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Iliadic Voicings

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ILIADIC VOICINGS

A libretto by Margaret Guarino-Trier

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Achaean:

Achilles – Son of Peleus, a young hero. Tenor.

Agamemnon – Son of Atreus, leader of the gathered Achaean forces. Bass.

Nestor – An old man from the same region as Achilles. Bass.

Menelaus – Son of Atreus, Helen's first husband, Agamemnon's younger brother. Baritone.

Patroclus – Son of Menoetius, Achilles' friend, from the same region. Tenor.

Briseis – A slave. Lived in a smaller village near Troy and was taken as Achilles' war prize. Alto.

Trojans:

Priam – The Trojan king. Bass.

Helen – A Spartan (Achaean) woman once married to Menelaus, now living in Troy and married to Paris. Soprano.

Hector – Son of Priam, main general of the Trojan forces. Baritone.

Andromache – Hector's wife. Mezzo-soprano.

Other:

Storytellers 1, 2, and 3 – Three women. Soprano, mezzo, alto.

A NOTE ON DOUBLING:

Priam can double Nestor. They both sing in the bass vocal range.

The Trojan Man who appears in Act One, Scene Three can be sung by Patroclus.

When the libretto calls for MEN or WOMEN to sing as a chorus, all respective vocal parts should sing – not necessarily as their characters, but simply to give more power to the vocal lines.

NOTES ON FORMAT:

1 - Throughout this libretto, I have utilized Suzan-Lori Parks' idea of "spells" as a moment where there is an extra space or beat (which I have formatted as an extra line break) in the movement of the scene or dialogue to show unspoken emotion. This includes Achilles' grief breaking out of the narrative form at the end of Act One. The specific actions of this are left open to interpretation. The libretto instead emphasizes the way that this emotion works in the format of the scene.

2 - Sometimes when characters are singing on top of one another, their lines are written out in this libretto as normal. However, in Act Two, Scene One I used the symbol of a / to note specifically when in the Women's phrase Briseis begins her own line.

3 – The Roman numerals throughout this text such as I.A., II.B., etc, mark moments where a new musical idea starts within the scene.

Act 1, Scene 1

I.A.

The Storytellers enter. Three women doing rhythmic, practiced work of carding wool/ spinning/ weaving.

STORYTELLER 1:

Sing with us, Muse,
Of the rage of Achilles.
Shining son of Peleus
Who killed countless Trojans.

Their bodies stayed on the war field
Feeding dogs,
Hungry spirits,
And carrion birds.

STORYTELLER 2:

Let's begin when godlike Achilles
clashed
With Agamemnon, lord of men,
ruler of the Achaeans.

STORYTELLER 3:

Agamemnon, house of Atreus
(Wretched, cursèd house).
He led his gathered army
Through ten years of war.
Ten years of slogging,

STORYTELLER 1:

Filthy,

STORYTELLER 2:

Exhausted war.

STORYTELLERS:

The same heroes,
The same deaths,
Have been sung about through centuries.
Each version in a different light.

Ours is simply one light among many.
One song, one story to keep us company.
Grab your work and settle in.
Sing with us.

I.B.

STORYTELLER 1:

He's here!
The young hero Achilles
Has called a meeting
To address the fiery plague
Spreading through their ranks.

ACHILLES:

Son of Atreus, hear me!
This plague has gone on long enough.

I have spoken to a priest.
The plague is sent by Apollo.
You took the daughter
Of his follower as a slave.
Send the girl back
And the plague will be lifted.

AGAMEMNON:

Haven't I given up enough
To the gods already?

To save our men,
I will send the girl back
If I get something in return.

ACHILLES:

We've looted all we can.
There are no more prizes
Until Troy falls to us.

AGAMEMNON:

You want me to be without honor!
You want my rank for yourself!

In that case –
Send the girl back and lift the plague.
I'll take your prize Briseis instead!

ACHILLES:

My Briseis?
Agamemnon, lord of greed,
How dare you lay claim

To something that is mine?

STORYTELLER 2:

This feels familiar,
Doesn't it?

ALL STORYTELLERS:

Yes.

ACHILLES:

My men fight the hardest.
I bring back the most kills.
I swear this oath to you all:
We will not fight
For Agamemnon anymore.

One day, you will need me.
You will regret offending Achilles!
But I will not come to your aid, no,
not even if you curse me
with your dying breath.

They draw their swords in anger.

I.C.

NESTOR:

Hold.
Both of you
Hold.
Listen to this old man
When he tells you –
Hold.
How the Trojan men
Would leap for joy
If they heard this squabbling.
Hold.

