



MEDEA |

RESOURCES TRANSCRIPTS

MEDEA | ADURA AND JEANETTE

Medea is a woman who is wronged at the start of the play, her husband has left her for the daughter of the King. She has made a hell of a lot of sacrifices for her husband and the play opens with her finding out that they are getting married and the play is about how she grapples with the rage and her desire for revenge. She's a mercurial character, she's incredibly confident but mostly she will cut off her nose to spite her face to get what she wants and she makes the ultimate sacrifice at the end of the play.

There are 10 of us in the chorus, so the character really, I guess they represent the women of Corinth. It's quite hard to sort of say what is the specific character. We have to speak with one voice, although we are all very different, there is a big range of ages and so finding that one voice so I guess what we are, is the women at the school gate who always have a view of what's going on, they have a very, they have very attached in their view of Medea they talk about Medea more than about, you know and they sort of encourage Medea, 'go for it, go for it, punish him, do it' but they also have that wonderful thing of going, talking a good game but then going woaahh no we didn't mean that. But I guess they play that, there's a sort of intermediary between the audience, they help to mitigate the audience's shock or horror at what's happening on the stage. So I guess this character is the character of the chorus is the kind of intermediary between the audience who are just watching and Medea and Jason, Kreon who are absolute active, who drive the drama. They do and we go 'don't do' or 'yeah go for it' you know.

And it's really interesting that when Medea first meets the chorus she calls them 'Women of all time'. And I think there is something for me anyway about the diversity Janette is talking about and this idea that she is speaking to women now, women before and women in the future and so the character is every woman really.

We did talk about this a bit in rehearsals about who is Glauke? This woman because in, as Adura brought up one day, in the Greek time when the play was written, women had no public presence, no public life they would have been in their houses behind the walls, I mean except for like you know working class women whose life stories are always different and never recorded at all. So it's quite interesting about who is Glauke, this princess who has left the palace which in Greek times she wouldn't have been able to do and has come to confront Adura and they way it's staged it's as if she walks through the street and she used, originally she came up the stairs at the front of the runway and it was kind of like 'ahhh' but her walking through the crowd I find really impressive. There is a part of me that's going, who are you? You're doing this, and it does give her a wonderful entrance because normally a wonderful entrance is like boom and the whole audience goes 'ahhhh' but this is a wonderful entrance because a lot of the audience are going who is that blonde girl? Can we see her? and she comes up the stairs.

It's very intriguing straight away.

And so that kind of moment and I thought about that a lot and we talked about it saying what is a modern in our time equivalent of that and the only thing I could sort of come up with, which for your kids is before their time even, although, was in 1987 when Princess Diana opened the AIDS unit and went and touched AIDS patients and kind of hugged them and it was a huge story at the time of like oh my god because at that time there were some medical staff who wouldn't deal with HIV patients and there was this huge story of this young blonde haired girl in blue and that was the only thing I could think of that sense of somebody, incredibly privileged, not necessarily powerful but very privileged, very protected being able to do that.

I tend to approach character through text you know and Liz's text is phenomenal. And I think if before I did this role I would definitely have been like commit to the text as an actor and you'll be fine but with Medea it's a little bit more heightened than that, well a lot more heightened than that because

often what she say isn't what she means and she's often playing a game to get people on her side. After the first reading I think as a mother myself my instinct was to try and understand her actions and understand them from a mothers point of view because of the really heinous act she commits at the end of the play that kind of was like where my mind was at through the whole process, how am I going to get to this point, where it feels believable to me that she would do that so most of the rehearsal period was exploring that but also I was in a lot of sessions with the chorus because we have this inter-play and I think naturally I wanted to rely on the chorus and then it all came to a crunch point about 2, we had done 2 dresses and Michael the director said to me 'I think your humanising her too much, I think you are trying to make her understandable as a mother who would kill her children'. My attitude was to I want you to understand why she would do that and he was like 'She doesn't care what anybody thinks, she literally will cut off her nose to spite her face because she wants vengeance' and the other note he gave me was that she doesn't rely on the chorus it might seem like she needs them but she doesn't need them. So there is just this kind of almost 360 where I went from 'please understand why I have done this' to 'I don't give a , I don't care what you think of me and that was like a real moment for me , you know.

Its also quite interesting from the chorus that that process is really fast, I mean it's quite a short play, the play is only what an hour and twenty minutes and what she'd says she is going to do, she takes you through what she's going to do and then I am going to do this final terrible thing and at that point its within, it happens all within 5 minutes maybe or 6 minutes maybe of the play. The chorus are going no no you can't do that, no no you mustn't do that, you can't do that and she's like no, go get the guy. and so there is this sudden, for the chorus going 'woaaaah' no we didn't mean any of that when we said 'Punish him for all of us' , we didn't mean any of that and Medea just goes no I am going to do what Im going to do.

But interesting to think, what do they think she could do? Like, if you know when they say 'Punish him for us Medea'. What could she actually do? Like its interesting like he's about to become part of the royal family like I think that line 'Punish him for us' is not an innocent line because if he was just a man in the street yeah, get him but he's actually part of the royal family so whatever she comes up with, with 'Punish him for us Medea' is going to be gruesome because it has to be and I have seen.

And she's done everything right to this point you know they are healthy, fit and nice children and so she's no worse than the whole system that we commit to and I find, I just find that kind of do you know you are expected always to be a good mother but what if you are not?

