

2012 Suggestions for Teaching *Medea/Macbeth/Cinderella* from the plays by Euripides, Shakespeare and Rodgers and Hammerstein, adapted by Bill Rauch and Tracy Young

Before seeing/reading the play

Medea/Macbeth/Cinderella was created out of Director and Adapter Bill Rauch's desire to
explore what he considered the three great populist movements in western drama. What
is populism, and how does it relate to Greek tragedy, Elizabethan drama, and the
American Musical? These and other websites provide information:

http://www.osfashland.org/browse/production.aspx?prod=237 (click 'video')

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Populism

http://ablemedia.com/ctcweb/netshots/tragedy.htm

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabethan theatre

http://www.theatrehistory.com/american/musicalo30.html

2. Research the life and career of Euripides. Read a synopsis or the full text of his tragedy, *Medea*. Who are Medea and Jason in Greek mythology? What is the Legend of the Golden Fleece? These and other websites provide information:

http://www.theatrehistory.com/ancient/euripidesoo1.html

http://www.theatrehistory.com/ancient/bateso18.html

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medea

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jason

3. Read a synopsis or the full text of William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Who are the major characters and what are the prominent themes? These and other websites provide information:

http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/macbeth

4. Research the folk tale *Cinderella*. What other variations of the plotline are there? What themes are found within every version of the *Cinderella* story? This and other websites provide information:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cinderella http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/typeo510a.html#jacobs

5. How did Rodgers and Hammerstein influence the evolution of the American musical? These and other websites provide information:

http://www.pbs.org/wnet/broadway/hello/elements.html http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rodgers and Hammerstein

- 6. What is treason? What is betrayal? What are the differences between the two? What are the similarities?
- 7. Define ambition. In what ways is it both positive and negative? What would you be willing to do to achieve your ambitions? How far would you be willing to go?
- 8. Define fate. Define free will. Make the case that life is governed by fate, then that is governed by free will. In what ways can life be governed by both?
- 9. Define madness. What can drive one to madness? Is madness curable? Justifiable? Why or why not?
- 10. What is the purpose of a ghost light? What are some of the superstitions associated with them? This and other websites provide information: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghost_light_(theatre)

Other Resources

Books

Medea by Euripides

Greek Tragedy by T. F. Gould, C. J. Herington (eds).

Macbeth by William Shakespeare

The Sound of their Music: The Story of Rodgers & Hammerstein by Frederick Nolan.

Film

Rodger's and Hammerstein's *Cinderella* starring Julie Andrews (1957) Rodger's and Hammerstein's *Cinderella* starring Lesley Ann Warren (1965) Rodger's and Hammerstein's *Cinderella* starring Brandy (1997)

After seeing/reading the play

- 1. Refer to your research on Greek tragedy, Elizabethan drama and the American musical.

 How has Greek tragedy influenced the different forms of theatre that have followed it?

 How has Elizabethan drama influenced the American musical?
- 2. What words would you use to describe the world of *Medea*? The world of *Macbeth*? The world of *Cinderella*? Are there any words that might be used for all three? How might you describe the play *Medea/Macbeth/Cinderella* as one entity?
- 3. How does each story support the others in *Medea/Macbeth/Cinderella*? Give examples of moments in each story that echoed in one or both of the others. When are characters from one story aided by characters from another and when are they thwarted by others?
- 4. Compare Medea, Macbeth and Cinderella. In what ways are these characters similar? In what ways are they different? What sort of relationships does each have with their families? With the wider world? Which of them are treated unjustly and why? Which of them treat others unjustly and why? How are they each punished or rewarded because of their actions?
- 5. What is the central conflict for Medea? For Macbeth? For Cinderella? Decide which character you feel has the greatest challenge to overcome and explain why. What actions does each take to address his/her problems? Who makes the wisest decisions? Who doesn't?
- 6. The Nurse in *Medea* says, "Good never comes from overreaching." Each story *Medea, Macbeth* and *Cinderella* has ambition as a theme. What does ambition cause the characters in these stories to do? What are the effects of ambition? Who is negatively affected by ambition in these stories? Who is positively affected?

