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CONCORD
THEATRICALS

THIS RESTLESS HOUSE

THE BOUGH BREAKS
ELECTRA AND HER SHADOW
Based on Aeschylus' *Oresteia*

by Zinnie Harris

SAMUEL FRENCH

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The three plays that comprise *This Restless House* can be performed on their own or as part of a continuous evening. Together they run at 4.5 hours, and if performed in rep with each other, I suggest part one (*Agamemnon's Return*) plays on its own, then parts two and three (*The Bough Breaks* and *Electra And Her Shadow*) play as different parts of the same evening.

When we first performed this trilogy at the Citizens/National Theatre of Scotland we used ten actors in total plus four children. This meant that the chorus was made up of three actors. It would also work comfortably for larger casts, and then the chorus could be much more substantial. You can divide the chorus lines up however you wish, but they shouldn't speak as a whole group – rather as a bickering and discordant group of old and dishevelled men.

The style and staging is open to future directors; for the first production our references were the Balkan wars and the Eastern European revolutions of the late eighties; but whatever the setting, it should be messy and glamorous in a down-at-heel way and very bloody. There are various songs that should be sung by the chorus and /or the whole company. I have given lyrics, and these can be sung either to an original or existing tune – anything that feels folky and like it comes from the anarchic energy of the chorus.

All of the plays are about love in some way, and they work best if the love is there alongside all the darkness and hatred. Clytemnestra loves Agamemnon, and hence is so torn. Their scene on the hill, in the first play, is where they re-encounter that, and the question we had in rehearsal for that scene was whether or not these two people were ever going to be able to becomes lovers again. Equally in the second play, the starting point should be that Electra loves her mother, and the last thing she would ever do is to hurt her. Her journey is one of separation from her mother and seeing her as she is, rather than as she wants her to be. Also of course having to appease her father's ghost. (In Dominic Hill's production the ghost of Agamemnon was always visible, bloody and itchy in the

background, sometimes coming and sitting among the action; this was very effective, but however you stage it, Agamemnon's influence should never feel far away.) In the third play, love is there too – finally – and at the last moments the little girl comes back on to stage with her suitcase; it should feel as if all the characters remember that love and gentleness have been the things they lost.

Zinnie Harris

THIS RESTLESS HOUSE

This Restless House first performed at the Citizens Theatre in May 2016.

CAST

AGAMEMNON	George Anton
DOCTOR/JORDAN	Adam Best
CHORUS/ IAN	Cliff Burnett
BUTCHER/CHORUS/MICHAEL	George Costigan
AEGISTHUS/CHORUS	Keith Fleming
CLYTEMNESTRA	Pauline Knowles
ORESTES	Lorn Macdonald
ELECTRA	Olivia Morgan
CELIA/MEGAN	Itxaso Moreno
AUDREY	Anita Vettesse
YOUNG ELECTRA	Chloe Chambers
YOUNG ELECTRA	Orla Hay
IPHIGENIA	Rose Hughes
IPHIGENIA	Freya Kane
OWEN	Jonas Lennie
OWEN	Callum McGhie

with Rich McPherson, Mike Moran, Loretta Scott, Annette Stewart and Stevie Thomson-Fitch

CREATIVE TEAM

Writer – Zinnie Harris
Director – Dominic Hill
Designer – Colin Richmond
Composer – Nikola Kodjabashia
Lighting Designer – Ben Ormerod
Movement Director – EJ Boyle
Fight Director – Emma Claire Brightlyn
Assistant Director – Jack Nurse

CHARACTERS

BUTCHER
A SERVING WOMAN CALLED CELIA
CLYTEMNESTRA
ELECTRA
AEGISTHUS
A DOCTOR
ORESTES
AGAMEMNON
AUDREY
JORDAN
MICHAEL
MEGAN
IAN
OWEN
IPHIGENIA
CHORUS

ELECTRA AND HER SHADOW

Scene One

ELECTRA *is holding the knife exactly the same as at the end of the previous play.*

She is shaking.

