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Blaike Cheramie

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ἜΠΙΟΣ:
A MUSICAL CONCEPT ALBUM ADAPTATION
OF HOMER'S *ILLIAD*

by
BLAIKE M. CHERAMIE

SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS

PROFESSOR KEIM
PROFESSOR ROSELLI

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Introduction

“In talking about Homer, however, we do well to remember how very heterogeneous and numerous are those who wish to claim him as part of their heritage, and to bring as many of these heirs into the conversation as we can. The demolition of intellectual boundaries...while entailing many risks and terrors, brings also exhilaration, liberation, and reward.”

- Robert Fowler, *The Cambridge Companion to Homer*

The idea to turn the *Iliad* into a musical came to me in the midst of a conversation with my father. He confessed to me that he had tried many times to read the illustrious epic and had even bought it on Audible, but he came to the same destitute conclusion every time: it just wasn't interesting enough. Now of course, what he meant in saying that was however interesting the *Iliad* actually might be, it wasn't interesting to *him*. Similar to the case of my father, the *Iliad* is an afterthought or a remnant of high school literature requirements in the minds of most people. At best, one might become acquainted with the tropes and primary characters' names enough to crack a joke about a Trojan horse or to identify a torn Achilles tendon. The primary issue of today is that readers struggle to connect with the Homeric epic over boundaries of elaborate translations, long books, and catalogues of ships. However, in recent years, there has been a trend of artists forging connections between the ancient world and modern audiences through media. The field of Reception Studies is growing immensely with the constant development of entertainment through media. Lorna Hardwick describes Reception Studies in her book bearing that title as a genre which gives insights into both the current culture as well as the ones that shaped a text's journey from antiquity to modernity.¹ Therefore, adaptations of ancient stories into art forms such as movies, musicals, and albums can reveal much about today's societal

¹ Hardwick, Lorna. *Reception Studies, "From the Classical Tradition to Reception Studies"*. United Kingdom, Oxford University Press, 2003.

norms in addition to those of the budding entertainment industry of the 20th century, for example.

Anaïs Mitchell, American singer-songwriter and creator of *Hadestown*, has brought Greek myth to the homes of hundreds of thousands of eager audiences through her concept album and off/Broadway cast recordings. She adapts the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice into a folk-jazz-rock musical in an Americana cocktail of epic proportions. The Coen brothers dropped Homer into the Southern tradition with their award winning comedy-drama musical adaptation of the *Odyssey* in *O Brother Where Art Thou?*. In the world of popular music, Bob Dylan and the Doors employ classical themes in their respective pieces “Mother of Muses” “The End: Oedipus”. Lynn Kozac of McGill University began a tradition of performing the *Iliad* as a one-woman show in a local bar in Montreal². All of these examples and their resounding successes show that general public interest in classical stories is as thriving as it ever was, if not more so. Why then, are there not more people reading the *Odyssey* in their spare evenings, or listening to the *Iliad* audiobook during their morning run? The key to the popularity of these endeavors, which will henceforth be referred to as “modern classical medias”, is resonance. The key to establishing this audience-art connection is creating empathy for the characters and underlining bridges that unite the worlds of ancient epic and modern listeners. The current record of artistic adaptations of ancient works shows that if the study of Classics is transported from dusty library shelves to the stage or Spotify, it is much more likely to grab and keep the attention of audiences. The creation of modern classical media is critical in today’s climate; the continuation of the classical discipline necessitates developing the approachability and universality of works such as the *Iliad*. With this in mind and bearing the inspiration and weight

² “This Prof Is Turning Homer’s *Iliad* into a Weekly, Serialized 1-Person Bar Show | CBC Radio.” *CBCnews*, CBC/Radio Canada, 28 Feb. 2018, <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/as-it-happens-monday-edition-1.4552032/this-prof-is-turning-homer-s-iliad-into-a-weekly-serialized-1-person-bar-show-1.4552038>.

of my aforementioned predecessors, I set out to create a musical concept album of Homer's *Iliad*, consisting of 7 tracks of my own musical and lyrical creation. I now present my work in the hopes that those who listen will hear themselves reflected in this modern framework of ancient voices.

While there is a market for many different vectors of modern classical media, a concept album was the most appropriate in choosing how to proceed with this project. The first factor to determine my choice is my background in songwriting and performance, so a musical media was the logical avenue to utilize my professional experience. I felt strongly that due to the epic nature of the poem, the most fitting foundation for my project was the genre of musical theatre. This genre can cover a long period of time and stories and allows for the structure of the poem to maintain its form without cuts or compromise. For example, the stage adaptation of Hugo's *Les Misérables* created by Claude-Michel Schönberg, Alain Boublil, and Jean-Marc Natel covers a time span of 17 years. This long span of time allows for increased character growth, development of themes, and imparts a better connection between character and audience, simply because they have "journeyed" together throughout the story. This is ideal for a poem such as the *Iliad*. Additionally, the genre of theatre allows the songwriter to construct the story around themes and string tracks together through a plot, giving more depth to concept than is afforded in a commercial music album. While the length of a full Broadway musical album is impractical for the nature of this project, I still wanted to capture the creative freedom and thematic value of writing for theatre. Therefore, I chose to write a musical concept album to combine the length and production of a popular album and a musical cast recording. The Cambridge Dictionary defines a concept album as "an album on which all the pieces of music are based on a single idea." The single theme at the center of my concept album is the *Iliad*, and the tracks will be my interpretations of key moments in the poem. The formatting and process of this project is largely inspired by Anaïs Mitchell's

Hadestown, which began as a concept album of songs based around the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, published in 2010. Just as Mitchell, I will be combining my own individual and artistic voice with Homer's poetry, characters, and themes to adapt his stories for a modern audience, in the style of contemporary singer-songwriter. After her concept album was met with success, Mitchell progressed with the project in many cycles throughout the decade, ending with a full Broadway show *Hadestown*, Tony award winner for *Best Musical* in 2019. In the same way, I plan to expand my concept album into a full production in the years to come. My album is titled *Ἔπος*, meaning epic, song, promise, and story³- all of which are conveyed in the music found within it.

