

## Medea - A Mirror for the 21st Century

A podcast with Avery Willis Hoffman, Fran Amewudah, and Shivaiké Shah

introduced by Giovanna Di Martino

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Production photograph from BAME *Medea* (2018 O'Reilly theatre, Keeble College Oxford)

### Giovanna Di Martino

Hello, everybody, and welcome to the latest episode of *Staging the Archive*. My name is Giovanna and I'm one of the co-hosts of this podcast series. I'm here today with three special guests who will be discussing a recent production of *Medea*, which ran in 2018 at the O'Reilly theatre at Keeble College in Oxford and its revival. I'm sure some of our listeners will remember it as it was a particularly striking *Medea*. It is the first all Black, Asian and minority-ethnic production which the university has ever hosted. The play was directed by Francesca Amewudah-Rivers the then president of the Oxford University Drama Society and co-produced by Shivaiké Shah - he was one of the makeup artists and I know we're going to come back to this. Fran and Shiv are both with us today to talk about this exciting *Medea* and their on-going work on it. Leading the conversation will be Avery Willis Hoffman, a

writer, director, producer and the Programme Director of Park Avenue Armory in New York. She too was involved in student productions when she was a graduate student in Classics here at Oxford. She was president of the Oxford Classical Drama Society, founder and director of the Oxford Greek Festival, which ran in 2004 in honour of the Olympics returning to Athens. Her DPhil thesis is on modern adaptations of *Trojan Women* was supervised by APGRD co-founder Oliver Taplin (with co-founder Edith Hall). He was actually with us on this podcast series a couple of episodes ago, and current director Fiona Macintosh served as her dissertation defence committee. She also produced a *Medea*, the Oxford Greek play in 2002 at the Oxford Playhouse and I know we'll come back to this for sure, which was directed by Nathaniel Coleman and starred Marie-Louise Crawley. And for the last 14 years, Avery has collaborated with the maverick director Peter Sellers, creating multiple projects in theatre, dance and opera. So welcome back, Avery, and thank you all for being here with us. Now, as usual, we'd like to kick off the conversation with a description of an archival item, especially chosen for this episode. So let's start with a description of the item that we have in front of us, which is a photograph of the 2018 production of *Medea*. So Fran and Shiv over to you.

### **Fran Amewudah**

Hello. Yes, thank you so much for having us, firstly and for such a lovely introduction, it's very sweet. This is my favourite image of the play. It comes at that crucial point when Medea resolves to kill her children and it's that kind of inner turmoil she has. There's a whole section of the monologue where she's torn between her love for her children, but also her drive for justice, revenge and almost salvation even or a kind of freedom through infanticide - not just freeing herself but also freeing her children. I just love how the chorus in this image are stood right by her as her sort of only support through this agonising decision that she has to make, but the neutral expressions are quite chilling almost as though the outcome is inevitable here. I just remember the atmosphere in the theatre at this point being so tense everyone was just transfixed by Charithra, who played Medea and the chorus and what she was about to do. And it was at this point, I remember thinking yes, *Medea* was the

right choice of play for us. So we chose to stage *Medea* at that time to address the lack of diversity in the Oxford theatre scene. And the wider creative art scene really, at Oxford at that time.

Shiv and I were two a very few students of colour doing theatre. And so I thought, let's bring POC students together who were interested in the arts and let's reimagine the canon of Western theatre as we know it, let's take up mainstream space. Let's take this classical text and infuse it with our own perspective. So we had over 40 students of colour involved, it was a real celebration of culture and diversity through music, movement, spoken word... to tell this well-known story through a modern lens. And now we're really excited to be working on its professional revival. And this image, although it was taken from the Oxford show, we still very much want to keep a similar aesthetic, and Shiv can talk more about the makeup.

### **Shivaik Shah**

So one of the most striking things, I think, about the photo is obviously the very extensive makeup - the very kind of stark white makeup that was used in the production. It was certainly not a short process. I think Charithra herself was painted for about 40 minutes before the show and it took about two hours and three artists to complete the chorus of six. People most recognised it I think from the Beyonce 'Sorry' video where Laolu NYC - is an amazing artist - who made this kind of painting mainstream. So that certainly was the inspiration. But when talking to Fran and Charithra, I think something else we noted is both Charithra and I are Indian and henna is such an important part of our culture. And for me, I have so many memories of spending hours as a kid at weddings watching a bride come out completely covered in henna and I have photos of my mother covered from kind of tip of the hand right to the elbow and the feet right to the knees, it's a very important visual aspect. So this is one of the amazing moments which I think highlights one of the key facets of our job in production, which is collaboration, and working out ways to bring cultures together. I think the actual original art is Yoruba and then we mixed it with our own cultural influences of the three artists who were painting

