

Christoph Willibald Gluck

IPHIGÉNIE EN TAURIDE

February 26, 2011

Conductor **Patrick Summers**
Production **Stephen Wadsworth**
Set Designer **Thomas Lynch**
Costume Designer
Martin Pakledinaz
Lighting Designer
Neil Peter Jampolis
Choreographer **Daniel Pelzig**

Iphigénie **Susan Graham**
Oreste **Plácido Domingo**
Pylade **Paul Groves**
Thoas **Gordon Hawkins**

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Mr. and Mrs. Howard Solomon

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When Agamemnon gathered the Greek armies before the Trojan War, the goddess Diane sent unfavorable winds to prevent them from sailing. Her oracle set a condition: to sail forth and attack an innocent country, Agamemnon must sacrifice his daughter. He accepted the terms and killed his daughter Iphigénie on the altar. In his play Iphigenia in Tauris Euripides imagines that Diane saved Iphigénie and delivered her to distant Tauride, where Iphigénie served the enemy Scythians as Diane's high priestess—though Iphigénie's family believed her dead.

ACT I Fifteen years later. Iphigénie and the other priestesses—all captives from Greece—ask the gods for safety and peace from a storm. Iphigénie relates a dream: her home was destroyed; her father was killed by her mother, Clytemnestre, who gave her a dagger; her brother Oreste cried out for help, but she was forced to kill him. The priestesses grieve and urge Iphigénie not to lose hope that she will see Oreste again.

The Scythian king, Thoas, comes to Iphigénie in despair, pursued by omens and voices calling for his downfall. Oracles have ordered him to sacrifice every stranger to the country to end his torment. His soldiers come with news of new captives—two Greek men—and Thoas orders Iphigénie to kill them. The men are brought in: one is haunted by past crimes, the other defies Thoas. They are imprisoned as the Scythians call for blood.

ACT II The strangers are Oreste and his friend Pylade. Oreste, who has killed his mother and is pursued by the Furies, lives on the edge of madness; he now feels responsible for Pylade's imminent death. Pylade calms Oreste with the pledge that they will die together. Pylade is taken away, and Oreste sinks into sleep. He awakens from a nightmare to find Iphigénie standing in front of him. Without revealing her identity she questions him about the royal family in Mycène. He tells her all: Clytemnestre murdered Agamemnon to avenge the death of Iphigénie. Oreste struck down Clytemnestre to avenge his father and then, he adds, Oreste killed himself. Iphigénie sends the stranger to be shackled to the altar, and mourns the loss of her family.

INTERMISSION

ACT III Iphigénie resolves to save at least one of the captives and to send the survivor to Mycène with a letter for her sister, Electre. Pylade is reunited with Oreste, and Iphigénie tells them Oreste must live and carry the sealed letter. Pylade is happy to die for his friend. Oreste, determined

that he himself should die, seizes the sacrificial knife and threatens to take his own life if Iphigénie will not spare Pylade. Iphigénie gives Pylade the letter and helps him escape.

ACT IV Iphigénie cannot bring herself to harm the stranger and cries out against Diane. Oreste is brought in. Touched by Iphigénie's concern, he encourages her to do her duty, calling out, "Iphigénie, beloved sister, thus also did you perish at Aulide." Sister and brother realize the truth. Thoas bursts in. He orders the Greek man killed immediately and is about to sacrifice Oreste himself when Pylade returns with Greek soldiers to save his friend. Thoas is killed in the fray, which is halted when Diane herself appears to pardon Oreste, quiet the Furies, set the Greek women free, and send prince and princess home to Mycène.

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