

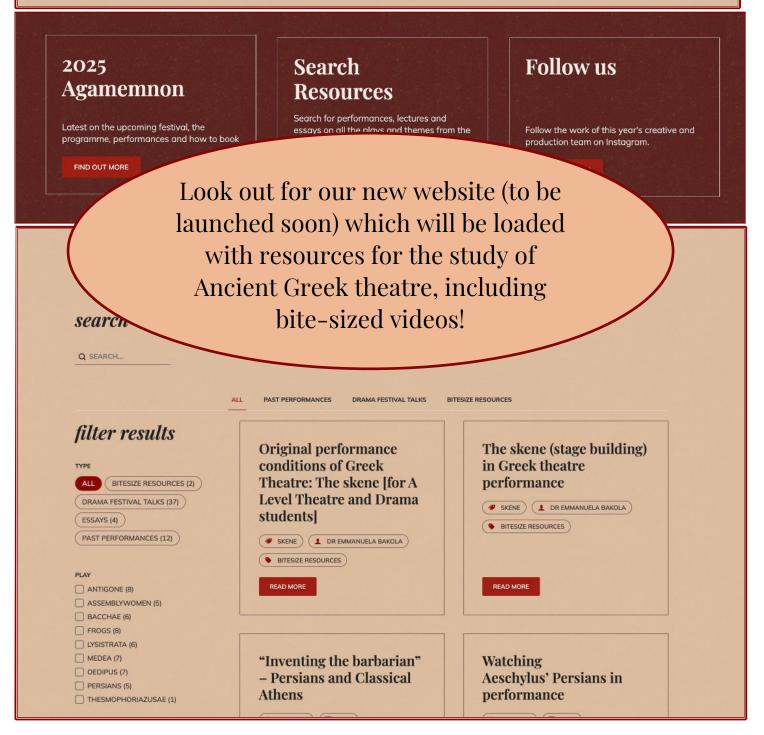
Greek Ver Theatre at Warwick

Annual Drama Festival and Educational Resources

The Warwick Ancient Drama festival has been held every year since 2013. This site documents the festival's productions, academic lectures, programmes and photographic material, and brings these resources together to support and inspire new ways of teaching ancient drama in both schools and universities.

The core ethos of the festival itself and these resources is a recognition of the significance of performance in shaping the meaning of the plays.

The resources collected here, which include bitesize videos, essays and blogs, offer a new pedagogical platform for teaching ancient drama tailored specifically to schoolteachers and their students.



Welcome to Warwick!

Professor David Fearn



Welcome to the Annual Ancient Drama Festival hosted by the Department of Classics and Ancient History at Warwick! Our aim is to introduce students and the wider public to the many meanings of ancient drama through performance and talks. We are very proud of the production that the students have created; we hope you enjoy it!

Here at Warwick, we are passionate about the opportunities Classics offers both intellectually, and in developing the critical skills of analysis, rigour and creativity which are needed in the modern world. In Classics, we study ancient cultures in the round, from a number of perspectives. Our degrees offer study of history, literature, languages, material culture, and philosophy, and use Classics and Ancient History to think afresh about the key concerns of our times - and we've recently introduced a new English and Classical Civilisation joint degree for those interested in exploring the links between both Classical and English literature. If you'd like to find out more about the degrees we offer, and the opportunities they can open up, please do pick up a departmental brochure and sign up for a University open day:

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classics@warwick.ac.uk.

Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, the *Oresteia* and the concept of the Warwick productions

Dr Emmanuela Bakola

Agamemnon was composed not as a standalone play, but as the first part of Aeschylus' trilogy *Oresteia* (458 BC). It is almost as long as the two other plays put together, *Libation Bearers* and *Eumenides*, working as the 'engine' that powers the entire trilogy. It establishes the characters and dramatic action, as well as the central themes and motifs. These continue to be explored and developed in the following two plays, bringing the entire work of nearly four thousand lines to a stunning finale that leads audiences further away from anything they might have expected at the start.

