

TARRAGON THEATRE

34th SEASON 2004-2005

“Is there a better evening of theatre to be had anywhere?”

David MacFarlane, *Globe & Mail*, 2003

“An unrivalled purveyor of Canadian drama”

Vit Wagner, *Toronto Star*, 1999

“Tarragon [has] the key position at the centre of Canada’s theatrical stew.”

Mira Friedlander, *Globe & Mail*, 1997

About Tarragon Theatre

Tarragon is primarily a playwright’s theatre. Its mandate is to develop, encourage and produce new work; to attract or train new artists and technicians to interpret new work; and to inform and develop an audience for new work. The goal of the OutReach programs is to develop quality theatre education initiatives for students, educators, community members, and theatre patrons. The mandate of OutReach is “to use all its resources, programs, and facilities to promote, wherever possible, inclusion. Particularly through our OutReach initiatives we aim to support and foster relationships with community members, educators and students as together we develop the theatre practitioners and audiences of today and tomorrow”.

In 2003, our neighborhood association unanimously voted to adopt the official name Tarragon Village Community Association, making this the first neighborhood in Toronto to take its name from that of a theatre. Tarragon Village encompasses Dartnell Avenue to Bathurst Street and Bridgman Avenue to Davenport Road. An inaugural ribbon cutting ceremony took place on May 31, 2003.

Tarragon Achievements

- Over 175 Canadian premieres by such celebrated and award-winning playwrights as David French, James Reaney, George F. Walker, Judith Thompson, John Murrell, Joan MacLeod, Maja Ardal, Morris Panych, Jason Sherman, Guillermo Verdecchia, Ann-Marie MacDonald, Daniel Brooks, Diane Flacks, Richard Greenblatt, Ted Dykstra, Ken Garnhum, Michael Healey, Morwyn Brebner, Mavis Gallant, Kristen Thomson and a host of others.
- Tarragon is the foremost producer, in English Canada, of translated plays from Québec, most notably the work of Carole Fréchette and Michel Tremblay.
- Plays developed and produced at Tarragon have on many occasions, toured nationally and internationally; they have also been widely published, broadcast and filmed.
- Tarragon has received more than 200 Dora Award nominations, many nominations (and winners) for the Chalmers Canadian Play Award and many nominations for the Governor General’s Award for Drama (winners include Judith Thompson, Joan MacLeod, Guillermo Verdecchia, John Krizanc, Jason Sherman

and Morris Panych, all for Tarragon plays). Tarragon has received the Lieutenant Governor's Award 5 times in the past 7 years.

- Since the 1995/96 season, Tarragon subscriptions have risen 136% to a record 4,095 subscribers in the 2002-2003 season. Tarragon is deficit-free.
- The Urjo Kareda Playwrights Endowment Fund, named to honour Urjo's commitment to Canadian theatre, stands at just under \$1.2 million. Income from the fund is used to assist playwrights while they are writing their plays.

Tarragon Programs

- 7 or 8 major productions in two theatres each season. In the 2002-2003 season, there were seven productions (300 performances) with a total attendance of 46,950.
- Playwrights Unit (since 1982). As many as 7 playwrights, with works-in-progress, work individually and collectively with the artistic director and the associate artistic director over the course of a year. These plays are given a public reading during Play Reading Week, held in mid-December.
- 4 playwrights-in-residence.
- Tarragon Theatre/George Brown College New Play Development Project – a Tarragon playwright will write a play to be workshopped by second year acting students at George Brown College in order to give the students a sense of the development process and their role as actors within it.
- Spring Arts Fair (since 1985): an extraordinary free celebration of the performing arts, presented in spaces throughout the interior and exterior of Tarragon Theatre.
- Outreach programs aimed at youth including Spring Training Project, Young Playwrights Unit, *Under 20 for Under 20's* playwriting contest, high school and post-secondary co-op placements; Outreach programs aimed at educators including Teacher Nights and educator workshops.
- Apprentice programs in arts administration and stage management.

Tarragon Special Services

- Over 500 scripts professionally read and assessed annually without charge.
- Student and senior matinees; wheelchair accessibility throughout facility.
- Teachers provided with a complimentary study guide.
- Costume and prop rentals for professional and community companies.
- Pay-What-You-Can performances every Sunday afternoon.
- Tickets donated to community and social service groups for fundraising events.

TARRAGON THEATRE

study guide

Helen's Necklace

By Carole Fréchette

In an English version by John Murrell



Starring: Susan Coyne & Raoul Bhaneja

Directed by Eda Holmes

Assistant Director: Sarah Baumann

Set and Costume Design by John Thompson

Lighting design by Andrea Lundy

Sound design by Matt Swan

Stage Manager: Kate Macdonnell

November 17 to December 12, 2004

About the **Helen's Necklace** study guide:

This study guide has been created so that your theatre experience at Tarragon is a fulfilling and engaging one. We hope that it will help create discussions, generate ideas and prompt many questions.

The **Helen's Necklace** study guide was coordinated by Avery A. Swartz and compiled by:

Avery A. Swartz Publicity and OutReach Associate

Joanna Falck Literary Manager

Fiona Jones Studio and OutReach Co-ordinator.

Mary B. Wood OutReach Consultant developing lesson plans grounded in Ministry Curriculum.

Thanks also to those who also contributed to the study guide: Sarah Baumann, Laura Bonfigli, Christine Estima and Kristen Van Alphen.

Special thanks and acknowledgements to Charissa Aldcroft, Henry Bertrand, Alex Gilbert, Eda Holmes, Catherine Matzig and Kirk Thomson.

The **Helen's Necklace** study guide is divided into several sections.

1. **About the Tarragon Theatre**
2. **About the Play**
3. **Additional Resources**
4. **Lesson Plans**

We encourage you to make use of this study guide as effectively as possible and as such we want to highlight the fact that some elements of the guide are most useful prior to viewing the production and some are most useful post viewing. For example, while the structure, character breakdown and themes set up a context for viewing, the design elements are best understood after viewing. There are also lesson plans included for pre and post show activities.

