

INTRODUCTION: IPHIGENIA IN THE BLACK FANTASTIC

Helen Morales

You can no longer play along with the part that you've been prescribed to
play.
esperanza spalding*

Shorter and spalding don't so much as reproduce the play—instead they
refract it like a dazzling prism before smashing it into varicolored shards
across the stage.
Vanessa Stovall**

Once in a while there comes an ancient drama's transformation of such stunning creativity and vision that it deserves immediate scholarly attention: Wayne Shorter and esperanza spalding's ...(*Iphigenia*) is one such event. A 'jazz opera' that radically reimagines the myth of Iphigenia dramatized in Euripides' tragedy *Iphigenia in Aulis*, ...(*Iphigenia*) is a collaboration between two musical greats: saxophonist and composer Wayne Shorter and jazz bassist, singer, composer, and lyricist esperanza spalding, who also plays a leading role in the drama.¹ *Iphigenia in Aulis* was Euripides' final work, written between 408 and 406 BCE, the year of his death. In a poignant echo across the centuries ...(*Iphigenia*), which premiered on the east coast of the USA in November 2021 and on the west coast in February 2022, would turn out to be Wayne Shorter's last production; he died on March 2, 2023, and we dedicate this volume to him in gratitude and admiration.

This special issue of *Ramus* is designed to provide a record of, and responses to, ...(*Iphigenia*). The production was presented as an 'open rehearsal and work in progress' and as yet the libretto and music have not been published. Mario Telò and I are immensely grateful to esperanza spalding who generously agreed to be interviewed for this volume by Debarati Sanyal and myself, and who has allowed us to publish excerpts from her libretto. We are also grateful to Frank Gehry who discussed his set design with Catherine Flynn and to Jeff Tang, executive creative

* spalding in *Real Magic* (2021).

** Stovall (2021).

1. The production is billed as a 'jazz opera' but that was not esperanza spalding's description. Speaking as part of an *Illuminations* Live Panel Discussion on February 11, 'The Performance of Labor/The Labor of Performance: A Convening', *Cal Performances and The Black Studies Collaboratory* (2022), with panelists Ra Malika Imhotep, X'ene Sky, jazz franklin, kai barrow, esperanza spalding, and brontë velez, spalding discusses the politics of opera and its intense somatics.

producer, who provided the images, facilitated discussion, and helped in other ways. Shorter and Spalding had hoped to return to and develop the production further, when funding allowed; we do not know whether Shorter's death will mean that this will not happen. This situation adds another ellipsis to that already in the title: we will have to wait for the next stage of ...(*Iphigenia*).

The articles in this issue present perspectives on the production from colleagues from different disciplines—Ethnic Studies, Global Arts, English, French, Rhetoric, Comparative Literature, and Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies, as well as Classics. Mario Telò drew together the contributors, many of whom (including myself) first came together two days after seeing the opera in Berkeley for an academic panel discussion at the university, a debate that was continued at the home of Debarati Sanyal. This event—and now this special issue—have demarcated a space for transversal analysis: analysis that cuts across disciplinary boundaries to address the ideological, political, musical, visual, and performative dimensions of the production, thereby 'creating connections and cultivating resonances among positions that may at first sight appear incompatible'.² One example of this: when most of us saw the production, we looked intently at the drama on the stage. When Lionel Popkin saw the production, he was attuned, as a choreographer and performer as well as an academic, to what was going on in the orchestra pit, and to the monitors that were intended to be viewed by the performers, positioned behind the audience. His and Alex Purves's analysis of the radical dynamics of conducting in ...(*Iphigenia*) chimes with, and adds another dimension to, the analyses of form, somatics, and race, in other articles in the volume.