She is otherwise alone on stage.

ELECTRA Orestes?

Orestes are you there?

don't piss about –

Orestes?

is that you?

I can hear you

She moves around the stage with the knife.

if you're playing a game

then fuck off, fuck off with your teasing

There is a sniffing.

A snuffling, an odd sort of noise. Unsettling. It's not even clear where it comes from.

this isn't funny

don't scare me

Face-less forms seem to be in the shadows, or is it her imagination?

There is a chill, a wind.

stop it, Orestes.

She looks around.

Orestes. Stop it.

stop it.

She is in the middle of a wood.

She looks around.

CLYTEMNESTRA *is sitting in a chair. Blood all down her.*

CLYTEMNESTRA hell my darling

I could see your mouth moving to ask the question

hell is the answer

ELECTRA that can't be you –

CLYTEMNESTRA yes me

ELECTRA *looks around.*

ELECTRA but, how can it be? I just

CLYTEMNESTRA put a knife through me?

well done but now

ELECTRA you're alive?

CLYTEMNESTRA sadly not

very dead and this place...

ELECTRA where's Orestes?

CLYTEMNESTRA gone

the palace gone

everything you know, gone

you know of all my kids I expected this least from you

you were my little biddable poppet

ELECTRA stay away from me

CLYTEMNESTRA I can't even touch you

you might not like being here but look Electra
at least look at me

ELECTRA I'm dreaming, I know I'm dreaming

CLYTEMNESTRA if you wish

ELECTRA get back

ELECTRA *backs away.*

CLYTEMNESTRA oh sweetheart there is a lot worse to come
you have unleashed something

ELECTRA what do you mean?

CLYTEMNESTRA I don't know but can't you hear them?
scratching, sniffing
in the dark when you have your eyes shut
moving about in the undergrowth

ELECTRA I'm not scared

CLYTEMNESTRA you should be
you should be very very scared
you killed your mother. You foolish girl
all hell is coming for you now
you had better run

The sound returns, terrible now. And terrifying.

All around. **ELECTRA** *doesn't know which way to turn.*

The lights change. **ELECTRA** *is on a snow-covered mountain.*

ELECTRA oh god

Her dad is standing beside her, she doesn't see him at first.

AGAMEMNON Electra

ELECTRA please Mum if that's you

AGAMEMNON my baby

ELECTRA what?

AGAMEMNON it's me your father

ELECTRA *looks at him for the first time.*

ELECTRA my father's dead

AGAMEMNON yes ok, but here to help you
you have to fight this, you can't let them destroy you

ELECTRA what are they?

AGAMEMNON I don't know but your mother is behind it
take everything I have, all the power I had
you just have to find their weakness
if they are sent by your mother then they'll have a weakness
arm yourself, find every weapon you can
think like a soldier you have to fight back

ELECTRA *hears the wind again.*

ELECTRA I don't even know which direction they are coming from

AGAMEMNON it's the blood on your hands
that's what is bringing them

She looks down.

She wipes her hands.

ELECTRA there's blood on us both

AGAMEMNON but my crimes do not insult them like yours

ELECTRA I can't fight

AGAMEMNON then keep the window shut

don't let them in
if you can't fight them, keep them out

ELECTRA what window?

The noise starts to come back.

DAD?

She looks about her.

AGAMEMNON run Electra

ELECTRA DAD?

AGAMEMNON run

He has gone.

She is on a beach.

She sits up.

ELECTRA where now?

ORESTES don't ask

ELECTRA Orestes? Thank god
we have to get out of here

ORESTES I wish it was different –

ELECTRA what was different?

ORESTES I am not with you any more

ELECTRA yes you were in the palace beside me
something terrible is after us

ORESTES I was yes, right by your side
but then

ELECTRA no don't tell me

ORESTES we were in the dining room

ELECTRA on the floor

ORESTES you started shaking
this terrible shaking,
Electra I was scared
forgive me please, when I saw what had happened to you

ELECTRA forgive you?