There is a lot as a woman to still be raging about and I think one of things thats made most liberating about the play is you get a woman who explores her rage like she doesn't shy away from it she lets it overtake her and I think, I think that will always feel relevant I don't know that as women we feel in contemporary society we feel able to really explore rage I don't think we are socialised into exploring rage and so you have this character 2000 years old who does and its, she's I mean I would like to say she won't always be relevant but you know it feels like she's still very relevant because we don't do that so it didn't feel like I needed to do some huge research of like Grecian Theatre or myth or anything like that and with Liz's text as well it just feels very relevant and because of the way Liz has written it as well it feels very visceral, very contemporary there is a lot of swear words in the play, which also just lands it for you in a particular way as well so you have this mix of the very kind of like mundane language and this heightened poetry and all of it feels like it just grounds you in your own reality of what the world is like right now for me anyway as a woman. So thats interesting, in terms of the bigger themes I mean I think a mother killing her children will always be fascinating to people because still we don't expect women or mothers to behave that way. But of course motherhood is only 1 part of Medea and she is willing to sacrifice that. She doesn't do it because she is a mother, she does it in spite of being mother its just one part of her and I think it will always be fascinating that someone chooses to sacrifice children in this way when we, we were talking about this earlier, children are sacrificed everyday in this world still, all the time, all sorts of reasons and for Medea I

think the thing that kind of surprises people is because she's their mother but that still happens today that was something I looked at as well, contemporary stories of mothers who kill their children and it happens, it happens all over the world consistently so there is, its not as much of an anomaly as we would like to think that it is. Talking about translations of Medea, I read one where they really really tried hard to make you believe that she was doing it for the good of the children and that if she didn't do it the children would be killed by Corinth and its true they would be because of what she's done and what I love about Liz is she is just like 'Mmm Mmm' she does it for all sorts of reasons and thats only one of them, its only a small part of it you know she doesn't let us off the hook.

Because its also structurally a great play because we were just talking about this as well, but the Nurse come on at the beginning and says this is everything thats happened but she doesnt come on and go right everybody settle down and I am going to bring you up to date this is not a preface she comes in and she herself is, you know that way she is like 'I wish to all the gods' and she goes back like to the absolute essential moment which is of the sun heating up the soil and a seed growing into a tree that could be cut down to make a keel for the ship that sailed to Colchis and so there is that whole thing as well of a Nurse going stay in your seats there is more to come. Do you know which I think is when we are talking about theatre thats 2500 years old but even like in shakespearean theatre characters do that in plays, you know suddenly a new art form and an audience is going to watch a play for 3 and a half hours so you have a character near the top of the play going, 'Im going to do this, Im going to do this, Im going to do this, so you need to stay to the end and I think thats also function of tragedy of chorus It is not about being sad, it is not about being sad its about you stay to the end and tats part of the function of chorus as well to keep the audience, you dont get to leave.

A key moment I think is when she finds out that Glauke is pregnant. Because the stakes become much higher then because its about not just Jason bedding a new bride its starting a new family and I think for her it becomes really stark what she is going lose. Everything she is losing in that moment becomes really stark. And another pivotal moment is actually something that we have added which is a kiss that Jason forces on her at the end of their first scene together where she has basically said Ive betrayed my family, Ive killed people, I have left my land , have made enemies of everyone I ever loved all this for you and you treat me like this and she's really pleading to his humanity going like the sacrifices I have made for you. How can you treat me like this and for me physically when he kisses her at the end as a kind of its an act of total violence and domination of her and I think for her in terms of her relationship with him that for me is a turning point but thats not actually in Liz's script its something that we, that Michael brought to the table but I think its brilliant. I mean the idea of it is in Liz's script because the chorus say when Jason comes they say 'Beware of him, don't fall for it,' so there is obviously a real, because she loves him so much , there is a real possibility of that happening but we have crystallised it in a physical act. actually mother interesting moment I think I just made this connection now so bear with me but when she's. When Glauke leaves she comes up with a plan to kill her and she comes up with a plan to kill her and kill the child in her she dies that before she thinks about killing her children and I have just suddenly understood that she is able to make that leap after she has made the leap with Glauke, I didn't realise that. You've made me realise that!

MEDEA | BROOKE AND FLETCHER

We're part of the whole crowd so we come out of the audience and I see our function in the piece as commenting, supporting backing up just being a really strong group together and when we are first discovered when we rise up above the rest of the crowd I think for me that's a massively important moment because it's when we as this specific group of women kind of join together and voice what we feel and then are together for the rest of the piece commenting on the piece so for me that that first moment of rising out of the crowd is one of the most important points for us, that's what I would say, and they also push the action further as well and they can sometimes interfere and maybe give Medea what their thoughts are and yeah we are amongst the audience at the, at the very, very beginning so it's almost like we're audience members and like Fletcher was saying we step up onto our stools and it's like it's super empowering, yeah it is, and when we start the first point when we speak together is is really, really powerful I think yeah for sure.

So we all kind of find our own person, I think, I think for me I'm myself within the chorus as part of the chorus as part of this group of women. We can't overact, we can't we can't be too tiny there has to be a strong group sense but being an individual within it so for different parts we will all feel differently and we have to show that in a small way much as we're all moving the action forward at the same time, in the same way, we all have different feelings about it but but we were told not to overact weren't we? That's right. No overacting required in this piece. We can't get too invested in our emotional journey! No, because there were bits that that some of us were and we had to ask we had to say 'please tell us, you know, if if we are, if we are overacting please please tell us' so that's what they had to do, so they had to pick ones out and go, 'you're overacting, you're overacting, you're overreacting' and you weren't allowed to do that so it's just about developing yourself within a group which I don't think any of us had done before so it was really fascinating doing it. And we are all individual people as a group of ten but the chorus is one physical being so we are all, you know, we do have our own individual personalities but we're all acting as one and we're speaking chorally and that's, that's like really, really challenging as well. Really, really challenging! So challenging! Yes it really is and um because we've got to have the same intonations and certainly at the beginning of the process we were all that's something that we found the most tricky and we were trying to, we're trying to really, really get it so what we would do is we would hear how someone else would maybe say the line and then we would copy that and then we would do it again to really really get it into our bodies so we all sounded like one voice. Yeah, so we're always in rehearsals when, when Adura was rehearsing and then we discuss what the push points were that the chorus were kind of pushing her on like almost like you know, a tabloid newspaper going, 'yeah yeah do it do it do it' and then suddenly they go 'oh hang on a minute' but but that was discovered through rehearsal you know and it was it was lovely it was really joyous wasn't it? Absolutely yeah, there was a lot of times where we were maybe on the floor on top of our stools but then it was changed to us maybe being closer to Adura on this stage and we just sort of played around with and what felt best for the scene there's one particular moment in the play where we're all holding on to Adura's hand and and it's super super impactful because we're connecting with her we have agreed to her plan and this is what we're going to do. Yeah we were trying to figure out what would be the best, the best way for us to get to that point and what our positioning would be because for quite a long time we weren't on the floor for quite a lot. Yeah yeah. But then we thought we should be up on the stage with the with the principles and about the action. We did quite a bit of movement exercise as well we did quite a lot of movement and moving as one so if one of us moved we kind of moved in the same style as that person so we did quite a lot of work with that and just loads just loads of voice stuff it was it was quite fascinating because Michael wanted us as the chorus in the room a lot while he was rehearsing the principles so quite a lot of the time I thought we'd be in another room actually doing the choral stuff but Michael wanted us to be present in the room while he was doing the principles so that they got the feel of us