This special issue steps out of the confines of conventional academic journal publishing and knowledge production. It comprises thirteen short scholarly articles and two interviews. Contributors were asked to write about an aspect of the production that struck them as most illuminating, not to write 'reviews' of it. We were without the usual supports for scholarship: no recording, published score or text (the excerpts from the libretto were provided after the articles were compiled, and the interview with esperanza Spalding was conducted towards the end of the process so her interpretative frameworks were not available to the contributors), and no academic publications directly on the production, except for an important critical essay published online by Vanessa Stovall after she saw the production at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC in December 2021 (see Fig. 1).³ This means that quotations from and descriptions of the production are from memory (or notes scribbled during the performance), and that occasionally there is some overlap across the articles themselves. We decided to retain these moments of repetition rather than edit them out; it is instructive, as a snapshot

2. Braidotti (2022), 9, on transversal ways of thinking. For reflections on what kind of scholarship is valued in the discipline of Classics and how traditional forms of knowledge production can perpetuate white supremacy, see Eccleston and Padilla Peralta (2022).

3. Stovall (2021).



Figure 1. Still from ...(*Iphigenia*), performed at the Kennedy Center (Washington, DC), December 10, 2021. Curtain call. © Elena Park.

of audience reception, where and how contributors' responses chime despite diverse approaches, and where they do not, and we also thought the reiteration of certain points might prove helpful to the reader.

Classicists have some well-established critical moves when it comes to analyzing adaptations of ancient texts: what we often call 'reception studies'. For ... (*Iphigenia*) we might expect exploration of how the production receives, adapts, or appropriates Euripides' 'original' *Iphigenia in Aulis*, and some discussion of its relationship to other ancient representations of the sacrifice of Iphigenia, such as that recounted by the chorus in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. Mark Griffith and James Porter do some of this work in their articles in this volume (though that is not all that they do). One of the issues that they, and Telò, emphasize is that this kind of analysis is complicated by the fact that the ending of Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*—how the play ends—is uncertain.

His tragedy revolves around the sacrifice of a young woman, Iphigenia, the daughter of King Agamemnon, commander in chief of the Greek fleet, and his wife Clytemnestra. The Greek armada is poised to set sail for Troy to avenge the taking of Menelaus' wife (and Agamemnon's sister-in-law) Helen by the Trojan prince Paris, and to reclaim Helen. They are unable to embark because the seas are calm; there is no wind. A prophesy has decreed that the winds will only come when Agamemnon has sacrificed his eldest daughter Iphigenia to the goddess Artemis. The play opens with the brothers debating the morality of carrying out the sacrifice, and the morality of not carrying out the sacrifice. Iphigenia arrives with her mother and brother. They have been lured under false pretenses: they were told that she is to be married to the Greek warrior Achilles. When it becomes clear what the real scheme is, Iphigenia and

Clytemnestra plead with Agamemnon to change his mind, and Achilles, who was not privy to Agamemnon's plan, prepares to defend the girl by force. Iphigenia realizes that she has no means of escape. She 'chooses' to offer herself for the sacrifice ('a choiceless choice': Sanyal in this issue) and goes to her death singing a hymn to Artemis. The manuscript as we have it ends with a messenger reporting that Iphigenia was replaced on the altar by a deer (as she was said to have been, by the will of the goddess, in Euripides' other play about Iphigenia, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, aka *Iphigenia among the Taurians*), but this is likely to be an interpolation.⁴ Indeed, there are so many possible constructions of the text that, as Sean Gurd puts it, '[t]here is not one Iphigenia in Aulis, there are many Iphigenias in Aulis'.⁵ ...(*Iphigenia*), then, is a provisional, processual adaptation of a provisional, processual tragedy.

This approach to reception studies sometimes brings to bear other texts in a 'chain' of reception, as do a couple of the contributors here: Griffith discusses Cacoyannis's 1977 movie *Iphigenia*, and Judith Butler offers a brief reflection on Ann Carson's *Iphigenia among the Taurians*. However, this method alone of analysing adaptations risks downplaying reception as an embedded, political, and historical process.⁶ The most immediate context in which the final years of the production took place, and which shaped the audiences' experiences, was the Covid-19 pandemic. In February 2022 the pandemic still dominated the news and our lives. For me, going to see the performance meant traveling on an airplane for the first time in two years. There was a palpable anxiety and excitement among the crowd while we waited in line to have our vaccination status checked outside the theater.

