Presents

**MEDEA**

Our student performances are made possible by a generous grant from John Igo

This Study Guide was written by Kacey Roye, with selected excerpts from public domain.
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The Classic Theatre’s mission is to build a professional theatre that inspires passionate involvement in a shared theatrical experience and to create a source of pride for our community.

JUST FOR STUDENTS: Join our AIM High Internship Program!

AIM High offers total immersion in design, technical production and acting through hands-on experience working on our productions during the 2015-2016 Season with professional theatre artists and technicians.

Email Director of Education Kacey Roye for more information: Kacey@classictheatre.org

AIM High intern, Renelle Wilson (far right) onstage with the cast of Classic Theatre of San Antonio’s award-winning production of Scapin by Moliere, 2013.
Synopsis

Euripides’ Medea begins in a state of opposition. Jason has abandoned his wife, Medea, along with their two children. He hopes to advance his position by remarrying a lady named Glauce, the daughter of Creon, King of Corinth.

After a long series of trials and adventures, which ultimately forced Jason and Medea to seek exile in Corinth, the pair had settled down and established their family, achieving a degree of fame and respectability. Jason’s recent abandonment of that family has crushed Medea emotionally, to the degree that she curses her own existence, as well as that of her two children.

Fearing a possible plot of revenge, Creon banishes Medea and her children from the city. After pleading for mercy, Medea is granted one day before she must leave, during which she plans to complete her quest for justice on the murder of Creon, Glauce, and Jason. Jason accuses Medea of overreacting. By voicing her grievances so publicly, she has endangered her life and that of their children.

Appearing by chance in Corinth, Aegeus, King of Athens, offers Medea sanctuary in his home city in exchange for her knowledge of certain drugs that can cure his sterility. Now guaranteed an eventual haven in Athens, Medea has cleared all obstacles to completing her revenge, a plan which grows to include the murder of her own children; the pain their loss will cause her does not outweigh the satisfaction she will feel in making Jason suffer.

Medea plans to play a trick; she pretends to sympathize with Jason (brining him into her confidence) and offers his wife gifts- a coronet and a dress. Apparently, the gifts are meant to convince Glauce to ask her father to allow the children to stay in Corinth. The coronet and dress are actually poisoned, however, and their delivery causes Glauce’s death. Seeing his daughter ravaged by the poison, Creon chooses to die by her side by embracing her and absorbing the poison himself.

A messenger recounts the gruesome details of these deaths, which Medea absorbs with pleasure. Her earlier state of anxiety, which intensified as she struggled with the decision to kill her children, has now made her even more determined to fulfill her plans. Medea murders her children and flees the scene. Jason is left cursing his existence; his hope of advancing his station by abandoning Medea and marrying Glauce, has been annihilated, and everything he values has been lost through the deaths that conclude the tragedy.
Euripides was a tragedian of classical Athens. He is one of the few whose plays have survived, with the others being Aeschylus, Sophocles, and potentially Euphorion. He was born in Salamis Island in 480 BC. He served for a short time as both dancer and torch-bearer at the rites of Apollo Zosterius.

Euripides contributed to Greek tragedy in a few significant ways. Where Aeschylus and Sophocles emphasized plot, by adding an actor each, Euripides added intrigue. Intrigue is present in Greek tragedy by the constant presence of the all-knowing chorus.

Euripides also created the love-drama. New Comedy took over the more effective parts of Euripides' technique. In a modern performance of Euripides' tragedy, Helen, the director explained it was essential for the audience to see immediately that it's a comedy.

His plays were performed in the Attic drama festivals in 454 BC, but it was not until 442 BC that he won first prize. This distinction, despite his prolific talent, fell to him again only four times. Aside from his writings, his chief interests were philosophy and science.

In his later life, he had two disastrous marriages to wives Melite and Choerine. Between the two, they bore him three sons, and were both unfaithful. He became a recluse, making a home for himself in a cave on Salamis. The apocryphal account that he composed his works in a cave on Salamis Island, symbolizes the isolation of an intellectual who was rather ahead of his time. Eventually he retired to the "rustic court" of King Archelaus in Macedonia, where he died in 406 BC.

