

Iphigenia in Weimar

an opera in four acts

by Philip Armstrong

Characters

Athena	Dramatic Soprano
Iphigenia	Light Soprano
Furies	3 Mezzo-Sopranos
Pylades	Tenor
Orestes	Bass Baritone
Musaeus	Bass
Townsmen	Male Chorus
Townswomen	Female Chorus
Handboys and Handmaidens	Adolescent Dancers

Instrumentation

2 flutes
2 oboes
2 clarinets Bb
1 bassoon
1 contrabassoon
2 horns F
2 trumpets C
2 trombones
1 tuba
1 timpani (4)
1 percussion (pedal bass drum, hit hat, ride cymbal, vibrasnap, suspended cymbal, tambourine, wood blocks x2, tam-tam, snare drum, cabasa, claves, cowbell)
1 bass drum
1 harp
strings

The score is written in C (with standard octave transpositions)

Duration: 2 hours 30 minutes (acts 1 & 2: 1 hour 10 minutes, acts 3 & 4: 1 hour 20 minutes)

Written during 2014/2015

ACT ONE AT THE ILM PARK

- Scene 1 Keep Back! (Orestes, Pylades, Furies)
- Scene 2 It's Good You Have Finished (Orestes, Pylades)
- Scene 3 Foreign Footsteps In the Park On The Ilm (Musaeus, Townsfolk)
- Scene 4 My Friend, This Time Do You See What I See? (Orestes, Pylades, Musaeus, Townsfolk)
- Scene 5 I Dreamed And Rose Aloft (Iphigenia)
- Scene 6 I Am Overjoyed To See You (Orestes)
- Scene 7 My Sister Is Gone (Orestes, Pylades, Musaeus, Townsfolk)

ACT TWO AT THE WEIMAR CASTLE

- Scene 1 Is Anybody There? (Orestes, Pylades)
- Scene 2 Orestes Is Afflicted By Regret (Musaeus, Furies)
- Scene 3 They Have Gone Away (Orestes, Pylades, Musaeus)
- Scene 4 I Shall Not Remain Separate From You (Orestes, Musaeus)
- Scene 5 First Dance - A Celebration Of Iphigenia (Handboys and Handmaidens)
- Scene 6 You Are My Orestes (Iphigenia)
- Scene 7 This Girl Before Us Is So Beautiful (Orestes, Pylades)

ACT THREE BEFORE THE ROMAN HOUSE

- Scene 1 The Moment Is Come (Athena)
- Scene 2 She Speaks To Me (Orestes, Pylades, Musaeus)
- Scene 3 Dearest Youths And Maidens (Musaeus, Townswomen)
- Scene 4 Second Dance - A Celebration Of Ritual (Handboys and Handmaidens)
- Scene 5 A Fine Hoard Of Classical Icons (Athena, Townsman)
- Scene 6 This Day Is A Mighty Philanthropy (Orestes, Pylades, Musaeus, Furies)
- Scene 7 These Handboys And Handmaidens Hold For Truth (Musaeus, Townswomen)

ACT FOUR INSIDE THE WEIMAR CASTLE

- Scene 1 The Gaze Of The Other (Athena, Townsman)
- Scene 2 I Need Iphigenia Beside Me (Orestes, Pylades, Musaeus)
- Scene 3 Peace Upon All Who Dwell Gaily By The Rugged Shoreline (Musaeus, Townswomen)
- Scene 4 Third Dance - Further Enactment Of Sacrificial Ritual (Handboys and Handmaidens)
- Scene 5 A Sharpened Implement Is Held Aloft (Musaeus, Furies)
- Scene 6 I Bid Farewell (Athena, Townsman)

Introduction

Iphigenia, who was sacrificed to the gods to solicit support in the battle against Troy, reappears in ghostly form before her surviving brother, Orestes. He has come to Weimar in search of its Hellenic heart, which might free him of the fearsome Furies who pursue him. He is astonished and overjoyed to discover his long-lost sister here, and thrilled she can lead him, with the support of Athena, to penance for his shame. He must confront the face of the unknowable Other.

Stage and Costumes

The set should represent natural and classical themes suggestive of Weimar's Golden Era heritage.

Drama

The drama should enhance the representational and emotional power of the music and libretto. All onstage characters, including the chorus, should be animated throughout. The handboys and handmaidens in particular should take an acting role as well as dancing.

Acknowledgements

In addition to the references to Euripides' and Goethe's *Iphigenia in Tauris* and, in turn, to ancient and classical themes, the author acknowledges reference to the writing on ethics by Immanuel Levinas.

ACT ONE AT THE ILM PARK

[A scene of parkland with broad oaks and an expansive meadow of wildflowers]

SCENE 1 Keep Back! (Orestes, Pylades, Furies)

[Scene 1: Orestes is battling with his sword against the Furies who are pursuing him; he believes they seek retribution because he has murdered his mother. But they contradict him and point to other motivations, insisting there are further matters for him to consider.]

[Orestes uses his sword to battle against an invisible foe, the Furies. Pylades looks on in resignation.]

Orestes Keep back! Be gone with you all, I appeal.
I command it! Dissipate on the wind.

Pylades Orestes, be careful! Tis nothing there.

Furies We seek not to cause of harm, dear fellow.
This tragic man; be reassured. He should
Look to Natural Law and be heartened.

Orestes I know why you are here, darkest demons.
You come for skin and bone, a counterblow.
A son censuring his mother is wrong,
And always Natural Law bids recourse.
It seeks revenge with all fire and fury.
Redress is brought to bear by divine wrath.

Furies These matters were settled by court of law.
Orestes was reprieved of indictment.
There were crucial mitigating factors.

Orestes The Furies are summoned to pursue me.

Furies If Natural Law seeks this flesh and blood,
Then some further motive is exertive.
This man is endowed with savvy insight;
His patrons bid him perceive this purpose.

Orestes These phantoms manifest only torment.

Furies Open wide the eyes and look to the fore.
Observe the face of the Other ahead.

Tis not only youth that invokes the knife,
Heir of an elevated lineage,
With mighty heritage and great prospects.

[The furies depart. Orestes calms.]

SCENE 2 It Is Good You Have Finished (Orestes, Pylades)

[Scene 2: Pylades tries to assuage his friend's fears. Orestes calms and thanks Pylades for his guidance, and explains why he has led them here. The gods have instructed him to seek the Hellenic heart of Weimar, which will enable him to overcome his shame and guilt.]

[Pylades becomes animated while Orestes calms]

Pylades It is good you have finished with all that;
I fear for your moods and frame of mind.
I honour the true born Lord of Argos?

Orestes My uncle rules at home. I am exiled.

Pylades He tramples on your undeserved mischance.

Orestes Some refute the justice of my freedom.
They cling to me like hounds, hot on the heels.

Pylades Yet none has the same esteemed lineage,
The lofty heredity of the gods.