The writing process for my concept album is one which integrates my background in Classical Literature and Languages with my musical profession. My first step in creating my project was to read through the *Iliad* and select the passages of heightened drama, or those integral to the plot. I myself never cared much for the *Iliad*, its associations in my mind always being those of long-winded action scenes and grimey, hypermasculine warriors battling it out over their fragile egos and sculpted torsos. I undertook this project to prove to myself that I could find depth and reliability in its pages, even as a young woman with a love of the sensitive and minimal interest in wars. I uncovered something transformational as I poured through the poem through the eyes of a writer: the *Iliad* is deeply personal.

CHORDS AND LYRICS

³ Liddell & Scott (1940) *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford: Clarendon Press

Track One: "Fight for Me"
Music and Lyrics by Blaike Cheramie

Verse 1 & 2:

C, AM, F, G

I can see it
Far off now just in the distance
If you listen closely you can hear it
It's the sound of hope
Can you hear it?

Can you taste it?
The end so close, the gods all sated
Victory so long awaited,
Our rescue fated
Can you taste it?

Pre-chorus:

Am, C, F

I've been crying 'cross the faultlines
Hoping you would come to save the day
Everything is changing, you're the only one that feels safe

Chorus:

C, Am, F, G

I'm running to you like a long lost lover
I'm running to you like a reckless brother
I'm running to you like I'm running home
You're the only home I know

Im fighting for you like the river runs
I'm fighting for you like I've already won
I'm fighting for you like I've got nothing to lose
I'm fighting for you like you're fighting for me too

Verse 3 & 4:

C, Am, F, G

I've been working
Thankless jobs now I'm deserting
Running back out of the hurting
They're not deserving
Of what I'm earning

Take me out of battle on foreign shores
I can hear someone shouting at the city doors
Everyone loses unless they win
You and I we're gonna make it til the very end

Chorus:

C, Am, F, G

I'm running to you like a long lost lover
I'm running to you like a reckless brother
I'm running to you like I'm running home
You're the only home I know

Im fighting for you like the river runs
I'm fighting for you like I've already won
I'm fighting for you like I've got nothing to lose
I'm fighting for you like you're fighting for me too

Bridge:

Am, F, C, G

Like a spy in the night
Creeps the question of dread
Why fight at all? What life is left?

Then I remember that you're on my side
Miles apart, years' divide
Keep me going like I know I'm coming home
So I,

Contrafactum Chorus:

C, Am, F, G

I'm running to you like sails in the wind
I'm running to you like it's a matter of when
I'm running to you with my very last breath
The promise of you is all I have left

Im fighting for you and for our daughters and sons
I'm fighting for you like I've already won
I'm fighting for you because I just have to
I'm fighting for you like you're fighting for me too

Track Two: "Put Down the Bow"
Music and Lyrics by Blaike Cheramie

Verse 1 (Hector):

F, Bb, Eb, (Eb once, Bb once)

All my life, I've been walking these halls
Going where duty calls me

Live like a hero, do well by my people
My position's mission determined for me

Hook:

Dm, G

You frolic in from the meadow

Dm, G7

Thinking you run the place, hell no

Bb, Eb, C, F

You gotta learn to be smart, do your part
You've got to put down the bow

Verse 2:

F, Bb, F (Cm/F hammer)

I see you shrink from responsibility

F, Bb, Eb, F (Cm/F hammer)

Prefer to hide in the palace with your women and your finery

Hook:

Dm, G

But leadership is not a vacation,

Dm, G7

Right now your name is a dishon'able mention

Bb, Eb, C, F

You gotta fight hand to hand, be a man!
You've gotta put down the bow

Verse 3 (Paris):

Dm, A

Brother! Life was meant to be slow

Dm, G

Just pick an arrow, easy! And let it go

Bb, F

Okay I'm dropping the ball?

Let someone else take the fall!

Eb, C

It's so much easier to go with the flow!

Bridge A (Hector):

[*(spoken)*]: I just don't get it, Paris.]

Dm, A, F, Dm6

Don't you see what's happening?
Don't you hear your people's screams?
Don't you have an ounce of human sympathy?

Bridge B (Paris):

Dm, C#aug, F, Dm6

Have you ever thought that I can't fight
Because I'm so kept up at night
Wracked with guilt and fearing what's to come

Bb, Bbm

I feel the weight of the city piling up to the sun

A, A7, Dm

I can't fight because I know what I've done

[Dialogue break]

Verse 4 (Paris):

C

But...

F, Bb, Eb, Bb

Your reproach is on the nose
Okay, it's down to field I go
And if I die I know the price is finally paid

Dm, G

I'll put the bow down brother
But I hope that you discover

Bb, Eb

There is merit to the things I've come to know

Eb, F (Cm/F hammer)

It might do you well to get a bow

Track Three: "Reasons to Stay"

Music and Lyrics by Blaike Cheramie

Capo 2

Verse 1 & 2 (Hector):

C, Cmaj7, Am, F

I'm coming home dear, I promise
The first time that I can't be honest
Feels like I'm walking to my grave

I'm always holding the ceiling
I forgot how it feels to have feelings
I think I'm tired of being brave

Pre-Chorus A:

Bb, F, Bb, F, Csus, C

If I could stop the clock
And tie up both its hands
I think the gods would understand

Chorus:

C (one strum)

If I touch you for

Cmaj7 (one strum)

Just a minute more

Am, F

You know that I won't want to leave
My everything is within reach

C, Cmaj7, Am, F

Laughing through your tears
I thought the weight would disappear
Darling you keep giving me reasons to stay
But I'm going anyway

Verse 2 & 3 (Andromache):

C, Cmaj7, Am, F

I see it's pulling you under
Shut out the lightning and thunder
We'll make a shelter from the storm

I know you think that I'm blind to
The unspoken pressures that bind you
But say the word and we'll run away

Pre-Chorus B:

Bb, F, Bb, F, Csus, C

We can stop the clock
And tie up both its hands
I don't need the gods to understand

Chorus:

C, Cmaj7, Am, F

If I touch you for
Just a minute more
You know that I (I know that you) won't want to leave
My everything is within reach

Laughing through your (my) tears
I thought the weight would disappear
Darling you keep giving me reasons to stay
But I'm going

Bridge (Hector and Andromache):

F, Fm

I don't see a warrior in you (you know what I've got to do)

C, AM

Can't you just be a hero to two (i would never ask that of you)

F

All the stories they will tell

Fm

Could never raise your son as well (I could never raise our son as well)

Dm

As you could

Bm

If I could make you stay,

G

you know that I would (you know that I would)

Chorus:

C (single strum)Cmaj7 (single strum)

Let me touch you for

Cmaj7 (single strum)

Just a minute more

Am

... I don't want to leave

F

Our everything is within reach

C, Cmaj7, Am, F

Laughing through your tears
I thought the weight would disappear
Darling you keep giving me reasons to stay

Outro:

Bb, F

I'll keep giving you reasons to stay,

F

You giving me reasons to stay

Fm

But I'm going...