and every night, we obviously each painted something different, but one could notice who was doing each by – when up close, I don't know whether you can tell him this particular photo – but mine would be more paisley-based. Lee, who was also an artist, would kind of be much more alike to like the original. I think just apart from being very visually striking a very important aspect of how we've mirrored the chorus and Medea in the play. It kind of demonstrates how this kind of cultural collaboration is such an intrinsic part of a play that is so to do with foreignness and otherness. And obviously, Avery, you put on a production of *Medea* in 2002, another very unique time in history, let's say. Obviously, you were also influenced by this kind of foreigners and otherness, so we'd love to hear you talk a little bit about that.

### **Avery Willis Hoffman**

Thanks, Shiv. It's really incredible to be with you all "across the pond", as we say and talking to you from New York. I just want to say it's really an incredible time to be doing art, just to acknowledge where we are. But I wanted to just say one thing about the 2002 production. It was right after 9/11, and I personally had just returned from New York when 911 happened. That time in Oxford was really challenging, as it was all across the world and especially in New York. And being from New York, it was a real moment where you need to figure out how to resolve all the things that are happening in your world and in your space. Often, for those of us in the arts, we look to the arts to do that. Of course, we were already well in process, in creating what was the Oxford Greek play of that year. So we were in talks about which play we were going to be producing in the original Greek for the Oxford community and the wider UK community. As a cyclical thing the Oxford Greek Play was always - as was the Cambridge Greek Play - really looked forward to in the community. So that the choice of *Medea* really became just the most appropriate choice given all that was going on. So I think bringing forward - as you mentioned, Shiv - these questions of foreignness and otherness, were definitely top of mind, I think, given we had English subtitles, but we did do the play in the original Greek. So thinking about what other elements - as you mentioned - costume, makeup, the power of music and dance, the

choreography, just thinking about all the artistic elements that go into expressing some of these really powerful themes, when you don't have a language that everybody understands. Of course, it was an extraordinary challenge for the actors and the dancers- but the actors in particular, to learn that ancient Greek to memorise it and to convey it with the kind of emotion that would be easily received by the audience. I think we did a pretty good job of that. Mary Louise Crawley, who has gone on to work with Ariane Mnouchkine and others, was just an extraordinary Medea. We spent so many hours in rehearsal and Nathaniel Coleman, who was the director, was just an excellent classicist, and so understood the lyrical nature of the language. So I think as an exercise, it was an extraordinary exercise in an extraordinary moment. I know you and Fran have been going through an extraordinary moment yourself. So just turning it back over to you – Fran, you mentioned this earlier: why *Medea*? *Medea* is one of the most performed Greek plays in the 20th century, in the 19th century - across time - so can you say a bit more about why you chose that play, versus other plays in the western canon, to focus your efforts and bring this really beautiful and unique casting approach and creative approach?

### **Fran Amewudah**

Yeah, absolutely. I think I was really interested in the idea of contemporizing a classical text: so taking a form which has been traditionally considered to be for a certain group of people, and kind of just injecting our own perspective into it. I've always loved theatre since I was small and I think it was around about my GCSE years, I was thinking more contextually about this art form that I love so much and its origins in the West. I found Greek tragedy, I found Greek comedy. I was just obsessed with this idea of this - so intricate, the themes and the way that it just speaks to contemporary society, even though it was written thousands and thousands of...so much time ago, by dead white men performed by white men for white audiences. I thought this was really mad that I found myself so connected with something that was not written for me or written for the communities that I'm part of, but it still spoke so closely to me. The message - especially behind Medea as a character, she's so

powerful and so complex. I thought that her story speaks to the contemporary setting and the on-going fight for racial equality. She's considered to be a foreigner, she's considered to be barbaric and therefore she's seen as a threat to the peace and prosperity of Corinth; and this kind of xenophobia is very prevalent in today's society. So I really thought that this was it was a great text that we could use to sort of unite all kinds of cultures - diverse cultures - together with this one text, and bring out these themes of diaspora, of identity, of belonging in a way that was celebratory. I was really drawn to the form of Greek tragedy, with the choruses. I thought: this is a great way for us to inject different kinds of cultural storytelling, through music, through poetry, into this piece of art. Which we hoped would make a statement and just show the theatre scene at the time that we are here, people of colour black brown people - we love the arts as well and we have a lot to offer. And it should be for all audiences as well - theatre. I just love the text, I think *Medea* is dope. But also, I just thought it was really interesting how - its origins and how we could sort of contemporize that and really speak to some of the struggles that we face as people of colour in white dominant settings and societies, but also in a way that was celebratory.