I am old for a reason,
I have walked the earth
and seen many heroes
and fought by their side.
Listen to Nestor
As he gives you advice.

Agamemnon, king,
you are powerful
even without riches.
The girl was Achilles' prize first,
Leave her be.

You, young Achilles,
Listen to your father's old friend.
Don't fight against a king.
He rules thousands of men
Including us.

Both of you
Must cease your fighting
And cool your anger.
Hold.

I.D.

STORYTELLER 1: (*recit*)
But although Nestor spoke well,
The heroes went back to their tents
Fuming in anger.

STORYTELLER 2:
Lord Agamemnon kept his word.
He sent back the girl
To her father and the plague lifted.

STORYTELLER 3:
But he also
sent his men to Achilles
To take the beauty Briseis.
Achilles fumed,
But he couldn't resist.

STORYTELLERS: (*sung*)
Briseis was silent as she was led away.

MEN (CHORUS):
Another day
Another task
Without reward.
If we could rush in now
And seize the city

Then this trial could end.

Swift Achilles has the right idea.
It's been a long ten years here.
As we deliver the girl
back to her father,
we pray O Gods,
deliver us home as well.

My heart shrinks
Like a man without water.
Only the sea or Trojan blood
Will ease our thirst.

Act One, Scene Two
II.A.

STORYTELLERS: (*recit*)
While the Achaean armies
Gathered on the plain,
The Trojans in their high palace
Looked down at them.

PRIAM:
Helen, child,
Come sit by me.

HELEN:
King Priam, I will gladly.

PRIAM:
You know that I don't blame
You for this mess.
It is the will of the great awful gods.

HELEN:
You are kinder than I am, then.

PRIAM: (*sung*)
Can you tell me –
Who is that figure down below?
He's not the tallest one, true,
But he wields power
And greatness around him.

HELEN:

That one is Agamemnon,
 Son of Atreus,
 Leader of the Achaeans.
 King among men,
 And fierce with a spear.

PRIAM:

A fine army.
 I can't help admiring them.
 And those ones there?

HELEN:

There, twisty Odysseus.
 He plays the fool,
 Until he opens his mouth.
 Next to my husband,
 My former husband,
 Menelaus.

PRIAM:

A fine army. Full of heroes
 And the gods who walk behind them.
 I can't help admiring them.
 They could rival the heavens in power,
 these lines of shining Achaeans.

II.B.

HECTOR: (*recit*)

Helen, where is your husband?
 Paris, prince of useless beauty.
 Paris, prince of ruin.
 Even the Achaeans must pity me,
 to have him as a brother!

HELEN: (*sung*)

Hector, your courage commends you.
 If only I were married to a man
 With strength and looks like yours,
 Rather than my spineless husband.

HECTOR:

Your tricks won't work on me.
 Save it for another.

Get that spineless husband of yours
Ready to fight in an hour.

II.C.

STORYTELLERS: (*recit*)
Hector with his gleaming helmet
Went home to greet his wife,
and found her not at the house,
nor praying at a temple,
but pacing along Troy's walls.

HECTOR:
Andromache!
Wife!

ANDROMACHE:
Who calls me?
Does my heartless husband
Remember his wife and child at last?
No, it cannot be my husband,
For if he were here,
Who would be on the battlefield
Throwing himself at the Achaeans?

HECTOR:
It is your husband,
Who had hoped for a happier greeting.

ANDROMACHE: (*sung*)
Happy?
What have I to be happy about?
If you continue in this way,
The Achaeans will surely kill you
And your son and I will be left alone.

Swift godlike Achilles
Killed my father and my seven brothers.
My mother died of grief --
Hector!
You are all that I have.
You are now
Father, mother, brothers, all!
And my mighty husband.
If you die, it would be

Better for me to die as well.

I.I.D.

HECTOR:

I hear you, my wife,
But I cannot stop fighting.
It is against my spirit.

ANDROMACHE:

Is glory more important than your life?

HECTOR:

I know that Troy will fall one day.
No city lives forever, but
The image that pains me most is you --

ANDROMACHE:

You!

HECTOR:

In chains and grieving,
A slave sold to another land.

ANDROMACHE:

Pallid and cold,
On a funeral bier.

HECTOR:

How can I not fight
To prevent this?
I will die before this fate finds you.

(recit)

Enough of this somber talk.
Let me see my son!

ANDROMACHE:

Ah, he doesn't know you
With your helmet on!
Astyanax, don't cry,
Child, it's your father.

HECTOR:

I will take my helmet off
To comfort him.

My son, my son.
 May you be a greater man
 Than your father.
 Lord Zeus, I pray.