Agamemnon is set in Argos, home of the eponymous king and his brother Menelaus, who in Aeschylus' version is *not* king of Sparta, but crucially, of Argos jointly with Agamemnon. They led the military expedition against Troy together, an event which casts a shadow over the whole play. **After Troy's sack and heavy plundering, Agamemnon returns home with loot, in the only ship of the entire fleet that has survived a terrible storm**. His homecoming, and the Trojan riches that the expedition had set off to take, are at first celebrated by a messenger who arrives to announce that the expedition has been a success, thus suppressing the army's heavy losses and suffering. But this, rather forced, celebration does not last long. Agamemnon's wife Clytemnestra usurps the action by helping reveal the fuller and much grimmer truth and orchestrating Agamemnon's homecoming. She has waited ten long years to avenge the death of their daughter Iphigeneia, whom Agamemnon had sacrificed as a young maiden to facilitate the expedition's sailing. Once Agamemnon sets foot in the house, Clytemnestra murders him alongside **Cassandra, the Trojan prophetess, presumed concubine and most treasured possession of the war's loot.** The play closes with the queen glorifying her husband's murder and assuming full control of the house and the kingdom's power and riches, together with her own lover Aegisthus – also a scion of the Atreid household.

Agamemnon has been performed as a standalone play much more often than it has been as part of the entire *Oresteia* trilogy. As the summary above shows, it is more than capable of standing on its own. It has suspense and intrigue and a powerful and well-developed set of characters, which have captured audiences' imagination for millennia: above all, the regal, sharp-witted and eloquent queen Clytemnestra, who holds all the male characters of the play in her grip, dominating the royal house and our stage with ease; and the Trojan Cassandra who, having already paid heavily for a failed deal with Apollo, ultimately shares Agamemnon's brutal fate at the hands of Clytemnestra. In the wake of twentieth century feminist thought, such powerful female characters have cemented audiences' fascination with the play: Clytemnestra and Cassandra are often referred to as symbols of female resistance against the patriarchy, which in this play is conveyed by the conduct of imperialists Agamemnon and Menelaus, and the cruelty of Apollo.

Thus, the performance history of the *Agamemnon* from antiquity to today often includes little more than a mention of the other two plays. These focus on Orestes' revenge. In *Libation Bearers*, Orestes, returning to Argos (enacting one of the several homecomings which structure the trilogy), is reunited with his sister Electra and kills his mother Clytemnestra to avenge his father. Orestes is then forced to flee Argos to escape the Erinyes (Furies), who hunt him down to avenge the latest murder, i.e. Clytemnestra's. In the final play, the *Eumenides*, Orestes arrives in Delphi to seek protection by Apollo. Despite the god's verbal assurances, Orestes can only find sanctuary in Athens, where he is acquitted in a

court of law. The trilogy ends with an impressive, albeit enigmatic, scene, which focuses *not* on Orestes' homecoming to Argos, but on the 'homecoming' of the Erinyes, cosmic and chthonic deities, who find a new home in Athens as well as an official cult – and thus a firm place in the wider cosmic order. In that impressive finale, from the wandering vagrants that they were before, the Erinyes now become part of the cosmic household led by Zeus and promise to channel their previously destructive energies into a more beneficent order.

This Warwick production has been conceived to allow *Agamemnon* to work both as a standalone play and as part of the *Oresteia*. We have planned for the *Libation Bearers* and the *Eumenides* to be produced together next year, in January 2026, in the same space at the Warwick Arts Centre, and we will make the videorecording of this year's *Agamemnon* (2025) available to audiences to watch in advance so that they might experience the full effect of the trilogy.