Orestes Pylades, my cousin and truest friend,
You were not born at my sister's demise.
Yet I celebrate your coming to the world
And to this tale. I admit to you that
I appealed gravely to the Lord Phoebus.
What might I do next? And there was a voice.
"Go seek the Hellenic heart of Weimar.
Stand forth and seize the classical laurels,
That which is offered by heavenly grace.
The gift shall be yours to keep forever.
You shall carry it home to Attic soil
And thereafter all about the wide world.
Accordingly you shall find your freedom."
Thus I tread here in this far-flung kingdom
To end my madness and my wretched shame.

SCENE 3 Foreign Footsteps In the Park On The Ilm (Townsfolk)

[Scene 3: Unnoticed by Orestes and Pylades, the townsfolk have come across the intruders. They empathise with the two young men but remain resolute to the profound implications of their coming.]

[Enter Musaeus and Townsfolk unnoticed by Orestes and Pylades]

Townsmen Foreign footsteps in the Park on the Ilm.
These wretched men who come before us ask:
What god or man, what unimagined flame
Can forge a path where no path yet exists
And rescue Agamemnon's blackened name
From suffering and torment unto peace?
The King of the Homeric shall answer.
He rules over a diligent people
Who scrupulously keep the sacred rites.

Townswomen Revered champions, welcome to Weimar.
In this dear land we share your pain, your joy.
We laugh, sing, and wail, for Hades below.

Musaeus If 'Liszt lived in the Ilm Park' obtains, and
If two hundred years or more thereafter
Every person now alive is not free
To claim the assertion does not obtain,
Then all are constrained by long history,
By ev'ry word and thought and ev'ry deed,
By Iphigenia's cruel demise.

Townswomen We wreathe the tomb with our moans and our tears
And thus honour the land of the living,
Musing and romancing the ancient rites.
The rhythms pattern the thrust of a knife,
The melodies a bloody impalement,
The harmonies a twisting blade, and thus
We dance and sing with the Lord of the Dead
Praising and celebrating his domain.

SCENE 4 My Friend, This Time Do You See What I See? (Orestes, Pylades, Townsfolk)

[Scene 4: A ghostly form appears before Orestes and Pylades. Orestes recognises it as his deceased sister, Iphigenia, who perished as an offering to the gods.]

[Iphigenia appears before Orestes, Pylades and the townsfolk as a radiant yet ghostly form]

Musaeus Iphigenia stands tall and rejects
This Hard Assertion of the Consequent
Refuting freedom of will by way of
Hypothetical possibility.
If she were subdued by hidden demons,
Then all her deeds would be those of demons.
She would carry no worthiness at all,
And no blame for that which the demon wills.

Orestes My friend, this time do you see what I see?

Pylades Yes, I do. There is a ghost before us.

Orestes My friend, I can hardly believe my eyes.

Pylades What is this thing, Orestes? Who is it?

Orestes Iphigenia! Sister! Beloved!
I lost you when I was but a small child,
And I need you now, please stay here with me.
I need you, my beloved, stay with me.
Beautiful, King Agamemnon's daughter,
Perceive me and have no further heartache.
It is your long lost brother before you.
Sing to me again; I miss you so much
Heal my aching heart, make me well again.

[Orestes falls to his knees as if under a spell]

Pylades Be careful, Orestes, your sight is true.
I see this well, a beautiful vision,
But I am not persuaded it is real.

Townsfolk This is a wraith; it's not real. Be careful!
The real girl was offered for Troy's conquest,
Slain for Helen's sake. We see no dagger
Protruding from the belly, nonetheless
She is surely beautiful all the same.

Musaeus If all sequels are causally constrained,
The consequence of that which came before,
And the mind and agency supervene

Upon the flesh and blood and bone and brain,
A part of this causally constrained world,
Then there can be no sov'reign volition
Emanating from beyond the fetters.

SCENE 5 I Dreamed And Rose Aloft (Iphigenia)

[Scene 5: Iphigenia tells of her continued involvement and contentment with the sacrificial altar. But now she rejoices because she is sure Orestes shall soon join her in the ghostly realms.]

Iphigenia I dreamed and rose aloft
High into the night sky.
There were girls dancing and
Spinning all around me,
Jumping and rejoicing.
The earth below rippled
Like the waves on the sea.
Then a pillar rose up
Far above and beyond.
It fell; it was a man.
The meaning of this dream?
Orestes shall join me.
I cry, yet I rejoice.
So long we are apart,
The sea-spray between us.
It is a lonesome shore,
Never a home for me,
Never the maidens of
Hera's dance at Argos
Singing pretty loom songs,
Embroidery and beads.
So much is far away.
I must be contented
Overseeing the rites.
I am joyous and thrilled
With this revered altar,
Yet also I rejoice.
My brother shall join me.

SCENE 6 I Am Overjoyed To See You (Orestes)

[Scene 6: Orestes declares his joy to see Iphigenia. He admits to her that he has slain their mother to avenge their father's murder. Now he wishes only to be with his sister.]

[Orestes rises and grows animated]

Orestes I am overjoyed to see you once more.
 So long it has been only the Furies
 On my mind, cursing and blaspheming me.
 'Tis only knives and daggers in their thoughts.
 But now the clouds are lifted from my sight.
 All the world is made radiant sunshine.
 One blood we are, our fates joined together.
 King Agamemnon, your father, is dead.
 Your mother killed him in a frenzied rage.
 O, my sister, my beloved sister,
 My treasured, whom I missed so very much,
 What is become of our sad family?
 You ask if the vexed wife suffers remorse?
 No. Her son stripped her of life; she is gone.
 O shipwrecked house! What drove him to do this?
 Retribution! To avenge a slain father.
 The Furies tell of some other motive,
 Yet I will not hear their morbid design.
 O, my sister, my beautiful angel,
 My treasured, whom I missed so very much,
 Achilles, who betrayed you, is gone too;
 The furies also spoke of his motive.
 They say it was veiled fantasy that drove
 This pretence at being noble suitor.
 The knife was sustained aloft in his mind.
 They say Odysseus perceived his thoughts
 And used his appetite to lay a trap.
 If there is no sullen bitterness, still
 I am sorry, but I was just a child.
 O, my sister, my beautiful angel,
 My treasured, whom I missed so very much,
 I am sorry, but I can do no more.
 I wish for naught but to be here with you.

[Iphigenia disappears]

SCENE 7 My Sister Is Gone (Orestes, Pylades, Townsfolk)

[Scene 7: Orestes is heartbroken when the ghost of Iphigenia disappears. The townsfolk ask themselves if Orestes might seek reunion with his sister by offering himself to the rites.]