ANDROMACHE:
 I pray.

HECTOR: (*sung*)
 Andromache,
 Don't you cry either.
 I'm not dead yet.

Oh, I'm sorry.
 It's alright, it's alright.

Kiss me, love, and go back home
 To do your women's work.
 War is the work of men.

Act One, Scene Three
 III.A.

STORYTELLER 1: (*sung*)
 The Achaeans and Trojans faced each other again,
 Going through the motions of killing and dying.

STORYTELLER 2:
 Without Achilles' forces
 The Achaeans felt the difference.

STORYTELLER 3:
 But their leaders were heroes in their own rights,
 And they held the line from breaking.

STORYTELLERS:
 The sons of Atreus fought like wolves.
 But when Menelaus defeated a young Trojan man,
 He cried out --

TROJAN MAN:
 Menelaus, lord,
 Please don't kill me!
 I'll live as your slave instead –
 Show mercy to this lowly man.

MENELAUS:
You are lowly.
I will make you a slave.

AGAMEMNON:
You would show mercy?
To the man who stole your wife away?

TROJAN MAN:
That wasn't me,
It was god-cursed Paris!
I'm not even a servant.

AGAMEMNON:
Menelaus.
Kill him.
Don't show such weakness
In front of our men.

A beat.

STORYTELLERS:
On the advice of his brother,
Menelaus drove his spear through the man's heart
And cut off his cries.

AGAMEMNON:
After all this time,
You still need big brother's help.
I don't mind – it's my duty.

STORYTELLERS:
Menelaus didn't answer.
He only turned away.

Act One, Scene Four
IV.A.

STORYTELLER 1: *(recit)*
Standing on a Trojan tower,
Lovely Helen watched
The armies fight.

STORYTELLERS: *(sung)*

My child,
Let us tell
You a story.

HELEN:
Mothers,
I am listening.

STORYTELLERS:
Have you heard about
Iphigenia?

STORYTELLER 3:
Poor Iphigenia.

STORYTELLERS:
The Achaean armies were beached,
Their ships wouldn't sail.
The priest begged Great Artemis.

Agamemnon, lord of men,
Told his wife
That Iphigenia would be married.
They sent her off
In a wedding veil.

Great Artemis had answered,
She wanted a sacrifice
If the men were to
Make it to Troy.

Poor, sweet Iphigenia.
They say she cried out once –

STORYTELLER 1:
Daddy!

STORYTELLERS:
Before they bound her mouth
And lifted her like a goat
Face down onto the altar--.

HELEN:
Stop!
My God,
I can't hear anymore!

Why are you telling me this?

STORYTELLERS:

Everyone's talking about it.

IV.B.

HELEN: (*recit*)

My poor sister.

My poor niece.

Iphigenia,

I remember her now.

Maddening Aphrodite,

What horrors have been set into motion?

What have we done?

(*sung*)

As a princess of Sparta, I served as priestess.

I prayed for blessings for my city

And for love.

I was won by a king

As a present for his brother.

Shining-haired Helen,

What a prize!

Bore a daughter too young

And tried to forget her.

I know that I left her alone.

Then there was Paris

Like the answer to a prayer.

Dropped into my bed by Aphrodite.

I know what they say,

And I know what this has caused,

But I swear

I did it for love.

Goddess Aphrodite,

This beauty is both power and curse.

How can one face launch a thousand ships?

The winds of time erase

Even the loveliest of statues.

I don't want to be forgotten.

Call me a bitch-whore, call me a fool.
 Make me the villain of their stories –
 I don't care!
 As long as they tell stories about me.

Beautiful, awful Helen.
 I would not mind that legacy.
 Let me be known for love.

Act One, Scene 5
 V.A.

Achilles' tent. Patroclus enters.

PATROCLUS: (*recit*)
 I saw Briseis.
 Agamemnon hasn't touched her,
 But he's keeping her under close guard.

ACHILLES:
 That bastard.
 Just thinking about it makes me angry.
 Things that are mine should stay together.

PATROCLUS:
 People.

ACHILLES:
 What?

PATROCLUS:
 Briseis isn't a thing, she's a person.

ACHILLES:
 Right, that's what I meant.
 Good thing I have you here, Patroclus,
 To watch my language.

STORYTELLERS:
 Great Achilles, lord!
 A group comes to see you.
 King Agamemnon,
 Red-haired Menelaus,
 And your elder Nestor.

ACHILLES:

They are welcome here.
He'll beg me for help,
Wait and see.

PATROCLUS:

And you'll stop feuding with him?

ACHILLES:

Come, let's prepare a feast fit for a king.