Track Four: "(More Than) A Pretty Face"

Music and Lyrics by Blaike Cheramie

Refrain:

C, G, F

5, 10, 25 strokes

C, E, Bm6

Brushing my hair 'til it shines

C, G, F

Beauty is power for women who know

C, G, C

That's how you survive

[Interlude: **C, Em, Am, C, F**]

Verse 1:

F, C

When I was young I would sit at her feet

Am, G

While my mother would fashion her hair

F, C

I realized that pretty meant good and I knew

G, C

That my face was the armor I'd wear

Verse 1a:

F, C

But the bracelets I wear

And the jewels in my hair

Am, C

Come to make a gilded cage

F, C

And the blame for this war

Hist'ry heaps on my name

F, G

Just for playing the game they made

Hook:

Am, G, F

They'll never know that I'm more

Fm, C

More than a pretty face

[Interlude: **C, Em, Am, C, F**]

Verse 2:

F, C

I was just 12 when a man first decided

Am, G

He'd come to steal me away

F, C

That son of Aegeus showed me that appearance

G, C

Gave wings in addition to chains

Verse 2a:

F, C

Once again I am trapped, in this unfeeling land

Am, G

Longing for lord and home

F, C

It would be better instead if I rather chose death

Am, E, E7

Not a bitch begging for a bone

Bridge:

Am, Eaug, C, F

I'm guilty and innocent

Favored but cursed

A bride on a losing streak

C, C(b5), F, C

For someone who men love to talk about so much

They never let me speak

[Interlude: **C, Em, Am, C, F**]

Refrain:

C, G, F

So it's 5, 10, 25 strokes

C, E, Bm6

Brushing my hair 'til it shines

C, Em, Dm

Beauty is painful but all women know

C, F, C

That's how you survive

Interlude resolve on C

Track Five: "Beginning of the End"

Music and Lyrics by Blaike Cheramie

Intro:

F#m

There comes a time, at the end of the road

A

When blaming everyone does nothing, anymore

Bm

Let the fires burn around me as I fall to my feet

C#m, C#M

If death has taken you I know the time has come for me

Verse 1 and 2:

F#m, D, A, C#m, C#M

Sick to my stomach I sink to the ground

Ears start to ring, I'm drowning in sound

And I lost you

How could I lose you

Blinded by sorrow and guilt in your name

Outlive you? I never thought I'd see the day

From this moment on there's a life to repay

I'll never be the same

Chorus:

D, A

I'll burn down kingdoms for you

C#M, F#m

These hands show the record of what I would do

D, A

My pride caused a blindness that cost you your life

C#m

Now the burden is mine

C#M

Let the flame burn bright

D, Dm

It's the beginning of the end

F#m

Tonight

Verse 3 & 4:

F#m, D, A, C#m, C#M

Too many years I've been tied to my fate

Too many obstacles thrown in my way

By the unfeeling Gods and their hold on my days,

I'm taking back my grave

Rising inside me this hate that I feel
For dardanian fools and retributive kills
A chess piece who knows he is used in the game
Is a victor all the same

Chorus:

D, A

I'll burn down kingdoms for you

C#M, F#m

These hands show the record of what I would do

D, A

My pride caused a blindness that cost you your life

C#m

Now the burden is mine

C#M

Let the flame burn bright

D, Dm

It's the beginning of the end

Bridge:

Bm, G, D, A

I see your face

The fog begin to fade

If I was just a man and if Troy was just a place...

Bm, G, Esus, E

But now the stories live to know our name

Contrafactum Chorus:

D, A

So I'll burn down kingdoms for you

C#M, F#m

The world is watching me to see what I'll do

D, A

If there be any kindness I'll see you within nights

C#m

For now the burden is mine, yes

C#M

The burden is mine

D, Dm

It's the beginning of the end

F#m

...

Track Six: "After All This Time"

Music and Lyrics by Blaike Cheramie

Theme:

Am, Em, Am, Em

Gm, Dm, Fm, C#Maj, G#, C

Verse 1 & 2:

Fm, C#, G#, C

And so the final show
I must walk this road alone
Somehow I knew the end would look like this

Walking to my grave
My choice has already been made
With every step I hear his echo in my mind

Hook:

C#, G#

Maybe in another life,
We could be friends you and I

C

But not tonight

Fm

Not after all this time

Verse 3 & 4:

Fm, C#, G#, C

The scales have been raised
Now who the gods decide to save
Is left unknown, but soon shall be revealed

Running for my life
Death is such a sacrifice
Is honor truly worth the cost to stand and fight?

Hook:

C#, G#

Maybe in another life,
We could be friends you and I

C

But not tonight

Fm

Not after all this time

Bridge:

Fm, C, F, A#m

Stop! It is enough!

Now face to face I call your bluff

I think you're just as tired as I am

F#M

Perhaps we could speak man to man

An eye for an eye

Don't you dare try to disguise the things you've done

This is the burden you took on!

C#, G#

Maybe in another life,

We'd be better you and I

C

not tonight (Not tonight)

Fm

Your time is up (I think you're right)

C#

Achilles: Hm. So many years fighting, and this is where the scales fall.

C

Hector: Promise me my rites

Achilles: The victor ends the fight

Fm

Both: After all this time.