**Feel free to contact us should you have any questions or comments at
416.536.5018 x243.**

Educator Programs are generously supported by:



Helen's Necklace

"We cannot go on living like this."

About The Play

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Synopsis

Helen's Necklace by Carole Fréchette, translated from French by John Murrell, takes place in the heart of a hot, chaotic Middle Eastern city that still carries the scars of a recent war. Helen, there to attend a conference, suddenly realizes she has lost her necklace, which is of little monetary but great sentimental value. On a sudden impulse, she goes in search of the fragile plastic pearl necklace. Nabil, a local taxi driver, serves as her protector and guide during their delirious journey through the ruined city.

There are 2 parallel journeys to consider in this piece. The first is Helen's search for her necklace and the second is to find out what the necklace represents.

Elements of the Play

Helen's Necklace is a one-act play with 6 characters. In this production, a single actor plays 5 characters. Although the play is written entirely in the present tense, there are moments when it feels more as though Helen is narrating memories than taking part in the action.

How is this a memory play?

Consider the various narrative forms available and discuss why this piece better suits the dramatic narrative over poetry, short story, essay or novel.

Dramatic Techniques that occur within this piece include:

1. One actor plays multiple characters in Eda Holmes' conceptualization of this piece.

How does that affect your perception of each character knowing a single actor crosses gender, race and class?

2. Direct Address: At the end of the piece, Helen asks Nabil to wait and she speaks directly to the audience.

Why does Fréchette introduce a new stylistic convention in the last few seconds of the piece? What is the purpose of this address? Is the audience implicated through the use of direct address?

3. Representational characters: In the script, with the exception of Helen and Nabil, the characters are listed as titles and not proper names (i.e. Foreman, Woman, Man, and Vagrant).

Is this choice indicative of Fréchette's overall message? Why does the woman get named within the dialogue but remain "Woman" in the script?

Setting

The play takes place in a war torn Middle Eastern country. The text tells us that the country borders the sea and the language spoken by the natives is Arabic.

In the same fashion as a road narrative, **Helen's Necklace** uses a taxi to bridge each specific location. Specific locations include: a construction site, the roof of a tall building, just outside a Palestinian refugee camp and the waterfront. Although the locations are distinct, they are all connected through Helen's journey.

Through research about the play, we know that it is set in Lebanon. Why do you think Fréchette left the location out of the text? What is achieved by not specifically naming the country?

Characters

Helen	Lost & alienated; searching for a necklace in a war torn land.
Nabil	Reckless cab driver who befriends Helen and guides her through the twisting streets and her personal journey.
The Foreman	Victim of war; refuses to let the past control his future – believes in rebuilding.
The Woman	Lonely & sad; obsessively searching for her son's red ball.
The Man	Victim of war; is angered by Helen's search for a worthless necklace when he has lost his "place on earth".
The Vagrant	Tries to sell Helen a new necklace that he claims is over two thousand years old.

How is Helen similar to the people she meets? How does she differ?

Is Helen self-absorbed? Are the other characters? How does Nabil stand out?

A Note About Translation

Written first in French, **Helen's Necklace** underwent a significant transformation in the translation process. John Murrell, translator of numerous pieces by Fréchette, not only translates the words but also has to translate the feeling of each play. There is a

visceral quality that must be maintained to accurately represent the drama, not simply echo the dialogue.

For more information on the process of translating drama, one useful resource is *Stages of Translation* by David Johnston. It's a unique collection of interviews and essays that deal with the art and the business of preparing performance scripts from works originally written in languages other than English. It's available at *TheatreBOOKS*, which can be found on the web at www.theatrebooks.ca or by visiting 11 St. Thomas Street, Toronto.

Thematic Elements

Loss

An interview in the "Toronto Star" quotes director Eda Holmes saying that the play is a metaphor for loss: "...not just material loss but the loss of Western innocence and the loss of human innocence, the idea that we will be young forever...".

Helen begins the play having lost her necklace. She stands on a familiar corner looking for it – when she gets into Nabil's taxi she begins the journey of becoming lost herself. Practically, she is unable to discern streets and neighbourhoods. Spiritually, she loses her assumptions about herself and her world as she delves farther into the city and meets more people. The Woman, the Man, the Foreman and the Vagrant have all lost things that are irreplaceable and Helen's evolution occurs as she begins to care less about the necklace and more about all of the other things she has lost – her "missing pieces".

With every character that Helen meets in the play, she realizes that it is not the necklace she has lost but rather something it represents. As the people she meets discuss their missing pieces she becomes connected or, to continue the metaphor, found. She is eventually so connected that she can actually communicate with Nabil. The necklace has taken the place of important human elements and allowed her to live in a false reality. With its loss she is forced to confront this realization and in so doing she attains a much deeper understanding of herself and the world. In accepting her loss, she gains many things including a purpose – to deliver the message to us that "we cannot go on living like this."

What is it that Helen is searching for? Does she find it?

How does Nabil function in the play? Has he lost anything?

Cultural Differences

Western culture has a reliance on materialism that the world of the play brings to the forefront. The audience is offered an alternative perspective of Western values when they are juxtaposed against the day-to-day life of the war torn Middle East. Although Helen begins searching for a plastic necklace she eventually discovers that it is not the necklace she needs but something much less tangible and much more profound.

The play also brings to light the divide between a people brought up with war as a way of life and those who come from a land “that still has all of its pieces.” Although Western civilization and culture can be strong and overbearing, the tables are turned for Helen – she is lost in a foreign place searching for something that is impossible to find. Constantly encountering language barriers, cultural barriers and class barriers, Helen keeps trying to reach for the only thing that is familiar – the memory of her necklace.

Is there an object that you value for more than its material worth? Why do you feel that way? How do you project worth onto an object?