being there and we got the feel of the actual piece so it was, it was really, it wasn't what I expected was going to happen but again I think it worked really well so we did have opportunities to go off and work on our own, in another room but a lot of the time was spent all together. And we have to sense quite a lot of the time when, when other chorus members are moving around remember us doing exercises walking backwards and trying not to bump into anyone. Yes that was very important. It was very very important because we actually do that in the play, we're all in a cluster on the stage and then we all disperse and we have to walk backwards, yes, so we have to sort of like tap into that and try and sense where people are on the stage so we've done that a lot in the little movement sessions that we had and it was actually really beneficial us being in the main space with the principals because we got that chance to feel what it was like being all spread out and then when we came together on on the stage so I I did really really enjoy that. I think it's great for an audience to see inclusion and that should happen all the time it's as simple as that it should just be everything that is done it should be all inclusive. There's certainly been times in rehearsals where I've maybe found things tricky but I've had to just speak up and talk about how we can work through it and how it would be the most accessible but it's been yeah it's been really, really brilliant and I would you know maybe turn to Fletcher or turn to another actor in the chorus and ask them if they can audio describe something to me that's maybe happening in rehearsals or something like that talking about the relationship between an actor and a director you know I felt totally comfortable about coming up to Michael and saying you know 'I don't, I might have to like clarify this, could I just have a couple of minutes just to figure this out with the actors in the chorus' and the chorus have been brilliant in just jumping in and be like 'right Brooke, let's figure out this particular bit' so you know you you know where you are on the stage and you know what the cues are, what the cues are and things like that um so it's been yeah it's been really really great and we've had conversations about lighting and I hold quite a lot of actors hands when whenever I'm walking, whether it be on the floor or on the stage, Fletcher being one of them and it actually kind of works, it sort of looks like a mother-daughter relationship which is, you know, which is another theme within the within the piece. Yeah absolutely. And then we have Bea, who is a deaf performer, and they have been absolutely wonderful about speaking out, things that they need clarifying. Absolutely yeah, they've been great at that and sometimes the chorus can all talk together at the same time and Bea has to say 'you can't do that because I can't keep up with that' and that and that's really important and we've really learned to to you know put up our hands one at a time if Bea's present so that so that they can follow everything that we're saying but it's it's been great and again Bea doesn't sign everything and we had an integrated performance an integrated sign performance which was great as well.

There's loads of of themes within the piece that are Universal and are throughout time; there's love, there's Revenge, they are the two main ones really: love and revenge, and when we first were doing the piece I was thinking 'you know she's she's really horrible' and all that Medea and all that kind of thing but actually when you think about it, the time that this was written, so it's the time of the Gods and she has been struck by this Arrow by Cupid she has no choice but to love Jason for the whole of her life she has been struck with this Arrow if she can't love him then she has to hate him there's no there's no inbetween for her as that character and although we're not in modern times struck by that that arrow that that sense of of complete and utter love and then someone betrays you, betrayal is another theme that's that's massive within the piece, that that betrayal then what do you do? Now in those times, yes it's far more extreme than possibly than what we would do now but that theme is constant throughout like Love, Betrayal, Revenge they're all there. Yeah, it's so, the themes are so relatable to the times that we're living in now, you know, we still have difficulties within our relationships whatever forms they take, we still have to make painful decisions in our life even though you know Medea's decisions are very extreme, extreme, and drastic and like no one would ever you know think of doing that today because your subconscious be like 'no, shouldn't do that' but absolutely the the themes of Love and Motherhood and Womanhood - its an incredibly feminist piece

yeah absolutely - and there's, you know, the the majority of the cast are predominantly women I think it's so so relatable to audiences today. Yeah and the whole thing of the Womanhood and The

Sisterhood supporting supporting Medea and almost encouraging her at one stage to really go for it and then but when they find out that that Glauke is pregnant they back off. As soon as you talk about children everything for the chorus changes I would say. When the children become involved they're they are altered completely with the support they have for Medea. Yeah because they have they've sort of gone along with her plan agreed with her plan that Jason should suffer like, 'how could he possibly do that to you?' but then when she mentions that she is going to kill her children that's when they back away and they think no you can't do that at all.

There's a moment when we hear the Manservant say to Medea that Medea's children have given the presents to Glauke and that's something that really really hits us that's like right down at the pit of her stomach and we think and we just slumped down to the floor because we think okay well that is the children's fate set in stone and they are to be doomed and like quite a lot of the chorus stuff is incredibly earthy and gritty and full of gravitas and that's something that just really really hits us in the core so we can't do anything but you know slump to the floor - yeah - so that was that was really, really interesting trying to figure out all of those different levels. The first moment that we speak together I think is massive because that's that's the coming together of the women we voice how we feel about her cry and we all feel the same about her cry so that is the first thing for me. Then we come on the stage we go back into the crowd and then once we see what Kreon, how Kreon behaves with her, we support her again. The next turning point for me probably would be the announcement of Glauke's baby, the next one would be her vocalising that she's going to kill her own children, and then the final one when we try to stop her. Yeah I totally agree with that and it's that way where you know the the chorus do have a mind of their own you know they are they are with Medea they are they are physical beings they can't be seen by all of the characters but they you know they're sometimes a part of Medea's subconscious but like they are there and yeah I think they interfere with their own thoughts and talking about when she says that she's going to kill the children that is like a massive massive blow to them and the the chorus have a big, big speech about how you know she could never ever do something like that and you know isn't this what a mother is like supposed to do and then they talk about all of these things and and then they're like down on their knees begging her not to do that and up until that point they've been they've been like with her the entire time.