Track Seven: "Nobody Wins, In the End"

Music and Lyrics by Blaike Cheramie

Verse 1 & 2:

A, C#m

Can I tell you a story?
About a man in his prime
He had his world before him
He had time

Interlude: **A, C#m**

Now I'm old and gray
My youth well faded in its place
But I'm still the man that I became
That day

Verse 2a:

Bm, A, Bm, G, E

I held my little boy
His tiny fingers, chubby face
I knew within one glance
I'd burn kingdoms to keep him safe

Hook:

F#m, F#M

I come alone to grasp your knees

Bm

And kiss your hand, Achilles

Dm6

Have compassion, please

A

I will not rest until

D, Dm, A

I hold my son again

Verse 3:

A, C#m

I've been a storm of rage
Senseless grief and restless pain
To be honest, I'm so tired
Tired of being brave

Verse 3a:

Bm, A, Bm, G, E

I'm so sorry,
For all you've lost within your life
You kiss my hands when well you know
They are the source of all your strife
Hook:

F#m, F#M
You will see your son again,
Bm
Before the morning comes
Dm6, A
But until the dawn, pray sit with me
D, Dm, A
So to remember those we've lost

Bridge:

F#m
I've brought you everything I own
C#M
The sum of all that I've become
F#M, Bm
To get my son back since I can't have him alive
G
Old man, your strength and wisdom shine
D
I'll accept your gifts as mine
C#M, F#m
Although I'd trade them in a heartbeat for my friend
Bm, D
My boy, war is ugly. And it's true,
Dm, A
Nobody wins in the end.

A, C#m
Can I tell you a story?
Of daughters and sons
Of men and women just fighting
To protect what they love

Interlude: **Bm, A, Bm, G, E**

Hook:

F#m, F#M
Of rosy dawns and starry skies
Bm, Dm6, A
Of sacrifice, of hands and prizes won
D, one note each

And so the story lives on

A

TRACK ANALYSES

TRACK ONE: FIGHT FOR ME

The opening number in my concept album is titled “Fight for Me”, and it differs from the other songs on the album in structure and tone. In writing this song, I created an intentional departure from the rest of the songs in their conversational style; this track is a continuous set of lyrics, describing the sentiment of not any one character in particular, but the entire host of characters seen throughout the *Iliad*. The reason for this shift in structure is because the opening of the poem itself does this, introducing a large number of plots and people to keep track of. Because of the nature of a singer-songwriter genre concept album I cannot depict large opening numbers with an ensemble cast; in a more advanced version of this production, its lyrics will be sectioned off into dialogues between Criseis and Chryses, Chryses and Apollo, Agamamnon and Achilles, and Thetis and Achilles.

In addition to balancing the themes presented by the large cast of characters, I also wanted the tone to reflect my own personal music style, or a more contemporary coffeehouse feel. The reason for this is because I believe as the first track on the album, it is important for me to connect with the audience and establish my narrative power over the story. In order to achieve this, I wrote this song on guitar rather than piano. It also mirrors a contemporary song in the structural composition of the piece; in the same way that the repetition in a chorus is meant to grab the attention of listeners on the radio, the repetition of line format in the chorus is meant to grab the attention of an audience. The song presents the question “Who are you fighting for?” I created the concept after trying to find evidence of deep personal connection in the *Iliad*, when upon closer inspection I discovered it to be everywhere within the text. Everyone in the poem has someone as their motivation, whether they seek to protect them, avenge them, or prove

something to them. This song highlights the personal investments at stake, and the underlying humanity of war as presented by Homer.

TRACK TWO: PUT DOWN THE BOW

The second track on the album is titled “Put Down the Bow” and it features a conversation between Hector and Paris inspired by the ones they have at the beginning of Book Three and during Book Six. The dynamic between Hector and Paris is a hard one to comprehend, much less turn into a song. I had a lot of trouble setting the tone for this track, but eventually I decided on a fast-paced, brightly-arranged piece with lots of Disney/broadway influences within the instrumentation. These recognizable signatures of musical storytelling include hammering on/off a chord, like I do between Cm and F in the track, and inter-musical dialogue between characters (such as when Paris interjects in Verse Three.

The verses and hooks of this song trend towards lighthearted instruction, with undertones of patient instruction rather than scathing insults. However, the “insults, stinging taunts” which Fagles writes of in Book Three make an appearance in the Bridge with a more somber tone. The chords appear in descending order (Dm, C#aug, F, Dm6) with augmented and minor sixth chords mixed in to cause a slight discomfort in a listener. This chord progression signifies a slow landslide of troubles in progress for Troy and Paris. Thematically, the bow, in the song as in the epic, is a symbol of Paris’ evasive and even less-manly status. This is in direct contrast to Hector’s heroic willingness to fight in the throngs of battle, both for individual reasons of reputation and to honor his city. In her article “Archery in the Iliad”, Caroline Sutherland writes: “The heroic code derided archery, and those that participated in it. It is continuously and

traditionally associated with foreigners.”⁴ It is likely that due to his status as the proclaimed doom of Troy and his upbringing in the countryside, perceived himself to be an outsider, ultimately leading to this choice in weaponry.

TRACK THREE: REASONS TO STAY

The third track in my concept album is titled “Reasons to Stay”, and it depicts the scene in Book 6 where Hector reunites with his wife Andromache and their young son Astyanax. This interaction is bittersweet; at its heart lies the themes of contrast and illusion. The contrast is present in the several dichotomies presented in the background of Book 6, building up the backstory which leads to this quiet, devastating moment: the brutal experience of soldiers versus cushioned life in the palace, Hector at the end of his life next to his posterity (Astyanax, a boy who is described as “in his first flush of life” in Book 6, line 473), and the two courses of action which Hector might choose (to leave and fight for with his men, or to stay and choose his family). Perhaps the greatest of these dichotomies is that of the illusion which blankets the scene. When they first reunite upon the rampart in line 511 of Book 6, Andromache fights for their family and for the future of herself and their son; however, once it becomes clear that Hector is resolved in his decision to fight, husband and wife begin to build a shelter of illusion for themselves in which they might attempt to spend their last moments together in normalcy. This passage stands in distinction over the course of the Iliad, a liminal space between war and peace, between duty and desire, between hero and man.