The play's central theme of the ethics of the sacrifice of individuals for 'the collective good' had a bitter resonance in the broader political context where elderly and immuno-compromised people, and those whose work necessitated close contact with others, seemed to many people to be expendable. Kim Solga's question about Katie Mitchell's 2004 production of *Iphigenia in Aulis*, 'What happens to a body when circumstance demands that it enact its own forgetting?' was as much a question for the audience in their lives outside, as well as in their experiences inside, the theater.⁷ The production highlights something that is there in Euripides too—the sour, rotten, indigestible component of laws that require death in order to restore the social order. How many deaths are acceptable in service of this restoration, we asked ourselves, as we sweated into our masks trying to get our heads round the cognitive dissonances

4. See Gurd (2005), and more generally on the play and its reception see Michelakis (2006).

5. Gurd (2005), 9. See also Wohl (2015) on action, agency, and aporia in the tragedy.

6. See Goldhill (2010), 60, on how this model of conceptualizing the classical tradition is 'invested with Victorian intellectual and social anxieties', and further, 69, on why 'the diffuse, collaborative, multi-levelled nature of performance as an event cannot be reduced to the model of an individual artist nurturing an aesthetic response to an artwork, or responding to the ancient world through an artwork'.

7. Solga (2008).

between ‘business as usual’ and the knowledge that this meant that more people would inevitably catch the disease and die. Euripides points out the *necessity* of the universal good annihilating the subject in order to preserve the social order. Shorter and spalding, in giving us a *chorus* of Iphigenias (about which more will be said below) press us to ask, *how many subjects* is it acceptable to sacrifice?

The pandemic exacerbated inequities along racial grounds (including the inequities of who lived and who died), in a country where not being able to breathe was a symptom of police brutality against Black people, as well as a symptom of the pandemic. Roshanak Kheshti’s discussion in this volume of air and breath in the production and these wider contexts is important here, as is Mario Telò’s reading of *Iphigenia in Aulis* in his book *Greek Tragedy in a Global Crisis*.⁸ One point that Telò makes is that the political and medical management of the pandemic in the United States was coded as a military exercise. It was imbued with the discourse of nationalism, as the former president named the virus through the use of a racial slur, and the discourses of invasion by virus and refugees merged.

A crucial context for understanding ...(*Iphigenia*) is this heightened nationalism and racism in the United States at the time of the production. Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Aulis* is a drama that has been long celebrated for its nationalism. Aristotle quoted with approval the sentiment voiced by Iphigenia in her patriotic speech towards the end of the play that ‘it is right that Greeks should rule barbarians’ (‘barbarian’ is a common ancient Greek word for foreigner).⁹ Her claim that Greeks are naturally superior to foreigners is used to lend support for Aristotle’s argument that the foreign person and the enslaved person are essentially the same, and that slavery was a natural practice. The play’s nationalism and patriotism are still celebrated today in Greece and Cyprus, where it is part of the high school curriculum (although we should have faith that instructors teach the text in different ways).¹⁰

That racism and anti-racism are crucial frameworks through which to understand the ideological resistance of ...(*Iphigenia*) is something that several contributors discuss or mention: Roshanak Kheshti (in relation to jazz and the tradition of ‘whiting up’, the racial relationships of jazz, Greek tragedy, and opera), Salar Mamani (who exposes the mutual reinforcements of ‘race’ and ‘species’ in relation to bodies, hybridity, and race in the production), Debarati Sanyal (along with

8. Telò (2023). See also his comments on the ramifications of the reversal of masking that seeing a theatrical performance during the pandemic involved (actors were unmasked, audience members were masked), on temporality and the ‘stuckness’ of the characters in the drama and people living through the pandemic, and on the ethics at the heart of the play and political contexts: ‘Iphigenia’s final gesture, her sudden acquiescence to the patriarchal solution, sacrificing herself for the community—whether fulfilled or forestalled at the last moment—aligns itself with the bio- and necro-political discourse on the disposability of certain lives that became shockingly explicit at the outbreak of the pandemic.’

9. *Politics* 1252b8, quoting *Iphigenia in Aulis* line 1400.

