



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
March 2, 2009



LOVE, BETRAYAL, REVENGE... TRAGEDY.

What would you sacrifice for revenge?

2008/2009 Season

4 MEDEA

March 19 – 28, 2009

By Euripides

Directed by Linda Hardy

Composer, Music Director: John Mills-Cockell

Choreography: Kaz Piesowocki

Set Design: Nathan Brown

Costume Design: Hannah Matiachuk, Rene

Linares, Caroline Hearn-Kehoe

Lighting Design: Amanda Gougeon

Stage Manager: Chris Sibbald

A disturbing yet powerful Greek tragedy of the revenge of Medea, a woman whose passion and love lead to her own destruction

The Phoenix Theatre presents the passionate story of *Medea*, a woman capable of anything to bring the man who abandoned her to his knees.

From March 19 to 28, 2009, the University of Victoria's Phoenix Theatre offers Victoria the rare opportunity to experience a classical, Greek period piece about love, betrayal and revenge. This production is a richly imagined and exquisitely designed stylized interpretation of Euripides' enduring play with classical Greek-inspired costumes, music and ceremony.

The myth of Jason and Medea dates back to 600 BCE, however it is believed that Medea was a real woman. A powerful sorceress and barbarian princess, she used her magic to fight along side Jason to find the Golden Fleece and helped make him a hero. The two had sworn faithfulness to one another until Jason's desires overcame his promises. The play itself was controversial in its day. Euripides adapted the myth to give Medea more complexity and depth. He also challenged the conventions of drama at the time: he mocked the gods, used a morally-uncertain chorus, and was critical of Athenian society. The play has fascinated artists throughout time, and has been reinvented on everything from pottery and frescoes to opera and television.

The Phoenix Theatre's production of the *Medea* is directed by the University of Victoria's own Linda Hardy. Linda is a long-standing faculty member at the Department of Theatre and has taught and directed in the U.S., Switzerland, Thailand, China and India. "This play is about three things: Love, betrayal, and revenge. At its core, it is timeless — a very human story," Linda comments. "Whether we are looking at modern domestic tragedy on the home front or wars in the Middle East or elsewhere, we find the same theme — at what price revenge?"

Medea will also feature movement choreography by retired Theatre faculty member Kaz Piesowocki and set design by fourth year Department of Theatre student Nathan Brown. Vancouver Island-based composer John Mills-Cockell has created an original composition for the production. John has had an extensive career in the theatre, film, television, radio and music industries and had received awards from SOCAN and the Canadian Film and Television Association. He has assisted the Phoenix Theatre in several productions over the past few years including the award-winning *Wind in the Willows* (2007) and *Dark of the Moon* (2008). Costumes have been designed collaboratively by three undergraduate students: Hannah Matiachuk, Rene Linares, and Caroline Hearn-Kehoe. The stage lighting has been designed by Amanda Gougeon and is stage-managed by Chris Sibbald.

The Phoenix Theatre presents its main stage production of Euripides's *Medea* from March 19 to 28, with \$6 Previews on March 17 & 18. Due to popular demand, the Phoenix Theatre has **added one extra performance** on **Monday March 23 at 8pm**. Join Dr. Ingrid E. Holmberg, Associate Professor from UVic's Department of Greek and Roman Studies for a **FREE Pre-Show** Lecture entitled "*Medea: From Ancient Myth to Modern Production*" on **Friday March 20 at 7:00pm**.

The performance schedule for *Medea* at the Phoenix Theatre at UVic is as follows:

Preview Performances 8pm: March 17 & 18 (Previews \$6.00 at the door after 5pm)

Evening Performances 8pm: March 19 (Opening Night), 20, 21, 23* 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 (*NEW!)

Matinee Performance 2pm: Saturday March 28

Single Tickets: \$12.00 (Student) - \$22.00 (Adult/Weekend)

Phoenix Box Office opens March 11, 2009 in person or by phone: **(250) 721-8000**.

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Box Office: (250) 721-8000



BACKGROUND: Medea
March 2, 2009



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4 THE MEDEA

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THE HISTORY OF MEDEA

The woman and Euripides' legend

Medea was princess of Colchis, and granddaughter to the god of the sun, Helios. Jason was charged to find the Golden Fleece, and the love-struck Medea agreed to help him – if he promised her marriage. With Medea's help, Jason was able to retrieve the Fleece, and returned victorious. To distract her father and leave with Jason, she killed her brother. On their return to Iolcus, they discovered Pelias on the throne that was to be Jason's. Medea, through a demonstration, convinced Pelias' daughters that cutting up an old ram and boiling it would make it young again. When they saw Medea's young ram emerge from the pot, they did the same to their father, who of course never emerged. Having murdered the king, Jason and Medea then left for Corinth.

Though Jason had pledged himself to Medea, he still desired power. A marriage to Glauce, princess of Corinth, would bring him into a royal family once more. Medea, however, does not forget his oaths to her. She knows how to break him. She is willing to do the unthinkable.

Colchis, where Medea came from, was located in the western part of what is now Georgia. It was also a probable homeland for the Amazons, a tribe of warrior women. It was an area with many riches, and the destination for Jason and the Argonauts. Iolcos, Jason's homeland, was in modern-day Thessaly, in central eastern coast of Greece. It still exists as a village today, with a population of 105. Jason and the Argonauts - and later Medea - travelled all over the southern part of Europe, from what is now France to Georgia.

Euripides wrote his Medea in 431 BCE, when her legend was already about a thousand years old. Her story would have been familiar to the Athenian audience. At that year's Dionysia, it won third prize out of three. Though it is considered by many to be essential to the western cannon, Euripides' audiences were not so enthusiastic about it. In the play, he makes several adaptations to the conventions of drama at the time: the chorus, once the paragon of morality, is now unsettled and swayed by Medea's strength; his slave characters were intelligent and his heroines were assertive; he was critical of Athenian society at the time, using drama for political commentary; and there was also disrespect and mockery of the gods – a challenge to the religious views he was born into.

Artwork emerged that was connected to the particular themes of this play. Euripides shows Medea's decision made not out of madness, but sober logic and ruthless determination. The duality of the character – powerful and dangerous, yet nurturing and loving – was later depicted on pottery, in paintings, and in other works, right into our own age.

People have been attracted to the play for its strong characters, exploration of justice in an unjust society, and its timelessness: no human is a stranger to love, loss, betrayal and revenge.

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