Much of his life and his whole career coincided with the struggle between Athens and Sparta for domination in Greece, but he didn't live to see the final defeat of his city. It is said that he died in Macedonia after being attacked by the Molossian hounds of King Archelaus and that his tomb was struck by lightning—signs of his unique powers, whether for good or ill.
Facts About Medea

- In Greek mythology, Medea is a sorceress who was the daughter of King Aeëtes of Colchis, niece of Circe, granddaughter of the sun god Helios.
- Medea is known in most stories as an enchantress and is often depicted as being a priestess of the goddess Hecate or a witch.
- As with most of the myths recounted in ancient Greek tragedy, the story-line of Euripides' Medea, originally produced in 431 BC, is derived from a collection of tales that circulated informally around him.
- In the Medea myth, from earlier versions, Medea did not kill her children. The Corinthians killed them.
- Euripides' Medea was regarded as a dangerous person not so much because of what she did to her children - especially since this is not original to the myth - but because she defended the rights of women and deplored their treatment by men.
Analysis of Major Themes

Revenge & Pride

The theme of revenge and pride is the driving force behind this entire story.

“O Aegeus, my husband has proved most evil... Jason is wronging me though I have given him no cause... He is taking another wife to succeed me as mistress of his house... Be assured thereof; I, whom he loved of yore, am in dishonour now” (Medea to Aegeus of her current situation).

From this quote, we can see that Medea feels Jason has betrayed her and infringed upon her pride by going behind her back and becoming engaged with another woman- casting aside and demoting her to his mistress instead of his bride. She even comments that if he had not sired the children, that she could have possibly forgiven him and let it slide. The fact that he would commit such an act, after having had children with her, is too much for her to forgive.

Medea then uses these feelings of betrayal and trampled pride to carry forth her vile and repulsive actions of revenge, even going so far as to kill the children, which she admittedly loves, and whose only fault was of being the spawn of their father, in order to complete the misery of Jason and rob him of all that he held dear.

*Medea (about to murder her children)* by Eugène Ferdinand Victor Delacroix (1862).

*Medea and sons, Mermeros and Pheres, in Classic’s version.*
The Position of Women

Euripides was fascinated by women and the contradictions of the Greek sex-gender system; his treatment of gender is the most sophisticated one to be found in the works of any ancient Greek writer. Medea's opening speech to the Chorus is Classical Greek literature's most eloquent statement about the injustices that befall women. He also recognizes that the position of women, and their subordination to men, is inextricable from the very core of social order in Greece. Greek society functions thanks to injustice. Athens, a city that prided itself as a place more free than the neighboring dictatorships, was nonetheless a city that depended on slave labor and the oppression of women. (The typical apology offered by admirers of Athens is that all ancient societies were sexist and dependent on slave labor; this generality is untrue. Many societies were more generous in their treatment of women than the Greeks were; and many societies functioned, even in the ancient world, without slave labor.) Euripides was aware of these hypocrisies, and he often pointed out the ways that Greek society attempted to efface or excuse the injustices it perpetrated.

At the same time, Medea is not exactly a feminist role model. Euripides shows the difficulties that befall women, but he does not give us tinny virgin heroines. He gives us real women, who have suffered and become twisted by their suffering. What we see is not a story of female liberation, but a war between the sexes in which all emerge scarred.

Exile

Modern audiences have difficulty conceiving how horrible exile was for the ancient Greeks. A person's city-state was home and protector; to wander, without friends or shelter, was considered a fate as horrible as death. Medea, for the sake of her husband, has made herself an exile. She is far from home, without family or friends to protect her. In her overzealous advocacy of her husband's interest, she has also made their family exiles in Corinth. Because of her actions in Iolcus, Jason cannot return home. Their position is vulnerable. Jason, hero of the Golden Fleece (although Euripides emphasizes that Medea was the true agent behind the success of the quest) is now a wanderer. His marriage is shrewd and calculating: he takes a bride of Corinth's royal family. He is faithless, but he has a point when he argues to Medea that something needed to be done to provide their family with security. Euripides links the themes of exile and the position of women. When emphasizing the circumstances women must bear after marriage (leaving home, living among strangers) Medea is reminding us of the conditions of exile. Her position, then, is doubly grave, as she is an exile in the ordinary sense and also an exile in the sense that all women are exiles. She is also a foreigner, and so to the Greeks she will always be "barbarian."
Passion and Rage

Medea is a woman of extreme behavior and extreme emotion. For her passionate love for Jason, she sacrificed all, committing unspeakable acts on his behalf. But his betrayal of her has transformed passion into rage. Her violent and intemperate heart, formerly devoted to Jason, now is set on his destruction. The Greeks were very interested in the extremes of emotion and the consequences of leaving emotion unchecked; they also tended to see strong passion and rage as part and parcel of greatness. Medea is an example of passion carried too far, in a woman perversely set on choosing rage over mercy and reason.