10. Gerolemou and Zira (2017), 70–2.

the ‘critical fabulations’ of Saidiya Hartman’s *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval*,¹¹ Danielle Stephenson (on Black feminist ‘poethics’), Judith Butler (on femicide),¹² Stephen Best (on the traditions of Black Classicisms), Mario Telò (on Afrofuturist and Afropessimist perspectives in relation to the ending of the production), and Ella Haselswerdt (on Afro-fabulation, taking up Tavia Nyong’o). The arguments are rich and complicated, more so than my gestures towards their content indicate; I cannot do them justice here. In her interview, esperanza spalding discusses how the legendary African American hero and enslaved disrupter John de Conquer (sometimes known as John the Conqueror) was an inspiration for the dynamics of the second act of ...(*Iphigenia*).¹³ My framework of understanding at that stage in the interview was the *dea ex machina* from Greek tragedy: this was totally inadequate. spalding’s discussion, in relation to the formal construction of ...(*Iphigenia*), of John de Conquer’s creation of a caesura in time and space in which enslaved people could dream, hope, and thereby survive, not only dilates the context for absorbing her production, but could also prove rich material for future theorizations of tragedy.

Tracing embedded political and ideological contexts are, of course, not the only axes for understanding the production; indeed, the title ...(*Iphigenia*) with its perplexing ellipses and parentheses jibs against any kind of fixity, as Stephen Best and Mario Telò discuss in their articles. Indeed, one thread that runs through many of the contributions is Shorter and spalding’s striking play with temporality. The character acted by spalding is named Iphigenia of the Open Tense; she appears like a creature from the future, a luminous figure in an iridescent silver outfit (like a spacesuit from a science fiction movie), and the production collapses time through both libretto and music. Roshanak Kheshti and Ella Haselswerdt reflect on this, using Tavia Nyong’o’s theorisation of Black queer temporality; Stephen Best also discusses it, building on Vanessa Stovall’s essay, and Danielle Stephenson argues for the ‘tenselessness and timelessness’ of the Black radical tradition, and the ‘artful disruption of the presumed futurity’ that jazz creates. Catherine Flynn invites us to view the production as a meditation on the current ongoing environmental catastrophe, with the cycle of slaughter of the Iphigenias in the first act being ‘analogous to our observation of the rapidity and ease of environmental depredation: The cycle repeats itself as we watch, uncomfortable, but passive’. Her focus on temporality, informed by Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt School theorists, is on repetition and the production’s cycle of relapse. Her discussion of the disruptive power of

11. Hartman (2019).

12. See also Caridad Svich’s (2012) multimedia play *Iphigenia Crash Land Falls on the Neon Shell That Was Once Her Heart (A Rave Fable)* which reimagines Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Aulis* (and Racine and Gluck’s adaptations of the tragedy) in relation to the femicides committed in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico.

13. As told in Hurston (1943).

Shorter and Spalding's version of opera chimes with Danielle Stephenson's analysis of disruption, from a different perspective. With these analyses of racism and of environmental catastrophe, we loop back to the political and ideological contexts that this production expands upon.

...(Iphigenia) can be viewed as belonging to the cultural movement that writer, broadcaster, and curator Ekow Eshun describes as 'the Black fantastic'.¹⁴ Sharing commonalities with, but differing from, magic realism and Afrofuturism, the Black fantastic is 'a way of seeing, shared by artists who grapple with the legacy of slavery and the inequities of racialized contemporary society by conjuring new narratives of Black possibility'.¹⁵ Eshun quotes scholar Michelle D. Commander who explains that within the Black fantastic, Black artists are 'renarrativizing master accounts, and creating and representing new worlds and alternate existences'.¹⁶ This is especially evident in the second act of ...(Iphigenia) when Shorter and Spalding create time and space away from the 'master narrative' of the Greek myth, with its attendant misogyny and nationalism, and conjure a kind of dream world outside of the myth where the chorus of Iphigenias sing and vocalize and imagine a different reality. (I will say more below on this, and see also the comments of Best, Butler, Sanyal, and Stephenson as well as the interview with Spalding in this issue).

