

Director's Note:

The roots of *Electricidad* reach deep into the past. The first telling goes back to the 8th century BCE, when Homer's *Iliad*, a foundational work of Western culture, tells the story of the Trojan War. Around 400 BCE the Greek tragic poet Sophocles writes his play *Electra*, on which *Electricidad* is based.

Agamemnon and his wife Clytemnestra are king and queen in Greece. The son of the king of Troy, on a visit, abducts Agamemnon's brother's beautiful wife Helen and takes her back with him to Troy. In revenge, Agamemnon raises an army and sets sail to Troy to reclaim Helen and destroy the city. But because he had angered the gods in an earlier action, they refuse to give him the winds he needs to reach Troy unless he sacrifices his most precious possession. This is his daughter Iphigenia, whom he lures with promises of marriage to the Greek champion Achilles. Queen Clytemnestra agrees to the marriage but when Iphigenia reaches her father, he sacrifices her to the gods. The wind rises, Agamemnon and his army sail to Greece, and after a 10-year siege, conquer the city and return to Greece with Helen.

Bitter over the murder of her daughter, Clytemnestra (ironically renamed Clemencia in this play) has in Agamemnon's absence taken a lover. When her husband returns, she welcomes him as a victor, bathes him, and creates a banquet in his honor, after which she stabs him to death in revenge for Iphigenia. Her other daughter, Electra, sends away the youngest child, Agamemnon's son Orestes, to keep him safe, meanwhile mourning her father's death and plotting her own revenge. The local people, the Chorus, watch in concern and comment on the action.

Greek culture demands that a son revenge his father's death, so when Orestes returns his duty is clear. But the culture also forbids the murder of close kin; he knows that if he kills his mother he will be pursued relentlessly and driven mad by the punishing demigoddesses known as the Furies. What choice does he have?

Electricidad is set in the Chicano/cholo barrio of mid-20th century Los Angeles, but it reminds us that bloodshed, grief, and revenge run deep. It asks all of us: What choices do we have?