V.B.

AGAMEMNON: (*sung*)

I come to you humbly, son of Peleus,
On behalf of our people.
I am willing to admit that I was wrong.

Our army needs you,
God-blessed Achilles.
Join us again and fight.

ACHILLES:

When I captured eleven cities
From Troy's rich lands,
Did Agamemnon give treasure fairly?
No!
Did the sons of Atreus learn
Their lesson from lovely Helen?
No!
Did Agamemnon stop himself
From stealing the woman I held as wife?
No!
So why should I fight for them?

If I stay here to fight,
I will die on Troy's gray plains,
But the ages will sing of me.

If I go home,
I'll lose my chance at glory,
But I will live in my father's house
for many long years.
He'll pick out another woman for me.

I would rather live an obscure life and be happy
 Than die and be honored.
 In the morning, I will leave you and go home.

V.C.

NESTOR: (*recit*)
 Achilles, dear child,
 Will you truly leave?

ACHILLES:
 Yes.
 Nestor, I will not force you
 To go with us.
 But if you want to return
 Back to our home,
 There is a place for you on my ship.

NESTOR: (*sung*)
 I will tell you of this deed
 As I heard it long ago.

The great hero Meleager!
 His city needed help
 To save them from outside invaders.
 But he had been angered
 And would not assist,
 Only lying apart with his wife,
 Cleopatra.

His people, his family, his priests
 All begged him
 But still he would not lend aid.

When all was almost lost
 And the invaders were at the gates,
 Who then asked? – Cleopatra.
 She wept and pleaded
 And moved his heart.
 Clever, lovely Cleopatra.

Meleager fought and saved his city,
 But his people had lost all their love for him.

(*recit*)

Dear Achilles,
 Don't follow Meleager's path.
 Better to join us again now.
 If not, your honor among men will be lost.

ACHILLES:
 I don't care about honor.
 Zeus is the only one
 Who will judge me.
 I have already made my decision –
 Don't think that you can change my mind.
 I will warn you not to anger me.

MENELAUS:
 Let's go – he has turned his back
 On friendship or righteousness.

ACHILLES:
 Have I?
 Was it friendship or righteousness
 What you did to me?
 Tell the others what I have said
 And see how quickly they leave you too.

AGAMEMNON:
 We have overstayed our welcome here.
 Son of Peleus.

ACHILLES:
 Son of Atreus.

PATROCLUS:
 Nestor, old father,
 Will you go home with us tomorrow?

NESTOR:
 I will not.
 Think on what I have said, Patroclus.

Act One, Scene Six
 V.I.A.

STORYTELLER 1: (*recit*)
 In the middle of the night,
 The Trojans pulled a daring move.

They stormed the Achaean ships –

STORYTELLER 2:

The ones that had brought them here
And would, gods willing,
Bring them home again.

STORYTELLER 3:

Now these ships were burning
And the men they had carried
Shouting in a panic.

STORYTELLER 1:

Agamemnon, son of Atreus,
Rode quickly to each camp,
Prodded each leader with fighting words –
Calling them to battle
On their honor,
On the names of their fathers.

STORYTELLER 2:

It worked, and the Achaeans drew together.
Agamemnon is the leader of men for a reason.

STORYTELLER 3:

But even so,
The Achaeans were dying
And desperate.
Burning ships lit up the night.

VI.B.

(Achilles' tent.)

Patroclus enters.

ACHILLES: *(recit)*

Good, you're finally back.

PATROCLUS:

Achilles.

ACHILLES: *(recit)*

Why are you crying
Like a little child?

PATROCLUS:
Achilles.

ACHILLES: (*recit*)
Don't tell me
You grieve for the Achaeans?

PATROCLUS: (*sung*)
Nestor's son died today.
Achilles.

I am begging you,
Son of Peleus,
Greatest of our people.
Help them.

You might as well have been born
From the rocks and the oceans,
So massive and uncaring is your rage.
I am not godlike or destined for greatness
But I can't sit and watch them die.

Even if there is a prophecy
Of death that you're afraid of,
I will hold it back
From you.

Dress me in your armor,
Let me lead the ranks.
I am begging you.
Help them.
Help them.

ACHILLES: (*recit*)
Why do you ask me for this?
I'm not cowering –
I swore that I would not give up
My rage with Agamemnon!

But you're asking me...

PATROCLUS: (*sung*)
Dress me in your armor,
Let me lead the ranks.
We must help them.

I am begging you.

ACHILLES:

... Get up.

Rouse our men.

Wear my armor.

Go and win glory for our people,

But Patroclus! Listen closely.