The song is a duet between Hector and Andromache, highlighting their intimate conversations in the “eye of the storm”. It is the only track on the album played on a ukulele,

⁴ Sutherland, Caroline. “Archery in the Homeric Epics.” *Classics Ireland*, vol. 8, 2001, pp. 111–20, <https://doi.org/10.2307/25528380>. Accessed 17 Apr. 2022.

which conveys the sense of intimacy and privacy exuded by the scene. The rhythm of the verses within the song are in 4/4; this “marching beat” suggests an underlying sense of the inevitable progression of time, in contrast with the lyrical emphasis on “stopping the clock”. The only time during the track when the progression evades the steady 4/4 is at the start of the chorus, in the lines “*if I touch you for/ just a minute more*”; here the single strum per measure symbolizes the liminality of their scene, the respite both characters feel in one another’s presence, just for a moment. Melodically, the first and second verses sung by Hector have a rigid structure from which he does not stray. Alternatively, Andromache’s melody is less patterned, and her melody line travels up where his is weighed down, contrasting her hopeful speech with Hector’s exhausted resolve.

The passage which I consulted as a reference comes from 6.482-485, at the end of their scene when Andromache, Hector, and Astyanax stop arguing and are grasping at their last moments together:

ὥς εἰπὼν ἀλόχοιο φίλης ἐν χερσὶν ἔθηκε
παῖδ’ ἐόν· ἦ δ’ ἄρα μιν κηῶδεϊ δέξατο κόλπῳ
δακρυόεν γελάσασα: πόσις δ’ ἐλέησε νοήσας,
χειρὶ τέ μιν κατέρεξεν...

“So saying, he laid his child in his dear wife's arms,
and she took him to her fragrant bosom,
smiling through her tears; and her husband
was touched with pity at sight of her,
and he stroked her with his hand...”

The bolded text are the two lines which make their way directly into my lyrics. They stood out to me during the writing process because of their vivid emotionality. In order to spark empathy within listeners, I seek out universal themes and emotions to which they can relate; by

doing this, the characters are humanized and the story becomes of greater relevance whereby the audience is prompted to think “*they were just like us.*” The aorist active participial form **γέλασσα** is heartbreaking to me, because it adds to the continued action of her laughing through her tears, which increases the vividness of the scene. The tenderness of the aorist indicative **κατέρεξεν** as Hector’s response is just as relatable to an audience, as these are highly descriptive physical actions identical to the ways in which affection might be shown today. Combining all of these elements, with regard to the scene’s significance at large within the body of the *Iliad*, I composed this song to make time stop, for just a moment.

TRACK FOUR: (MORE THAN) A PRETTY FACE

The fourth track in my concept album is titled “(More than) A Pretty Face”, and I wrote it to give Helen a voice of her own. In the *Iliad*, Helen has a few lines, but she functions only in relation to males (Priam in Book 3 line 200, Paris in Book 3 line 500, or Hector in Book 6 line 407, for some examples). The idea of Helen carries far more weight within the function of the epic than the actual character. Because I am writing my album for a modern audience, it is crucial now more than ever to allot space for Helen to express her side of the story. I wanted to give the song an incredibly simple feel, so I used C, G, and F as the primary chords (the building blocks of many nursery rhyme songs). This presents Helen in an unassuming light, to add depth to her character by means of contrasting her god-like reputation.

Lyrically, I kept vocabulary down to an elementary level as well, using phrases like “I realized that pretty meant good” to convey the same sense of childlike innocence. While Helen herself is still presented as very intelligent and aware of her predicament (“a bride on a losing streak”), the innocence rather refers to a surprise at, or uncomfotability with being given a space

to speak. The lyrical refrain used to tie the narrative of the song together is the theme of Helen brushing her hair. This act is a vessel for her understanding of the trap set for her as a woman; maintaining her beauty keeps her safe from the extended dangers of a life for an undesirable, but to be desired is to be in danger inherently. The ring composition of the song, ending with the same refrain with which it began, is a despondent resolution to continue existing within the framework of the patriarchal ancient world. Even if a woman was aware of these structures, this “trap” set for them within their socio-economic communities, she would not be in a position to act upon these realizations.

One reference to the text included in the song is the line “It would be better instead if I rather chose death, not a bitch begging for a bone”. This is in conversation with line 344 in Book 6 when Helen is lamenting her part in the war to her brother-in-law Hector.

‘δᾶερ ἐμεῖο **κυνὸς** κακομηχάνου ὀκρυόεσσης’

Translations of the word *κυνὸς* as “bitch” are fairly sensationalized due to modern connotations of the word. *κυνὸς* here is a feminine, singular, genitive but this same form also indicates a masculine, singular, genitive noun. The only reason for translating the word “bitch” rather than “dog” is latching on to Helen’s femininity; a woman is sexualized and demeaned even in her insults, even to her own self. However, I used this lyric within the song for this very reason, to prove a point to my audience how the modern dilemmas of gender politics did not grow out of a clueless history of women unaware of their own societal subordination. Another reference to the text comes in the lines “Once again, I am trapped in this unfeeling land, longing for lord and home. It would be better instead if I rather chose death.” This writing is taken from a conversation between Helen and Priam in Book Three, beginning at line 207.

‘αἰδοῖός τέ μοι ἐσσι φίλε ἔκυρὲ δεινός τε:
ὥς ὄφελεν θάνατός μοι ἄδεῖν κακὸς ὀππότε δεῦρο

υίεϊ σῶ ἐπόμην θάλαμον γνωτούς τε λιποῦσα
175παῖδά τε τηλυγέτην καὶ ὀμηλικίην ἐρατεινήν.
ἀλλὰ τά γ' οὐκ ἐγένοντο: τὸ καὶ κλαίουσα τέτηκα.

“I revere you so, dear father, dread you too- if only death had pleased me then, grim death, that day I followed you rson to Troy, forsaking my marriage bed, my kinsmen and my child, my favorite, now full-grown, and the lovely comradeship of women my own age. Death never came, so now I can only waste away in tears.”