Manipulation

Manipulation is an important theme. Medea, Jason, and Creon all try their hand at manipulation. Jason used Medea in the past; he now manipulates the royal family of Corinth to secure his own ends. Creon has made a profitable match between his daughter and Jason, hoping to benefit from Jason's fame as the hero of the Golden Fleece. But Medea is the master of manipulation. Medea plays perfectly on the weaknesses and needs of both her enemies and her friends. Medea plays to Creon's pity, and to the old king's costly underestimation of the sorceress. With Aegeus, she uses her skills as a bargaining chip and takes advantage of the king's soft-heartedness to win a binding oath from him. Against Jason, she uses his own shallowness, his unmerited pride, and his desire for dominance. She plays the fawning and submissive woman, to her husband's delight and gratification. Jason buys the act, demonstrating his lack of astuteness and his willingness to be duped by his own fantasies.

Cleverness

Euripides emphasizes Medea's cunning and cleverness. These traits, which should be admired, also cause suffering for Medea. This theme is linked to the theme of pride and the theme of woman's position. Medea tells Creon that it is better to be born stupid, for men despise the clever. Part of her difficulty is that she has no real outlet for her gifts. Her force, her intellect, and her strength of will all exceed her station. The Greeks, though they have some respect for her, often treat her smugly because of her sex and her barbarian origins. She is surrounded by people less intelligent and resourceful than she, but social power and respect is theirs. Medea is despised for talents that should win her praise; she is also terrifyingly free. Because she is an outsider to normal order, she behaves without restraint or morality. Her genius, denied an empire to build, will instead be used on the smaller playing field of personal revenge.
## CAST OF CHARACTERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Actor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MERMEROS, A son of Medea and Jason</strong></td>
<td>Jack Dullnig</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PHERES, A son of Medea and Jason</strong></td>
<td>Logan Trevino</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NURSE, Medea’s nurse</strong></td>
<td>Mindy Fuller</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DYA, Chorus</strong></td>
<td>Sophia Bolles</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>KATERINE, Chorus</strong></td>
<td>Cristina Vasquez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ZONYA, Chorus</strong></td>
<td>Magda Porter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ANJA, Chorus</strong></td>
<td>Meredith Alvarez</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MEDEA, A sorceress and a princess</strong></td>
<td>Georgette Lockwood</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>KING CREON, The king of Corinth</strong></td>
<td>Michael Duggan</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ATTENDANT, A messenger</strong></td>
<td>Bekka Broyles**</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>JASON, Medea’s former husband</strong></td>
<td>Kerry Valderrama</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AGEUS, The King of Athens</strong></td>
<td>Guy Schaafs</td>
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**AIM High Intern**
### PRODUCTION STAFF,
Classic Theatre of San Antonio

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Director</strong></th>
<th>Mark Stringham*</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Choreographer</strong></td>
<td>Susan Trevino</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Production Manager</strong></td>
<td>Allan S. Ross</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Stage Manager</strong></td>
<td>Alexandria Sepulveda</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Technical Director</strong></td>
<td>Rick Clyde</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Scenic Designer</strong></td>
<td>Allan S. Ross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scenic Artist</strong></td>
<td>Kendall Davila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intern/Child Wrangler</strong></td>
<td>Bekka Broyles**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Costume Designer</strong></td>
<td>Vanessa J. Lopez</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lighting Designer</strong></td>
<td>Kaitlin Muse</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sound Designer</strong></td>
<td>Mark Stringham, John Coker</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Graphics Design</strong></td>
<td>Will Templin</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Board Operator</strong></td>
<td>Scott Marker</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Composer/Musical Director</strong></td>
<td>John Coker</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Photographer</strong></td>
<td>Siggi Ragnar</td>
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*Member of the Actor’s Equity Association
**AIM High Intern