[Orestes is heartbroken that Iphigenia is gone]

- Orestes My sister is gone leaving me alone.
All is ruin; my mother, my father.
- Musaeus The principle of sufficient reason,
Whereby ev'ry entity that exists,
If it exists, then for its existence
There shall be sufficing explanation.
Whereby ev'ry event that arises,
If it arises, for its arising
Then there shall be full justification.
Whereby ev'ry assertion proclaimed true,
If true, then for its truthful assertion
There shall be adequate vindication,
Is nonsense!
- Townswomen How beauteous are the fruits of Atreus
A virgin of gladness, and a Lord of
Flashing locks, yet a terrible wrath has
Fallen upon the house of Tantalus,
Who caused tragedy afflicting many.
- Orestes Yes, this is the way of dark sorrow. Or
Perhaps no, it is not like that at all.
- Pylades I am standing close beside you, my friend
To console you in your aching distress.
- Musaeus Iphigenia asserts
That volition is simultaneous
With the unbroken chain of proceedings.
If all aftermath is fixed on one path
Then this path shall not entail an absence
Of free will, of moral capacity.
- Orestes Would that I was clear of what must be done.
I have seen my sister, I spoke with her
Yet still I am uncertain and cautious.
- Townsmen These lands are closed shut to those who value
Their own needs above those of the ancients.
Who are these two hapless warriors that
Come without sense and purpose, ignoring
The many years of blood on the altar?

Do these men come for their own sweet glory?
Are they snared by fancy and delusion?
They should take heed of Cauris and Byblis,
Wanton love forbidden between siblings.
Better if their blood burst free at the rites.

Musaeus This is a necessary condition
Of self-control, of moral behaviour,
Of aesthetics and creativity,
Of the recognition of another,
Of the legitimacy of values,
Of the significance of human life.

[Curtain]

ACT TWO AT THE WEIMAR CASTLE

[A bridge scene over a small river with a large baroque castle nearby]

SCENE 1 Is Anybody There? (Orestes, Pylades)

[Scene 1: Orestes and Pylades cross a bridge beside the Weimar Castle. They are cautious to avoid anybody noticing them, yet Orestes is reluctant to seek a hiding place. He is drawn to the sacrificial altar within. However he hears the Furies approaching and immediately comes to his senses.]

[Orestes and Pylades cross a bridge moving towards the castle, cautious to avoid anybody noticing them]

Orestes Is anybody there? We must watch out!

Pylades I'm watching, my friend. I see no others.

Orestes This is the ancient castle; we've found it!

Pylades Yes, Orestes. This is the place we sought.

Orestes In there is the altar where blood is shed.

Orestes I smell the foul remains of the slaughtered.

Pylades Foul, yes. Yet these were once fresh fruits of spring.
We're no fledglings. Still, we must be cautious.

Orestes I sense this shrine is a barbed snare of sorts,
Though I am loath to flee; something draws me.
I take these footsteps of my own free will.
I have wandered here a timeless exile,
A man hounded by pain and misery.
Yet when standing in this sanctuary,
It feels to me I am very near home.

Pylades We must not be seen here by this temple.
Yet we should not flee, we should not panic.
This is not the custom of our people.
We can hide in the park down in a cave.
Then at night we can return to our purpose.

Orestes Our purpose? Our earnest design? But yes,
We haven't braved the time zones to give up

At the end. Pylades, your words are wise.
I have yearned for an end to the torment.
I have come here to this altar of strife
But not to seize a mystical image.
No longer do I trust this is my path.
There are other duties, other charges.
But wait, I hear movement in the distance.

Pylades I hear it too. It comes from over there.

Orestes It is the damnable furies; let's hide!

[Orestes and Pylades run to hide]

SCENE 2 Orestes Is Afflicted By Regret (Furies)

[Scene 2: With Orestes and Pylades in hiding nearby, the Furies suggest that Orestes covets the notion of a sacrificial knife. He denies any yearning to partake in its butchery yet it is this denial that causes him shame and embitterment.]

[Enter Musaeus and Furies]

Furies Orestes is afflicted by regret,
And now there is this vision of a girl.
He reveres her, yearns for what she has become,
Yet he fears this is precarious ground.
He sees the sharpened knife held to her throat.
He sees the blade pressing down, always down.
He mulls whether to loathe it or covet it.
Always unsettled by his family,
Troubled by the gaze which seeks his penance;
Ev'ry exploit begets anguish and grief.
Most of all he rues not sailing to Troy
To partake in the frantic butchery,
This indulgence in bloody sacrifice.
At the final battle he had stood at
The threshold of delightful pubescence,
But not the burning gates of the city.
He could have joined the mirth before the end,
Before the Trojan Horse and the Great Fire.
He knew of his appeal to lustful men,
As alluring as the young Achilles.
All would have rejoiced to see him bare-skinned
Upon the battle field, to aim arrows
At his unclad form; he desired this too.

Inspired by a vision of disrobed youths,
He sees them impaled, sees his own ribs speared.
He had watched himself through their piercing eyes.
He knew of their cravings to transfix him.
They willed to thrust their knives into his chest
And belly, and he too desired this fate.
He could hear the blade biting at his flesh.
He can hear it now, the abiding blows,
Endless thumping, forever in his mind.

Musaeus She knows it is possible to argue
 Against a necessary connection
 Fastening this chain of circumstances.

Furies In particular, his mind is upon
 Achilles' spear, this apex most of all.
 He should have disclosed his mind. He knows that
 Achilles had the same intuition
 As a boy, this appeal to shameless men,
 And thereafter faced the same contrition,
 This that drove him to skewer so many
 In such fury, this and his great skill and strength.

Musaeus Against the rules of modal inference,
 The Transfer of Powerlessness based on
 Fixity of past, fixity of law.
 She shall be the ultimate source of choice.

Furies Orestes knows well he should have gone forth,
 A fixed destiny beside his father,
 His sister, pursued by a whetted blade.
 Yet he desisted; he shirked his duty.
 He carries a burden of shame, devoid
 Of courage to consummate the vision.
 While others rallied round, while Achilles
 Stood forth, Orestes remained in hiding.
 And now this man is sorely embarrassed.
 He no longer lives, he merely lingers,
 Facing the prospects of a slow demise,
 Of prolonged decay and embitterment.

[Exit Furies]

SCENE 3 They Have Gone Away (Orestes, Pylades)

[Scene 3: When the Furies disappear, Orestes protests they have told of terrible things. He abhors their words but admits to the tragedy that has befallen his family and snared Pylades too.]

[Orestes and Pylades reappear]

Pylades They have gone away; the courtyard is clear.

Orestes Then you saw them this time, my kindly friend?

Pylades I heard them, but could not decipher words.

Orestes I could understand every syllable.
They spoke of terrible and shocking things.
They spoke of my own imminent demise.

Pylades Did they speak of your delightful sister?
Do they know why she appeared before us?

Orestes At the time she went up to the altar,
My sister understood Natural Law.
She felt it under her skin, a sharp dream.
Our father knew it too, but woe is me.
Our mother did not, the child-bearer not.
Motherhood debilitates reasoning
And blinds a woman to Natural Law.
To the ways and means of the probing knife.

Musaeus Iphigenia has made note of the
Argument of impossibility:
If an agent is deemed to act freely
Only if her mental state of beliefs
Are accrued freely, and subsequently
If she is deemed to accrue beliefs freely
Only if she acts of her own free will,
Then acting freely is conditional
Upon accruing beliefs freely and
Vice versa, on ad infinitum
Until the very last gasp of the world.
But she renounces the impossible.