The tone of these lines shows that Helen is blaming herself, rather than blaming the patriarchal structure she is victim to. I believed by shifting the narrative and giving Helen space to speak without it being in reference to a man, it would resonate with modern audiences in a more powerful way, and diversify the narrative of the Iliad for the better.

TRACK FIVE: BEGINNING OF THE END

“Beginning of the End” is the fifth track on the album, and narrates Achilles’ inner thought process upon hearing of Patroclus’ death. This song was difficult to write, because Achilles’ reaction is twofold; he is dumbstruck upon first receiving the news, in shock and overtaken with grief. He is flooded with emotion, something he is no stranger to, but it takes a different direction this time. The secondary half of his reaction comes once he has addressed his initial mourning; once he has come to terms with the news of Patroclus’ death, he immediately shifts into planning his revenge. I believe the Iliad’s depiction of this scene is one of the most vivid in the whole poem, described in highly emotional and universal terms. It is for this reason that I knew it needed to be made into a song. Everyone has experienced heartbreak and grief

during their life, and many have borne witness to the same gut-wrenching, breath-stealing moments of shock and sadness. In “Beginning of the End”, the line in the first verse says “sick to my stomach, I sink to the ground.” This is in reference to Achilles’ immediate reaction in Book 18, lines 24-28:

ὣς φάτο, τὸν δ’ ἄχεος νεφέλη ἐκάλυψε μέλαινα:
ἀμφοτέρησι δὲ χερσὶν ἐλὼν κόνιν αἰθαλόεσσαν
χεύατο κακ κεφαλῆς, χαρίεν δ’ ἤσχυνε πρόσωπον:
νεκταρέω δὲ χιτῶνι μέλαιν’ ἀμφίζανε τέφρη.

So the captain reported. A black cloud of grief came shrouding over Achilles. Both hands clawing the ground for soot and filth, he poured it over his head, fouled his handsome face and black ashes settled into his fresh clean war-shirt.

The action of immediately falling to the ground to scoop up dirt is so visually descriptive, it acts as a good marker for the first half of Achilles’ reaction within the song. With regards to the structure of this song, prior to the first verses I included an Intro. This lead-in to the rest of the song happens within a single moment, it is his internal narrative upon receiving the news. The lines “There comes a time at the end of the road, when blaming everyone does nothing anymore” is in response to Achilles’ dispute with Agamemnon over honors, and is the first glimmer of guilt we see in Achilles over the death of Patroclus’, which only grows throughout the song (and Book 18). This passage is the first pivotal moment in Achilles’ character development, followed by his interactions with Priam. They are significant because the author humanizes Achilles in a way that is typically reserved for Hector. The difference between the manner in which they are humanized, however, lies in Hector’s mild manner and dutiful sense throughout his portrayal, in comparison to Achilles’ irrationality.

TRACK SIX: AFTER ALL THIS TIME

The sixth track in my concept album is titled “After All This Time” and it portrays Book 22 of the Iliad when Hector and Achilles come together for their showdown. It is an intense book, full of a diverse range of emotions, motivations, and years of built up tension. To impart the sense of dread and discomfort, I begin the song with a series of minor chords stacked on minor chords. Minors are utilized in music to convey negative or darker emotions to an audience, in comparison with major chords which typically sound brighter or “happier”. The effect of the series of Am, Em, Gm, Dm and Fm is that of alienation and transportation for the audience, grounding them in the overall sense of the scene. The fast-paced waffling between Am and Em at the beginning of the sequence represents the back and forth of their chase scene, while the entrance of the lyrics represents an internal dialogue of the characters. The lyrical portions of the song are slower than the instrumentation to signify the slowing of time inside one’s mind in order to process the experience, despite the immediacy of the current moment. The line “The scales have been raised, now who the gods decide to save is left unknown, but soon shall be revealed” is a direct reference to Zeus’ golden scales in the text (lines 249-254):

τότε δὴ χρύσεια πατὴρ ἐτίταινε τάλαντα,
210 ἐν δ’ ἐτίθει δύο κῆρε τανηλεγέος θανάτοιο,
τὴν μὲν Ἀχιλλῆος, τὴν δ’ Ἔκτορος ἵπποδάμοιο,
ἔλκε δὲ μέσσα λαβῶν: ῥέπε δ’ Ἔκτορος αἴσιμον ἦμαρ,
ᾧχετο δ’ εἰς Αἴδαο,

“Then Father Zeus held out his sacred golden scales: in them he placed two fates of death that lays men low- one for Achilles, one for Hector breaker of horses- and gripping the beam

mid-shaft the Father raised it high and down went Hector's day of doom, dragging him down to
the strong House of Death..."

The inclusion of these lines in reference to Zeus' scales is critical because it cues to a listener who might not be very familiar with the *Iliad* that this scene is pivotal. By addressing the grander themes of the gods and fate, the song is intensified even further. In the bridge of the song, Hector tries to appeal to Achilles' humanity by making a pact with him and speaking to him as a person rather than an enemy. However, it is important to note that Achilles has a personal score to settle that Hector does not have (although he is pushed by the pressure to protect his city and his reputation). Ultimately, the song reaches its peak at the end (in tempo as well as lyrics) as vocal interplay between Hector and Achilles mirrors their direct combat right before Hector's death. The song ends dramatically right before the moment of Hector's death.

TRACK SEVEN: NOBODY WINS, IN THE END

The final song on the concept album is titled "Nobody Wins, in the End". It is largely a conversation between Priam and Achilles based in the final book of the *Iliad*, but at the very end of the song becomes more of a narrative close to the album, sung from my perspective. The very first verse is sung from Priam's perspective; I wrote it with ambiguous terms so that the listener would think Hector to be the subject, only to be caught off guard when the subject is revealed to be Priam himself. This serves to instill upon the listeners the generational legacy of the poem, making the theme of enduring stories and the close of the album seem all the more significant.