Do not attempt to take Troy.

Only drive the Trojans back

From our ships tonight.

No matter what god seizes you,

Save some glory for the rest of us!

You and I will watch those towers fall

Beneath our swords together.

But not tonight.

PATROCLUS: *(recit)*

I understand.

V.I.C.

Achilles helps Patroclus dress in his armor while the other men fight and sing.

MEN (CHORUS): *(sung)*

Slaughtered,

Roaring,

Driven like animals

Back to our camp.

The man who just died

Was a carpenter's son.

That one, a servant's.

That one, a king's.

I share a tent

With my brother beside me.

A spear just crushed

through his head.

Oh gods above us,

You see everything.

We might die today.
Please let my death be quick.

ACHILLES:

Warriors!

The battle you want is here –
Go and fight the Trojans!

STORYTELLERS:

Patroclus emerged like a god
in Achilles' shining armor,
Their men fresh and ready for battle.

The cry went up around the field
As the Achaeans recognized:

MEN:

Achilles, son of Peleus!

STORYTELLERS:

And Patroclus,
Son of Menoetius,
Did not correct them.
Instead he hit one of the Trojan generals
With his great spear,
Cutting him down instantly.

Relief swept through the
Achaean army.
Fear swept through the Trojans.
The real Achilles, alone in his tent,
Prayed for Patroclus' safe return.

AGAMEMNON:

Achilles and his men have joined us!
Achaeans, bolster your courage –
We won't die today!

HECTOR:

Why are you retreating?!
Any Trojan who runs away now,
I'll kill him myself!

STORYTELLERS: (*recit*)

The battle broke out again.
This time, the advantage was

Firmly on the Achaean side.

They fight. Music.

STORYTELLERS:

Patroclus pushed the Trojans back
To the base of their city walls.

Blood and battle-frenzy
Ringing in his ears,
Patroclus tried once –
Twice –
Three times –
To scale the walls of Troy.
The Achaeans pounded on the base.
But each time, Patroclus was thrown down.

He tried a fourth time and fell,
Harder,
Back into the cluster of men
Grappling with each other.
And his helmet fell off.

That shining armor
Had been made to fit Achilles.
Now, Patroclus stumbled –
Distracted, he tried to fix it,
To keep it on his body.

The Trojans
Descended upon him
Like a hailstorm
And began to tear it off him.

MEN:

Godlike Achilles,
He bleeds.
A man like any other.

Patroclus is mobbed and begins taking heavy wounds. A spear stabs his thigh – another one stabs his back. He drops his shield.

PATROCLUS:

If I stay in this battle,
I won't survive.
Get back to the Achaean line!

Why am I so far forward?
Achilles warned me about this.

STORYTELLERS:

If he could get back to the line,
If he could get back to his people,
Maybe he could escape the death
Calling his name.

Mighty Hector
Saw his chance –
Shoved his spear into Patroclus,
Impaled him through his stomach.
The point of the spear emerged from his back.

The armies freeze. A beat of horror.

HECTOR:

Did you think that Troy would fall today?
Did you think you'd be the one to ruin us?
You will not capture our wives
and kill our children –
Not while I live to turn this fate
Away from their doors.

Did Achilles order you to kill me?
Fool.

PATROCLUS:

Hector.
Boast if you want to.
You haven't killed me.
The gods did.
You merely
Finished me off.

You won't
Live long.
For this,
I see
Your
Fate.
You
Will die
By the
Hands

Of
Achilles.

STORYTELLERS:

He couldn't speak anymore.
Death claimed him
And set his soul free,
O great-hearted Patroclus.

HECTOR: (*recit*)

Dying men always say such things.
Perhaps I will kill Achilles first.

STORYTELLERS:

You mean, before he kills you?

Hector looks at them, his dread rising, then turns away. He takes his spear out of Patroclus' body.

V.I.D.

MENELAUS:

Patroclus is dead!
Achaean, to me!

TROJAN MEN:

His body
And armor
Belong to us!

MENELAUS:

Come and fight me for it, then!
No one gets past me.

Fighting breaks out again.

MENELAUS:

Come guard the body!
Leave the armor –
It's lost to Hector!

MEN:

Leave the armor,
Give me the armor,
Leave the body,

Give it to me!
Let it rot,
Let us tear it,
Let us stand
and protect it from harm!

V.I.E.

MENELAUS: (*recit*)
Where's my brother?

AGAMEMNON:
I'm here!
I'll help you carry it.

STORYTELLERS:
The two sons of Atreus
Swiftly carried the corpse free
From the battle,
Back into camp,
Over to the ships,
And set it down gently
On the ground.
A last service to their comrade
Patroclus.