How does receiving the stone from Nabil provide Helen with a sense of closure?

We identify ourselves with things – is that a product of our cultural upbringing or is it innate? Defend your answer.

Do you know people who have been raised during a war? How has this changed their lives?

Discuss with your class the difficulties of being a stranger in an unfamiliar land. What are the challenges and dangers one might face?

Beauty

The sea is a beautiful place that Helen has been dreaming about even before she comes to the Middle East, and it is the place that she strives for during her journey. It appears, when she first gets into the taxi, between the elements that make up an urbanized cityscape. She needs to travel literally and spiritually through the cityscape to arrive at the place of balance and beauty that is the sea.

Helen consistently refers to the beauty of the necklace and to all of the ways it makes her feel. Her obsession with the necklace transcends its physical beauty; it acts as a shield that protects her from the world. It is only once she loses her shield that she actually begins to feel and see the things around her. This culminates in Helen opening herself up enough to another person (Nabil) that she is able to seek solace from him: she asks him to place his arm around her like a shield. Set against a backdrop of violence and destruction, Helen’s fragility is wholly apparent in the metaphor of the tiny white randomly placed pearls that are held together by invisible threads.

List all of the things that you think the necklace represents. Defend your choices.

Language

The use of language in Fréchette’s piece works in terms of establishing character and theme. She creates characters who have a different way of speaking, including language, rhythms of speech and inflection. Thematically, the language is an alienating force used to reinforce how lost Helen feels in her environment. At the end of the play, she and Nabil have a moment of perfect comprehension that acts as a beacon of hope.

Excluding Helen, examine how each character's speech is altered despite the fact that they are all played by a single actor?

Are communication barriers a problem for Helen? Or is she creating communication roadblocks through her own displaced feeling?

War

Although not directly involved in the action of the play, the backdrop of war creates a thematically important frame. The Foreman, the Woman and the Man all relate the things that they have lost to war: a house, a son, and a place to call home respectively. Helen's scene with the Man occurs outside the walls of a Palestinian refugee camp. The Man says, "There are days of light when I manage to forget that I have been walled up inside a camp since the day I was born". The walls he refers to have a very specific literal meaning; the walls surround the refugee camps in order to keep the refugees from building a home or a life in the city. This reality is juxtaposed against Helen's search for a piece of jewelry. Despite the fact that Fréchette does not write a play about war, it thematically saturates all aspects of the narrative.

Consider other plays, movies or television shows that take place during wars. How is Helen's Necklace the same? How does it differ?

Social Responsibility

Social responsibility is a theme that permeates the entire production of **Helen's Necklace**. Before the play begins, Helen arrives in the Middle East for a conference to "reflect on the troubles of the world" but when we meet her, she is searching for her necklace. Despite its apparent triviality, it is actually the latter pursuit that allows Helen to become aware both of herself and her connection to the world around her.

It was Fréchette's own visit to Lebanon with a group of writers that compelled her to write this play (please refer to the interview in **Additional Resources**). Fréchette gives Helen a voice and Helen in turn uses it to communicate with the audience. Helen's moment of direct address is Fréchette's strongest vehicle for communication.

The production values also reinforce the theme of social responsibility, as the audience is placed on both sides of the theatre. Witness to both the play proper and to each other's reactions, the audience is suddenly implicated in the overall message of the play: "We cannot go on living like this."

An interesting discussion may revolve around the role of Human Rights Organizations in settling disputes. How much does your class already know about these types of organizations?

Consider this play's relevance in light of the current political situation. Could these events be relocated into Germany in WWII or Afghanistan in the last year? Why or why not?

Elements of Design

The following section combines general information about areas of design (including information from Tarragon production staff, design websites, and the textbook: *Theatrical Design and Production* by J. Michael Gillette) with specific examples of how design elements have been employed in the production you are attending. A brief glossary is also included to assist with technical terms used in this section of the guide.

Design Overview

A script can be performed numerous times without ever being interpreted the same way. Although text stays the same from production to production, the way the piece is conceptualized changes.

The designers (set, costumes, lighting, sound, etc.) and director thoroughly discuss the play to ensure all parties share a similar vision of the play, and explore how this vision will be represented through design. Design elements should create an environment for the play that supports the production concept: the creative interpretation of the script.

There are some artistic and practical considerations that apply to all areas of design. These include:

- mood and spirit of the production
- historical period of the production
- locale of each scene
- season of the year and time of day for each scene
- time, labour and material budgets
- health and safety
- needs of other designers

For **Helen's Necklace**, the production concept is highly symbolic. The designs are representative of four things: the journey motif, the war-torn land in which the story takes place, the memory state in which the story is narrated, and the notion that we exist in a world that is propped up.

All three designers help the audience into the story without laying out the whole picture – allowing them to be guided but not led into the world of the play. This is introduced in the opening sequence: a mini-journey that reveals for the audience each iconic design feature and sets the stage for Helen's story to unfold. Although the audience will not completely understand the meaning of every element, they become aware of the importance of the components that have been exposed and this informs the rest of the narrative.

What does the opening design montage add to the play?

Set Design

The set designer's job is to create a physical world which helps the audience understand and enjoy a play by providing a visual representation of the production concept. Before rehearsals begin, the set designer meets multiple times with the director. From these

meetings design drawings and a maquette (a scale model of what will be onstage) are developed. The model and drawings are used by the actors, stage managers and production staff to better understand the design goals; to imagine and replicate the space the production will be set in; and to build and decorate the set pieces.

Specific practical elements considered by the set designer are:

- the socio-economic level of the characters
- number and position of entrances and exits needed
- number and position of entrances and exits already in the space
- the seating formation of the theatre – is it malleable?
- the type of stage that comes with the theatre (i.e. proscenium, thrust, arena, catwalk etc.)
- is this a flyhouse?
- the duration of the run
- will the set tour after the first production

In addition to the scenery, the set designer is frequently responsible for designing the stage properties.