### **Avery Willis Hoffman**

Yeah, that's beautiful. And Shiv what did you feel was the reception of the play when you put it on in Oxford? What was the moment like? What were the times like -why now? Why do *Medea* in this environment? How did it sit with people?

### **Shivaik Shah**

It was interesting because I remember very distinctly, sitting in the bid meeting with Fran - and I'd done numerous bid meetings before - I knew in this one we'd immediately face backlash. So I brought 14 members of the cast and crew along and still - 14 members is bearing in mind at that point between Fran and I we'd probably done 30 plays at Oxford, none of which had had a crew any larger than 10. But yet, we were still faced with a question of "Oh, but you guys won't be able to find enough people to do the play", which was

extremely baffling. Given that we were sitting in front of an audience with 13 people there. So we were immediately facing backlash: the tickets won't sell. Then the play came around and before - we had pretty good sales - and then kind of serendipitously almost, the university's diversity report came out the day before we opened and suddenly we find ourselves inundated with interest from the university, inundated with interest from the press. Suddenly this production was simply sold out in seconds, after that report came out and we published it on our Facebook page. Then the play felt immediately like it had been placed in this very different lens of 'we do have something to offer'. I think the majority of people that came – the majority of people of colour that came, at least - felt this kind of relief almost: 'it's here, we're ready'. But this is all in the context of Oxford. I think at the time when Fran came to me originally to do the makeup and then to produce, we were both so suffocated by the environment we thought: absolutely brilliant. And then we left - we graduated. Now, somehow, it's been a year – God, that's petrifying - and we kind of, went our separate ways. Fran continued to work in theatre, she had some amazing positions, including work at the National Theatre; I somehow ended up working in fashion. In March, just before the whole world shut down, I reached out to Fran and said "Look, where are we thinking about this", because we realised outside in the real world, we were still feeling suffocated and loss by trying to navigate spaces, artistic spaces - for me primarily fashion; for Fran theatre - where we felt heavily under-represented. And again, this play that had been kind of sitting in the back of our minds for two years, came to the fore. And I think what was so particularly important for me - sitting backstage at castings, where I was told "you cast this many of this race, this many of this race, this many of this race" - I still felt like we didn't have the right approach to diversity. I'm not saying that we haven't made progress: I'm just saying that there's a lot more progress to make. I think one of the ways that this production focuses on making progress is by appreciating that we're not being diverse for diversity's sake and we're also being diverse to celebrate that diversity - not to tokenize in any way. We want to bring people together as well. I think often conversations around diversity can be so polarising and instead, we want to demonstrate the conversations about diversity can show

how cultures are perhaps similar to each other. That people can enjoy and flourish by thinking about what other people do: other people's - even small things - other people's wedding traditions; they can be interesting, we can celebrate that difference and bring it on a stage. Even in this kind of horrific play. Then obviously, the world shut down and we saw how the coronavirus was specifically affecting BME - people both in this country and in the States, where you are, Avery and so much more. Obviously then we saw the atrocities and murders and in the States that were happening and continue to be happening - even this week - and ever more so, we realise the importance of a production that doesn't polarise, that tries to bring together people to with something that's been bringing together people, as Fran says, for nearly 3 millennia – and that's theatre. That's certainly what we hope to do again, as we provide these productions in ever more polarising times.

### **Avery Willis Hoffman**

Fran, can you say a bit more about the rehearsal process and the process of tackling this ancient text and how you interpreted it with this incredible group of actors, producers, makeup artists and other creative folks? What was that process like? What were the things that you brought forward as a result of this sort of diverse approach?