(*Achilles enters.*)

STORYTELLERS:
And they realized,
After all this time,
No one had thought to tell Achilles.

ACHILLES:

ACHILLES:

ACHILLES:

[END OF ACT ONE]

Act Two, Scene 1
VII.A.

All women onstage together as Achaean slaves. Patroclus' dead body lies in the middle.

Briseis enters.

STORYTELLER 1: *(recit)*
Briseis, you're late.
Where have you been?

BRISEIS:
In Agamemnon's tent,
Watching him watch me.

STORYTELLER 2:
He's sent you back now?

BRISEIS:
Yes.
But not fast enough.

STORYTELLER 3:
We should begin.
It's time to wash the body
And prepare it for
Burial rites.

WOMEN (CHORUS): *(sung)*
May your soul find rest
In the fields of fallen heroes.
May your ashes find their place
In the hollows of the earth.
May you sleep evermore,
All your pain left behind you.
Be at peace. Be at peace.

May your soul find rest
In the fields of fallen heroes.
May your ashes find their place
In the hollows of the earth.
May you sleep evermore,
All your pain left behind you.

BRISEIS:
Oh, Patroclus.

Ill-fated friend.
 You were the only one
 Who was kind to me
 When I first was brought
 To this place.

I know how you spirits must feel.
 Ripped away from your bodies.
 Watching in silence and shame.

When I die,
 Will women sing songs for me?
 Will they cry and pray
 Over my corpse?
 Or will my name
 Be forgotten,
 My body thrown away?
 Remembrance is a privilege
 For heroes – not for me.

WOMEN:
 May your soul find rest.
 May your / (soul find rest.)

BRISEIS:
 Oh, Patroclus.
 This slave pities you.
 To die so far from home.

WOMEN:
 May you sleep evermore,
 All your pain,
 All your pain,
 All --

BRISEIS:
 If we cry for ourselves
 we get beaten.
 But at least I can cry
 For you!

Let me scream,
 Let me bite,
 Let me rip my skin away.

My name is Briseis.

My name is Briseis.
 I'm crying for my friend.
 This is how
 Briseis mourns.

VII.B.

The Women continue humming their funeral hymn. Achilles enters.

ACHILLES: (*recit*)
 What are you doing?
 Get away from him!

BRISEIS:
 We're only
 Washing the body.
 Preparing for the funeral.

ACHILLES:
 Stop,
 You can't –
 You can't change his smell, his –
 Don't do that anymore!

The women exit. Briseis stays.

(The Storytellers pick up their work and move back to their usual spots on stage.)

BRISEIS:
 Achilles, lord,
 We have to honor him correctly.

ACHILLES:
 I don't want you to touch him!
 How can I let fire eat him,
 Reduce him to nothing?
 I thought you of all people
 Would understand.

BRISEIS:
 You won't bury him?
 You'll make him rot in the air?

ACHILLES:
 Enough.

BRISEIS: (*sung*)
You are selfish.
You will damn him.
While you keep him here
He cannot rest.
Give him his proper rites.

ACHILLES: (*recit*)
I said, enough!

I should have let Agamemnon
Keep you.

He exits.

BRISEIS:
You should have killed me
When you burned my village to the ground.

She exits.

VII.C.

Menelaus enters.

STORYTELLER 2:
What is he doing?

STORYTELLER 3:
Pacing,
Worrying,
Thinking about his absent wife.

MENELAUS: (*recit*)
You women, sing
A story to me?

STORYTELLER 1:
Son of Atreus,
What kind of story would you like?

MENELAUS:
I don't know.
Something fitting for a man.

For a king.

STORYTELLERS: (*sung*)
Perseus slaying the Medusa.

She was beautiful and deadly,
One sister of three.
When men looked upon her
They would die.

Brave young Perseus
Cut off her head.
She cried out
And writhed on the floor.
From her body came
A winged horse,
Which Perseus used to fly home.

MENELAUS: (*recit*)
Do all of your stories end in death?

STORYTELLERS: (*sung*)
Perseus freeing Andromeda.

The most beautiful woman
In the whole world
Was chained to an ocean-side cliff.
A sacrifice for a monster.

Perseus, flying,
Appeared just in time.
He petrified the monster
With Medusa's bleeding head.
Freed lovely Andromeda from her chains
And married her
And she fled home with him.
They had many children and lived
Happily ever after. The end.

MENELAUS:
I see.
Marriage or death.
Marriage or death.
Isn't there a third kind of story?

STORYTELLER 1:

Like what?

MENELAUS:

Like...