It will be interesting to take notice of the following:

- Where on the stage certain scenes take place
- How the mood and spirit of the production is relayed through the design
- How many different locales are represented on the stage
- What areas are used as exits and entrances
- What information the set gives about the characters

The **Helen's Necklace** set, designed by John Thompson, is a long narrow playing space with riser units for audience seating on both sides. The set design serves many purposes:

- the narrow playing space reinforces the sense of travel by pushing the action back and forth. It results in audience members having different perspectives on the action depending on where they are seated.
- the audience seated on both sides (the "Catwalk" or "Alley" configuration) highlights that we are implicated in the action; it does not allow us to shrink in the shadows – rather audience members become part of the set, by forming a backdrop to the action, for patrons seated on the opposite side.
- the 2 blue panels hanging from the grid extend the set and frame the audience to reinforce the sense that we are an integral element of the design. The panels also allow for lighting effects that pull the focus from the floor to the ceiling.
- the leaning wall, held up by a stick, evokes conflicting feelings of danger and comfort – it threatens to collapse but also provides a nook that houses the picture of the sea. In the final scene the leaning wall also allows for elaborate shadow play and its angle keeps the shadows similar in height to the actors themselves.
- the use of the booth as a set location, and production staff as inhabitants of that location, extends the idea that everyone in the room has a part to play in the story. It also underscores the journey, which includes exploring and utilizing everything that is found in the space.

- the central element of the set is a wooden column supporting a jack, which in turn supports the beam that runs above the playing space. The piece juxtaposes two worlds with its use of natural and man-made materials and works in conjunction with the stick to show the unstable nature of our world. It also illustrates the propensity to tear things down and build on top of them.
- the playing area is painted with colours that evoke the climate and landscape of the world of the play – framing this is bands of green which represent the boundaries, the outside world, us.
- the bricks represent rubble. Sometimes the corners of a building, sometimes pathways, they also conjure the idea that the world is collapsing, eroding, falling apart.
- the picture of the sea represents both the final location of the play and the place that Helen is spiritually striving for – it is a place of peace, balance and beauty.

Does the set succeed in drawing the audience into the action? Are you aware of the audience across from you and how does that inform your experience?

How is Helen's spiritual journey reinforced by the director's use of space?

Points of Interest:

- The use of office chairs to depict the seats of Nabil's taxi developed out of an article by Thomas Friedman, which described youth building rifle look-outs, propped up on stilts with office chairs as gun rests. The image made a huge impression on director Eda Holmes.
- The photo mounted in the entrance-way was taken by designer John Thompson. He and Eda wanted to find a local entry point for this story; John went out to look for local images that could inform the design and captured this picture in Etobicoke. Without a label, it can easily be considered an image from the world of the play.
- The column was originally intended to be treated with plaster and paint. When carpenter Ian Chappelle finished, the column was so beautifully built that it no longer required more work – the sense of loving human craftsmanship was powerful and perfect for the design.
- This is the first time the booth has been incorporated into the set design in this way.

Sound design

Sound design consists of music, effects and reinforcement (such as microphones).

The sound designer obtains a lot of information directly from the script i.e. “a phone rings”, “it begins to rain”, or “a sad song is heard through the window”. S/he must think about the transitions between scenes and what sound elements will shift the audience from the mood of one scene to the next. Sound design also extends to the elements the audience hears when they first enter the theatre, during the intermission, and even the curtain call and post-show music.

Some practical elements the sound designer considers are:

- speaker and microphone placement
- live or recorded sound, or both
- volume of each piece
- length of scene changes
- equipment available
- existing ambient noise in the theatre

As well as establishing and reinforcing mood and atmosphere, sound elements also provide information to the audience:

- When you enter a theatre take a minute to listen to the pre-show music or soundscape – does it offer any clues about the nature of the show?
- What sound cues did you hear that helped establish time and place?
- Were any special effects used? Were they useful in moving the story forward? Why or why not?

The sound designer for this production is Matt Swan. He begins by playing a Middle Eastern piece of music with lyrics. The audience immediately has a sense of location and the language barrier. From here the overall sound in **Helen's Necklace** transforms slowly from very specific sounds, which identify locale and are common to the Western ear, to less realistic sounds and music native to the Middle East. To again reinforce the sense of memory, the first few cues are played to establish a scene and then disappear to allow the story to take over. They are also played at a high volume to intrude on the audience's comfort level and force focus.

As Helen delves deeper into her memories, the sound begins to underscore the scenes, creating a less conscious reaction from the audience. Specifically, when Helen is recalling her conversation with Robert, the designer has taken a droning tone and looped it to quietly reinforce a sense of discomfort and foreboding. As Helen arrives at the sea the designer incorporates the soothing sounds of waves – the audience is able to identify with the sounds and welcome the comforting element, which is in direct opposition with the previous cues. Finally, when Helen and Nabil are able to speak to one another the music echoes with the word they have used most to connect throughout the play: "Yalla". This echoes the song heard at the beginning, except now the audience understands what is being said. It also echoes the message Helen has brought to the audience and acts as a last call to arms: "Let's go."

How many location-specific sounds can be picked out in this design? What emotional effect does the Arabic music have?

Lighting Design

Effective stage lighting not only lets the spectators see the action of the play but also ties together all the visual elements of the production and helps create an appropriate mood and atmosphere to heighten the audience's understanding and enjoyment of the play.

The lighting designer wants to give information such as time and place, mood, and where the focus of a scene is. Lighting design is often not noticeable because it has been created in such a way as to enhance the mood of the play as unobtrusively as

possible. However, many directors will employ unnatural lighting or hyper-realized lighting to add another layer to the production.

Lighting includes the use of coloured gels to create different effects; intensity to determine how dark or bright a scene is; direction to establish the angle at which the light hits the stage; and movement to decide the duration and components of cues.

Lighting and sound often work together to create an effect (i.e. a fade to black that is timed to a piece of music).