### **Fran Amewudah**

It was a struggle. It was really a testing of my patience, but we got through it. I think - what Shiv said earlier about the main kind of opposition that we came up against, initially, when we were going through the bid process – it was “there just aren't black or brown people, at the moment, in Oxford' Where are you going to find the cast? Where are you going to find the group?” =So we really have to think about how we would attract these people, because it's not that there weren't any of us, it was just we didn't feel like we belong in the theatre scene, and we didn't feel like our voices were valued. So we were doing our studies. So Shiv and I, we thought: we need to really make sure that we make this show as collaborative as possible and as embracing of all different kinds of art forms. So yes, in our in our audition call out, we had



bedroom singers come through, tap dancers come through - all sorts. If you just like to express yourself, come through and audition. So we had an array of different people with different skills coming through and I think at the end of the audition process, we had close to 80 people audition for 15 roles. It was really overwhelming the amount of response we got and it was just beautiful, really, to see the amount of talent that was in Oxford at that time - and I'm sure it's still there - from diverse backgrounds. We ended up having this cacophony - in the cast and crew - of actors, of spoken word artists, poets, dancers: we had a massive Bollywood dance in the middle of the wedding scene. We had some incredible singers, musicians... we just kind of said, okay, this is too good to just pick one avenue and go down, let's put it all in and let's celebrate all that we have to offer. It was definitely a lot of organisational skills had to come through, a lot of messaging with Shiv. But I basically made the show my life for two, three months and was jumping from rehearsals for actors, to rehearsals with the chorus to rehearsals with musicians, and then the collaboration process with the poets and the spoken word artists, the musicians and myself to make the soundtrack for the choruses. I think the way that we got through it was through collaboration - each feeding off each other's skills. Because we were so united with this goal of making this beautiful show, just celebrating ourselves, it was really something special. This is definitely something that we want to bring forward through into our revival, this collaboration between emerging, but also professional artists, in music, in poetry and through acting, we definitely want to keep a collaborative show.

### **Avery Willis Hoffman**

Thank you. Could you maybe just say a little bit more about your approach to the chorus and how that might be different from others? What drove you in the directions that you ultimately took with treating the chorus?

### **Fran Amewudah**

Yeah, sure. I've always been fascinated by the choruses as a trope in Greek theatre and I thought it'd be really interesting to experiment with the chorus

being an extension of Medea's personality. Rather than revealing this through dialogue, we thought we could really emphasise the power of collaboration again and of interdisciplinary theatre through having the Chorus express themselves through movement, poetry and live music to sing Medea's song. So it's exactly what you were saying Avery, about using the power of music and dance to convey these things - of foreignness and otherness- in place of language, which is often limiting. We've just actually had a really great chat with a spoken word artist who's been working at the Roundhouse, who we've commissioned to come up to work on one of the choruses with us. So the process is going to be very much me as a musician/composer, working with the text that I'm given by a spoken word artist/poet, to write the music and using different cultural motifs, rhythms, different musical textures and layers, to bring out the themes of foreignness, diaspora, culture, which are in the text. So, yes, this is going to be a collaborative process. But I am excited.

### **Avery Willis Hoffman**

That's amazing. And just shifting a little bit to this revival and maybe, Shiv, can you say a little bit about the plans - how you've evolved from the Oxford production and what your plans are at this moment for reviving the piece.

### **Shivaik Shah**

I think that the Oxford production was great, don't me wrong, but we were students, we did it in six months 'amidst our studies' - very much in quotes, because I don't think Fran and I did a huge amount of studying in that period. **But**, you know, handing in some form of essay weekly, if not two, and it was certainly a bit – necessarily - slapdash, we didn't have the chance to ... I mean, I will never forget banning Fran from coming to the theatre on the first day of opening because we had - the set was 12 trees. She was set to come in and see them, they had arrived that morning, and they were just nowhere near... I mean, they weren't trees, they were twigs. So I had to send her a message saying "Fran, I'm afraid you're categorically allowed nowhere near the theatre until the end of the day" –we then somehow found another eight trees to add into the space. So these are the kind of things that obviously we

