

Jason and Medea

POSTMORTEM

Conceived and directed by
Enrique Pardo

Written in collaboration with
Francesco Scarpelli

Director's Programme Notes : *From Euripides to Bill Clinton*

VIDEO of the production

Return to <http://www.pantheatre.com>

Produced by

MIMANDIROSE ENSEMBLE

a company founded by Giovanna Lué and five actresses who worked and trained with Enrique Pardo from 1993 to 1998.

Subventioned by the Comune di Milano.

Created on November 12th 1998, at the CRT Milan

with Sara Luigina Donzelli, Claudia Dulitchi, Giovanna Lué, Elisabetta Pogliani, Antonietta Storch, Paola Zecca.

- *Dramaturgy*: Francesco Scarpelli.
- *Lights*: Alessio Rongione.
- *Scenography*: Nicola Quagliarella and Diego Taverni.
- *Music* from The Rolling Stones.

An edited video tape of the performance will be available. 50 minutes long (the performance is 75 minutes), in Italian. The performance is in Italian - we can forward an English translation by Charles Boer. For information contact PANTHEATRE.

The setting

A run-down parking lot in a Milan suburb. A caravan belonging to 6 nomad women recalls the charred remains of the Argo ship. The back of the stage is a dimly lit street where some of the women work as prostitutes. The stage floor is covered with scraps of black paper in an anachronistic reference to the Black Sea.

Programme Notes

There is an unhappy and violent ghost imprisoned in Medea's mythical grave. It has haunted opinions and ideologies through the ages, and is very active today. This performance is an exhumation that lets loose its contradicting voices and tries its hand at an updating POSTMORTEM. It calls on 8 conflicting witnesses:

1 - Euripides, "the inventor of soap opera" and the main culprit in this affair. He started it by downgrading Jason, the Athenian civic hero par excellence, the model of responsible political education, the future prime minister. The judges of Athenian tragedy were obviously outraged at what they saw as Euripides' sensationalism, and his defence (once again!) of foreign women. He got the last prize at the competition in 431 BC, and was stone-walled by the establishment. But, his Medea was (of course) an instant success in terms of gossip, and hit the covers of all the current Novellas 2000 glossy magazines. It became the most rewritten play in late antiquity.

2 - Apollonios of Rhodes, the Alexandrian author of the "Argonautica", tells the whole story from A to Z, including his version of the Medea affair, elaborating on all the gossip Euripides refers to: the travels, the meeting with Medea, the transactions, the many betrayals, the scenes of jealousy, etc. We meet a post-heroic Jason dealing quite successfully with his mission, but falling into deep trouble with the Colchian princess, whose magical help he accepts and without which he could not have succeeded.

3 - Seneca uses Euripides' Medea to build a massive negative case for his ideology: "Stay away from erotic passion!". His is a stoic's prosecution of Medea, and of women. His Medea is the ultimate negative queen of the night flying off in a dragon-drawn chariot, to "where there are no Gods" - certainly not Seneca's!

4 - Ovid's Medea is an enigma. In his Metamorphoses she is the Queen of Witches, but unfortunately Ovid's only tragedy - Medea - has been lost! A major Roman author is supposed to have said that he would give all of Seneca's tragedies for Ovid's Medea...

5 - Valerius Flaccus is a little known Latin author who wrote his version of the "Argonautica", exaggerating Apollonius' Alexandrian pastoral take. His Medea is an innocent and magical maiden, a kind of Lolita, who charms the old dragon out of his wits.

6 - Christa Wolf turns the whole affair upside down: she totally redeems Medea, pleading not guilty on all charges: no murder of her brother, no boiling of Peleas, no burning of the new bride, no infanticide, no jealousy! She opposes Seneca on all counts, and presents a contemporary feminist defence of Medea.

7 - Heiner Müller's Medea accuses her sons of being hypocritical little actors, before slitting their throats. Interestingly, both Müller and Christa Wolf lived in East Germany, the former communist GDR. One gets the feeling that Müller's Medea is a nihilistic allegory for the collapse of ideologies, while Christa Wolf tries to salvage some dream scraps of an utopian matriarchal communism.

8 - Bill Clinton. From the onset of this project - well before the revelations about Monica's blue dress, that can link up with Euripides' lethal dress, (the wedding dress with which Medea burns Glauce, Jason's new fiancée) - I declared that my idea of the contemporary Jason was Bill Clinton: not a hero (à la Kennedy or Eisenhower), but a much more clever, efficacious and ambitious politician, one who is truly concerned with dynamic social compromise. The Monica Lewinsky affair seems not to have any of the mythological passion of Jason and Medea, and Clinton, not unlike Jason, behaved like an immature teenager. But, the scandal corrodes a civic model, it degrades a politician and with him the notion and reality of politics.