Lighting also works closely with set pieces when 'practicals' are used. These are light sources that are manipulated by the actors (i.e. a desk lamp). In this case the set designer will determine the look of the lamp and the lighting designer will decide how it functions.

Some practical considerations for a lighting designer are:

- the number of locations in a set
- the number of lighting instruments available
- the type of performance (i.e. drama, dance, opera, etc.)
- whether the lighting board is manual or computerized
- alternate light sources (i.e. video or slide projection)
- set materials requiring special lighting (i.e. a scrim or cyclorama)

Some lighting elements to notice are:

- when and how lighting indicates a change in time or location
- lighting changing the focus from one character to another
- how lighting interacts with sound elements
- how lighting is employed to reinforce a mood
- how colour is used in the lighting instruments

Because the play is set in a hot climate, lighting designer Andrea Lundy has used warm gels to light the playing space. This is offset by the cooler colours she employs on the panels hanging from the grid. When Helen switches from external to internal narrative the illumination of the set is decreased and the focus switches to an abstract design high in the air. This pulls the audience out of the present world of the story to follow Helen to another mental place. The gobo projected on to the panels is an intangible design that, depending on your interpretation, may contain a heap of pearls. The cue is an obvious signpost for the audience that another type of memory is being explored. Andrea uses corridors of light to create alleys on the set and boxes of light to highlight and isolate elements, including the picture of the sea and Helen herself.

One of the most intriguing design elements is the string of lightbulbs that are suspended across the playing space. This simultaneously evokes feelings of starkness, industrialization, a pearl necklace, and the symbol of a message being received or an idea taking shape. It is also strung diagonally across the playing space so that when it is lit, it connects both sets of audience risers. Andrea also uses a wide variety of lighting angles to change mood and effect. She uses lamps hung from the grid, at actor height and placed on the floor. One particular effect is a light shone through a 'bullet hole' in the set.

Does the string of bare bulbs conjure up other ideas? How do the angles of lights change the mood of a scene?

Costume Design

Costume design includes all clothing, underclothing, hairdressing, makeup, and accessories such as hats, scarves, fans, umbrellas, and jewellery, worn or carried by each character in a production.

A costume design suggests specific personal information about each character.

Through discussion with the director, the costume designer will decide whether or not to make the costumes 'period accurate'. The designer researches clothes of a period in many ways including: looking through store catalogues of the era (i.e. Sears or Eaton's); going to a reference library, art gallery and/or museum; perusing picture archives; or even looking at old family photographs. Similarly, if the costumes are contemporary, designers look to current fashion magazines, tv and film, and stores for research.

The designer also works from indications within the play's script and looks for hints into the characters' personality. They then make artistic choices for the colour of the costumes, their shape, and the fabrics to be used.

Finally, the designer works with the costume team and the actors in fittings to make certain that the costumes are comfortable and as easy as possible to manipulate.

Some practical considerations in costume design include:

- the background and personality of the characters
- the limitations created by the set or staging (i.e. a raked stage makes spiked shoes impractical)
- the actors can move about on the stage as required (i.e. run up a set of stairs or engage in stage combat)
- the costumes remain effective under stage lighting
- costumes that need to be changed quickly are built accordingly
- costumes can last for an entire run and be laundered

To clothe the actors within the production concept for **Helen's Necklace**, costume designer John Thompson worked with actor Raoul Bhaneja and director Eda Holmes to find small elements that would set one character apart from the next. The goals included allowing a fluid transition from one character to the next and finding enough change without creating a caricature of a construction worker, Middle Eastern lady, vagrant, etc. In the case of the Foreman, only the removal of eyeglasses and the acquisition of a prop clipboard was used to distinguish the character from that of Nabil. To maintain the fluidity, many of the character elements are preset onstage.

Helen and all of the other characters are dressed in the same palette of colours that appear in the set.

Would the story change if Raoul had elaborate costume changes between characters? Notice that the set and costume designer are the same person. How might this help or hinder the design process?

Glossary of Useful Technical Terms

Acoustics	The sound transmission characteristics of a room, space or material
Cue	A directive for action (i.e. a change in the lighting, sound, or an actor's entrance)
Cyclorama	A large piece of scenic material used to surround the stage on to which colour can be projected
Gel	Generic name for the film used in lighting instruments to change colour. It can also be used as a verb (i.e. to 'gel' the lights)
Gobo	A thin metal template inserted into a lighting instrument in order to cut a pattern into the light that is projected onstage
Flyhouse	A theatre space with the ability to "fly" set pieces and/or backdrops from a fly gallery located high above the stage using ropes and cables
Maquette	A scale model 3-D representation of the set design
Plot	A scale drawing showing the placement of various elements (i.e. lighting instruments) relative to the stage configuration and theatre
Prompt book	A copy of the script with each actor's blocking, all the technical cues, and details/lists of all technical elements involved in the production
Raked stage	A stage that is higher at the back than at the front
Scrim	A scenic panel made from translucent gauze-like material
Stage Configurations	
Arena Stage	A stage configuration where the audience completely surrounds the playing space
Catwalk Stage	A stage configuration where the audience surrounds the playing space on 2 sides – also known as an Alley stage
Proscenium	A stage configuration where the audience watches the action through a rectangular opening that resembles a picture frame (proscenium arch)
Thrust Stage	A stage configuration where the audience surrounds the playing space on 3 sides

Additional Resources

1. About Carole Fréchette
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About Carole Fréchette

Carole Fréchette was born in Montreal in 1949. She studied acting at the National Theatre School before she joined the Théâtre des Cuisines, with whom she was an actress and playwright until the early 80s. Since 1993, she has devoted her time to writing. Her plays are wrought with lyricism and elegance and the deceptively simple writing is overflowing with dense, topical imagery. Among her plays are: Governor General's Award winning *Les Quatres Morts de Marie*, *Le Collier d'Hélène*, and *La Peau d'Elisa*, all translated by John Murrell into English. They had their English language premieres at the Tarragon Theatre as *The Four Lives of Marie*, *Helen's Necklace*, and *Elisa's Skin*, respectively. Other plays include : *Les Sept Jours de Simon Labrosse*, *Jean et Béatrice* and *Baby Blues*.