hope that a professional production will avoid. But I think two of the main things that we certainly won't be changing: as Fran said, the collaboration; and as a producer, having found this working before: if you don't need it, don't do it. But with *Medea* - we spent this whole production saying 'yes' and anyone who approached me and said they wanted to be part of the crew, it was a yes, so we ended up with a cast and crew of 41 people. It meant that, as Fran said, a Bollywood dance, Madiba dress and all these incredible things and we certainly hope to change that but one of the biggest changes – Avery, obviously you'll know about this and so will Dr. Rosa, who's helping us - Fran and I ourselves are adapting the script. I think in Oxford we used the Robin Robertson translation, which is brilliant, but we thought actually as per your advice Avery but we had a lot that we could we could say. Fran and I both know the story, the script is embedded in our minds at this stage: we dream about it! So we know what we want to do with the text. Both you and Rosa helped us realise that we had a lot to say, so we are currently in the long process of creating the script ourselves. Obviously, we will have five spoken choruses now - we're having the chorus, this time around, helping us fill in the gaps where we want the chorus to work the text of the story of *Medea* itself. Fran and I have been working over the last few months and we will be working over the next year, I'm sure, refining Euripides' text, but we are never failing to be amazed by the power of his language and learning how we can adapt that to make the story that we want to create. So I think that's certainly one of the biggest things and I think another change we're making is the scope, but it's almost not a change. But I think when making a production one is generally quite limited - if we're doing our first production. You know, Fran and I, on the other hand, we want a cast of at least five or six people on stage and a chorus of at least six and live music and all of these dance aspects. I think that one of the things that we're standing by is the scope. Obviously we're currently in the coronavirus crisis so being on stage is not possible. But we're working on adapting currently a film version that will put the concept of *Medea* out there, if not the whole thing right now. We can't necessarily have people in the space, which is obviously, as theatre makers, what we want. Avery you just did some incredible work online and we hope to do some

incredible - a snippet of production online, with some of our new work, testing our new script and working with some new creatives, but we're just trying to adapt. I think that's what theatre is doing right now. We're seeing that everyone wants to keep creating; I don't think creators ever stop creating whatever happens. So that's what we're hoping to look at - at the moment - is creating this film and keeping it big, keeping it ambitious, keeping it on the level that the Oxford one was as a baseline and then seeing how we can build on that spirit of collaboration is the heart of our production company, that's the heart of the play.

### **Avery Willis Hoffman**

Yeah. I know that you've also made a commitment to support other folks in the theatre business - to bring them forward. Can you talk a little bit about your internship plan, ways in which you can bring others who are in the business, who maybe need that kind of support and an outlet and a project to focus on? Can you say a little bit more about that?

### **Shivaik Shah**

Absolutely. Again, this was a discussion with you, Avery that really inspired us to do this. But I think Fran and I have been lucky. And that comes with - we worked together - but it comes with the privilege of having been to an incredible university like Oxford and we had the opportunity to be raising the money to put on a production like this and had an amazing space, like the Keble O'Reilly to put on a show like this. But obviously there are so few people with that ability, with that privilege. Also, as everyone (I think) knows, the theatre world is full of nepotism and full of the need to network and the need to be in a certain place, at a certain time, in a certain group of people and a certain kind of class of society to make your way. Obviously we disagree with that on every level and we feel a responsibility as people who are making our way in the industry to be making sure to be taking other diverse voices with us, because that's where theatre is going. I mean, however much people fight it, people want diverse voices, people want new stories and that's exactly what we'll be doing. One of the ways that we will be

ensuring that is by having interns and shadows and people, that for every role we create, we want to make sure that there's someone there that can learn from that person, as much as we're all learning as we keep going. We want to make sure that we're bringing people along so for example, we're pairing with the Christian Cole Society at Oxford, and we'll be pairing with the BAME Drama Society Fran herself founded to make sure that we're bringing on people - students who potentially want to get involved. But also on a much wider scale, we want to be ensuring that every role we create, every theatre that we approach, we're approaching them on the basis that we also want to find new people and this doesn't mean people with a wealth of theatre experience. This just means anybody who has an interest who, who needs that in and – realistically, I mean when you have that in in theatre you can start building your networks. We've been lucky enough to find our way to people like you and obviously we had access to funding and the AGPRD itself through Oxford but we want to be making sure that we're letting people in with us as we as we make our way. But we also, in the spirit of collaboration, want to be focusing on platforming others. We are two artists and we're writing, but alongside that, we're platforming the spoken word creatives, obviously we'll be platforming the actors, we want to be platforming - along with Fran, there'll be a lot of music performed. It's really key to raise other voices as we raise our own, because we're certainly not fighting this battle alone in any way, shape or form and I don't think either Fran or I are under any impression that this is not a road that has already been forged by people behind us. There are people alongside us everywhere trying to try to fight for this representation and we're just hoping to do that ourselves, but also help other people in making their way into this industry - diverse people that don't find it so easy to walk into what is otherwise (in my opinion) quite a closed business.

