

## **Newton Theatre Company's *Iphigenia at Aulis*: Ancient Theatre, Timeless Issues**

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If you've recently passed the steps of Newton City Hall while on an evening walk, you've likely heard and seen women calling to the gods and demanding justice. No, they're not protestors — they're actors.

From Thursday July 26 through Saturday July 29, Newton Theatre Company (NTC) will transform Newton City Hall's magnificent marble steps into a stage and transport its audience back to Ancient Greece with their production of Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*.

*Iphigenia* is the prequel to *The Oresteia*, the trilogy NTC has depicted over the past two summers. It examines the famed House of Atreus at the very beginning of the Trojan War, when patriarch Agamemnon is forced to make the ultimate sacrifice in order to achieve glory for himself and his country. The play begins the infamous cycle of revenge that will take several decades— and lives— to complete.

Melissa Bernstein, Artistic Director of NTC and the show's director, is excited by this year's nontraditional performance.

"I'm so excited about this production because I've cast all women," Bernstein said. "This Don Taylor translation really doesn't let the men off the hook... so I thought it would add complexity to the show to have females playing males."

Several of the actresses involved in the production mentioned how meaningful and empowering it was for them to be able to take on these mythic roles.

"It shows that, as simplistic as it is, we can understand and navigate these issues that some people think, still, women wouldn't be able to," said Sophie Dennis, who portrays Iphigenia.

The cast has also found many political parallels between the play and our world today. Karin Trachtenberg, who portrays Agamemnon, likens her character's struggle to the "impossible situations" that migrant and refugee families grapple with today.

"There's been a lot of attention on immigrant families who are illegally crossing the border, doing all kinds of things to save their families." Trachtenberg said. "They either stay where they are and possibly [risk being] murdered, or come to this country and risk everything."

Whether the subject is a war or a refugee crisis, *Iphigenia at Aulis* illustrates that the conflict between a nation's needs and the weight of its citizens' individual sacrifices has been around for millennia.

"Those who are in power make decisions for the larger picture," said Linda Goetz, who is portraying Clytemnestra for the third summer in a row. "It's always the sacrifices [of

citizens] that [those in power] don't realize — the grief and the loss and the day-to-day-ness of these decisions that they don't consider. War is a necessary evil... [but] it's still the same people who are left behind who have to pick up their daily lives and deal with the decision-making process of those who decide what's good and what's not for the country."

These themes may sound like the makings of a somber evening of theater, but the play is not without its lighter moments.

"I don't think [the all-female version] makes fun of men so much as just parodies them," said Mary Dennis, who plays an Old Man. "They become caricatures of warriors and so we kind of have a good time playing on that."

"I think it just means we can have more fun with it because some things can be done a little tongue-in-cheek," Trachtenberg added, "but I think at the heart of it we're telling the story like anybody would."

NTC's *Iphigenia at Aulis* will be performed at 7:30 PM from Thursday July 26 through Saturday July 29 on the steps of Newton City Hall (rain location: the auditorium at Newton City Hall). Admission to the show is free and donations to Newton Theatre Company will be accepted. A short pre-show talk with Boston College Classics Professor Chris Polt will kick off the show. For more information, please check out: [Newtontheatrecompany.com](http://Newtontheatrecompany.com)