Pylades Elektra, who is your sister, my wife,
She also contrived her purpose in this.

Orestes Do not blame yourself for these dark matters.

- Pylades It was she who instigated revenge
And thus summoned forth the filthy Furies.
- Orestes My mother could not see her daughter's pride,
The girl selected above all others.
My mother would have had her stay behind
Brooding in regret, like these townswomen.
My mother was a fool. Yet I do not
Hold this against her, not now she is gone.
I sympathise with her predicament.
- Pylades There was reason beyond just mere revenge?
- Orestes When my family fed upon the blood
Of my sister, when we ate of her flesh,
My mother did not partake. She carried the
Shame of her abnegation to her death.
Only my father and my sisters ate.
And me; I feasted on the meagre arms,
Lithe and slender, due to my tender age.
It was my father who ate the thighs.
- Pylades Elektra ate of the breast and the heart.
- Orestes I do not fool myself the restored wind
Was actualized by the consuming of
Iphigenia's form; I do not take
To supernatural explanations.
The renewed breeze was coincidental.
But assuredly, her death blessed the war.
She gave added purpose to the fighting
Beyond that of Helen's captivity,
Not only to King Agamemnon's troop,
But to the entire Hellenic army.
- Pylades Your family gave purpose to the war.
- Orestes My sister gave our family purpose
Until I, in terror, betrayed them all
By refusing to relocate to Troy,
By refusing the fierce demonic sword,
By lacking the courage and bravery
Shown by my valiant fearless sister.
I should be a phantom alongside her

Alongside Achilles with his great spear
 Alongside all of the beautiful youths
 Who were bitten by the teeth of a blade.

Pylades Elektra bemoaned how she was denied
 That to which Iphigenia succumbed.
 She rued there was no place for her at Troy,
 As there could have been for her young brother.
 She lamented her lack of direction.
 Whenever a heroic figure fell
 She bid me simulate knives into her.
 I made pretence at the ritual death
 But it was never enough for her, no.
 She drew close to the domains of madness.
 I struggled to persuade her back to me.

Orestes Pylades, she trusted you, you calmed her,
 As you calm me; it was after you took
 To the knifing that she came to love you.

Pylades I believe this is true, my closest friend.

Orestes You too are entwined with our family.

SCENE 4 I Shall Not Remain Separate From You (Orestes)

[Scene 4: Iphigenia appears again to Orestes, this time with her attendant handboys and handmaidens. In his joy, Orestes asks that he might walk with her for eternity in the light.]

[Iphigenia surprises Orestes when she appears with the handboys and handmaidens]

Musaeus Her people were immersed in the Critiques.
 They turned away from a bounded domain
 In contention with human liberty.
 She perceives the essence of agency,
 This irreducible substance,
 Not in itself beyond her self-control
 At the foundational base of events.
 She has libertarian sympathies.

Orestes I shall not remain separate from you.
 Either come with me, my cherished sister,
 Or else I shall lie down beside you here,
 And forever remain close at your side.

We shall embrace liberty, our birth-right.
You shall free me, and I too shall free you
Joyfully we shall walk in light conjoined.

Musaeus Iphigenia knows the difficulties
Of the libertarians are made void
If agency is beyond nat'ral law.

SCENE 5 First Dance - A Celebration Of Iphigenia (Handboys and Handmaidens)

[Scene 5: The handboys and handmaidens dance a celebration of Iphigenia.]

Dance - A Celebration of Iphigenia

[Exit Musaeus with handboys and handmaidens]

SCENE 6 You Are My Orestes (Iphigenia)

[Scene 6: Iphigenia sings of her love for her brother. She tells him of the sense of conviction she felt at the moment of her sacrificial death, and how, in her work at the temple, she offers courage to others following the same resplendent path.]

[Iphigenia glows in radiant light]

Iphigenia You are my Orestes,
Concealed from my sight since
Just a toddling infant
On your first happy steps.
Yet now once more we can
Look upon each other.
There is wonder and joy
In this reunion.
You are my own brother,
And we are joined in blood
And in adoration;
I have missed you so much.
I am content, joyful,
Yet my heart was empty.
I remember Aulis,
Where always the winds howl
Across the blue sea straights.
It is a dream now, yet
Do not fear my bearing.
I came to conviction
Even when all about

Were shedding woeful tears.
 And I persevere with
 Conviction to this day.
 I give strength to others.
 I bid them have courage.
 I bid them lift their eyes
 To a resplendent path.

SCENE 7 This Girl Before Us Is So Beautiful (Orestes, Pylades)

[Scene 7: Orestes tells his sister of the reason that he and Pylades came here to this ruin, and of how they escaped the Furies and then the local folk that pursued them. Iphigenia disappears from before him, but Orestes remains overjoyed he has been able to summon her from the beyond. He wonders if he can summon Athena too.]

Pylades This girl before us is so beautiful.

[Orestes addresses Iphigenia, though there is no response]

Orestes My sister bids we account of ourselves.

Pylades We had difficulties on the river.
 There was an eddy, deep eaten by the flow.
 We moored furtively out of sight and sound.
 But there were herdsmen with their cattle near.
 They spied us from the fields, they heard us come.
 Orestes confronted them as they charged.

Orestes It wasn't the herdsmen that challenged us.
 There were other creatures coming for me.
 It was the ghastly she-dragons of Hell.
 My sister, there was no face to be seen,
 Only gnashing fangs, bent on my downfall.
 From their cloaks blew a hurricane of fire
 With belching smoke; their wings fanned it further.
 I tried to repulse them, to drive them back,
 But they are as deft in strength as they are
 Hideous to behold. They crowded me.

Pylades To my eyes, there were no grim shapes at all.
 It was only you that saw these furies.
 It was your noise that baited the herdsmen.

Orestes They were there even if just I saw them.
 I drew my sword to them, I leaped on them.

Pylades You leaped on the grazing sheep and cattle.
You stabbed and smote at them, piercing their coats
Till the foam was died red at the waves' edge,
Until the herdsmen blew their horns for help
And a whole host of them came down the hill.
But by then the madness had slipped away.
You lay down, your lips dripping with spittle.
You collapsed on the ground in exhaustion.

[Orestes grows rapturous]

Orestes My sister, this man knelt to care for me
Even while holding his cloak to shield me
From the thrown stones, until I rose again
And saw the battle raging around me,
The peril close at hand. I cried aloud,
"Ho, Pylades, 'tis death! But let it be
A gallant death! Draw forth and follow me."
Our two swords went into worthy action
Driving back the herdsmen; none of their stones
Struck home for we were guarded by the gods.

Pylades We escaped, though they realise we are near.
No doubt they plot for us to receive
The holy spray, thus unto the blood bowl.

[Iphigenia disappears but Orestes remains ecstatic]

Pylades She is gone. Come let's go while we have time.

Orestes It is awesome I can call my sister.