Iphigenia of the Open Tense stands out from the other Iphigenias. She wears futuristic garb and, in one scene, has a hybrid appearance, wearing a deer's antlers or being a kind of hybrid human-deer (on which see the analyses of Mameni and Haselswerdt). Her singularity and luminousness, as well as her position as a woman under threat from a king, perhaps evokes Saint Ephigenia, an Ethiopian princess whose biography contains some similar elements to the myth of Iphigenia, and who was, in one account, merged with the daughter of Agamemnon whose name is echoed in hers.¹⁷ Shorter and Spalding's new paradigm of Black woman's agency in a constrained, cruel, and callous world summons old paradigms from different cultures.

I have three further points to make: about the aurality of the women in Act II, about Clytemnestra, and about the transition from the second to the third act. However, before that it might be helpful to give a brief summary of the drama,

14. Eshun (2022).

15. Eshun (2022), 12. The Black fantastic, according to Eshun (2022), 11–13, eschews the sardonic tone of magic realism, and some of the limitations of the genre of Afrofuturism.

16. Eshun (2022), 13, quoting Commander (2017), 24.

17. The life of St Ephigenia originated in the apocryphal tales about St Matthew. A notable account is found in the *Legenda Aurea* by Jacobus de Voragine in 1275 CE, and her story is also told in the body of work created by a small group of Belgian Jesuits in the seventeenth century known as the Bollandists. St Ephigenia was said to have been a young Ethiopian woman (though there is no independent Ethiopian tradition about the saint), the daughter of a king, who was renowned for her purity and chastity. She is still venerated today, especially in Afro-Peruvian communities: see Sánchez (2012) and Rowe (2019). In his hagiographic play *San Mateo en Etiopía*, the seventeenth-century Portuguese dramatist Felipe Godínez fuses the myths of St Ephigenia and Iphigenia: see Márquez Martínez (2017). I am grateful to Charles Kuper for discussion of this topic.

even though it is necessarily partial, subjective, and from memory; it cannot possibly do justice to the score, libretto, or choreography, which, as I noted above, is provisional and likely to change.

Before the formal opening of Act I

An Usher, dressed in blue, walks up and down the aisles of the theater asking people what they know about the myth, telling them that what they will see tonight will be different, and warning them that this story does not end well. People talk to her as they seat themselves; most do not realize that she is a character in the drama.

Act I

The set is spare, with a forest and an altar (see Catherine Flynn's article on the set design, including her interview with Frank Gehry). There is a piano on stage. The Achaean soldiers march on: Agamemnon, Menelaus, and Calchas, plus six others. Multiple Iphigenias are killed one by one. As Sunder Ganglani, the dramaturg, puts it in the program notes: 'In Act I we are lost between repeats in the cyclical time of trauma. One by one, another Iphigenia is sacrificed at the altar to appease Artemis, supposedly. The army is desperate for wind so they can set sail and wage war, and Artemis could compel the air to move if she felt so inclined. The men are drunk, literally, but also drunk on self-satisfaction, patriotism, and desire—they are children wielding power and carrying weapons, and they hardly notice the dead women that litter the ground beneath them.' 'For beloved Greece I give my flesh and blood' proclaims Calchas, ventriloquizing for the Iphigenia clad in white who remains gagged as she is slaughtered. The Greek soldiers behave like frat boys and dance. 'I die so that Greece may live' cries an Iphigenia clad in pink before she cuts her own throat. A deer enters; the soldiers veil the animal and slit its throat. The body of the deer is thrown onto the side of the stage and spot-lit as one by one the bodies of the Iphigenias are laid alongside it.