Maybe Perseus knew Medusa
Before she turned into a monster.
Maybe they were friends, almost.
She was beautiful.
They got along well enough,
He had thought.

STORYTELLERS:

Perseus has to kill Medusa,
Or he won't be able to live
Happily and marry Andromeda.

MENELAUS:

I know!

I know he has to kill her, I know!

I just think

There should be a third
Type of story.

STORYTELLERS:

Son of Atreus,
Aren't you writing one right now?

MENELAUS:

Can you tell me how it ends?
Death
Or marriage
Or something else?

STORYTELLERS:

You're the only one who knows.

Act Two, Scene Two
VIII.A.

STORYTELLER 1:

Let's check back in with Achilles.

STORYTELLER 2:

He's not doing well.

STORYTELLER 3:
 By night he sobs and
 Embraces a corpse.

By day he slaughters
 And the plain turns red with blood.

STORYTELLER 1:
 He killed so many
 That the flow of gore
 Almost changed the course
 Of a nearby river.

STORYTELLER 2:
 Bloody, sluggish river,
 Bloody, flooded fields,
 And in the middle of it all,
 Bloody, raging Achilles.

STORYTELLERS:
 Outside the walls of Troy,
 Hector waited for his death,
 Gripping his spear with sweating hands.

The rest of the Trojans
 Watched from inside the walls,
 But he wouldn't retreat.
 He had to try.

HECTOR:
 Lord Zeus,
 Protect me.
 Let me kill him
 And go home.

PRIAM:
 My son...

ACHILLES:
 Hector!
 I will kill you and eat you raw!

They fight. Music.

STORYTELLERS:

Little sister, come quickly
 To the battle at the walls.
 They're fighting –
 Your Hector and that raging Achilles.
 This will end one way or the other.

ANDROMACHE:
 I am coming.
 Gods, protect us!

ACHILLES:
 Run if you want!
 I will keep chasing.
 Don't you know who I am?

STORYTELLERS:
 Swift, godlike Achilles.

Hector stops running and faces Achilles. They fight more.

ACHILLES:
 I will leave your body
 To be eaten by dogs
 And ghosts
 And vultures.

HECTOR:
 Wait –

ACHILLES:
 Isn't that what you planned
 For Patroclus,
 When you took his armor?

HECTOR:
 Kill me if you can,
 Son of Peleus.
 But don't disgrace my body so.
 It isn't honorable!

ACHILLES:
 You think you can
 Beg me!
 You think you can
 Speak of honor!
 The time has passed

For little things like that.
 There is no agreement
 Between lions and men.

His spear lands a blow – wounding Hector deeply.

ANDROMACHE: (*not sung, screamed*)
 NO!

Hector turns to look at her. The battle music fades – their musical motif plays.

Achilles spears through Hector's body. He falls.

VIII.B.

STORYTELLERS:
 Dead!
 Hector,
 Strongest of Trojans!

WOMEN (CHORUS):
 Woe...

HELEN:
 Hector, my heart mourns for you.
 You were kind to me,
 You called me sister.
 What grief!

WOMEN:
 What grief!

HELEN:
 What cruelty!

WOMEN:
 What grief!

HELEN:
 Your royal parents,
 Listen how they cry!

PRIAM and WOMEN:
 My son!

ANDROMACHE:

I should smother this child.
It's a kinder fate than the gods will give him.

Wake up, Astyanax,
Pick your head up from my breast.
Look at your father!
He left us behind!

She throws herself forward and is restrained by the women.

HELEN:

Andromache!

WOMEN:

Andromache!

ANDROMACHE:

Get your hands off me,
Helen,
Murderer!
Or better yet,
Keep holding on,
And I'll do what no man
Has been brave enough to
And throw your body over the walls!

HELEN:

...It won't bring him back.

STORYTELLERS:

Wait, look,
What is he doing?
Raging Achilles,
Not satisfied yet.

He's piercing through
Hector's ankles.
Attaching him
To a chariot.
Dragging his body
Around the walls!

WOMEN:

What cruelty!
What grief!

WOMEN + PRIAM:
My son!

Music.

ANDROMACHE:
Hector
Hector
Hector

Act Two, Scene Three
IX.A.

STORYTELLERS: (*recit*)
As he slept that night,
Achilles had a dream
In which Patroclus
Appeared to him.

ACHILLES:
It's you!

PATROCLUS + STORYTELLERS: (*sung*)
Achilles,
Burn my body.
While you keep me here
I cannot rest.
Give me my proper rites.

ACHILLES: (*recit*)
Don't go.
Stay here a little longer.
Wait –
Let me hold you again!

