

Greek Tragedy Monologue Suggestions for *Bacchae* (prepared by Dan Smith)

Since many of you are less familiar with Greek tragedy, I thought it might be helpful as the production dramaturg for this show to put together some resources. Director David Furumoto has stated that it's fine to choose material from *Bacchae*. We are using the Paul Woodruff translation, so it would be best to stick with that version. David's comments also suggest that he is interested in seeing movement. In Ancient Greece, the Chorus sang and danced. Many of the choral speeches have rhythms that might lend themselves to dance. Rhythm, movement, and musicality are also present in the Asian theatre forms that interest David. This production will use a presentational style of acting, so gestures that might seem like indicating in other contexts could be appropriate here. One other thought about presentation and gesture: this play was originally performed before an audience of approximately 17,000 people. Consider coming up with gestures that would be visible to a crowd of that size.

Sources for Translations

The MSU Library has a wealth of English-language translations of Greek tragedies. Your best bets for translators are Paul Woodruff, Anne Carson, and Grene & Latimore. You'll be able to find some archaic-sounding translations at The Perseus Project:

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/collection?collection=Perseus:collection:Greco-Roman>

You'll want to look at Aeschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles. Since *Bacchae* is by Euripides, you might find his style the most compelling.

General Suggestions and Suggestions by Role

You are likely to have the most fun with Messenger speeches and Choral speeches/songs. These will also allow the most scope for movement and presentational expression of emotion. You won't have time to do a whole Messenger speech or a whole Choral speech, so cut judiciously. There are appropriately gory Messenger speeches in *Hippolytus* and *Medea*. The Choral entry song on pp. 3-7 of *Bacchae* gives a sense of the tone and would be appropriate to pull from. I think 20-30 lines would be about right. Lines 60-88; 89-118; 105-134; or 135-166 could all be good cuttings. For similar Choruses, I'd suggest *Medea* and *Eumenides*.

For those interested in the role of Dionysus, I would look at gods and demigods: Aphrodite in *Hippolytus*; Athena in *Eumenides*; Prometheus in *Prometheus Bound*, Herakles in *Philoctetes* or *Alcestis*, etc. For speeches from *Bacchae*, I'd suggest a cutting from his opening monologue on pp. 1-3. Lines 1-6 and 10-42 would make a good cutting, or lines 43-63. Dionysus also has a good speech on p. 35, lines 847-861.

Pentheus is a tyrant, but he is also young. Oedipus or Creon in Sophocles's *Oedipus the King* and *Antigone* would hit the tyrant notes. Jason in *Medea* might be a better direction, given his rage against women. Hippolytus in *Hippolytus* or Haemon in *Antigone* could also work.

If you are interested in the role of Tiresias, that specific character shows up in other plays including *Oedipus* and *Antigone*. A possible analogue for Cadmus would be Aegeus in *Medea* or Theseus in *Hippolytus*.

Agave's monologue on p. 49 (lines 1202-1215) could work well as an audition piece. Medea in *Medea*, Jocasta in *Oedipus*, or Creusa in *Ion* could be good places to look for material for this role.