### **Avery Willis Hoffman**

Yeah, thank you. That's extraordinary work and not easy. So I applaud you for those efforts and I know they'll continue on into the future. So Fran, can you say a little bit more about the film and what your hopes are, what the film will

consist of, and what you hope it will achieve, getting into the world during this this time of Corona?

### **Fran Amewudah**

One of the key things that we want to achieve through our revival is reach. We really want to attract a diverse wide range of audiences, especially young people. I think there's a massive stigma around the classical world and ancient history is something that is so far removed from young people now. Shiv and I - being young people - want to try to dismantle this and say: "Look, this is this is an art form, it should be open to everyone and we can all learn from it". And it does, it speaks to us as young people and it should be able to speak to a wide range of young people especially. So yes, we hope that through this film, it will just be able to attract a much wider audience of people who perhaps haven't been to the theatre before. I think one of the things we've seen through this coronavirus crisis is just the arts is having to become more accessible, obviously, because we can't perform on stages in theatres. As creatives as we've been thinking of ways to reach people without being part of a building. We were blessed to have the internet and to be able to connect with people virtually. We really hope that this film will be able to attract a wide audience. It will just be a snippet of what is to come, hopefully next year or in the not so distant future. We envision for it to be a section of text from the show, exploring and highlighting our main themes, which we have spoken about quite a lot: diaspora, identity, belonging, from the POC perspective. Shiv and I are currently working on adapting the script - I'm working on that monologue at the moment - and then we're hoping to feature one of the choruses. What was so great about the choruses in Oxford, that people really resonated with, was it was this sort of combination of contemporary pop music. So we had Stormzy, Kendrick, an artist called Ibeyi, who are these incredible Afro-Cuban twins. We had their sort of contemporary music merged with traditional African-American spirituals, gospel and original writing as well. So that really helped to speak to a younger audience, having Stormzy Lyrics there, or the Kendrick beat come in, really helps attract a more diverse audience. So this chorus and moving forward with the revival of the

script, all of the music is going to be original composition, but still very much with this cap of merging different generational styles and genres: pop and hip hop, African American and spiritual, all sorts of styles. So yeah, we're going to feature some of that in the film, along with some of our texts that we've been adapting as well.

### **Shivaik Shah**

And the film will also be the point where we officially launch the production company, Chameleon Productions, which will platform all of this but also, that's where the internship programme will be platformed. That's where we will start - hopefully - to release content, obviously, progressively. We don't know when theatres are opening, but we certainly hope to continue consistently reaching out over the year. We're very lucky - already we're paired with TORCH, obviously, APGRD - we're right here right now. Obviously Rosa has been an incredible mentor to us, Avery and yourself have been incredible mentors to us and the Gilbert Bayes Trust and all these people that we're already collaborating with. We want to use the production company platform to continue reaching out to people, as Fran says, to more people than ever before. We've seen during the coronavirus that these views of it online have reached millions, and that's certainly not the millions of people who have been going to the theatre normally. So there is the scope there. There is the interest and ancient Greek drama doesn't need to be for a bunch of people who went to Oxford and theatre doesn't need to be for a bunch of people who can afford really expensive tickets. We hope that as a play and as a production company, we can just continue drawing in the interest of people that eventually theatre is going to need to keep afloat in 20 years. So that's what we're trying to do now.

### **Avery Willis Hoffman**

Yeah, it's incredible work. As you imagine - when we might be able to gather again in a theatre, not six feet apart, or maybe it will be six feet apart - where do you imagine this new revival can exist? What kind of spaces are you

looking for? What's your theatrical dream for re-envisioning this project if that's not too scary of a question?

**Shivaik Shah**

Fran and I are never afraid to dream big. I mean, Fran and I, we've never put on a professional production ourselves before, the production company is new. We do believe that there is scope for this at a London theatre, we do think that there will be space for this in a place that can draw a lot of people - both in the space and obviously online, we're obviously thinking about people's followings. So hopefully we can demand a pretty decent London stage. But at the end of the day, it's going to take someone believing in us, and we're going to have to continue working and obviously putting out as much content as we can to really make that a possibility. But we certainly see this, however deluded it may seem, coming to a pretty decent London stage, hopefully, whenever we can in the next kind of 12-18 months, whenever things open. Unless Fran has anything to add to that?

**Fran Amewudah**

Exactly that. Dream big. Go big.

