



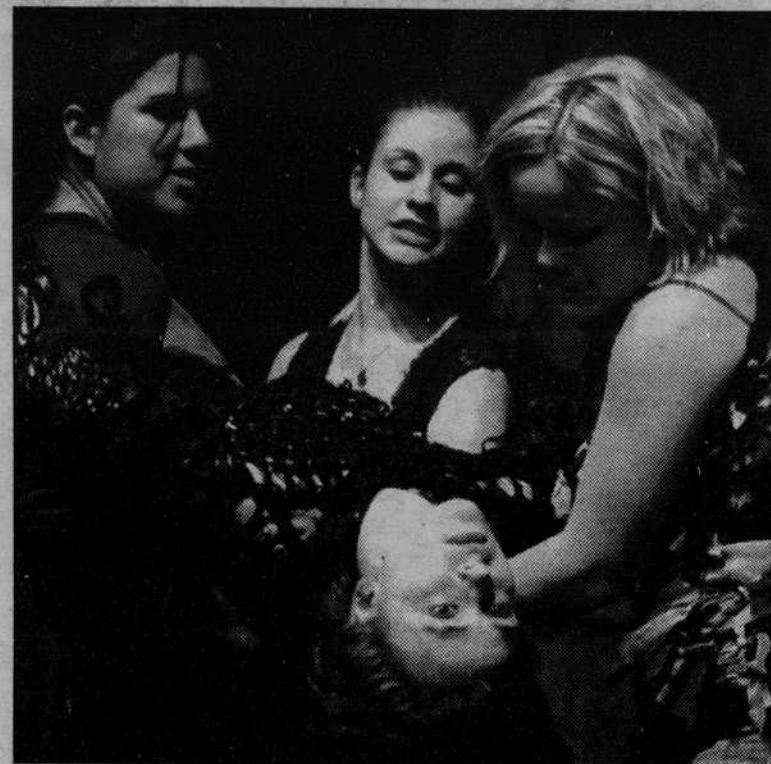
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R. Ashley Smith Emerald
During a recent rehearsal of 'Electra,' Jocelyn Fultz, who plays Electra, is held up by (from left) Nicole Barrett, Sarah Linder and Lindy Anderson.

Futuristic direction spins Greek drama

■ 'Electra,' a classic Greek family tragedy, is given a bold new interpretation

By Mason West
Oregon Daily Emerald

This is your Greek tragedy. This is your Greek tragedy in a post-apocalyptic world. Any questions? Hope so.

Don LaPlant has wanted to direct the classic Greek tragedy "Electra" since he was a sophomore undergraduate 10 years ago. This year, he got his chance, and his vision opens Friday on the Robinson Theatre stage.

The story of Electra is complex, but the simple summary is that Electra's father, the king of Mycenae, sacrifices Electra's sister to appease the gods and then goes off to war. In his absence his wife, Clytemnestra, takes a lover, and the two assassinate the king on his return. Electra then spends the rest of her life waiting to take revenge on her mother for her murderous act.

LaPlant took the script by Sophocles and placed it in a ruined world to visually reinforce the themes he saw.

"I found thematic similarities between the Greek text and some movies that were about living in a world that's falling apart," LaPlant said. "The heroes in those movies do very violent things, and yet they are still heroes. This is an idea that I am trying to work with."

A large part of the visual inspiration came from movies, including "Mad Max," "The Crow" and "Waterworld" — "even though it was a bad movie," he said.

The influence of these films is easily seen in the costumes. The actors wear torn garments with occasional pieces of armor. LaPlant has been working with the costume department both formally and not since early last summer. The result was a non-traditional development process where the department made rehearsal costumes for the actors to use before the final outfits were made.

The costumes needed to be extremely mobile to allow the actors full range of movement. In addition to being post-apocalyptic, LaPlant's vision for the show included dance and other means of physical expression, such as martial arts or even cheerleading moves.

"The classic Greek chorus has always been associated with doing dance, so the idea of movement isn't foreign from the play," LaPlant said. "But the characters are such huge, towering figures that it seemed wrong

to have them walk around normally." Senior Brian Henderson, who plays Electra's brother, Orestes, said that the action in the show occurs when communication between characters breaks down.

"In a musical, the emotions get so high you sing. In our show, emotions get so high you dance," Henderson said.

To give the movement a beat, senior Jon Christianson composed most of the music for the show in an industrial/heavy metal style. He used lots of heavy percussion and found sounds ranging from cast members screaming to the banging of metal objects.

As if the visual and audio changes weren't enough to irk purists of classic Greek theater, LaPlant made some alterations to the script.

"We cut some things from the text, I rearranged the order in which some people are killed, and I killed more characters than are in the script," LaPlant said.

LaPlant created the extra characters by dividing the lines of the chorus among the members to give each a more individual personality. Sophomore Sarah Linder's "character" is linked to lines dealing with Electra's living sister, Chrysothemis, who is inclined to forgive Electra's mother for her act.

"My character is torn between helping Electra and leaking information back to the palace," Linder said.

LaPlant feels justified in his decisions because they help him reach his ultimate thematic goal.

"I wanted to focus more on the family dynamic of the play, so I had Electra kill her mother last."

Although this is not the way Sophocles intended, it is the way the play ends in the interpretations of other Greek playwrights Aeschylus and Euripides.

LaPlant is confident in his interpretation of the play and has the backing of his cast.

"I think that the interpretation works really well," Linder said. "It almost seems like the play was written to be presented like this."

"I've never been this proud about a project," Henderson said.

Electra runs April 13, 14, 19-21, 27 and 28. All shows start at 8 p.m. in the Robinson Theatre. There will also be a benefit matinee performance for Community Mediation Services on April 22 at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$5 for University students (\$10 for the benefit matinee) and are available at the EMU ticket office or at the theater box office on days of performances.

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