He wakes up and reaches out, but finds himself alone.

ACHILLES:
A dream,
That's all it was.
Or was it him,
Speaking to me once again?

(sung)

No one else must ever
Have felt grief like mine.
If they did, how could the world
Keep on turning?

I don't want
To watch your body burn and become nothing.
I don't want
To leave you in this foreign ground.

But I will do it
Because you asked me.

IX.B.

STORYTELLER 1: *(recit)*
The funeral games for Patroclus
Were finally held,
Much to the Achaeans' relief.

STORYTELLER 2:
There were sacrifices and feasts,
And many festival games.

STORYTELLER 3:
King Agamemnon did not compete in the games,
For Achilles handed him a fine prize
Without prompting,
A beautiful sword for the ruler of men.

STORYTELLER 1:
The Achaean warriors went home satisfied,
But godlike Achilles kept his grief in his heart,
Even when the funeral pyre burned out.

STORYTELLERS:
He gathered the ash and bone of Patroclus,
And put it in a golden urn.
He made plans for when his own death came,
That their bones might be mixed together.

Act Two, Scene Four
X.A.

Achilles walks back into his tent, where Briseis is cleaning.

ACHILLES: (*recit*)
They all tell me that
I should be done mourning.
I will never be done.

BRISEIS:
You did what was right.
He can rest now.

ACHILLES:
I know.

BRISEIS:
Will you ask me to stay?

ACHILLES:
No.
Leave me be.

She exits. He sits in silence for a while, still grieving.

X.B.

ACHILLES:
Who's there?

Priam enters slowly.

PRIAM: (*sung*)
Remember your father,
Great godlike Achilles.
He sits by the hearth
In his old age.

Do you think of your father,
Young son of Peleus?
He waits for news of his child.
Alive, honored, and safe.

ACHILLES:
Old man,

You should not be here.

Please, sit down.

PRIAM:

I have fifty sons and
Fifty daughters and now
Most of them are gone.

My firstborn son,
We named him Hector.
He was my greatest pride.

My son,
He grew up so quickly!
When he was young,
He would ride on my back.
We would look at the horses together.
My son...

ACHILLES: (*aside*)
I could kill him now,
As he sits beside me.
It would be so easy.

But he's a king,
And he is my guest,
And I cannot do him wrong.

(*to Priam*)
You come to me asking for mercy!
Haven't you heard of my rage?

PRIAM:

He is already dead.
Let us bury him.

ACHILLES:
Hector killed Patroclus.
Do you think that I care?

PRIAM:

All I ask is for the body.
Your revenge is finished now.
Don't condemn his soul.

Let us bury him.
Give him his proper rites.

My firstborn son,
We named him Hector.
He was my greatest joy.

ACHILLES:
I could kill you now,
As you sit beside me.
Why should I hold back?

PRIAM:
He has a son
And wife and mother,
Let them grieve for him.

ACHILLES:
There is no one else
Who knows grief like mine.

PRIAM:
Don't condemn his soul.

ACHILLES:
Do not anger me.

PRIAM:
Let us bury him.

ACHILLES:
Why should I let you bury him or

BOTH:
Give him his proper rites.

PRIAM:
The one
Most beloved of my heart
Is gone.

Achilles looks at him – startled by this phrase, hearing his own grief reflected in it. He starts to sob.

Priam puts a hand on his back. They cry together.

Music.

X.C.

ACHILLES: (*recit*)
 Take the body and go.
 How many days of peace
 Do you need for the funeral?

PRIAM:
 We need twelve days.

ACHILLES:
 You shall have it.
 I will make sure
 The other Achaeans
 Follow this truce, too.

PRIAM:
 I thank you.
 I should leave now,
 Before dawn rises.

ACHILLES:
 I will give you
 A cart and a horse
 And an escort
 If you wish.

PRIAM:
 No,
 I will carry him myself.
 In my arms,
 On my back,
 As a father should carry his son.

Priam straps Hector's corpse to his back. He begins to walk away. Achilles watches him go.

X.D.

STORYTELLERS: (*sung*)
 This is where we leave them, as
 King Priam brings his son back to Troy.

There will be other stories to tell.
But our work is finished now,
So our story ends here.

Let's watch for a little longer.
We don't have to go just yet.

King Priam carries Hector –
Great-hearted Hector,
Hector his son,
Hector breaker of horses –
Back home
Towards the walls of Troy.

As the Storytellers silently witness this moment, Briseis enters to stand beside them.

Helen enters to stand on the other side. Andromache walks onstage to stand beside Helen, holding the baby Astyanax.

They watch.

[FIN]