**Shivaik Shah**

Dream big - what else can we do, right? Let's see where it goes. I'm sure something will come of this, even if it's not sitting at the National Theatre, it will still make its mark, we're sure.

**Avery Willis Hoffman**

Well dreaming big is the first step, right? For sure. As you imagine everyone gathering together - and folks who are listening to this podcast - what can we do to help? How can we support what you're doing? What kinds of things do you need, in the next 12 to 18 months, as you embark on this journey? How can we help you and support you?



**Shivaike Shah**

Well, I think obviously the first thing we ask is that the film is hoping to come out in the next couple of months, we're just negotiating when that's coming out with - so the first thing we certainly hope is that people keep their eyes peeled for that. Anyone can. Obviously we're very contactable and we're always on the search for funding. We're always looking for people who can who can support any aspect of the play. We're also looking for creatives and people who can get involved. I mean, as we keep saying, it's the spirit of collaboration. So we're early on, please don't get us wrong. Even though the Coronavirus seems to have been going on forever, it has for us only been five months young. But we are certainly contactable. Giovanna at the end of the podcast is going to note how we can all we can all come together at the end of this. But by all means, we're ready to collaborate with anyone who can find our way - and we're already lucky enough, Avery, to be collaborating with people like you who are 'across the pond', as you say. So it's already global.

**Avery Willis Hoffman**

It is global! Anything else you want to add? I think we're coming up to the end of our time together. But any last words about the project or about your goals that you want to add before we turn it back over to Giovanna?

**Shivaike Shah**

Thanks, everyone, for listening. That's certainly first. And thanks obviously to the APGRD for having us - and Avery, for agreeing to host. I think Fran will be able to say something else. But for me, I think the only thing we can ask at the moment is for people to try stay as aware as possible and try to take responsibility for being aware of what's going on around us. To celebrate and enjoy things that make us different, because I think that's going to be the heart of how we move out of this very strange and sadly quite dark time. Fran?

**Fran Amewudah**

That's beautifully put Shiv. Just to add to that, I think just continue on investing in the arts. I think it's crucial that the arts take centre stage at this time, globally. So please keep on supporting the arts in whatever way you can.

### **Shivaik Shah**

And that can just be viewing a video - it doesn't have to be huge, just keeping engaged. The arts have kept you engaged with last five months and when we will come out of this we need to ensure that the arts are there to continue keeping us engaged in making these important changes. So many changes in society, I think, begin from people seeing them conceptually on stages and then kind of practising them. Yay the arts!

### **Avery Willis Hoffman**

Yeah, I couldn't agree more. I think the arts provides such a safe space for dialogue too, right - arts give you an opportunity to maybe tackle things that are a little bit more challenging in life. So I definitely think that the pursuit of the arts and the support of the arts are critical to our future. So on that note, I'll turn it over back over to Giovanna.

### **Giovanna Di Martino**

Thanks Avery. And thanks so much, Fran and Shiv, for sharing this with us, for sharing this incredibly fascinating and timely project on *Medea*. And I fear we could probably go on talking about it forever so I'm just going to put a hold. Thank you so much. If you want to know more about the performance history of *Medea*, of this widely performed play, do check out the APGRD's interactive/multimedia e-book titled *Medea: a performance history* by Fiona Macintosh, Claire Kenward and Tom Wrobel, which is free to download from our website.

### **Shivaik Shah**

We can vouch for that – it's an amazing book, it really helped us at the start of this, so absolutely great text.

**Giovanna Di Martino**

Excellent, I'm glad it helped. You can also check out Avery's past and on-going projects at [averyproductions.org](http://averyproductions.org) and her work at Park Avenue Armory at [armoryonpark.org](http://armoryonpark.org). You can check out Fran and Shiv's on-going project at [torch.ox.ac.uk/medea-kp](http://torch.ox.ac.uk/medea-kp) and you can get in touch with both of them. Get in touch with Shiv via his website [shivaikeshah.com](http://shivaikeshah.com) and please do get in touch with them. You are also very welcome to get in touch with us via the APGRD website. We'll have the photograph that we were discussing at the beginning of the episode and an accompanying blog post alongside this podcast. You can actually watch the whole performance on YouTube if you want, as well as some very interesting cast and crew interviews with Fran and Shiv, among others, so do check these out as well if you can. And once again thank very much to our speakers for being with us today.

**Shivaik Shah**

Thanks so much!

**Fran Amewudah**

Thank you!

**Avery Willis Hoffman**

Thank you!