Pylades Yet you also summoned the foul furies?

Orestes If this time of miracles is boundless
Perhaps I can call the gods. Athena,
Goddess of wisdom, show yourself to me.

Pylades My friend, you are making a mighty jest.

Orestes Athena, come down to me. Show yourself!

[Curtain]

ACT THREE BEFORE THE ROMAN HOUSE

[A footpath lies at the foot of a large Roman-style building]

SCENE 1 The Moment Is Come (Athena)

[Scene 1: Orestes and Pylades have come to the foot of the Weimar Roman House and summoned Athena to descend from the divine realms. She tells of how the deities swoon when youths such as Iphigenia go to ritual sacrifice. She insists that Orestes should be proud of the sacrifice of his sister. She asks if he will heed the call of the altar too.]

[Athena descends from the divine realms.]

Athena

The moment is come, the Natural Law,
And thus Athena descends from the sky.
Here is now; now is here, the moment true.
A pristine wonder of gentleness, yet,
Foundering amid sceptic paradox,
The subject shall submit to the Other,
Is commanded to duty from outside,
Is ordered to ethical agency.
The transfixed shall seek ritual oblation.
This is the time-honoured obligation;
The deities beyond Olympus swoon.
If my creatures of the woods are felled then
There must be atonement, must be balance.
Look to a time when all blooms, save a few,
Shall relish with fondness the altar-stone.
Boundless tribute to tender age, I say,
Honour to those who look upon the face
In wonderment, and perform the duty.
Honour to this young fellow's family.
The past is replete with glorious tales,
Of those who rose aloft to offer dues.
King Agamemnon was one such figure;
A champion to this day, here and now.
When mortals rise to honour the altar,
Then they show respect to their precursors,
To each of the family Atreus,
Even when also there is tragedy.
Let it not be forgotten, the heartbreak.
Let it not be unsaid that long ago
Pelops failed to acknowledge the altar,
Holy rites, to comprehend his father.

He too is here and now, in vile disgrace.
 He brought shame upon all his ancestry.
 Orestes can be proud of his father,
 Who performed great service to his people.
 Who led many courageous young men on
 To bravely face the sharp point of a spear,
 And impelled his daughter to the altar.
 Will Orestes wallow in deep regret
 Like Pelops, and like his own dear mother?
 Or follow this paternal wisdom,
 Thus Endowed of King Agamemnon, and
 Tantalus, Cronus and Gaia before?
 The moment is here, the blade immanent.

SCENE 2 She Speaks To Me (Orestes, Pylades)

[Scene 2: Orestes realises the goddess knows the full extent of his sister's sacrifice, and how this knowledge is passed onto others heading to the altar.]

[Orestes and Pylades enter and approach Athena. Enter Musaeus.]

Orestes She speaks to me. Do you see her, my friend?

Pylades I do. I see her right before us now.

Orestes Do you hear her voice, the soaring music?

Pylades I do. Though now she is quiet and still.

Orestes You saw the goddess and, before, the girl?

Pylades I did. Both are marvellous to my eyes.

Orestes Athena is queen of the nether, yet
 None is fairer than Iphigenia.

Musaeus She seeks no libertarian resort,
 A free will built on the inconsonant,
 On the claim that nothing is determined.
 She repudiates the anomalous,
 The indeterminate, which reduces
 To random chance, to probability.

Orestes I remember receiving her wrist band.
 I removed it myself from her forearm.

It was taken as a gift at her death.

Pylades Would that such matters might be forgotten.

Orestes I remember also the lance in the
Hand of Achilles, sent to win his bride.
My dearest sister, she too recalls all.
She remembers them leading her forward
To the altar, a sly re-direction.
They undressed her but for the regal crown
And led her across the sandy passage.

Pylades For all to gape at, a toothsome eyeful.

Orestes She recalls the altar stone and raised blade.
She remembers the dagger thrust. She sees it;
She hears it; she feels it every moment.
When her father impaled her chest, and then
Lunged at her throat, bleeding her out, and then
Took of the flesh, and shared with his household,
There was no dark repose for her mind.
She dreamed that Artemis showed kind mercy
And lifted her spirit through shining sky

Pylades All the way to this Thuringian soil.

Orestes She was raised high to semi-god status,
And thus her flesh abides to feed the rites.
Those who she consecrates taste of her blood
And know that folk shall take of their flesh too.
This shall continue in Perpetua.
Until at last we shall all be at rest,
And embrace that blackened oblivion.

Pylades Your Athena knows of these matters too.
She won't forget in all eternity.

SCENE 3 Dearest Youths And Maidens (Townswomen)

[Scene 3: The townswomen add their voice to that of the goddess, urging all youths to avoid disillusionment, and to rejoice at the prospect of the rites.]

[Enter townswomen]

Townswomen Dearest youths and maidens, our hearts beat full

With the rhyme and meter of dancing feet,
With the blessings of a lyre melody,
This music for the pierced and punctured dead.
Many difficult things are borne from birth,
Yet do not make hard iron of the heart
To keep the pain and suffering at bay.
Be not lulled by Harpocrates' silence.
Do not deny the cheer and merriment.
We envy this gift; you will have triumph
Where we have defeat. Like Sophie before,
You will have joy where we have shame and guilt.

Musaeus Iphigenia need not contend for
The supplanting of virtue and goodness
By resource to non-moral properties.

Townswomen Do not be afraid of us brash agents;
Like Auguste before, we bear gladness
And offerings of sweetened honey-wine.
This chalice brings the humming buzz of bees,
Wet of solace, the consecration of
Oblations on the way to the altar,

Musaeus She need not take resort to favouring
An insulation of ethical truth
From a naturalistic paradigm.
She pursues the reconciliation.
Iphigenia seeks a humankind
Compatible with the sweeping cosmos.
She attends appeasement between free will
And the spirit of absolute freedom,
And historical determinism.

Townswomen And for reassurance, to lend courage.
Do not be frightened by us elder serfs.
Know that the tools are wielded by others,
Sharp agents too potent for us to hold,
Or to see. We fill the silver goblets
Upon the altar, received by the gods,
And nothing other. Nought else. A blank void.

[Exit Musaeus and Townswomen]

SCENE 4 Second Dance - A Celebration Of Ritual (Handboys and Handmaidens)

[Scene 4: The handboys and handmaidens dance a celebration of ritual.]

[Enter handboys and handmaidens]

Dance - A Celebration of Ritual

SCENE 5 A Fine Hoard Of Classical Icons (Athena, Townsman)

[Scene 5: Athena encourages the youths to show courage and bravery when they ready themselves to receive the knife. The townsman relish the prospect of further offerings.]