This production has also been conceived to convey that *Agamemnon* was largely a reworking of Aeschylus' earliest surviving play, the *Persians* (472 BC), which is where the *Oresteia's* most salient themes appear to have been first developed (as far as we can tell, given the corpus that has survived). Both plays are deeply preoccupied with ideas of imperial greed and its destructive consequences on individuals, communities and the wider world. Both *Persians* and *Agamemnon* convey these ideas through colour and materiality, especially with the use of striking red fabrics that capture both wealth and the precious life that the greed of the powerful can callously destroy for their own enrichment. The production of *Persians* in 2024 conveyed the idea that loss of life is devastating and regrettable, even if it is the life of a hated enemy (as the Persians were for the Greeks in classical Greece). Life itself, and not the accoutrements of power, is ultimately the most sacred wealth.

Devastating loss of life is similarly at the centre of the *Agamemnon*: in almost every performed version of this play one can easily detect a major event that haunts it although the event itself is never shown: the sacrifice of Iphigeneia, Agamemnon's young daughter, whom he killed in order to appease the angry winds that would prevent the expedition from sailing. Thus, in the Agamemnon the theme of violence against the feminine, which had already played a part in the Persians, steps up significantly. The description of Iphigeneia's sacrifice in the words of the chorus -which has subtle, but unmistakable, connotations of sexual violence- is harrowing and informs much of the play, including its dramaturgy. In this production, the profound impact of Iphigeneia's sacrifice is conveyed by the constant presence of the bloodied saffron dress on the stage. This is one of the heavily significant fabric-props which dominate the symbolism of the play, as fabrics do in the *Persians* (and as they did in the 2024 production). However, the haunting presence of the dress accentuates this effect even more. It conveys that harrowing brutality fuels more harrowing brutality and generates more of the same horrors: in her grief and anger, Clytemnestra murders not only Agamemnon but also Cassandra who, in many ways constitutes the mirror image of Iphigeneia.

As in the *Persians*, so in *Agamemnon*, loss of life, loss of the most precious of all wealth, does not concern only individual killings. Numerically, the losses in Agamemnon should be imagined as staggering as they are in the *Persians*. The chorus tells us that scores of Greek men have been turned into dust during the ten long years of the Trojan war: they have become ashes packed in funerary urns and shipped back to their loved ones. It is this dust, and not the golden dust that the expedition's greedy leaders would have wanted, that the sacrifice of so much life has produced. Troy has of course been sacked and looted, but very little of all that loot has survived the journey back to Argos.

Moreover, it is not only ordinary soldiers' houses that have been devastated as a result of the Trojan war: with Menelaus' (and Helen's?) fate unknown in the angry storm that annihilated the returning fleet, Agamemnon is the only royal household member who returns to Argos – only to be killed for starting the war in the first place. **Thus, the play starts with the narration of an ambitious expedition designed to enrich Agamemnon's and Menelaus' palace at Argos** (and, of course, to remedy its losses by taking back precious Helen, whom Paris 'stole', as the play tells us; the language of Helen's marriage to Paris is markedly economic). **And it ends by showing us that the war achieved very few gains.**

What it did achieve was devastation *on both sides* of the Aegean. At least three odes tell us about the extent of the Trojan catastrophe: the royal house and the city have been bled, annihilated and razed to the ground.

What of the other side of the war? The Argive palace, the *oikos* of the family of the Atreids, has not only failed to get richer, but has gone on to do what it has always done to itself. **As a result of its ruling members' inherited and generationally reinforced psychopathology, it has again devastated and bled itself, and will continue doing so.** This is not something the audience needs to have prior knowledge of: during the play we hear about the previous generations' kinmurders, including killing and cannibalism of children. The most recent kinmurder was fueled by the feud between Atreus and Thyestes, fathers of Agamemnon and Aegisthus respectively, over possession of a woman and the palace's rule and riches. Now, by the end of the expedition, Iphigeneia has been murdered, Menelaus is lost at sea, Agamemnon has been brutally killed, and Orestes, who was until recently 'sold' (as the play tells us) into exile, is destined to kill his mother in revenge. Until he comes back to do so, Clytemnestra and Aegisthus are determined to continue killing and crushing opponents to maintain the possession of the palace and its powers. **The Trojan**

war was thus neither success nor failure. For the Atreid household, it was business as usual.