### THEATRE STAFF- The Classic Theatre of San Antonio

Executive Director..............................................Kelly Roush
Co-Artistic Directors........Diane Malone, Allan S. Ross
Director of Education..........................Kacey Roye
Publicity.......................................................Christie Beckham
House Manager/Bookkeeper......................Linda Ford
Box Office Manager.................................Florence Bunten
VOCABULARY

**Belie**

*(v)*: Represent falsely

**Machiavellian**

*(adj)*: Of or relating to Machiavelli or the principles of conduct he recommended

**Animus**

*(noun)*: 1. Strong dislike or enmity; animosity; hatred. 2. Purpose; intention; animating spirit

**Chasm**

*(noun)*: A deep, steep-sided opening in the earth's surface; an abyss or gorge:

**Perfidy**

*(noun)*: Deliberate breach of faith or trust; faithlessness; treachery; an act or instance of faithlessness or treachery

**Agency**

*(noun)*: The capacity for human beings to make choices and impose those choices on the world; the state of being in action or exerting power

**Gaunt**

*(adjective)*: Extremely thin and bony; haggard and drawn, as from great hunger, weariness, or torture; emaciated

**Sophistry**

*(noun)*: Subtly deceptive reasoning or argumentation

**Adroit**

*(adjective)*: 1. Nimble in terms of using one's hands or body; expert 2. Cleverly skillful, resourceful, or ingenious

**Diadem**

*(noun)*: a crown or royal headband
LESSON IDEAS/ACTIVITIES

BEFORE THE SHOW:

- *Medea* addresses themes that students will find familiar, despite the troubling aspects of the plot; especially the topics of revenge and pride, and the position of women, directed at Medea and Jason’s marriage predicament (He abandons Medea to remarry for political gain) deserve careful discussion. As a pre-viewing activity, list the play's themes on the board, including: REVENGE & PRIDE, THE POSTION OF WOMEN, MANIPULATION, and EXILE.

- Brainstorm with students: how and where do these themes present themselves in our lives? Have students read or seen other works (literature, films, television) that touch on any of the themes of *Medea*? Assign students to select one theme and track its development as they watch the play, taking note of particular scenes that present the theme and characters who wrestle with that issue.

DIVING DEEPER:
What is an example of the historical confinement of women? How does Medea represent female empowerment? In Euripides’ time, the stereotype of women is that they are defenseless and weak; similarly, does Euripides’ play encourage or challenge the widespread confinement of women of the time?

Before answering, consider other examples. Identify female characters in television, film, and literature that are built on a stereotype (of age, class, region, ethnicity, race, etc.). List them on the board.

- Which characters are stereotypes that reinforce negative images? Label them.
- Which characters stretch or break out of their stereotypes? How do they do it? What message or lesson about stereotypes do the characters deliver?
- What role do stereotypes play in art? Should they remain or be a part of newly-created art?

DEBATE TOPIC:

The Justification of Medea’s Offenses

During the course of the play, Medea’s actions range from breaking societal expectations, such as accepting the will of her husband, to murdering her rivals, and eventually, committing the unholy crime of infanticide. Despite her atrocities, the only characters that continually condemn her are the Nurse and Jason, who is believed by many to be liable for Medea’s actions. She mostly retains the support of the women of Corinth, the Gods, and the audience. Assess Medea’s reactions to Jason’s misconduct. Does her position as a betrayed and grieving wife justify her wrongdoings? If not, where does she cross the line between what is acceptable and what is criminal?

PERFORMANCE:

When Medea loses everything, she plots revenge by poisoning Jason’s bride, and murdering her two sons.

Write and perform a scene that reveals what happens to Jason after the end of the play.

Jason is presented as a character with a heroic past, yet his actions in the play often exemplify the traits of a weak, reactive character. Medea also predicts an "unheroic death" for him at the play's close. It makes you wonder....

- Does anything in the play testify to Jason's background as a hero?
- Are we meant to sympathize with Jason at all??

Write and perform this “deleted scene” from Euripides’ play.