There are several references within this song, both to other tracks on the album and to the poem itself. King Priam says that "he would burn kingdoms" to keep Hector safe, echoing Achilles' sentiments on Patroclus in "Beginning of the End". This

emphasizes the similarities drawn in Book 24 between Priam and Achilles, survivors and protectors left to mourn the loss of their loved ones they couldn't protect. In lines 740-746, the two men share a moment of reflection with the other: "Priam the son of Dardanus gazed at Achilles, marveling now at the man's beauty, his magnificent build-- face-to-face he seemed a deathless god... and Achilles gazed and marveled at Dardan Priam, beholding his noble looks, listening to his words. But once they'd had their fill of gazing at each other, the old majestic Priam broke the silence first." This passage situates the two men as being on two sides of a looking-glass, equally fascinated by each other. This parallel is solidified by the comparison made of them by means of this reprised lyric. Another meta-reference to the album comes when Achilles confesses to Priam: "To be honest I'm so tired, tired of being brave." The theme of moral exhaustion imposed by heroic standards, honor culture, and war appears both in "Reasons to Stay" in Hector's verse. It appears again when Hector makes a bid at Achilles to confess his own emotional and physical weariness (to no avail) in "After All This Time". Because of the highly conversational emotional transaction that takes place in Book 24, nearly all of the lyrics are taken directly from the text. However, my favorite of the allusions to the text is the natural imagery in the final hook of the song: the line "of rosy dawns and starry skies" is a twofold reference to the passing of Hector. "Starry skies" is a nod to lines 374-378 in Book 22, describing the spear with which Achilles kills Hector moments before it pierces him.

οἷος δ' ἀστήρ εἶσι μετ' ἀστράσι νυκτὸς ἀμολγῶ
 ἔσπερος, ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν οὐρανῷ ἴσταται ἀστήρ,
 ὧς αἰχμῆς ἀπέλαμπ' εὐήκεος, ἣν ἄρ' Ἀχιλλεὺς
 320 πάλθεν δεξιτερῇ φρονέων κακὸν Ἴκτορι δίω

εἰσορόων χροῖα καλόν, ὅπῃ εἴξειε μάλιστα.

Bright as that star amid the stars in the night sky, star of the evening, brightest star that rides the heavens, so fire flared from the sharp point of the spear Achilles brandished high in his right hand, bent on Hector's death, scanning his splendid body- where to pierce it best?

While this passage is a painful one and acts as a precursor to great sorrow and disgrace for Hector in death, the reference to rosy-fingered dawn brings peace. It references lines 925-927 at the very end of the epic, when Hector is able to be honored with his proper funeral rites:

ἦμος δ' ἠριγένεια φάνη ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἥως,
τῆμος ἄρ' ἀμφὶ πυρὴν κλυτοῦ Ἴκτορος ἔγρετο λαός.

At last, when young Dawn with her rose-red fingers shone once more, the people massed around illustrious Hector's pyre...

To end the album in the same way as Homer does, honoring Hector and bringing peace to the narrative seemed to me the best way to connect to the poem itself. I am proud of my ability to hide references to the text in the songs on the album, in the hopes that someone might become interested enough from the universal themes to do further research into the epic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The danger of an inattentive audience is one that has persisted for centuries, as proven in Scodel's chapter "What are We Talking about When We Talk about Tradition." It has never been a threat to the genre until now, however, for the *Iliad* no longer holds the attention of the majority of modern readers and listeners. I postulate within the bounds of this project that in a shifting world of entertainment where audiences are used to being stimulated and engaged by intersections of several forms of art at once, the attention of the world must be recaptured by both a return to tradition and a departure from classical poetic storytelling. A return to the format of epic told through song has never been more fitting, in a world where shows such as *Hamilton* and *Les Miserables* have commanded the world to listen and learn. However, unlike traditional Homeric poetry, these shows have not compelled listeners to care about the lives of founding fathers and the protagonists of 19th century French novels by talking about their characters; the audience must become the work to be convinced of its importance. This is in direct contrast with Greek epic, where the narrator is altogether separate from the characters of which he sings. Scodel writes: "The formula does not make the hero literally present. Indeed, although it evokes the hero's traditional attributes, it does not necessarily bring all of them to full consciousness in the audience" (What we talk about 12). Although the storyteller is able to identify and describe the internal thoughts and feelings of certain characters through their bardic authority, the inherent objectification of narration mutes the character's individual voice.

In her other work "Bardic Performance and Oral Tradition in Homer", Scodel suggests that the narrative perspective of the bard is one of power, greater than the position of any one character. She concedes that the lines between bard and subject blur when effective storytelling is employed; nevertheless, it is emphasized that the entertainer's omniscience within the context of

the story, their knowledge of and inspiration from the gods in particular, creates their distinction (172). The bard's insight into divine affairs and emotions commands their authority over the story, and thereby, the audience itself. In a modern context, however, audiences are not so spellbound by this divine knowledge as they were in the days of homeric oral composition; in fact, the bardic role was all but eliminated when the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* became primarily a literary poem rather than a performative one. Scodel writes in "When We Talk about Tradition", "Earlier poets may have used writing and hoped that written texts would preserve and transmit their work (as they did), but the written version was a support or a supplement for oral performance" (3). By removing the performative element of poetry which is inherently performative, the magic of these epics is lost. It is largely for this reason that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are cemented in the minds of modern audiences as a text read only in school, closed off to their imaginations by boundaries of relevancy and language.

It is necessary to follow the present movement in re-presentation of old stories for modern audiences in order to renew and reconstruct how people think about homeric epics. As a society, we need to bring back the bard to reinstate epic poetry as a performance; simply speaking, we need to *make people care*. However, as previously stated, the bardic element of these epics which captivated ancient audiences (the ability to connect with the world of the gods) no longer compels listeners. Although it is deemed critical to reinstate the role of the bard to reinstate performativity in epic, the question remains: How must the position of performer be reformulated to once again regain the attention of one's audience? The solution is to give the bard the voice of the characters, to eliminate the narrative element altogether and bring these figures to life. In an age where Homeric heroes are only ever talked about, analyzed, and dissected, I believe it is now critical to give them a space to speak for themselves and draw their

epics into relevancy once more. For reasons of tradition, drama, and formatting, musical theatre is the genre that best lends itself to Greek epic. This art form often spans long periods of time, can support many protagonists and storylines, and features windows into the personal thoughts and feelings of its characters. This genre highlights the individual subjects of the story and humanizes them. Theatre acts as that which first appears as a magnifying glass on a specific story or character, but is revealed to be a mirror directing itself at the audience. Therefore, if homeric epic can be restructured to make its characters relatable, the audience will relate. When examining contemporary artistic endeavors within this phenomenon, it becomes clear that human stories, rather than divine ones, are what compels a modern audience.