[Athena takes centre stage]

Athena A fine hoard of classical icons, yet
Here is the most stunning sight in the world,
And the most sublime undertaking too,
A driving momentum, forcing within.
We must not be deceived by dogma, yet
The face of the Other is core value.
It is not a symbol of something else.
Prior to all language and reflection,
It sets demands upon the anima.
Bright wildflower, you must bear duty to
Sanction this Other to sever the stalk.
You shall show great courage and bravery
Allowing the marvellous deed be done,
These incisions to the interior,
This scattering of petals to the wind.
Anything else would be a disservice,
A disfavour to others and to you.
Efflorescent blossom of the meadow,
You would live in bitterness for all days;
Witness the self-reproach of betrayal.
Instead of charming the gods in heaven
You would rot in the dirt of self-disgust.
So step forward now with the chin held high
And ready yourself for sharp intrusions.

[Enter townsman]

Townsman We hear the ritual drum, bell and cymbal,
The long droning of necromantic song.
We see the shared vision of a harbour;
The swell is strong, the foam effervescent.

There is an Argive ship with fifty men,
And an ancient saga to be told, yet
Tis also a thirst for bodies and death
In the banqueting hall and it's feeding;
We do not spurn this hunger and passion.
Would that these were fifty striplings, though still
There are others ready in the stockade,
Those of comestible digestible.
The gods are kindly and sympathetic.
They furnish fine fare for the sacrament.

[Exit Athena, handboys and handmaidens]

SCENE 6 This Day Is A Mighty Philanthropy (Orestes, Pylades, Furies)

[Scene 6: Orestes declares he is impressed at the visionary sentiments revealed by Athena, but the Furies insist his words are empty. His life remains devoid of meaning.]

Orestes This day is a mighty philanthropy.
Nowhere can there be greater alms-giving.

[Enter Musaeus, Furies and townswomen]

Furies Well said, this salute to charity, yet
Still emptiness of meaning confronts him,
He who dodged the cutting edge of a blade;
It accosts him from every aspect.

Orestes Tis much gluttonous appetency, yet
I do not spurn this hunger and passion.
I do not deny the significance.

[Pylades calms Orestes]

Pylades The passion of Chrysippus' beau is here.

Orestes There is much affection and eagerness.

Pylades The knives are ground and filed to their finest.
They are honed to exceptional sharpness.
They will penetrate where they will with ease.

Orestes I do not fear this, and nor should others.
Why do you weep, sweet girls? You of fair form,
You who embrace the dying and the dead,

You who consecrate all eternity.
Do not tremble at the sight of Furies.
Is it dread in these eyes? No, surely not.
It is honour, love and true devotion.
Dearest, it is courage and commitment.
The dagger is ours for eternity.

Furies Well said from the bondage of duty, yet
It is not the furies that confront him.
It is the morbidity of regret.
Would that he might have overwhelmed the guilt
By way of avenging a slain father,
Injustice of a betrayed heritage.
It was this plan of escape that drove him
To the wretched slaughter of his mother.
He calculated – if he failed before
In his duty to his family, and
In his acquiescence to Achilles,
Then he could make amends by this bold act.
Yet it was erroneous calculation.
And even now he fools himself he is
Charged with culpability for this death
When still it is sadness and sorrow at
Avoiding Troy that festers in his mind.
And the lack of meaning grows torturous.
But now he begins to discern that still
There is one alternative that remains.
No longer is he the fair youth of before,
Yet still an Apollino of great charm.
And still he has much to offer the gods,
Those who would relish a blade at his throat.

Musaeus She does not favour the empirical
Eliminating the mind-manifest.
Neither does she favour the manifest
Insulated from empiric account.
She seeks a rapprochement between the two.

Furies And now there is this girl calling to him,
Whispering to him with passionate words.
He must offer his blood to the altar
The stone slab, as did his sister before.
A brief agony, a fleeting delight,
As the celebrant thrusts the dagger down
And euphoric bliss in eternity.

Musaeus She does not court supplanting the appeal
To beliefs with mere natural account.
She does not court either the opposite.
She seeks reconciliation between the two.

[Exit Orestes, Pylades and the Furies]

SCENE 7 These Handboys And Handmaidens Hold For Truth (Townswomen)

[Scene 7: The townsfolk add their voice to the notion that all youths shall desire the ritual dance.]

Townswomen These handboys and handmaidens hold for truth
Yet also they weep at the suffering,
As birds upon the shore cry; we too have
Wailed our grief, although for other reasons.
All know our fate, but it is told again.
For us it is not a howling of freedom
But of ruefulness, regret and remorse,
A failing of missed opportunity.
Thus we place high regard on these many
Others who come lonesome to the seashore,
Who, though they too have no wings, also cry.
Compliance is a great struggle for them,
To serve the Lord of Weimar and his toils,
Duty to his people, to Artemis,
To whom is paid the blood of the cherished.
Instead they long for the familiar,
The market-place of home, the olive tree.
But consent they do to acquiescence,

Musaeus Intuitively, Iphigenia
Knows she does not contradict Artemis.
She remains compatible with the law
That does not regulate her agency.
Thus for endless time, Iphigenia
Walks the caustic path of self-sacrifice,
Yet she does so of her own volition.

Townfolk And then there is belief and confidence,
And then there is love and adoration.

Musaeus She is prescribed to live without leeway
Yet it is an unencumbered pathway.

[Curtain]

ACT FOUR INSIDE THE WEIMAR CASTLE

[A classical ballroom with statues of mythological heroes and lovers, and griffins]

SCENE 1 The Gaze Of The Other (Athena, Townsmen)

[Scene 1: Athena asks if Orestes will commit to offering himself to the rites. His family tragedy was based upon a denial of such responsibilities by his ancestors, but he can shape a new future. She believes he invoked her especially so she could help him find the courage to do this. The townsmen add that the law must be obeyed, and that the gods shall hear the everlasting echoes of the rituals.]

[Iphigenia and the handboys and handmaidens are prepared by the townsmen for the solemn rites. Athena looks on.]

Athena The gaze of the Other is recondite.
It is not elsewhere, not part of the self;
It is infinite and it is nowhere.
There is a charge of diligent virtue.
There is a charge of care, of devotion.
There is no immunity from yielding.
Will this man, who summoned Athena forth
To lend him courage, also step forward?
Orestes shall be offered fit guidance.
At Olympus, the patron of wisdom
I am, nothing other than the Other,
The ethical by phenomenal thought.
I am sponsor of civilization,
Of law and justice, of licit warfare.
My emblem is the spear, tipped with fervour.
This man was astute to call the goddess.
Will Orestes be stirred by such guidance,
By the whetted edge of a scimitar,
And give of himself to the altar-rites?
Thus to be ingested as sacrament
Like, at Aulis, his sister was before?
If there is to be no ram's belly here,
Will there be feast on the tripe of this man
Who shall succeed where before Pelops failed,
Triumph where before there was misery?
This is the Natural Law of Gaia,
She who is primordial deity,
Mother Goddess, benefactor of life.
Her spawning was great, as was her wisdom.
She knew: if rights become elevated