Act II

The soldiers are absent. The women receive names: Iphigenia Unbound, Iphigenia of the Sea, Iphigenia the Younger, Iphigenia of the Light, and Iphigenia of the Open Tense. They form a chorus around Iphigenia of the Open Tense and, encouraged by the Usher/Artemis, the women speak and sing their truths. Some of the libretto here includes lyrics by Ganavya Doraiswamy, Safiya Sinclair, and Joy Harjo, renowned wordsmiths known for their exquisite, radical, and empowering poetry and lyrics, often from marginalized cultural perspectives

(South Indian, Jamaican, and Native American respectively). Iphigenia of the Open Tense scat sings while the other Iphigenias sway and vocalize. Sunder Ganglani summarizes in the program notes: ‘In Act II, those women, each of them different manifestations of the myth, find each other outside of time—Artemis holds the space and weaves a thread between them. They arrive together in solidarity; they share their struggle, their sadness, strength, fury, and love. They tell their stories so that the one among them who might interrupt the myth and incite all the other stories, all the other possibilities, gathers the strength and tenderness to do so.’ The Usher/Artemis urges Iphigenia of the Present Tense to resist: to say No to the sacrifice.

Act III

We are back in the myth, as signaled by the set of metal clouds and trees (though not at the level of conducting, as Popkin and Purves discuss in their article). In this act use is made of Charles Elgutter’s 1902 adaptation of the story, because spalding wanted to borrow the ‘very calcified and chauvinistic sounding language’¹⁸ of the early twentieth century (some extracts are quoted in Mameni’s article). Iphigenia of the Open Tense begins to play the role of the good daughter and good Greek, complicit in her sacrifice, but retches and vomits on stage. Urged on by the other Iphigenias, Iphigenia of the Open Tense sings a new song that compels the soldiers to retreat. The final tableau is of the women physically supporting Iphigenia of the Open Tense and each other. Ganglani writes of this act in the program: ‘Disorientated, and confused, the new Iphigenia is forced back into the myth and offered the opportunity to let go of the myth and show us all how to make something else. The opera ends in “open tense”, none of us onstage or off knows exactly what will happen. The ethic of improvisation takes over—the possibility of open tenses—and the art of listening and responding deeply *and at the same time*; what other worlds could that code of conduct and compassion create?’

The first of my three final points concerns the women’s vocalizations in the second act. This is the part of the production that most profoundly affected me: the wordless sounds of the women. Sometimes a kind of singing, sometimes ululating, keening, this aurality breaks away from the script, the myth, the necessary over-determining of visual representations of slaughtered women’s bodies. I am reminded of part of Judith Butler’s *Precarious Life: the Powers of Mourning and Violence* where she discusses ‘agonized vocalisation’ and how ‘the sound of language evacuating its sense’ precedes and limits the delivery of any semantic sense.’¹⁹ It

18. Smullen (2021).

19. Butler (2004), 133, quoted and discussed in Solga (2008), 157f.

is a call to witness suffering, yes, but also a call to ethics.²⁰ In the Shorter-spalding *Iphigenia* I read an ethics of spectatorship and listenership that asks us how will what we have seen and heard, or what we have failed to see and hear, change the way we will see and hear from now on? In whose reality will we invest our faith and why? When the Usher, the goddess, tells us to remember—an injunction *Iphigenia* repeats—what and whom will we choose to remember?

Second, it is striking that, in this production, there is no Clytemnestra. Modern adaptors like Edna O'Brien and Colin Teevan solve the problem of what many consider the (emotional and ideological) inadequacies of Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* by making it precede, and thereby offer an aetiology for, Clytemnestra's revenge in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*.²¹ By joining up the dots of the mythic narrative across different plays, and making the earlier tragedy (Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*) provide the conclusion to the story told in the later tragedy (Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*), these writers provide us with a climax that comprises maternal revenge rather than child sacrifice. This may be more uplifting and explicable for modern audiences steeped in Hollywood revenge movies, from *Kill Bill* to *John Wick*.²² But in ...(*Iphigenia*) we are given no Clytemnestra, although the Usher takes on some maternal qualities. (For further discussion see Mark Griffith's article, and the comments of esperanza spalding in her interview in this issue).