ORESTES I went into a panic
I knew the gods were angry

ELECTRA there are no gods

ORESTES ok creatures older than the gods even
these terrors and spirits
I heard them
I ran out into the field and with a piece of rope

ELECTRA no

ORESTES we broke some rule
I'm sorry Electra
when I saw them coming

ELECTRA we're together, we're together in this

ORESTES not any more
it was your hand holding the knife
it's you they want

ELECTRA you left me

ORESTES I'm no use to you, I never was any use

ELECTRA so be of use now, how do I face this?

ORESTES I don't know what the answer is
I think you should run

ELECTRA where to?

ORESTES who knows?
a place they won't find you

ELECTRA and where is that?

where the hell is that?

where do I run?

The **CHORUS** *come on to stage.*

They sing a song. A song about a woman that runs around the whole world. A woman that never stops running. It's a sort of lullaby, but then gets fucked up. One of them keeps fucking it up. The **CHORUS** *get cross with each other.* **CLYTEMNESTRA** *says she knows this one and joins in. She picks up the story about the woman that ran, it has become scatological. She forgets the rhyme that goes at the end of it.* **AGAMEMNON** *and* **ORESTES** *join in with the* **CHORUS**. *They take a turn. They seem more modern now. Microphones and guitars. One of them is still trying to keep it sweet. What hope for a good ending is there? Does anyone know?*

ELECTRA *even has a solo spot.*

When it comes to her verse, the answer about is there any hope of a happy ending, she has the microphone. She answers.

None at all.

Scene Two

AUDREY *enters carrying a whole load of files.*

She goes over to the filing cabinet. She puts the files in the filing cabinet.

She speaks to a **CHORUS** *member that is in her way.*

AUDREY you shouldn't be here
and I know you are listening because your hand twitches
when you are off in a dwam
Jordan, should you be here?

JORDAN *looks confused.*

JORDAN I think I...

AUDREY exactly.
back out the door, along the corridor
go and sit in the day room
do you want me to ring for the nurse?

AUDREY *puts the files back, ignoring him.*

He still stands there.

She takes down a sweetie jar.

alright, one. Then back to your ward

She opens it, she gives him one.

JORDAN *sucks on the sweet and goes out.*

As he goes he passes **MICHAEL** *on the way in.*

MICHAEL I thought you didn't do that any more

AUDREY it's Jordan

MICHAEL new paper out, shouldn't reward

AUDREY again, it's Jordan

MICHAEL they're all somebody

AUDREY sweet tooth

MICHAEL you brought magazines in for Carol
don't tell me, it's Carol
and special pyjamas for Ted

AUDREY what can I say?
busted.

Beat.

life is miserable enough, isn't it?
the odd sweet

MICHAEL quite but who is going to do that when you have gone?

AUDREY if you've come to try and talk me out of going

MICHAEL heaven forfend. I know when a mind is made up
besides isn't it too late?

AUDREY you could say
could you move over actually? I have to get into that drawer

MICHAEL sorry

He moves a bit. Not enough.

are you sorting it all already?

AUDREY I've got to make a start
you wouldn't believe the amount of crap I have accrued
the case notes are the tip of the iceberg, and most of them
should be on computer

He is still in the way.

can you budge a bit more?

He moves a bit more. An exasperatingly small amount.

not in a clinic?

MICHAEL finished early

AUDREY oh.

He is completely in the way, he moves off the filing cabinet.

MICHAEL Judy says come over to the house, we'll have a meal before you go

AUDREY that would be nice.

Beat.

He stops and looks at her.

She looks at him.

don't

MICHAEL I know.

I won't. But

Beat.

you are the only one that agrees with me around here

once you have gone

AUDREY then get out yourself

MICHAEL where?

it's alright for you, at your time of life

AUDREY Keith won't be here for ever

MICHAEL I don't want to run the department

that's a whole other ball game

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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