Above charge of responsibility,
If feeble counterweight is brought to bear
Against unrestrained proliferation,
The physical world shall be overwhelmed.
Cronus employed this discernment aptly
He offered his children for the delight
Of the highest of mighty deities.
He watched them grow to adorable youth,
Of beauteous bloom, then slew them at the altar.
He dismembered and consumed of them all.
Demeter, Hestia, Hera, Hades,
And Poseidon; devoured ravenously,
But he was duped and deceived by Rhea,
She who did not perceive his deep insight.
Secretly, furtively, in defiance,
She gave birth to another son, to Zeus.
She kept him from a voracious father.
The boy grew to mighty strength far from sight.
Until at last, he deposed his forebear
And forced the disgorging of the siblings.
All were reconstituted, seized and torn
Away from the maw of the deific.
The reversal of the sanctified rites,
The revival of Zeus' pretty children,
Undoing of the blessed offerings,
The darkest, calamitous tragedy
In all measurement of antiquity.
Gaia mourned the loss for the higher realms.
Thereafter King Cronus was overthrown.
And the shameless profligacy of Zeus
Was greater than anything of before.
Yet there was no thought to Natural Law,
Until the youngest son divined the truth.
Tantalus was born of the union
Between doughty Zeus and the nymph Pluto,
She from among the three thousand daughters
Of Oceanus, the Black Lake patroness.
She consumed the local youths in great stock,
Not hers but of many others to hand,
Always with heightened ceremonials,
Always with recourse to sharpened daggers,
Feeding in the silent and submerged depths,
And imparted to her child great wisdom.
Tantalus divined sacred truth, a sense
Of Gaian law. There was obligation

To reveal ancient learning to the gods.
 He would offer Pelops to the altar.
 With formal observance Tantalus drove
 Into the tall boy, the beautiful youth,
 He who could not in all days understand.
 Tantalus offered the flesh to the gods,
 As Cronus had once before done the same.
 Demeter ate of her fill, shoulder first.
 She was consumed by her father before,
 And relished the extract; she swooned with joy.
 Hestia and Hera were desirous too,
 Even Hades and fluid Poseidon.
 But they and the other Olympians
 Were under the dominion of Zeus.
 They spurned the moment, the truth of Gaia.
 Zeus charged the punishment of Tantalus,
 The disgorgement of Pelops, he who failed,
 Where Orestes has the chance to succeed,
 To fulfil the charge of moral duty
 In the divine orifice forever.

Townsmen Rejoice together with us, you sea-folk.
 You voyagers to the land of splendour.
 The salt alone cannot cleanse the world's ills.
 Yet it cleanses these gifts to the Other.
 We do not pity those at the altar,
 Which drips of blood; the law must be obeyed.
 And those stood within must have fulfilment,
 Driving the blades into bare skin, thus to
 A mighty fire of incineration.
 Bring the treasured offerings before us.
 There is elevated glory in these deeds
 It reaches on into eternity.
 The dead do not hear it in their silence
 But the gods heed everlasting echoes.

[Exit Athena]

SCENE 2 I Need Iphigenia Beside Me (Orestes, Pylades)

[Scene 2: At last Orestes vows to freely tread the path of self-sacrifice. His offering to the knife shall resonate through eternity, merging with the growing clamour, and bring sublime ecstasies to the gods. However Pylades is shamed that he shall live while his friend shall die, but Orestes bids him discard his anxieties and instead

commit to caring for his young wife, who is Orestes' sister. The family line shall thus continue and benefit from an end to the tragedy.]

[Enter Orestes, Pylades and Musaeus]

Orestes I need Iphigenia beside me.
 It is not too late for me to flee, yet
 There is a dagger set on my body,
 And set on that familiar dull thump.
 If 'tis one small sound for one mere instant
 In one tiny corner of the heavens,
 It shall resonate through eternity
 And merge as one with the growing clamour
 To bring sublime ecstasies to the gods,
 Who in turn shall bless my blood descendants
 And all who walk upon this blessed world.

Musaeus Iphigenia refutes the transfer
 Of blameless non-responsibility.
 She cites the simultaneity of
 No-fault for an action of the past, and
 No-fault for the causative transfer of
 No-fault to a deed of the future, and
 Responsibility for the future,
 And thus resolves to her self-sacrifice.
 She who bears no-fault for the politics
 That ensure her death is without recourse.
 She who bears no-fault for the demon that
 Consummates death as unavoidable.
 Yet the girl brings upon herself this death.
 She asserts her freedom of volition.

Pylades You no longer covet your own footsteps?

Orestes I too go to the altar stone freely,
 Yet I want my sister be at my side.
 She shall watch me gored as I once saw her
 She shall feast upon this savoury flesh.
 Where are you now, my beloved sister?
 I shall not falter with her beside me.
 Stand with me, consecrate me; be with me.

Pylades This is a shameful scene that I shall live
 While you die. Folk will say I was gutless,
 A mere ogling voyeur, like these townfolk.

They will have no understanding of things.
They will whisper I abandoned my friend
While clinging to life for my own dear self.
They will whisper I plotted the downfall
Of the Atreus line, only later
To claim it for myself, for my avail,
To bury my own sweet knife in your kin,
To claim your sister and climb on your throne.
I do not choose this path. I prefer the
Bloody sword at my chest, and gulf of fire.

Orestes Be brave, be resolute my cherished friend.
I have dreamed of this moment since the day
I lost my sister; Athena knows it.

Pylades I dread mass scorn; most of all I love you.

Orestes Be at peace my friend. Plainly it would be
A bitter thing for me if I should bring
Unnecessary death upon my friend.
Even if you admire these handmaidens
As much as I, still this is not your path.
Mine is a tragic state, a marvellous
Design, as it is for all my household.
But you need not share in this providence.
Indeed you have your own crucial duty.
In this, my ally, you must not fail me.
You must take my sister as your consort.
In the sons of you and Queen Elektra
My name will last, and Agamemnon's line
Shall not falter; there shall be life anew.
And the trove of blades shall be replenished.
You shall build a tomb in my honour, a
Grave-stone; you and my sister shall weep there.
And tell of how I concluded my days
Run through by a maid beside the altar.
I love you. We played together as youths,
We hunted in the meadows and woodlands.
But now destiny has caught up with me.
I relish the sharp point of this jabbing.
I go to the altar in joy and love.

Pylades I shall guard your kin; I shall build your tomb.

Orestes You must disclose the truth to our offspring.

You must teach our sons and daughters alike
The beauty of a ritual dagger.

Pylades The ancient knowledge is safe in my care.

[Exit Pylades]

SCENE 3 Peace Upon All Who Dwell Gaily By The Rugged Shoreline (Townswomen)

[Scene 3: The townswomen celebrate that the handboys and handmaidens too shall join Iphigenia in the ghostly realm.]

[Enter townswomen]

Townswomen Peace upon all who dwell gaily by the
Rugged shoreline of the blue sea, of the
Soft rolling of green hills. These boys and girls
Shall accompany Iphigenia.
They shall share in the same home, the same dream,
A land of strong horses, forts and towers,
Rich with deep wells and beautiful orchards,
A land of champions and mighty swords,
A land of heroes and whetted daggers.
The same fate as the princess of Aulis
Shall be theirs, forever rent and severed.