I think because we're wearing quite contemporary costumes as well so I think people mistake us for audience members and they'll come up and have chats with us before the show which is lovely which is really nice and you can just sort of like pretend that you're the punter which is which is great and yeah being, being in amongst the crowd like right in the body of the kirk it's actually it's really good because you can hear people laughing at Liz's really witty - yeah - writing and even though it is a Greek tragedy it is very brutal what happens but it is Liz Lochhead so you know she's there's like so many funny moments within the play and just sort of it's like super refreshing when you hear audience members laugh because because we've been rehearsing it for about four or five weeks and - we've forgotten it was funny! We had forgotten it was funny and then then you hear people laughing and you think 'oh I didn't realise that was a funny bit maybe it's a funny bit' and so that's that's lovely. I think the costume designs been really interesting I think we're all in kind of grey and black and I think they've again they've tried to get different styles for all of us so we represent all different kinds, well we do, as people represent the whole of Womanhood anyway it's really lovely that that the costumes are so modern and I think it makes it accessible for younger audience members as well and you know we're still we're still playing the time if it was set in like 4th century BC but we're still in modern costumes so all the principals have got their you know suits on getting ready for Jason and Glauke's wedding and and that's it just makes it yeah it just makes it more fun and more and more accessible for maybe some school kids that come along and see the show.

MEDEA | LIZ LOCHEAD

Graham McLaren then of Theatre Babel, who was a director, who was very keen on doing modern versions of classic plays. He had a project on, which was called The Greeks, and he was doing three great Greek plays and he was persuading me like mad to write Medea and I didn't say yes right away because I didn't think it was necessary. There were several really wonderful English versions of Medea, a fairly recent one that I'd really, you know, enjoyed reading and so I said 'no you don't need.... do that version, that's a terrific version and that would be great for the company' and he said 'no I know there's a Medea in you Liz, you've got to do it' and he nagged me he was a he's a good friend so he nagged and nagged and nagged like mad and he didn't have any success until he said to me something that already chimed in with something that I'd already read about the actual Greeks that they told the stories in different ways they made up different versions of the stories depending on their own purposes in that particular play. And so he said, Graham said to me, Graham McLaren said 'you can do anything you want - you can change anything you like about it', you know, and so I thought 'oh right', because there was something in the original play that didn't, it didn't hurt my heart when I read it which was that he had Medea getting a kind of escape route for herself after doing the terrible thing she does in his original the King of Athens and Aegeus comes to her Island wanting spells for infertility so I suppose there was a lot of irony going on in that because he got Medea to give him spells to make his wife his wife fertile so that there could be an ongoing thing in his line and she was already, not telling him this, planning to maybe end her line in her life and, you know, she was going to be able to escape to Athens after doing that, and I didn't that didn't strike me as why Medea was doing it, I didn't think, I just didn't like that thing about it because however old people are, whether or not it's Mary Queen of Scots you know in 1500 and whatever it was or whatever, once I'm writing about them they're just human beings and I've got to find the truth of what they're doing for myself and tell myself what are they doing and why are they doing it and I just thought I don't want to have Medea have an escape route and in fact I decided I would probably put a wee fill into the play by making her after she's had her first thing that makes the chorus think that she must punish Jason 'punish him for us Medea' they say, 'punish him' and she is exhausted at that point and says maybe I should leave the children here with their parents and at that point I had the princess who's just about to marry Jason, Medea's husband, coming in to try and make peace and try and make things better and of course she makes things much worse and makes Medea determined to do it. It means it's not a pure pure version of the Greek play which I mean Greek plays they start and they just bullet to the end in a sort of so this was a sort of a risk in a way but I really enjoyed writing Glauke in as well and I liked how that made Medea having she hadn't actually decided to leave her children with the husband but she was exhausted and thinking she might and that firmed her up. But really I started to do it because Graham McLaren said 'you can change anything you like' and that made me want to do it.

So I worked quite hard last spring on Michael's notes usually doing something that had come up because of these notes but not exactly what he'd said sometimes exactly what he said I'd go 'of course' like at the beginning I realised I had to tell a bit more of what Jason had done because in the original - this is just a silly wee example - she's persuaded them to kill their father and I realised that when Euripides did this play all that while ago everybody would have known what Jason had done they would have known that he went and you know got the Golden Fleece and so on so I had to bump up that but it had to not sound as if the nurse was telling it to fill us in - of course she was that's a function of it - but it had to come from her heart and I just wanted... so I bumped up the amount of scorn that she had for adventurers and um so that speech got a bit longer and that had to be a bit in Scots it's only about six or seven lines but they took a couple of weeks different versions of them trying to get them right so it was very different working on something that was nearly right before we went into rehearsal so so I wasn't in rehearsal very much except invited in a couple of times you know Michael would if something came up he would not hesitate to you know tell me what the problem was and had it been a brand new play I would probably have been in for the first week or

something like that but even then probably not much beyond it but I could see with the tiny amounts of time that I was in like at the read-through how Michael's approach is absolutely the right one - he takes these words and digs deep makes the actors dig deeply into why do they say that at that moment? What's moving them to do it? And actors have to ask themselves those kind of questions anyway but it's good if they've got a director pushing them in the right direction which Michael certainly does and also stopping them from going in the wrong direction that's another key thing.