My third and final point concerns the move from the second to the third act. This proved the most controversial aspect of the production, with considerable audience resistance to it. 'What are we to make of Black art, Black voice, Black aesthetics forced back into the constraints of "cemented myth"?' asks Stephen Best in his article. The multiplicity of *Iphigenias* allows for the possibility of collective action that was impossible in the original myth (see especially Sanyal's article). Their repeated 'I...I...I' becomes a witnessing to the atrocities women face at the hands of men, #notallmen, to be sure, though #allwomen and non-binary people who experience male violence or live in fear of it. The creation of a sorority of *Iphigenias*, from different races, places, and time periods, provides some resistance to the Greeks' fraternity (and we note here the production's witty conflation of Greeks: college fraternities and ancient Hellenes). In Homer's *Iliad* we are told that the war will end when the Greeks have lain down with, that is to say raped, every Trojan's wife. I would like to think that the collective of *Iphigenias* exit at the end of the production to seek empathy and justice for their Trojan counterparts as well as themselves. Contributors to this issue differ in

20. My thoughts in this paragraph have been influenced by Kim Solga's article on Katie Mitchell's 2004 production of Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* at The Royal National Theatre in London, which I also saw. See Solga (2008).

21. Edna O'Brien's play *Iphigenia* in O'Brien (2003); Colin Teevan's (2002) play *IPH...* Elizabeth Cook's prose adaptation (2006) foreshadows Clytemnestra's revenge ('If he kills you, I will kill him', 409), but focuses on *Iphigenia*'s relationship with her mother and her ambivalence about her maturing body.

22. Though see Telò (2020a) on how Greek tragedy *resists* catharsis.

IPHIGENIA IN THE BLACK FANTASTIC

their understanding and interpretations of the ending of ...(*Iphigenia*). For example, Judith Butler ponders the abyss into which the soldiers disappear and it is worth comparing their reflections to the analysis of Danielle Stephenson who views the drama through Sankofa, a West African Akan philosophical tradition. Stephenson's is a more optimistic reading, where the abyss is not the end of the story but a threshold of possibility. In suggesting divergent readings, the articles in this issue align with what esperanza spalding in her interview calls the production's 'troubl[ing] of the tyranny of the singular narrator, the singular agenda of the storyteller'.

Cast list for ...(*IPHIGENIA*)

From the Cal Performances performance on Saturday, February 12, 2022

...(*IPHIGENIA*)

An opera created by Wayne Shorter and esperanza spalding

Wayne Shorter, Composer
esperanza spalding, Librettist
Lileana Blain-Cruz, Director
Clark Rundell, Conductor

Featuring

esperanza spalding, Iphigenia of the Open Tense
Brenda Pressley, Usher
Samuel White, Agamemnon
Brad Walker, Menelaos

Kelly Guerra, Iphigenia Unbound, Opera Broadcast Host

Eliza Bagg, Iphigenia of the Sea
Sharmay Musacchio, Iphigenia the Elder
Nivi Ravi, Iphigenia the Younger
Alexandra Smither, Iphigenia of the Light
Tyler Bouque, Kalchas

With

Danilo Pérez, piano
John Patitucci, bass
Brian Blade, drums
Berkeley Symphony
Frank Gehry, Set Design
Montana Levi-Blanco, Costume Design
Jen Schriever, Lighting Design
Mark Grey, Sound Design
Cookie Jordan, Hair Design
Joya Giambrone, Make-up Design
Sunder Ganglani, Dramaturg
Phillip Golub and Clark Rundell, Musical Dramaturgy

HELEN MORALES

Orchestrations by Wayne Shorter

Additional orchestrations and arrangements by Clark Rundell
Additional vocal arrangements by Caroline Shaw, esperanza spalding,
and Phillip Golub

Additional text by Ganavya Doraiswamy, Joy Harjo, and Safiya
Sinclair

Selected text from Act III excerpted from *Iphigenia* by Charles
S. Elgutter (1904)

Produced by Jeff Tang, Cath Brittan, and Mara Isaacs
...(*Iphigenia*) is commissioned by Cal Performances at the University
of California, Berkeley, CA; The John F. Kennedy Center for the
Performing Arts, Washington, DC; The Broad Stage, Santa Monica,
CA; ArtsEmerson, Boston, MA; MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA;
and Carolina Performing Arts, Chapel Hill, NC.

*This performance is made possible, in part, by the National
Endowment for the Arts and an Anonymous Patron Sponsor.*