In order to transform the format of epic storytelling, it is necessary to consider if making changes to the role of the bard compromises the genre itself. As previously seen in Scodel's "Bardic Performance and Oral Tradition in Homer", although the narrator's perspective differs from those of the subjects they portray, the boundaries between performer and character begin to dissipate in performance. It is this very lack of boundary which allows the audience to develop powerful connections to the characters which the bard presents. In her journal article "Empathy as a Tool for Embodiment Processes in Vocal Performance", Erin Heisel writes: "The singer who embodies and realizes a character engages in a process of intimate and meaningful empathy with the character throughout preparation and performance processes. By extension, audience members may feel an empathic connection to characters they see on the stage, both through the performer's portrayal as well as through the music experience" (Heisel 104). Heisel identifies a key factor in performance that creates a bond between bard and audience: empathy. While empathy between audience, subject, and bard was of great importance within the days of epic performance, this element is *critical* in today's media reception. Audiences expect to be drawn in

by art, to identify with the characters and find their own struggles within the story. In his book *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion, and the Cinema*, Murray Smith describes how empathy is a connection that can only be formed when a story is told from the perspective of a character; this window into their interior self allows audiences not only to observe in sympathy, but to “put themselves in the character’s shoes” by empathizing with their hardships, desires, and victories. He writes: “Centrally imagining a scenario from the attitudinal perspective of a person other than oneself is distinct from acentral imagining, or sympathy, by virtue of the subject’s ‘emptying out’ of her own qualities in order to simulate the states of the target subject: it is not a question of sharing but of imaginative substitution” (96). The “central imagining” of which he writes refers to the empathy that comes from a first-person perspective narrative, which is afforded by the tradition of musical numbers within theatre. The “acentral imagining” is provided by the established role of the bard within homeric epic practice, where the audience might feel sympathy for a character but does not align with them. “Imaging substitution” is both the cause and result of an empathetic connection; it occurs when a character is relatable enough that an audience aligns themselves with them, to the extent that members in the audience begin to picture themselves in the character’s struggles and triumphs. While a sympathetic connection between an audience and the subject of performance clearly differs from an empathetic one, they both indicate the role of a good bard who captivates their attention enough to pull them into the storyline, regardless of extent. It is for this reason that I believe shifting the narrative into a first-person account still facilitates the bardic authority first kindled by Homer’s performers, it simply modifies the resonance of the epic for a modern audience.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

When I write, inevitably I convey a sense of my own personal style; I infect the words and melodies as they might have been with the results of 22 years of memories and self-discovery. That being said, in order to write for a musical, movie, or any other concept-based project I simply cannot be Blaike. If I approach a writing session hyper-aware of my piano bench, or the socks on my left foot, or the clock chiming on the wall in its ridiculous and way-too-long hourly interlude...the character evades me and I leave feeling frustrated and out of touch. I experienced this block several times while writing this album, which is why on average each song took me over a week (and in some cases as long as 2 months) to finish. Usually I latch onto a single line which I then use as an emotional anchor for the rest of the song. For example in "Reasons to Stay", I struggled to put into words the real conversation he would have had with his wife; after several hours, I stumbled upon the lines "I'm coming home dear, I promise/ First time that I can't be honest." Immediately the contrast, push and pull dynamic of the song is tangible. Or when writing as Achilles, searching for how one would react immediately upon receiving terrible news, I grasped the lines: "There comes a time at the end of the road/ When blaming everyone does nothing anymore." For Achilles, a man to whom everything matters so much, to be finally numb is groundbreaking. In every possible way, I became a better writer when I completely stepped into the minds and hearts of the figures that make the *Iliad* so compelling.

Of course, there are boundaries and borders and obstacles between a modern listener and an ancient epic hero. Upon further reflection throughout the duration of this year-long project, I do not believe the goal in executing classical reception studies is to minimize the distinctly Greek aspects of a text in order to appeal to modern listeners. The secret is in how the material is presented. It is on account of this that I did not remove any references to “the gods,” why I left proper names in the lyrics, and why I decided (after much deliberation) to keep the weapon imagery in “Put Down the Bow.” The goal is not to lose what makes this story so beautiful, but rather to convince your audience that it is worth understanding. In looking toward the future of this project, I think making the transformation from concept album to an off-broadway production would allow the story to resonate even further in its ancient context. The introduction of multiple vocalists, costumes, and physical space would further animate the stories detailed in my songs.

While I have not been able to perform the entire album for an audience yet, I have performed several tracks for various groups throughout the composition process. As a performer, I have noticed that when I sing these songs *for* people, I feel a sense of duty and maternal ownership over the characters as if I need to help them show off their best side to the audience! Unlike the ability to get lost *as* a character when I am just playing on my own, it is my job to tell these people’s stories to the audience, which comes with an incredible sense of responsibility. It is also worth mentioning how much I truly learned about the *Iliad*; I too was once a non-believer in its hallowed pages, disinterested in what I thought to be male-centric, action- poem. I was shocked to find a strong and compelling female narrative (Andromache and Helen alone could facilitate enough analysis to last a

lifetime) and rich emotional storytelling. The growth in characters, particularly Achilles, shook me to my core. These are just several examples of the appreciation I gained for the depths of the poem over the course of this project.

In conclusion, the Iliad certainly has a place in the canon of ancient adaptations in modern classical media. I gained so much from this experience, to the point where I would encourage everyone to find a creative way to engage with a text they may feel is stale or disconnected. I hope to inspire others through sharing this work in our communities, and growing those communities by expanding their influence in my future career. I have become a better writer, a better reader, a better musician, and a better teacher. I have had countless meaningful conversations with unexpected people about this project, which opened my eyes to the amount of people who heard the same siren's call I heard compelling me to begin this album last year.

The world is begging to be seduced in dactylic hexameter. The time is now.

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