All good stories are relevant all the time, you know, you know it doesn't... things don't have to be about what's going on in Ukraine today to be telling us because the Greeks knew everything that's going on in Ukraine today you know already you know that the war plays like Thebans, you know, deal with all that sort of stuff and this one is so interesting because this man Euripides to an all male audience wrote this woman some great arguments there's a terrific argument near the beginning the chorus expect her to be crazy but she comes out and very logically tells him how unfair it is to be a woman and to have to have your father sell you in a dowry and how at that point you will be under your husband's... you know, she just describes all this and Euripides did this for an all-male audience you know 400 years or 500 years before Christ whatever the point is in time and he wrote an amazing female character and that's why Graham will have picked me to do the Medea version of it so I wouldn't say it is in any way a feminist version because the original play is a feminist version of Medea and I faithfully followed that really and we don't know exactly how the Greeks performed the chorus, well we know there was a kind of gang of people doing it and they partly sang and they partly danced, they kind of represent the audience in some ways but they also are individuals who don't know how the story is going to end and who are arguing for it to go their way and for you know this terrible thing that they hear that Medea is going to do everybody wants this not to happen and that's what I felt very strongly watching it this summer in Edinburgh how very very strongly it really hurt the whole audience that these beautiful three children - there were two teams of them playing them - that it broke your heart that she might do this thing as it breaks her heart as well so it's the story of, in Greek tragedies people make terrible choices and there's no getting back from the awful consequences that occur from them but it's relevant because people nowadays have to go through these kind of things for a start you know and at one point in the play Medea talks about getting the children ready to go to her husband's wedding to the new wife well I've had friends I've had to do that you know had to dress up their kids for the second husband's wedding and they found it hard and - it's not something I've experienced myself in any way - but we all live in a world where some terrible things happen and still to this day people kill their children under terrible circumstances. It was quite thrilling to see the play come to life because it's a play you can't do without a perfect Medea and I've had two wonderful Medeas doing them at two different points of my life it would be impossible to do it without somebody who was willing to play an outsider in a very closed society a quite small society it's not Scotland and although some of the language I use has got a Scots tinge to it, well why not?, I wrote it originally for a Scottish theatre company and it's just been done by a Scottish theatre company the National Theatre of Scotland so why shouldn't it sound Scottish in some ways. Not that it's set in Scotland or anything like that it's set in the islands that Euripides set it in but it's about an outsider who has come to this society who don't completely accept her so 22 years ago the wonderful Maureen Beatty played her as a Eastern European refugee and the wonderful Adura Onashile played her as an asylum seeker it wouldn't have worked had we not had an extraordinary Medea and then an extraordinary cast to put around them.

I thought it would be really good to see that Jason for all his faults does love his children so I put a sort of mad little intervention happen in a funny bit of the play but I'd been given courage for that by the the kind of the big intervention of having Glauke his new bride be part of the cast. In the original play there are two women, there's this nurse figure and in fact there might be more than one nurse figure I think in the original these people that are servants they've got a function and they've still got a function in my version you know the the nurse has this job of bringing you up to date with what's been happening where are we now in this story? and what's about to happen? and we see a human being who's terrified - she loves these children she's really sorry for her mistress and she feels quite

rightly because she's old and experienced that disaster is about to overtake the whole house and that'll probably you know it can kill them all if anything so she's terrified for herself you know whereas when I read the original versions or the many of the versions of Medea these servants would be just kind of supernumeraries just fulfilling the function I wanted them to fulfill the function of telling the story so far but also to be people that were going through it and so it became for me this time very much about the Powerful and the Powerless so that the nurse at the beginning who is terrified she was absolutely brilliant and she was a human being but she was a human being she was fearful but she had no power to change anything and the last words that she has in the play are 'I canna' because the manservant wishes her to run away with them, he doesn't think they'll succeed, he thinks they'll succeed.

be you know hunted down by soldiers and killed but they have to try and run and she says 'I canna' and that's been her position through the play she's been powerless to do anything else but bear witness to the state of Medea she has not stopped Medea she's been asked by Medea to go in and get the terrible weapons too and she's not said anything so plays are about writing things you know writing big speeches for people to do and speeches aren't about speaking they're about action but that nurse made no action she stopped and resisted in silence for a moment but obeyed her mistress knowing what was going to happen. The manservant I think in the original was probably a tutor and a manservant there's probably three or four who fulfill different parts of the play I decided to have one person going right through and make him a person he's at first kind of younger than the nurse and very masculine kind of slightly patronising to her calling her auld yin and things like that and but in the end he has to bear witness to the terrible thing and tell us, tell himself in front of us the story of what he saw and then try to flee - these are people without power, Medea has got no power to change her husband's mind and make him love her again and not marry but she has power she's a terrible power she has a power that's terrifying even to her and it does terrify her but she does it as some people still do you know do do this thing it's completely unnatural but it sometimes happens so it was a thrilling play to get asked to do but once I was doing it I was just writing human beings you know working on why is this person saying this just now nobody should ever I mean there's loads of words in this but there shouldn't be any extra that people don't have to say you know that's how the Greek plays work things the really terrible violent incidents happen behind closed doors or somewhere else and are reported and all the more powerful for that probably I think so.

MEDEA | TOM PIPER

It's interesting normally on a production I would do a lot more research I think in a way because this is such a sort of primal play and it's a response to Liz's writing and Euripides original concept that a lot of the research I was doing was not very specific it was about things like textures and responding to the room that we're in so initial designs were looking at a blue kind of world that responded to the blue that's in this room and so I was looking at you know metal container ships and thinking about refugees and containers and shipping and kind of the journey that they've been on and almost Medea is an outsider that's that sort of come into this world so I did look at quite a lot of sort of images of of refugees and of that kind of world but then increasingly started thinking more about the world of King Kreon the world that she's in and that in a way it's a sort of it's a world of male power we're also I get the feeling or in it in this my own personal thing that it's sort of slightly in decay you know and and that and that he's not and therefore there was something about you know the industrial heritage of Scotland and using metal and rusted metal that felt kind of quite interesting there's a symbol both have quite kind of masculine robust sort of powerful structures but also something that's sort of like on the turn and beginning to beginning to rust so in the sense that's how we've ended up with a kind of rusty version of the design rather than a kind of bright blue one We've always felt that the walkway is a very important element of the design in terms of there's a sense in the piece of Medea her world, her doorway, into her house and then the outside world that everybody comes from so King Kreon, Jason and Glauke they all come from the palace and we never see the palace it's just sort of over there and so that route in is very and the dynamic of that and the long entrances of somebody of power arriving to Medea who was once powerful but is now powerless felt very sort of important so there's a lot in the design that you wouldn't think of necessarily as the kind of what design does but what it's trying to do is shape the way that the characters interact in the space so creating these long entrances which sort of create these kind of standoffs and also because of the height it's at and the nature it kind of almost feels like a fashion catwalk as well so there's a sense of strutting there's a sense of showing off there's also the sense of the characters being aware of the audience too so when King Kreon comes on and he kind of goes I'm not a tyrant he's actually looking at everybody in the audience as our subjects and going you know I'm not a tyrant I'm not going to behave badly I'll give her a second chance so the kind of the design is helping to do that and that's one of the sort of things that I guess people don't realise about about what design does it's not just about a pretty picture or setting it you know in a particular world it's about shaping a space that the actors will interact in and how the dynamics kind of work within that space so one of the tools the designer has obviously I I do a lot of sketches and so in my process initially I had photographs of the venue and then I would be sketching over the top of them on an iPad and sort of trying out lots of ideas so that was how I kind of tried out blue versions I tried gold versions and gradually moved into this more rusty aesthetic and then the other sort of big tool that we use is to create models in this case a 1 to 50 versions normally it's 1 to 25 but also like a person is sort of that high and so that's a really useful tool for seeing how in three dimensions the set kind of fits in the in the space and how it's going to work and then that's also something that I then take to the scenic artists along with references so there's a sort of sense of how the the paint finish wants to be in the model but then I also bring kind of references of other rusted metal and then work with them they create samples for me so that you'll kind of try out on a piece you know it's these the right kind of rust tones that you want and how what kind of pattern because you know I mean actually there's lots of different versions of rust so everyone goes oh you know you become a slight connoisseur of rust as if it's a designer like me but so um so that kind of the model has been really useful from that but but it's just a kind of tool on the way towards the set so for me it's a thing that I do for discussion with other people and then you work on the real thing and you put the model to one side and go right now let's see how it works in real life under the real lights and what do we need to do to make it work.