Winner of the prestigious Elinor and Lou Siminovitch award in 2002, Fréchette was chosen from 35 playwrights nominated from across the country. The jury citation stated, "In an especially fresh and startling way, she uses the mysteries of theatre to explore the mysteries of our daily lives. Her plays negotiate that delicate balance of the known and unknown, the forever accessible and the forever exotic, which is the property of all great art." Fréchette's plays have been translated and staged in Canada, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Mexico, Romania, Switzerland and Syria.

On writing **Helen's Necklace**, she said, "I wrote this play in May 2000 while in Lebanon with nine other playwrights. We spent a month together, traveled in the country and spoke with the Lebanese people. We all had to write a play and our common theme was frontiers.... My play is more a personal play than a political play because it's not a play about Lebanon or Palestinians; it's a play about me looking at them. It's the only thing I could do. I felt powerless there; I saw things as a tourist." (For more of Fréchette's thoughts, please refer to the interview below).

Other Plays by Carole Fréchette include:

Elisa's Skin

A woman sits in a Brussels cafe, telling love stories and collecting them as well. Why? To answer a mysterious young man's challenge.

The Four Lives of Marie

This work begins with Marie as a precocious young schoolgirl, abandoned by first her father and then her mother, and follows her through four lives and four deaths.

Seven Days in the Life of Simon Labrosse

Terminally unemployed, Simon Labrosse invents a new job for himself everyday – emotional stuntman, ender of sentences, ego flatterer, easer of consciences – in order to fill the void in his existence.

All of the above plays are available at *TheatreBOOKS*, which can be found on the web at www.theatrebooks.ca or by visiting 11 St. Thomas Street, Toronto.

Interview With Carole Fréchette

What was the development of this play?

After the residency, the first reading was in Paris. The play was passed around in Paris, and a director (who was originally Lebanese) read it and said he wanted to do this play in Lebanon. He proposed it to the *Centre Culturelle Française* in Lebanon and in Damascus. The world premiere was in Damascus in April 2002, then it toured to Beirut and Lebanon. In the bilingual production (French and Arabic), all the actors were Lebanese, French, Syrian or Palestinian. The reaction was extraordinary; the people there were really thankful. I never thought about the future of the play, I just felt I had to write it. It's been done in since in France, Switzerland and Senegal.

How did the play change after the events of September 11th?

The play didn't change after these events, but it exists within a completely different context than when it was produced. The play has since become a sign of hope. I was afraid because my play was about a war that was a long time ago, but when September 11 happened, and the war began again, I began to think my play was just not accurate anymore. The events of September 11 were so powerful and violent and I thought my play was too gentle, but people were enthusiastic and moved by my play regardless.

Where did the line "We cannot go on living like this" come from?

There are over 400,000 refugees in Lebanon and we visited a few camps while we were there. It was a very intense experience for all of us. We visited one camp in Tripoli that they wouldn't let us into. They sent us some women who lived in the camp to tell us about their living conditions. I spoke to one woman and she asked, 'So you're going to write a play about us?' I felt so bad – I explained that I didn't know what I was going to write about. She kept insisting 'you know, we cannot go on living like this anymore. Are you going to say it?' After that evening, I went to my room and I wrote down my impressions of this meeting. This sentence is in the play because I felt like she was asking us for something.

Is it a political play or a personal play?

When I went to Lebanon, I thought before I left, 'I'm not going to write anything about war because it's so difficult to write about, and I know nothing about war.' After I spent three weeks in Lebanon, I also thought 'what do I know about war after three weeks?' But the memory of the war and the politics were everywhere; we discussed their politics all the time. It's omni-present. My play is more a personal play than a political play because it's not a play about Lebanon or Palestinians; it's a play about me looking at them. It's the only thing I could do. I felt powerless there; I saw things as a tourist. There

are some things you understand, but not the complexity of the politics. All I could stick to was 'Who am I?' I don't want to forget who I am and where I come from. And I don't want to speak on behalf of these people, because I don't know them. But meeting them changed me. This is what I wanted to show. It's about two things – a woman who opens up the reality of this part of the world – and about her own journey and her own feeling of loss – the fact that she finally accepts her loss. It's very intimate. It's important to me as well. The aspect of the play is that she opens up to other people who suffer."

What do you think of the English translation?

I'm happy that it has been translated into English. There are not many things that have changed in the play. When my plays are translated, it's a strange feeling. It's not completely mine anymore. It's another language, and someone else's words, but still it's me. It's my story. But it's John's (Murrell) words now, but I'm really happy about it, I'm excited to see the reaction to it.

Are there plans for a film version?

I'm working on a film script for this now. I'm working on this because a producer asked me to; a young Lebanese producer/director who saw the play in Beirut when it was there a year ago. He studied cinema in Paris and L.A. and contacted me through mail, saying he'd like to make this into a film, and would I like to do the script? We met, and it was a long process. I've never done film, but now the script is almost finished. I think it's going to be good – a co-production between Lebanon, France and Canada. It will be in French and Arabic. It will be filmed in Beirut; it's going to be exact. There's a cinematic quality about the play. It's almost already a film – it's a journey into the city, you can imagine that more easily on film. It's kind of a road movie. She takes the taxi and goes around the city looking for the necklace. It will be close to what the play is, but adapted for the screen. In a real city, a real street, a real taxi.

Helen's Necklace Vocabulary

<i>Aa chmèèl</i>	To the left.
<i>Aal yamine</i>	To the right.
<i>Abadan</i>	Never
<i>El bahr</i>	The sea.
<i>El bahr kbir</i>	The sea is large.
<i>Helou</i>	Beautiful.
<i>Marhaba</i>	Hello.
<i>Marhaba tcharaffna</i>	Hello, it's a pleasure to meet you.
<i>Narghile</i>	Water Pipe.
<i>Yalla</i>	Let's go.

