

2023-2024 Theatre Season
A Year of the Supernatural

**Blinn College Division of Arts, Kinesiology &
Agriculture-Brenham Campus**



Written by Liz Lochhead
(After Euripides)

Directed by Brad Nies

Technical Direction by Kevin Patrick

Costumes, Makeup/Hair Design by
Jennifer Patrick



Medea

By Liz Lochhead (After Euripides)

**2024 Texas Community College Speech and
Theatre Association Play Festival Entry**

**Produced by special arrangement with
Nick Hern Books Limited**

Resource Guide

This resource guide serves as an educational starting point to understanding and enjoying Liz Lochhead's adaptation of *Medea*.

Please note that the interpretations of the theatrical work may differ from the original source content.

Synopsis

Liz Lochhead's stunning new version finds Medea and Jason as refugees in the city of Corinth struggling to bring up their offspring in an alien and unsympathetic society. When Jason hatches a plan to better integrate himself, a plan that involves abandoning his wife and mother of his children, Medea is spurned, destitute, and desperate. It is then Medea uses the dark arts to exact her terrible retribution.



Public Performances

February 22 & 23

7:00 PM

February 24 & 25

2:00 PM

Preview Performances

February 22

10:00 AM & 1:00 PM

February 23

10:00 AM

Endowed Scholarship Auditions

February 24

4:30 PM

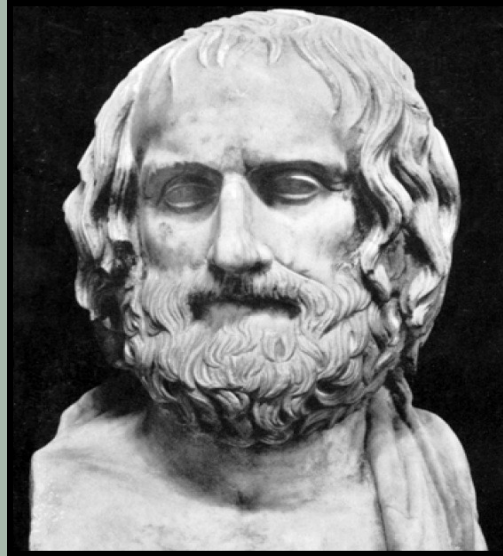
Dr. W. W. O'Donnell Performing Arts Center

Blinn College-Brenham



Liz Lochhead

A Scottish poet, playwright, and translator, Liz Lochhead was born in a small suburb of Wishaw, North Lanarkshire, Scotland on December 26, 1947. Both of her parents served in the army during the Second World War, and her father eventually became a local government clerk. Though encouraged by her teachers to study English, Lochhead decided instead to attend the Glasgow School of Art in 1965. After graduating in 1970, she taught art in high schools in Glasgow and Bristol. Gaining inspiration from the 1970s Scottish poetry scene, Lochhead went on to have several collections of her poetry published. Such collections include Islands (1978) and The Grimm Sisters (1979). Her success in poetry is rivalled only by her theatrical works. Her published plays include Blood and Ice (1982), Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off (1987), Perfect Days (2000), and a highly acclaimed adaptation of Molière's Tartuffe (1985). She adapted the medieval texts of the York Mystery Plays, and her adaptation of Euripides' Medea was the winner of the 2001 Saltire Society Scottish Book of the Year Award. Between 2011 and 2016, Lochhead was the National Poet of Scotland, and she served as Poet Laureate for Glasgow between 2005 and 2011.



Eurípides

Euripides was born on Salamis Island around 480 BC. Upon receiving an oracle that his son was fated to win "crowns of victory," his father insisted that Euripides train for a career in athletics. However, the boy was destined for a career on the stage, and he served as a dancer and torchbearer at the ceremonies celebrating Apollo Zosterius. In addition to studying play-writing, Euripides studied painting and philosophy. He had two disastrous marriages, as both of his wives, Melite and Choerine, were unfaithful to him. After this, Euripides became a recluse, making a home for himself in a cave on Salamis. It was in this cave where he built a library of written works, and it was also here where a cult of the playwright developed after his death. While the details of his death are unclear, it is believed that he retired to the court of King Archelaus in Macedonia, where he died in 406 BC. Modern scholars, however, are skeptical of this claim, as it is possible that Euripides never visited Macedonia. If he had, it is more believable that he may have been drawn there by King Archelaus with incentives that were to artists during this time.

The Story of Jason and Medea

The story of Jason and Medea is best known through the tragic play by Euripides, as well as an epic poem by Apollonius of Rhodes. In accordance with Greek mythology, Jason met Medea while visiting the kingdom of Colchis. In order to affirm his birthright and be crowned as king of Iolcus, Jason was charged with the task of getting the Golden Fleece from King Aeëtes, Medea's father. The princess fell in love with Jason and offered to help him if he would take her on his journeys and marry her. Knowing he would need her help, Jason agreed. Using potions and herbs, Medea assisted Jason, and the Golden Fleece was, begrudgingly, awarded to Medea's future husband. Knowing that her father would try to keep them from leaving with the fleece, Medea distracted him by killing and dismembering her brother. After, while her father was busy gathering his son's body for a proper funeral, the crafty couple set sail for the kingdom of Iolcus. Upon arriving, however, Jason was angered to find his aged father had appointed a man named Pelias to the throne. Hoping that her husband would be crowned king, Medea hatched a plan to trick Pelias' daughters into killing him. When the daughters told others what Medea had done, the couple was banished to the city of Corinth. Once there, Jason deserted Medea for Glauce, the daughter of King Creon. In light of this, Medea decided to use her powers to get revenge on the youthful princess, resulting in death and carnage at Jason's wedding. These deaths, however, did not quench Medea's thirst for revenge on her husband for choosing another woman over her, and she embarked on a deed so terrible, she was forced to use her powers once more to flee to the city of Thebes.