This space, the Hub, I would say it's quite a challenging space I don't know who the architect or interior designer was but basically they've taken this gothic church and created some very bold design

decisions within it so the walls are actually hiding very useful acoustic absorbent material so actually it's acoustic space it's brilliant so I mean that is great from a design point of view that you know that you don't have to mic your actors and that they can talk around the room and talk to everybody so that that's that's a fantastic gift of the space but there's a lot of very bright blue there's some strange sort of diamond shaped patterns on the walls there's a balcony front that's been painted a kind of mustardy cream colour so there's a lot of different colours and textures and for a long time in the design I was trying to respond to the gothic nature of the space and the pillars in the set I was originally going to do as black pillars like the pillars that are here and then what gradually happened is I felt A. I didn't really feel very interesting to be doing that just to be copying the kind of the room and so but I wanted to still respond to the proportions of the room so the walls line up with the balcony the pillars line up with the pillars in the room so the proportions of the piece of the set so sit within it and then interestingly the rust colour sits quite well between the kind of purple of the curtains the kind of mustard colour of other bits and and so that kind of works so it's both sits within the space and it looks like it's meant to be there but it's also different from it so that's so hopefully as an audience you're kind of clear oh this is the world of the play that I'm looking at and this is the world of the kind of the audience so what you have in the set is a it's a kind of rusty metal box effectively with walls that kind of line up with the balcony fronts of of the building and then it's raised about a meter 20 off the ground so that the standing audience on two sides is the walkway that runs right through the middle of it and then the audience is split into two groups on either side and so that means that the audience will always are always aware of each other as well which I think is a kind of important thing it's not the kind of show where like you know a woman called traditional theatre where you are you are a blank fourth wall looking through a proscenium arch it's very much a kind of an environment where we're all sharing the stories together and they're also the audience up on the balcony and some seated around the back as well so hopefully there'll be this sort of wall of people and faces filling that whole thing and then the walkway running through the middle of it creates this very kind of dynamic kind of entrance through and then there's a one small door which is the kind of route out into her house so that's where Medea goes that's where she kills the children we never see that so that's always the kind of Greek tragedy thing that you don't actually see that and you don't see her effect on Glauke when she sends the poison Crown so all of that happens off stage then it's reported back and you know past the power of that you know you do get the shock of Jason comes out covered in blood when Medea comes out covered in blood so you get that visceral impact that you know that they have that they've you know Jason has been cradling his dying children Medea has killed them so you see that but you don't kind of see the violence and in a way that's hopefully kind of more powerful than than seeing it itself and then the other big intervention you have in the spaces with Colin Grenfell's work who is the Lighting Designer and so obviously Colin's developed a whole rig of lights for the show and did a lot of pre-work about how to make sure that you don't blind the audience you know so you can still see the actors but the audience are looking out and they don't get kind of blinded so he's got us this strip of LED lights that run all the way down so you get a strong the lights are as much almost part of the design and the architecture of them that kind of run down and then he's also got this massive light that's outside the doors that the audience come in through and the way to the outside world and we've used that for the entrance of the king his daughter Jason to all the kind of people coming from the palace the kind of so in a way that brings both a naturalistic sense that it's kind of a bright shiny day out there but also the sense of power of this character coming in bringing this light in light in with him and that's quite a sort of brutal light it's quite hard for the actors to work with but because it really does go into your eyes but it also and it also for me exposes every last crease on any costume or anything so it's again it's like a catwalk and that's something that Michael the director is very kind of passionate about is that you know actually really focusing in on the actors and on the story and in a sense that's what I feel the design should be doing is or any design should be doing it should be creating a focused charged space within the performance that enables the actors to tell their story as clearly and as powerfully as possible and and you're supporting that but you're not illustrating it or getting in the way of it but then also I've responded to the colours in the palette of the costume so for example the people who kind of live in the palace kind of world so Glauke and who's the daughter of Kreon it's the morning of her wedding in the play so she's not yet in a wedding dress

but she's in a very nice blue satin dress and her hair is sort of elegantly done and Medea calls her sort of like she was like a bit of fluff that she can kind of blow away and but there is that sense of the kind of young woman coming into this world and sort of being very sort of self-conscious but aware of her impact so she comes in bringing that blue colour in and the same with Jason his wedding suit is blue and then Medea we've been on an interesting journey of her costume colour in the initially tried various dresses with Adura that were kind of in colour and things like that and then interestingly Michael saw her wearing a kind of black outfit in one of the photoshoots when someone came into film rehearsals and felt that was sort of had a stronger edge to to the character so we found a dress that kind of works for that and then the chorus are also in monochrome in blacks and greys so there are moments when Medea kind of joins hands with the chorus and it's almost like they become a kind of you know a monochrome kind of mass of kind of women or enraged and angry about the injustices of the world so she sort of and that black still stands out against the the rust colours of the set so I've used sort of that colour sort of there so there are lots of decisions that the building are unconsciously or consciously I'm kind of responding to in in the kind of colour palette with an audience actually even recognises that I know I'm not sure but that's what I'm doing behind the scenes.