Historical Background

The war that has seized Lebanon for more than two decades is a complex, long-lasting and destructive conflict. Between internal conflict and international conflict, some 150,000 people have died and over 800,000 people have been uprooted.

The civil war conflict began with the collapse of a power-sharing agreement that divided governing authority between Christians and Muslims. The conflict gradually spread

throughout the nation and turned the capital city of Beirut into a battleground. Four features have remained constant within this ongoing conflict:

1. Lebanon's geographic position and the presence of the PLO and more than 300,000 Palestinian refugees have turned the country into a major battleground in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Even today, fighting between Lebanese armed groups (chiefly the Hezbollah), the Israeli army and the Israeli-controlled SLA, have caught numerous civilians in the crossfire.
2. Efforts by members of the international community to intercede in Lebanon's civil war have generally not managed to meet their objectives. Welcomed at first, the force soon became the object of attacks. For example, in 1982, after a massacre in the Palestinian refugee camps, the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Italy dispatched a multinational force to bring stability to Beirut. The allies withdrew after suicide truck bombings killed several hundred American and French soldiers.
3. The violent and diverse character of warfare in Lebanon has reflected the wide range of combatants (including regular armies, guerrilla forces and militias). Tactics have included air bombardment, tank battles, urban assault, truck bombings and assassinations. Various factions have also taken Westerners hostage; most have been released in exchange for prisoners.
4. Lebanon has been further destabilized by power struggles within various religious groups. Despite attempts to rebuild, Lebanon remains stuck in its own Arab-Israeli conflict.

The following bibliography may be of interest if you wish to pursue an extended historical and political context:

Chamoun, Jean. *War Generation Beirut* (video – 50 minutes). 1988
Friedman, Thomas L. *From Beirut to Jerusalem*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux. 1989
Fisk, Robert. *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War*. New York: Oxford Paperbacks. 2001
McCullin, Don. *Beirut: A City in Crisis*. www.islamonline.com

Helen of Troy

Both mortal and immortal, sister to Clytemnestra, Polydeuces and Castor, Helen of Troy was borne of the coupling of Leda and Zeus as a swan. The abduction of Helen of Troy – whether she was willing or not – by the son of the king of Troy set off one of history's most memorable wars.

According to the story, three goddesses, Aphrodite, Hera and Athen, asked Paris, Prince of Troy, to choose the most beautiful among them. He chose Aphrodite, who, as a reward, promised to procure for him the most beautiful mortal woman. This was Helen, wife of Menelaus. Under suspect circumstances, Helen allowed Paris to carry her off to Troy. Menelaus then called on the Greek chieftains, most of whom had once been Helen's suitors, to help him attack Troy and win back his wife.

Treated many times in literature from Homer onwards, Helen has been regarded as many things: innocent, arrogant, intelligent, beautiful, sexual, cunning, manipulative,

charming, bold and assertive. Helen seems to be emblematic for the destructive power of beauty and sex. The basic duality lays in the fact that Helen is either the guilty doer of a daring and impious deed or the victim and pawn of men and gods.

Why has Fréchette placed this ancient reference in the middle of her play?

Consider the story of both Helens more carefully. What does Fréchette's Helen have in common with Helen of Troy? Is this an ironic reference?

Pre Show Lesson Plan 1

Script Analysis

Expectations:

CR1.01: create the inner and outer life of a character, using a variety of strategies (e.g., improvisation, research, textual analysis);

TH2.02: describe how movement and non-verbal communication can be used to portray character, to define relationships among characters, and to communicate dramatic tension;

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Materials:

- Minimal Script from **Helen's Necklace** (see attached script)

Warm up:

Greeting by Letters (Illustrates that with text, it is *how you say* something that carries weight, not necessarily *what you say*)

- Students are put into pairs and decide who is "A" and who is "B"
- The A's form a row across the room from the row of B's (they are directly across from their partner)
- Instruct the A's and B's to cross the room towards each other by saying "A, B, C, D" (the intent being "*Hi how are you?*")
- B's respond with "E, F, G, H" (the intent being "*Fine thank you very much*")
- Students repeat the exercise with the intent changing to: two very frightened people; long lost friends; very competitive colleagues; extremely paranoid people
- Ask some pairs to pick their favourite "exchange" and demonstrate it in front of the class.

Main Activity:

Minimal Script

- Divide the students into **new pairs** and ask students to decide between them who is "A" and who is "B".
- Distribute the minimal script from **Helen's Necklace** and allow students some time to grow comfortable it.
- When students are comfortable with the script, facilitate several of the following coaching techniques:
 - A speaks very calmly while B is very agitated
 - A is yelling while B speaks in a whisper
 - Perform it with A believing that B has lost his/her child
 - Perform it with B in total confusion
 - Perform it with B having his/her back turned to A for the scene
- Ask the students to perform the minimal script and continue performing into an extended improvisation. Students who feel comfortable can present their interpretations to the class.

Closure:

Questions for the class to consider after their scenes have been performed:

- 1) Did performing the text in different ways give you insights into the character? What were they?
- 2) How were people's interpretations of the script different?
- 3) Did anything surprise you about this activity? Why? Be specific.

Journal:

Looking at the **Helen's Necklace** minimal script:

- 1) Which gender were the characters? Two males? Two females? A male and a female? List specific examples from your experience to support your assumptions.
- 2) What did you already know about drama/theatre that was confirmed to you today? Please explain specifically (based on class experience) how it was confirmed.

Extension Possibilities:

- After seeing **Helen's Necklace** students can compare and contrast their own scene analysis with the performance they attended.
- Were any acting choices the same as their own interpretation? Did it give them a special insight into that scene?