Where will this all end for the royal household of the Atreids? Aeschylean audiences are not accustomed to simple solutions. Aeschylus' theatre does not consider myths and their outcomes merely in a local context, nor even in a context that focuses only on humanity. For this poet, anything that happens 'on the ground' is inextricably linked with, and has wider consequences in, the cosmos. And so it will be for the story of the *Oresteia*.

Come back in January 2026, to experience the cosmic finale of this tantalising play...

Director's note

Fred Brierley



I am fortunate enough to direct *Agamemnon* by Aeschylus this year. I have chosen *Agamemnon* as its morbid and visceral themes really appealed to me. It is the first play of the only surviving Greek tragedy trilogy we have: the *Oresteia*. The *Oresteia* focuses on ideas of justice, revenge, greed and imperialism which are current in any society, including our own. *Agamemnon* is 45% of the total *Oresteia*, so it is an enormous responsibility that I am so fortunate to have. I believe Aeschylus sought to cynically examine justice, war and family in the *Oresteia* by perverting these 'honourable' motifs.

These concepts of Greek thought which are so often construed as ideals, leave a foul taste in this play. This performance is intended to echo last year's production of Aeschylus' Persians and build upon its themes and creative decisions. Aeschylus is a fanatic for dystopic settings, so the costume and set designs are respectively intended to display his affection for this theatrical atmosphere. I have kept the same skeleton of the theatrical building (the *skene*) but ornamented it to represent the opulent Argive palace. The costuming and fabrics further reflect immense wealth, but more shockingly, the callousness with which it is handled. The frivolity of destruction is not only materialistic. Life and wealth are indistinguishable in Agamemnon and their joint destruction is another devastating motif. The casualties of the Trojan war demonstrate this. This careless desolation of life ties into the theme of the 'unseen'. The unseen is a key aspect of Aeschylean theatre which I have focused on. The Erinyes and the death of Iphigenia are two inextricable facets that drive the play's action. I have sought to make these palpable through lighting, set design and props. They represent the unabating drive for Clytemnestra's primitive, bloodthirsty revenge which can often be dismissed or forgotten. The cast and crew have worked extremely hard to make this play come to life, and I am so proud of them for their enthusiasm and insightful collaboration. I am also indebted to my producer, Colleen, and stage manager, Stella. They have managed to keep my head on straight and have helped immensely with the strenuous process of organising a Greek Tragedy. I also thank Dr. Emmanuela Bakola for her supervision and for ushering me to make Aeschylean greatness manifest on stage, and Professor Chris Collard for the translation.

I hope you enjoy.

Producer's note

Colleen Baxter-Locker



This is my second year being part of the Warwick classics play production team, and now I am even prouder to present our production of *Agamemnon*. The challenges and rewards from last year's show encouraged me to stay involved, and this year did not disappoint. The dedication and planning that has gone into this project has been a huge task, but one I have learned so much from and is now a core part of my experience at Warwick.

I would like to thank our incredible crew, first of all. A huge thank you to Avion our lighting and sound designers as well as Tech Crew who, without their skills, knowledge and enthusiasm for our project it would never have become what it is now. We also must thank our costume designer Hana, who for a second year has provided us with stunning, high-quality costumes along with her tireless dedication to our production. A big thank you to Rhianna, our music composer and producer, who has helped us truly elevate this play with her hard work around our amazing music. Susan Doughty also deserves a huge thank you helping up source all the props and has been nothing but helpful and efficient through any stress.

I must of course thank the amazing cast for their commitment to the play, that we have all contributed to and are all so proud of. This cast has been receptive, patient, engaged and, overall, a fun group of people to work with. The backstage crew have also been core in helping the show run smoothly with consistent hard work when and wherever possible.

To Dr Emmanuela Bakola, you have been a constant guide and mentor through this experience, and we value your love and care for our project. We have loved bringing your research to life for a second time.

Finally, to my production team, Fred and Stella, a huge thank you. As a team we have achieved such an amazing product and have stuck together through it all. Both have put in tireless work to create something that we hold so much pride in.