Major Themes in Medea



Vengeance

Regardless of the many things Medea does for her husband's success, Jason rewards his wife by leaving her for another woman. While her anger may be justified, Medea's vengeance goes too far in the eyes of the chorus, and they warn her that hurting Jason will cause her more pain.

Loss of Glory

In ancient Greece, heroes achieved glory by performing great deeds. This fame was passed down from father to son, and the son was responsible for living up to his father's glory. In taking revenge on her husband, Medea destroys the glory of Jason's heroic acts.

Importance of Family and Property

Since family and property were essential to the stability of ancient Greek culture, Jason's decision to abandon Medea in order to advance his social position is a betrayal of this stability. As such, this tragic downfall leads to Jason being punished so that the audience learns the extreme importance of fidelity to one's family.

Some Words You May Not Know from Liz Lochhead's Medea

- *Aphrodite: The ancient Greek goddess of sexual love and beauty.*
- *Circlet: The base of a crown with or without a cap.*
- *Corinth: An ancient city located in south-central Greece.*
- *Dance Macabre: A dance of death.*
- *Dowry: Property or money from a bride to her husband upon their marriage.*
- *Garters: An article of clothing fastened about the leg to keep up stockings.*
- *The Golden Fleece: The pelt of a golden-woolled, winged ram that rescued a prince from being sacrificed by his stepmother, and brought him to the kingdom of Colchis. The ram was sacrificed to the god Poseidon, and the pelt was given to King Aeëtes.*
- *Harridan: A belligerent old woman.*
- *Homilies: Commentaries that follows a reading of scripture and give the public an explanation of a sacred doctrine or text.*
- *Kolchis: A variant of the name Colchis. In classical Greek geography, a kingdom located on the eastern coast of the Black Sea.*
- *Labyrinthine: Description of a network of irregular and twisting corridors.*
- *Malison: A curse.*
- *Pelias: In Greek mythology, the king of Iolcus. Medea tricked his daughters into slitting his throat.*
- *Pigswill: Waste food that is fed to pigs.*
- *Pitch: A black substance used in roofing and paving roads.*
- *Progeny: A descendant or the descendants of a person.*
- *Quine: A variant of the word queen.*
- *Toffs: Slang for members of the aristocracy.*



Witches in Greek Mythology

Aristotle, an ancient Greek philosopher, once said, 'Women will bring disorder and evil and are utterly useless and cause more confusion than our enemies.' Women in Greek mythology were shown as no better, as they were depicted as deceitful beings that reveled in the downfall of men. Below is a list of witches female monsters that, according to the Greeks, would have joined Medea in her practice of the dark arts:

****Circe:** A jealous and vengeful lover, Circe possessed a strong knowledge of magical herbs and potions. With her heavenly singing voice, she could place wicked spells on any man that had the bad fortune of setting foot on her island. One of her favorites was turning men into pigs!*

****Hecate:** A protector of women, Hecate was the Greek goddess of witchcraft, crossroad, boundaries, and Hades the Underworld. She ruled over darkness and the moon, served as a medium between spirits and humans, and owned a magic key which would unlock the gates to all kingdoms.*

****Hera:** Queen of the gods and wife of Zeus, Hera was known for her jealousy and vindictive ways. She found great pleasure in wreaking revenge on her unfaithful husband, particularly by conjuring spells that brought about revolts against him. She also enjoyed casting spells on Heracles.*

More Witches in Greek Mythology

****Apate:*** Being locked up by the gods in a box did nothing for this witch's disposition, and she was hellbent on revenge when Pandora finally released her and her sisters into the world. In fact, her name, in Greek, means fraud, deceit, guile, and deception.

****Eris:*** The twin sister of Ares, the God of War, Eris was the goddess of conflict, strife, and discord. This vengeful witch, after not being invited to a particular wedding, cast a spell on all the female attendees that caused them to quarrel about who was the fairest of them all. The Prince of Troy declared Aphrodite the most beautiful, and his mistake started the Trojan Wars.

****The Fates:*** In Greek mythology, the Fates were three sisters that were deities, as well as children of chaos. They were believed to be all things mysterious such as death, disease, ghosts, dreams, and witchcraft. The Fates, wove the thread of each mortal's destiny, and when a thread was cut, that mortal came to the end of their life on Earth.

****The Furies:*** Another trio of sisters, the Furies were the goddesses of vengeance and retribution. Sidekicks to the Fates, these witches were depicted as whip-wielding, ugly sisters, with wings of bats and venomous snakes wrapped around their black-clothed bodies.

****Medusa:*** The youngest of the Gorgon Sisters, Medusa was originally a great beauty. After being caught having an affair with Poseidon, god of the sea, his jealous wife transformed Medusa into an ugly old hag. In doing so, she turned Medusa's hair into a heap of writhing snakes, and she bestowed on her the ability to turn anyone into stone.

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HERCULES