So the National Theatre of Scotland has a very strong sustainability ethic that was very much come in under the pandemic and people have been working on for long time called the green book and that's all about basically trying to be as sustainable as possible in a production so for this one we've uh basically tried to source reclaimed materials so all of the girders that you can see they're actually wooden and they were in a previous production and they've been made and adapted by the Citizens Theatre Workshop and then the steel floor is actually real steel kind of plate because I like that kind of truth to materials and you can feel it and also because the audience are literally leaning on the on the set you know that it has to be real so that you know they can see that it's actually real rust on the metal but that's been screwed down and glued with special glue that means we can peel it all off and and and reuse it another time the backs of the flat edges all come from Perth so this bit and the set has been painted by the Lyceum Workshop so there's been a kind of cross Scotland kind of collaboration of lots of different craft skills and sourcing materials for different places so that has been really useful and then all of the decking that we're sitting on that's all called steel deck and that gets recycled all the time so we're trying to be as um as green as possible and then as a designer I'm thinking ahead of well actually if this show doesn't isn't stored and they and they just want to get rid of it at the end then actually it's material here that I can use for future productions in Scotland maybe you know so look out for some rusty metal popping up somewhere else in Scottish theatre maybe in a few years time who knows.

That the people you're dealing with in the play mainly are the aristocrats and there's a couple of characters the nurse and the serving man who kind of reports about that often talk about their lowly status in relation to the and how they don't have the same high-powered emotions that the aristocratic people have and so there's something quite interesting about you know making a kind of a world in the audience of the kind of the Groundlings who are regarded as the kind of you know the ordinary people and then slightly raised above them are these characters so there's sort of a deliberate decision there and then also being able to sort of hide your chorus within the audience so initially the first few lines of chorus have they kind of emerge from the audience they're going to have little stools that they bring with them and then they can stand up and kind of appear of head height above the people around them so that you know hopefully I mean people will probably notice that there are these people who are coming in carrying little stools it seems like strange and you know it's Edinburgh Festival so you know people might arrive with a stool to watch a promenade show but then and then they kind of emerge out of the audience and other types of people go through it it's a kind of really powerful kind of image I think of the the thrust going through the middle and then because we've got the balcony as well that gives the opportunity for you know people to look down and it's great for the actors that for their eye line you know they're looking sometimes they're looking down and then they also look up so it gives them the kind of whole room to kind of relate to you know as a designer as you go on in your career you're sort of expected to do bigger and bigger shows so like I've done big

operas down the road as well so that's a big full-on piece with you know 2000 people watching, this is much more intimate 300 people or something and and I really love working at this scale because for me that kind of human connection is what theatres about.

MEDEA | MICHAEL BOYD

The first really big thing was just to be really reminded in a lovely way how strong Liz's writing was, particularly the powerful, lyrical poetry of pain, unsentimental, unself-pitying ability of Liz Lochhead, the poet to capture human suffering in words in a way that was neither mawkish nor self-pitying nor melodramatic just true.

We literally, we sought the rhythms in Liz Lochhead the poet in her language we found them and we celebrated them and that was a, a way of all the chorus vocally holding hands and and staying together and that produced some lovely stuff and at the other end we would do something that solved the problem that the rhythmic speaking sometimes caused which was it sounded a bit impersonal so at the other end we would we would say right okay we'll take it in turns for there to be a lead speaker and so literally I would choose someone sometimes democratically sometimes because I like the way they were doing it, to do a line and then get everyone to just copy that line. You know a lot of acting is mimicry and so it's quite fun actually just to be mimics and so you've got all these wildly different women from mid 70s down to tiny early 20s, hearing impaired, sight impaired, all being one person and that produced some very interesting things I might just am I really going to be just mimicking all the way through this I'm not sure as an actor that that's really fulfilling for me so it was a dance between you are an individual within this chorus and I would like you to find out as we go who you are and what your distinct thing is, your your age, your attitude, some of you are mothers, some of you are not, some of you are on your own some of you are with partners, some of you are recently split up whatever technically we're going to achieve at the same time we're behaving like the Berlin Symphonic Orchestra.

For the chorus as a group, everybody knowing that we had to support Bea- hearing impaired in a vocal chorus hello and visually impaired actress it kind of you was a unifying thing taking it in turns to to be with Brooke the sight impaired actress as we went around the stage because I wanted a very mobile chorus not static, going upstairs onto a very high stage with dangerous edges and all and it was stupid but in a funny way it stopped the chorus fragmenting in some ways it was it was really it was really useful as well as being very powerful in their own right things you just you became aware of the tradition in Greek tragedy of unsighted people being gifted with other sight and insight whether it's Tiresias or Oedipus after he's been blinded or whatever there's a lot there's a strong line of of blind people in Greek tragedy who have great vision and of course the, the kind of embodied vigour of sign language was a great gift also to the chorus it it gave another aspect to them with Bea's tremendously expressive signing so it was a mixture of a moral exercise a technical exercise and the same trial and error exercise that I was doing with the principal actors.