Please enjoy the show!

Stage Manager's Note

Stella Omotade



As stage manager, I am tasked with supporting the logistic side of the play, such as organising rehearsals and coordinating the non-cast teams e.g. makeup, stagehands, photography, but I also got to be involved with the more creative side of the production, something I have been interested in, but never really got the chance to try. This was precisely why I wanted to be involved the play this year and I am very grateful and proud of the work the cast and the production team have done. The chance to deep dive into our interpretation of the classical tragedy and then to represent those ideas onstage through significant details such as

lighting, makeup and movement choices has been incredibly rewarding. All these add up to create a truly remarkable production and I am very excited to present it to the world!

Deputy Stage Manager - Tech Crew Assistant stage manager - Colleen Baxter-Locker Lighting Director - Avion Tech Sound Director - Avion Tech Music Composer - Rhianna Pike Costume Designer - Hana Lawrie Professional Filming- Blunt and Brave, Emilia Moniszko Photographer - Mark Castillo Make-up and hair - Chloe Pearce, Niamh Little, Georgia Carwardine, Anna Morris, Parissa Zeydabadi-Nejad Backstage Crew - Beth Meachem, Darcy Scott-Worrall, Joe Smith, Seth Johnson, Neve Goodwin, Adam James Maybury

Translation: Christopher Collard

Cast

Sommy Chukwuma: Clytemnestra

Stepping into the role of Clytemnestra has been both a profound challenge and a privilege. To me, she is a woman of extraordinary complexity—a powerful, intelligent force, commanding and unapologetically strong in a world that demands submission. For ten long years, she has endured her grief for her daughter simmering beneath the surface. Yet, her rage toward her husband has been quietly growing, even as she is forced to sing his praises. Still, I do not see Clytemnestra as a villainess of myth, but as a mother haunted by loss and suffocated by despair. Behind her commanding presence lies a deep brokenness, a fragility hidden behind her calculated strength.

She is as much a victim of fate as those around her, and her story is one of pain, survival, and revenge. Bringing her to life onstage has been an incredible journey, and I hope to do justice to her depth, her humanity, and her enduring power.

Playing Agamemnon is an exciting opportunity to bring a deeply flawed character to life. He's not just a king or a war hero—he's a man whose treachery make him hard to sympathize with. Despite the name of the play, it isn't entirely about the man himself, but rather what he stands for: power, arrogance, and the fallout of his terrible decisions. Agamemnon's shadow looms over the entire story, shaping the lives of everyone around him. His sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia isn't just a tragic backstory - it's the spark that lights the fire of revenge burning in Clytemnestra.

Jed Kain: Agamemnon



It's an unforgivable act, one that reveals his cold ambition. It illuminates the extent to which he feels justified in bringing triumph to his name, gods and country. What makes playing Agamemnon fun is leaning into his flaws. He's not likable, but he's fascinating. His grand, self-important speeches are dripping with hubris. He's the kind of villain you love to hate, which is what makes his role so compelling. I've thoroughly enjoyed having the opportunity to be a part of this production alongside a wonderful cast. and crew.

Ultimately – as despicable as the Son of Atreus may be – I hope to do justice to such an unjust character.

Cast

Murry Silk: The Watchman

Having watched the Classics Play for the past three years, I am very excited to be finally taking part in my second year here at Warwick as a student in Ancient History and Classical Archaeology. Taking part in the play has been a wonderful experience and I am incredibly grateful to the production team for making this show what it is.

Whilst a small role in the overall play, the Watchman plays an important part in the story by establishing the setting and events that have occurred before the narrative, as well as adding in an aspect of para-comedy



to this otherwise deeply tragic play. It was also interesting to explore this character from a metatextual perspective, looking at the character as a mouthpiece for the playwright himself, and the way that he talks to the audience. This made this small role very interesting to learn and explore. Hopefully you enjoy watching the play.