Musaeus Artemis, immutable, possesses
The power to take surreptitious steps
To manipulate the world and ensure
Agamemnon kills the deer in the grove.
As it turns out, according to her will,
Agamemnon hunts down and kills the deer
Without any need for intervention.
The king could not have avoided the kill
And all that followed in the aftermath,
Yet still he was fully responsible
For the deed, the kill, which he did himself.
Iphigenia knows that Artemis,
The natural law that governs the world,
Bears the efficacy to ensure that
The princess does not avoid the altar.
But Iphigenia offers herself
Of her own volition, without the need
For intervention from immortal gods.
The girl could not have avoided her death

At the altar, and all that came after,
Yet still she was fully responsible
For the surrender, which she did herself.

SCENE 4 Third Dance - Further Enactment Of Sacrificial Ritual (Handboys and Handmaidens)

[Scene 4: The handboys and handmaidens dance an enactment of the rites.]

Dance - Further Enactment of Sacrificial Ritual

[Exit handboys and handmaidens, townsfolk]

SCENE 5 A Sharpened Implement Is Held Aloft (Furies)

[Scene 5: The Furies celebrate the honouring of sacrificial responsibility and of Natural Law.]

[Enter Furies who confront Orestes]

Furies A sharpened implement is held aloft.
Orestes dreams of this knife in his chest,
A dagger pushing through his lungs and heart,
As Iphigenia did once before.
For this we give thanks; Athena knows this.
He shall inspire these handmaids to the same.
They shall admire the steel-tipped javelin

Musaeus Artemis draws the inevitable,
Yet she cannot explain the causal line.
The ceding was not a contingency,
An act of Agamemnon's handiwork;
It was the resolution of the gods.

Furies Piercing their youthful skins, and driving down;
A vision of wondrous unity
Charming the divine to euphoria.
All their friends and acquaintances shall come,
From every corner of the entire world,
And the blades shall plunge like heavy rainfall,
Drenching the land with rejuvenation,
Inspiring motherhood not to anguish
But courage. Step forth and multiply all!
Rear flocks of siblings for the altar stones
And hear the thundering deluge of blood;
See it, taste it, just like the immortals.

We shall moan in our intoxication.

Musaeus There was no leeway for anything else.
Yet out of this impossibility,
This holy requisite of deathly blade,
Iphigenia found life, found freedom.
The argument from destinism that
No access to alternatives infers
No moral responsibility is
Thus refuted, given no access is
No requirement for moral engagement.

[Exit Musaeus and Furies]

SCENE 6 I Bid Farewell (Athena, Townsman)

[Scene 6: While the handboys and handmaidens are offered for sacrifice, Athena offers blessings to Orestes before returning to the divine realms. Thereafter the townsman declare a prosperous future for humankind and the entire cosmos. At the end, Orestes is sacrificed while Iphigenia looks on blissfully.]

[Enter Athena, townsman, and the handboys and handmaidens, who are offered to the rites]

Athena I bid farewell. To the handmaids I say:
Go forth, courageously, in peace and love
To the blades of zeal and adoration.
To Iphigenia I say the same:
Go forth, courageously, in peace and love.
The Goethian revisions have failed you,
But now, through darkness of oblivion,
To happiness; let the sword stay unsheathed
To inspire the rites uninterrupted
On into everlasting days, this gift
Leading the prosperity of those that
Remain behind. To Orestes I say:
Go too, courageously, in peace and love
To the blades of zeal and adoration.
Go forth, free from the veil of Apollo.
Be not racked with embitterment, fired by
A mother who never perceived the truth.
Go, be not another Pelops, blind man,
Bemused by a father's appetency,
Turning his back on all Gaian mystics,
Wholly misreading his son, Atreus,

The ritual offering of kindred,
The most dazzling star of all, Chrysippus.
This was not rivalry for the throne of
Olympus, as told by Zeus and allies.
It was inspired by the boy's great beauty,
By the fusion of blood with smelted ore,
By sounds of overwhelming penetrant,
Musical blend. To Orestes I say:
If the choice is to flee prickly daydreams
With company of sister beside him,
As told in fables and fiction before,
Then all is not lost. Still perhaps he may
Build a splendid temple to call his own
And tell the tale of Tauris at Weimar
So that men and women joined may sing songs
And proclaim Natural Law through the rites.
Therein the sword, in lieu of one parting,
Shall bless many throats, and still red blood flow,
Likewise the new realm initiated.
The face of the Other reveals new paths.
Its rites seek to diminish deception,
Those mystical spectres, tired and infirmed,
Exposed as fallacy. No longer the
Due of the individual to wealth.
The imperatives of the ecosphere
Above birth right of any one species.
Instead the authentic and tangible,
Of the all-embracing ethical face,
Of the Other. To Orestes I say:
If the choice is to embrace this rapture,
Thus shall live the ancient ceremonies
Bestowed of Gaia from the depths of time.
This man can advance these outcomes greatly,
The one path that beckons above others,
That he shall go now to his ordained home.
Show courage, relent; go, in peace and love
Go with the handmaids, go with the sister
To the blades of zeal and adoration.

Townsmen This place is blessed; the king is sponsor.
He wills the exalted sacrifices.
We are a prudent and heedful people.
We look out across three million years,
Gazing at the ancient footsteps of men,
A mere three millennia to wise words.

We find our origins in the Gaia,
A natural world red in tooth and claw.
Yet we look forward to the common ground,
A realm of kindness and benevolence.
We aspire to a time of glory when
Men can peer across a great stretch of years
Upon these words; we look to the future.
One fine day the extraneous shall come
From beyond al scope of comprehension
And walk upon the surface of this world.
No longer a human-centric cosmos.
Yet the face, this ethical agency,
This precious grasp of semantic language
And abstract thinking, such capacity,
Mind of myth and riddles and metaphor,
Shall make humanity more suitable,
Than any other comestible in
The entire galaxy for ingestion.
However advanced in cognitive sight,
Like any probing civilization
They shall exploit for their own purposes.
They shall not ignore this special resource,
But rejoice in a provision that can
Look upon the gaze of the Other, and
Think for itself, and know it is consumed,
The fare dispensed across the galaxy.
It shall be a fine and wondrous new day
For this thorny altar looks to the stars,
Advances the notion of compliance
And of human oversight of the rites.
This vital ebullience, this dewy
Springtide shall lead the rites and wield the knives.
Even if just one bloom in billions
Sidesteps the altar, all shall be made free,
A never-ending cycle of rapture.
We shall advance in peace and liberty,
Become compassionate, benevolent.
We shall assume moral obligation,
One beside the Other beside the All.
A golden dawn of learning shall arise,
No more the oppression, the injustice.
All shall be privileged to perception.
The beautiful progeny of the Earth,
All shall be raised to greatest potential,
Thus to enhance the feeding, and likewise

The ecstasy of divine offering.

[Athena returns to the divine realms. Orestes is sacrificed by the townsfolk]

[Curtain]