- 7. What does marriage mean for the characters in *Medea*? In *Macbeth*? In *Cinderella*? What are the benefits of marriage for the characters in all three plays? The disadvantages? Which marriages appear to be the most successful? The least successful?
- 8. Describe the relationship between Medea and Jason, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth and Cinderella and the Prince. Who has the most power in these relationships? Where does his or her power come from? How does he or she use power? When, if ever, do the dynamics of power change in these relationships?
- 9. Compare the portrayal of women in the three plays. Where does their power come from? How do they wield their power? How much influence do they ultimately have over their lives? How much influence do they have over others?
- 10. Compare Jason, Macbeth and the Prince. How are they similar? Different? How are these men regarded by the women in their lives? How much are their actions influenced by women? By ambition? By love?
- 11. What do children represent in the world of the plays? How does Medea use her children? Why is Banquo's son Fleance a threat to Macbeth? Why is it important for the Stepmother in Cinderella to have her daughters marry well? Why is it important to the King and Queen that the Prince marries?
- 12. Who is loyal in *Medea* and who is he/she loyal to? In *Macbeth*? In *Cinderella*? What are the rewards, or costs, for loyalty? What are the costs for disloyalty?
- 13. Make the case that Medea commits treason. Make the case that she does not. How do her actions compare with those of Macbeth's treasonous ones? How does each justify his or her actions?
- 14. How does Medea treat King Creon? How is King Duncan treated in *Macbeth*? How does the Queen treat the King in *Cinderella*? Which king receives the most respect? The least? How does the attitude towards authority differ between *Medea*, *Macbeth* and *Cinderella*?
- 15. The Nurse in *Medea* says, "Ruthless is the temper of royalty." How is royalty represented in *Medea/Macbeth/Cinderella*? In which play does royalty appear to have the most influence? Which story presents a good king? What qualities does this king possess?

- 16. Make the argument that Medea was fated to murder her children, Macbeth to murder King Duncan and Cinderella to go to the ball. Make the argument that these actions were undertaken freely, without volition, by the characters. How might free will and fate have combined to play a role in these character's actions and decisions?
- 17. What is the role of the supernatural in all of these plays? What is the role of fortune, or luck? Who has good luck? Bad luck? Who makes his or her own luck by his or her actions?
- 18. Medea, Macbeth and Cinderella all have guides that influence their actions. Who are the guides for each of these characters? What do these guides provide? How are the guides helpful? How are the guides destructive? Who is most influenced by his or her guide? Who is the least influenced?
- 19. In what ways are Medea, the three witches and the Fairy Godmother similar? Different? How are these characters distinct from the other characters in their stories? Which characters' actions or words have the greatest impact on their individual story? On the overall play?
- 20. How are the characters in all of these stories affected by conscience? Who goes against his or her better judgment in *Medea*? In *Macbeth*? In *Cinderella*? What are the results?
- 21. Lady Macbeth advises Macbeth to "look like the innocent flower/but be the serpent under it." How is the idea that reality can be hidden by appearances explored in *Macbeth*? How does this idea echo throughout *Medea* and *Cinderella*? Who presents a false face in each of these stories? For what purpose? What is the effect of these deceptions?
- 22. In the song "Impossible", Cinderella and her Fairy Godmother sing, "For the world is full of zanies and fools who don't believe in sensible rules and won't believe what sensible people say." In what way is this statement true in the world of *Medea*? The world of *Macbeth*? The world of *Cinderella*? What are the "sensible rules" in the worlds of these plays? Who are the "fools" who resist these rules? What are the results of their resistance?
- 23. In what way is Medea mad? What does her madness cause her to do? Who else in Medea might be considered mad? At what point in the play could one argue that Macbeth has

been driven mad and by what? What causes Lady Macbeth to go mad? The Fairy Godmother accuses Cinderella of madness. Why?

- 24. What secrets are kept by the characters in these plays? By whom? Why? What occurs when these secrets are revealed?
- 25. Medea creates a magic circle that she, Macbeth and Cinderella all step into. What is the effect of the magic circle? What can it protect them from? How effective is it? What is outside of the magic circle? What happens when they leave the circle?
- 26. *Medea* and *Macbeth* are both tragedies ending in death while Cinderella is a musical comedy, ending in marriage. How does the comedy work against the tragic events in *Medea/Macbeth/Cinderella*? How does the tragedy temper the comedic moments?
- 27. What does music contribute to this production? How do the songs move the story of *Cinderella* forward? How do they move the other stories, *Medea* and *Macbeth*, forward? In what ways do they connect the different stories together? What does the music contribute to the mood and tone of this production?
- 28. Refer to your research on ghost lights. What is the significance of the ghost light being turned on by the Stage Manager at the beginning of the show? What does this contribute to the overall mood and tone? What is the function of the Stage Manager throughout the show?

Members of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's Education department—Amina Henry, Sarah Langan, Joan Langley—created the "Suggestions for Teaching *Medea/Macbeth/Cinderella.*"

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