I don't know what I'm doing when I'm casting because I haven't rehearsed it I don't know so in a way you've got certain hunches that you're going to go with but it may be that that hunch requires a certain kind of person that you can't find but meantime you find this genius other person that contradicts that hunch then you go do you trust your hunch or do you go with something that actually is gorgeous and what might lead you in an interesting direction somewhere else so that's part of the process is being open even at the audition stage of, of changing direction slightly the process for instance with Robbie Jack who played the very very difficult part of Jason it's a difficult part in Euripides and I think even harder in Liz's version because Liz has quite properly celebrated the, the sort of feminist satirical aspect of it and there were there was a danger for me of of Jason being just a patsy just a sort of cartoon misogynist man and I met Robbie Jack here in interview and mucked around with some speeches with him and I thought yes thank you very much you're great. I felt I needed Robbie to someone as as sharp and bright as Robbie to weave into the character of Jason. More sort of credibility and authority and and humanity. I thought we had the ability in the the nuance and the virtuosity to pull that off and that's true and interestingly in rehearsals Robbie and I pursued that line of right we're gonna we're gonna try and make Jason as human as possible so that we

believe Medea might have fallen in love with him and so that we don't just as men in the audience go that's not me I wanted us to feel uncomfortable in the audience which meant that Jason had to be someone that we might not if not identify with but at least not easily dismiss and we push that and push that and push that and we got as far as we could with that and we were still stuck and in the end I also needed Robbie's comic virtuosity, his ability to just have fun with a character and play with his comic awfulness, so that was unexpected but it's a real lesson to a director about auditioning it wasn't just Robbie's intelligence and ability to be serious that I wanted, I knew I also wanted it's almost like a redundancy I wanted capacity in him for I knew not what, skills so that in rehearsal we could go this way that way that way you, you want someone who you can go in different directions with and I felt that about Robbie and it proved to be utterly true and he completely pulled it off. Adura, I cast Adura because she was the first artist who brought together for me the suffering, the humanity, the humour, the the witch and and the authority the kind of class actually and not in British sense of class but sort of authority. What she also brought was the fact that she's a Nigerian British Artist based in Glasgow and therefore vividly dramatised the aspect of Medea being an outsider. She brought utter empathy to Medea a thing that a lot of actors would say no to playing Medea for would be but she's she's a night she kills her children. Adura had the courage to take the role on and to go I think I can take the audience with this woman about where she's pushed to and there there comes a point in Medea's journey where, yes she's of course she's pushed and the the world is has damaged her and it's still inexcusable what she does and it's still extraordinary and appalling.

What is she like at that moment, what what has the damage done to her, turned her into, it's turned her into someone quite sick and someone quite dangerous and and allowing Adura and encouraging Adura to show that pain is not good for you, pain corrupts you and that she it does become corrupted Medea, to being capable and deluded to the extent that thinking killing her children would be a solution, and I think that was something that Adura had to confront and she did with great courage.

Where should we play it and how do you how do you stage this thing the and the big question is because there's this chorus which is a really big part of it it's is it what is the chorus is it partly us, the audience well if it is it's only if your like half of us because it's a chorus of women and Greek choruses weren't always choruses of women at all normally they were mixed, yeah they were the the citizens giving the sort of popular response and the chorus was genuinely a character in Greek tragedy because it it wasn't this perfect voice of truth of the people, no it was a fickle mob sometimes and I wanted to be able to physically embody the relationship between the chorus and the and the protagonists, the main characters and it really felt to me that the chorus should come from out of us, have an attitude to half of us i.e the men but it's a female voice and I, I kind of needed in my head a fluidity, a dynamic fluidity between audience and stage.

I wasn't excited by the idea of a bank of people stage left or a bank of people stage right going Medea, I I couldn't I couldn't get excited about that they are different kinds of women come together to talk about the unfairness to women in the world so they I I felt it was quite important they had an objective presence and also I thought it was very important to the for our understanding of Medea's journey that we were invited to look at misogyny and inequality so I wanted them to have their own objective life they're not just some subjective inside her head thing and that was best expressed for me by them being from amongst us and then coming and and being part of the action in extremists when they felt they had to come on stage.

Another major feature of the play for me was that it was a series in some ways a series of two-handed battles and I felt a desire to create the main street at the okay corral, the western shootout where you you literally, if you're going to go through this street you've got to get past me and so whether it's husband and wife fighting it out or whether it's the king and Medea fighting it out, or whether it's Medea and her rival Glauke fighting it out. It felt like I could create maximum tension on a relatively narrow long stage going through the audience, with the audience able to watch and be

the equivalent of the people cowering in The Saloon bar behind the window and not wanting to get a stray shot .

Right at the beginning Medea goes from a hero to zero, from being someone celebrated and maybe slightly feared to being someone, banished and treated like filth really, extraordinary plummeting that that can happen to the celebrated incomer, the abuse of power and the consequences of the abuse of power whether that's male power or political power. Kreon is a study in tyranny he's human, he's very human, he loves his daughter, he's funny, he's quite charming and he's vicious and he's pragmatic as well you know he's honest, I'm afraid of you, I'm banishing you and I'll kill you if you don't do what I'm telling you to do and I say these things because I can because I'm powerful and I I will not put up with being afraid of anyone.

I spent a lot of effort in the rehearsals creating a seamless line of tension and pressure so that there was sort of no escape hole for the audience or the characters on the journey to destruction so in a way, I, I kind of worked against the idea of key points but I guess there are key points that we tried to crystallise one key point was very near the beginning King Kreon's decision first of all to banish Medea and then to threaten her with death if she didn't leave after a day, her and her children that was that's a key closing of the space for Medea to give her fewer options another key point might be of Liz's creation where she created a completely new scene where where Medea confronts the new bride to be of the next bride of Jason the Princess Glauke who is off stage in the original and I think a flash point that Liz created was Glauke claiming at least and it I believe it, that she was pregnant with Jason's child, that is a moment, that's an emotional flash point for Medea, and and certainly in the text she you know she says that Glauke had condemned herself out of her own mouth but in fact the day had been planning to destroy her perhaps before that even.

Then there's a sort of very much a theatrical one when she's sending the kids off with these poisoned presents, it's a very poignant moment sending the kids down the long Runway of set to take the poison veil and the poison crown to the wedding feast for Glauke that will kill her- horribly and Jason in an almost hitchcocky moment goes stop children as they're going off to the wedding and it goes we this is you this is too generous you don't need to do this and she manages to persuade him, no no please I really want it to make peace and he caves in, for us we know that those presents are poisoned so for us that's a key, that's an if only moment, if only they hadn't gone so much of the pressures on the story on the play on the journey of Medea so much is set going before the play which doesn't mean it feels like a predictable boat race you still feel, you still feel, no no no don't do it but there there is that horrible momentum of a boulder rolling down a hill, so I suppose the key points of potential change in it are those moments where the boulder you think might be diverted that way or that.