

This begins the diary of the process of making The Trojan Women. It is for all Company members far and wide to be with us in some way.

Trojan Women

Day one Monday 7/25/11

The arrivals of yesterday, unpacking and grocerying, all gave way to the reality of our first day of rehearsal today. On a crystal perfect day by the sea, at the lovely Getty Villa, we begin.

We meet and greet and there are the usual nerves in the air. A beautiful lunch is laid out. We get Laminates Bondo! We laugh and give Brent the Equity- Deputy role before he's even had time to realize he's been duped. The jocularity in the air is in equal measure, it seems to me, to the desperation and recreation of human suffering in the play we have before us. I feel it inside myself. I think to myself, I don't know anything. I suddenly don't know anything, certainly least of all how to begin to do this play. But those thoughts that are staking claim in each of us I assume, are laid down as we find our corner to stash our gear. Each actor begins to make the green room, the rehearsal stage, a familiar place immediately. A place that is already holding what we don't know yet. What will it be? What will happen?

It is such a thrill to gather in this beautiful place.

We train, and talk about learning text from the script. We also talk about doing Stomping and Shakuhachi every day. The very real metaphor of its journey, fall, and rise, as well as the practical technical issues it addresses, seem particularly apt for this play. We are rusty, but back onstage and coming together step by step.

When we gather after training around tables now set up in the theater for a read through, there are introductions-the first foray into the thinking that has brought us together. Brian is with us on Skype the whole time just to keep us in the 21st century. (And too, Leon reads from his ipad.) Then Jocelyn relays three Greek signs from his morning-he walked to the beach listening to Greek music, he saw 2 Greek women along the shore and he saw a dump truck that said Athena on the side. (and his iphone was NOT lost) Signs are good.

Both he and Anne spoke of this text as being a continually evolving process, with the hopes that it illuminates the original story yet speaks to a contemporary audience. Anne spoke specifically about trying to find that state of acuity and shock that we are seeing in the world all around us after great trauma. She references the interviews of survivors from the recent shootings in Norway, the surviving victims of Japan's earthquake and tsunami. The sound of language, of a human being, when the brain is rewiring,-that kind of phenomenon. This Trojan Women isn't of one of women screaming and running. It is a depiction of domestic scenes between people who have shared a life, a culture, a family and experiences together. It is about people talking to one another using all their wits, struggling with how to move forward.

We talk about the actual geographical location of what is believed to be the site of Troy, now in Turkey. How extraordinary to have on day one around the table the expertise of the Getty's staff, classicists and scholars. Ken speaks of the layers of Troy excavated, and is so breezy and engaging, and the modern irreverence that can only come with a deep knowledge of his subject. Anne brings up that it seems from her reading she is finding that a central metaphor is this idea of an earthquake having leveled Troy, not fire. And that the play is a series of aftershocks-so that finding where those fall in the text is key. Its not lost on anyone that 'earthquake' here in LA is a particularly potent image.

We are shown the furniture, we talk about the props. And we are reminded again that the Getty is a museum, not a theater. To that end , Ken reminds us that it is the job of the Getty is to communicate the Ancient world thru their artifacts to the modern community. Another layer. So human and moving to me. So that the props, while not having to be slavish to perfect re -creation, can suggest in a shield, in a goblet, this whole culture from so long ago. These things become a bridge, in that sense, to antiquity.

We talk about what actually has been dug up. We talk about the difference between Greeks and Trojans, what is surmised by us, by Euripides, by historians. We talk about the depiction of the ancient orgiastic religions-and how this stands in for the beginnings of the suspicions and prejudices leveled against the 'luxurious East'-depicted as effeminate, soft. And how the Olympian Gods co-exist with these ancient religious figures such as Kybele, the Great Mother. (Ken points out that the Romans only had trouble with Jesus as being touted as the Only one true God, rather than just adding onto an already existing roster. That would have been fine....)

Then we read.

Then we learn how to pronounce most of the names and places.

We break the tables down again to start with training in the morning. It's the plan whoever leads, also writes something.

I don't know how to do this play.

7/25/2011 ellen