Matthew Lee: Aegisthus



Aegisthus has been one of the most fun characters I've ever had the pleasure of portraying. And the second I was told in my callback audition to try and channel Joffrey Baratheon and Darth Maul, I knew this was going to be a fantastic experience. Though Aegisthus enters triumphant and powerful with imposing soldiers flanking him in the final scene of the play, it quickly becomes apparent that he's only really playing at being the Machiavellian villain. Working with the director and creative team to find the moments of his speech where we could drop that facade to reveal a more petulant or scared side of his character has been greatly interesting both from an acting

perspective and understanding the text in a classical sense. Aegisthus is the Anti-Agamemnon, for better and worse the opposite of everything the titular king stands for. And Aeschylus communicates the nuances of this comparison fantastically in only a single scene. I've personally found that interacting with the chorus and playing off their improvised performances has really helped to bring these traits out. I truly hope I can do this fantastic character justice and I cannot wait for everyone to see the incredible results of the cast and crew's hard work.

Gio Presotto: Cassandra

From ABBA to Florence and the Machine, from Harry Potter's Sibyl Trelawney to Helaena in House of the Dragon; even the non-classicists in the audience probably encountered Cassandra, the prophetess fated to never be believed, in other media. Even studying Classics for almost three years now, this is the first time I'm looking at a Greek play not for an exam, but for art, to fully understand the character and story so that they can move you, too. It is an honour to have been chosen to act as this prophetess, I can only hope she will take over my mind in the way her visions took over hers, and that for a few minutes I may embody her.



Tymoffi Beckh: Herald A



I play the Herald, who is first to return from the decadelong campaign and subsequent homeward journey across the Aegean. In his jubilant tone, boiling over with stories of gallantry and war, I attempted to capture the feeling of victory which enraptured all his comrades who saw Troy's citadel ablaze. Not far behind, one such comrade follows who has taken a different course, both in his journey home and in his recollection of the events. In our scene, our dynamic serves to explore the tension inherent in the duty of heralds and the trauma which besets the veterans of war.

Toby England: Herald B

The Messenger in Greek tragedy plays a vital and disruptive role, making characters and audience alike aware of often traumatic events that are imagined to have happened somewhere off stage, at another time. Our performance of Aeschylus' play separates the Herald into two characters, on account of his somewhat contradictory focuses – sometimes more positive, sometimes more negative. In order therefore to portray the various horrors of war despite the pleasures of triumph, we offer two characters with very different perspectives of the events they have experienced. As someone who studies the presentation of psychological trauma in tragedy, bringing this somewhat 'new' character to life has been an enjoyable challenge.



Cast - Chorus

Joe License



Oliver Conoby-Gibb



Lexie Geodkoop



Aaron Cox



David Self



Natalia Zvonar



Emily Adcock



Cast – Chorus

Evangeline Iley



Sam Tall







Hols Cotton





Almila Dukel



Cast - Slaves/Mercenaries

Zarah Khokhar



Isabella Jeong



Niklas Kapeller



Warwick Classics Network

www.warwick.ac.uk/wcn



The **Warwick Classics Network** is a thriving community of teachers and academics dedicated to the promotion and support of Classics and Classics teaching in Coventry, Warwickshire and beyond. Led by Dr Paul Grigsby, the WCN is supported by the **A. G. Leventis Foundation, Graham and Joanna Barker**, and the charity **Classics for All.** The WCN has three key objectives:

• To provide teachers of classical subjects with resources, advice, and an active support network. Our WCN website with its teaching resource section STOA is an integral part of this support.

• To promote the teaching of Classics in schools not currently offering Classical subjects on their curriculum. Working alongside Classics for All, we provide information on training and funding available for introducing Classics to schools. The WCN are currently helping to introduce Classics to schools in Coventry, Rugby and Nuneaton.

• To promote the research undertaken by Warwick academics to a wider audience through public events such as our annual Teachers' Day, A. G. Leventis Ancient Worlds Study Day, and through the creation of specialised school resources and opportunities linked to staff research.

Visit us online at www.warwick.ac.uk/wcn to find out more

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FOUNDATION



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