Minimal Script for Helen's Necklace

A: Go ahead. You cry out. I want to see. Cry out: "We cannot go on living like this. We cannot go on." Shout it.

B: I'm sorry, I must have been mistaken –

A: Shout it! Cry out!

B: We cannot go on living like this.

A: Louder, much louder.

B: We cannot go on living like this. We cannot go on living like this.

A: Louder!

B: We cannot go on living like this! We cannot go on living like this! Stop! Please, stop!

Pre Show Lesson Plan 2

Expectations:

TH2.04 – demonstrate the use of movement, gesture, and non-verbal communication to express ideas in a drama

THV.01 – demonstrate an understanding of the conventions of role playing and structuring dramatic works etc.

TH1.01– demonstrate an understanding of the theory of “willing suspension of disbelief ” both as performer and as audience; **Ontario Dramatic Arts Curriculum**

Warm-up:

- Lead group physical warm up, stretching body etc. and guided imagery relaxation.
- Review the characteristics of tableaux.

Main Activity:

The sentence, “**We cannot go on living like this**” is repeated numerous times in **Helen’s Necklace** by several characters. It is first spoken by a character called “The Man”, who lives in a war torn Middle East. As the play progresses, we come to realize that this declaration touches the character Helen, who, the script states, is from a cold, northern country. She repeats the declaration, in direct address to the audience, at the end of the play.

Ask the students to brainstorm what they think is meant from this statement. Why would a playwright give this sentence so much power in her work? Where is Helen’s cold, northern country? Students brainstorm ideas from both the Man’s perspective and Helen’s considering their geographical upbringing. What is going on in the world that would have the characters declare this statement? Write these ideas on the board.

Divide the students into 4 groups. Ask the students to pick one element from the brainstorming that will be expanded. The students work for 20 minutes creating a tableau (where each actor represents a specific character) and short scene based on the element chosen from brainstorming. Ask the students to conclude their scenes with the tableau. The students are told that the characters in their scenes do not have to have direct connections but rather imagine that a thread connects them all. The scene may end up being a series of statements.

Students perform and watch each other’s scenes. Ask them to compare and contrast each presentation.

Reflection:

From each presentation pick a moment that spoke to you, that was powerful for you. Please explain your choices from both a personal and technical perspective. Consider the visceral reactions of a personal response as well as the technical elements of presentation (i.e. good focus, smooth transitions etc.).

Post Show Lesson Plan 1

Expectations:

TH2.04 – demonstrate the use of movement, gesture, and non-verbal communication to express ideas in a drama

THV.01 – demonstrate an understanding of the conventions of role playing and structuring dramatic works etc.

TH1.01– demonstrate an understanding of the theory of “willing suspension of disbelief ” both as performer and as audience; **Ontario Dramatic Arts Curriculum**

Warm-up:

- Lead group physical warm up, stretching body etc. and guided imagery relaxation.
- Lead brainstorming as to what makes a good tableau and write the characteristics on the board.

Main Activity:

Helen’s Necklace tableaux project

- Divide the students into 4 groups and assign each one a different character the following list: Helen, Sarah (the woman who lost her son), Munir (The woman’s dead son) or Nabil.
- Groups are to keep their assigned character confidential.
- Each group creates 5 tableaux to recreate the 5 stages of life for their character. If you had to represent each life in 5 images, what would they be?
- Each group strives for each student to have a specific role within the tableau.
- Students work on scene transition flow.
- Teachers are encouraged to play music to heighten focus during the activity.
- Students perform each 5-part tableau in front of their peers (with music playing if possible).
- Students discuss their reactions to the exercise. Which tableaux spoke to them? Why?

Reflection

What did you learn about your character from the 5 stages of life tableaux? Please explain specifically based on your experience in class.

Post-Show Lesson Plan 2

Whole Group Role Play based on **Helen's Necklace**

Expectations:

TH1.01– demonstrate an understanding of the theory of “willing suspension of disbelief ” both as performer and as audience;

TH2.01– demonstrate an understanding of the control of volume, tone, pace, and intention in an expressive speech;

TH3.02– explain how dramatic forms may effectively communicate more than one perspective;

CRV.01– use various ways to sustain a role within a drama;

CR1.02– demonstrate an understanding of the element of risk in playing a role (i.e. adapting to challenges to personal and social beliefs); **Ontario Dramatic Arts curriculum**

Warm-up:

Review with students the important elements of creating a whole group role-play:

- a. Maintaining focus throughout the role-play.
- b. Maintaining the physicality of your character throughout the role-play.
- c. Sustaining the vocal quality of your character throughout the role-play.
- d. Ability to take on, and commit to, your characters' attitudes and beliefs.

Main activities:

1. Character Diary Soundscape

- Students find a private space in the room and write a diary entry based on the character they played in the 5-part stages of life tableaux.
- Teacher asks students to close their eyes. The teacher will tap each student on the shoulder to indicate his/her turn. When the student feels a tap on the shoulder, they should start reading their diary entry. Once another student begins to read their diary entry, the preceding student should stop. The soundscape continues until all students have read an excerpt of their diary entry.

2. In class role-play

- The class sits in chairs forming a circle.
- The teacher tells the students that they will be taking part in a whole group role-play based on their characters from the diary entry (inspired by **Helen's Necklace**).
- Teacher leaves room and returns as a “facilitator”.
- The scenario is in present day and the UN has decided to compile a record of people recounting their experiences with war – some experiences should be firsthand, others can be indirect.
- The objective of this discussion is to make recommendations to various Governments and portray the overwhelming feeling that as a global community, “*we cannot go living on like this.*”
- Encourage the students that varying opinions help create conflict and will liven the role-play.
- Once the teacher as “facilitator” commences the exercise, they can intervene with probing questions to further the debate.

Reflection/Journal:

Students can explore greater character depth by answering the following:

What surprised you about your character? List two things and give examples.

What was your favourite part of the role-play? Use specific examples from the exercise.