



Option5ive and CHASHAMA presents

# Herakles

By Euripides Directed by Jay Scheib  
at CHASHAMA, New York City, Dec 2000

Prologue: Herakles5 by Heiner Müller

Presented by  
CHASHAMA  
Anita Durst, Artistic Director

Directed by  
Jay Scheib

Dramaturgy  
Laura Butchy, Michelle Shafer,  
Caroline Reich

Sound & Video Design  
Leah Gelpe

Scene Design  
Suzanne Wang

Lighting  
Jeremy Morris

Clothes  
Anonymous

Performed  
Jennifer Bainbridge, Martin  
Berryman\*, Scott Dixon, Krassin  
Iordanov, Aimee McCormick,  
Maria Markosov, Barbara  
Sauermann, April Sweeney,  
Malinda Walford\*

*Herakles* by Euripides  
Herakles (aka. Hercules) returns home from his heroic labours to discover that his family is to be executed by the leader of a brutal coup. Heracles, in setting everything straight, suffers a terrible hallucination which is set upon him by his lifelong enemy, HERA. While under the power of this homicidal fit, he mercilessly slaughters his own wife and children.

one...as the actor whose heart beats and whose hair stands on end...as the Socratic thinker [through which] ...Everyday man forced his way from the spectators' seats onto the stage...the spectator now actually saw and heard his double...Thus the Euripidean drama is a thing both cool and fiery, equally capable of freezing and burning."  
*Herakles 5* by Heiner Müller  
For Herakles' fifth labour he must clean the stables of Augias—the stables are notorious manure pits that have not seen a shovel for thirty years. Herakles succeeds in cleaning the stables by dumping all of the cowshit into the river. Thirty years of Theban Beef (sound of thunder), after having passed through the Thebans, is dumped into the river. The river

chokes on the shit. Herakles is a hero, but isn't he also the man behind the ecological disaster? Heiner Müller portrays a Heracles who doesn't want to take part anymore: a lazy womanizer, a hack politician, a brutal monster and finally the representative destroyer of a Godless world.  
"Hear me, Thebans! See my weakness and release me from your labor which was too great for me. Look at my arms, not strong enough... Who's Herakles? I, dunghill without a face...lost in the maze of my guts...a victor conquered by his victories, Heracles forced into Heracles."  
Herakles 5, Heiner Müller

Production  
Making use of small, poetic, video loops, digitally sampled and manipulated sounds, found sounds, music, puppets and objects, this project, with Aimee McCormick as the hero Herakles, is a small and persistent inquiry into the complex sets of relationships in which we live our lives—The relationships between human beings, the environment, the faith in gods, and the endless processes which conspire to hold them. The combination of these two texts, supplemented by an operatic movement from Handel's "The Choices of Hercules," and an epic poem from Pindar, provides a critical double and distancing necessary to see the Hero with the wobbly legs, the Hero who doesn't want to take part anymore.

The square images below are captured frames from some of the video which was projected both during and prior to the performance. They orbit around themes of nature and civilization, the prismatic memory of the missing person, the unknown soldier, the vacillating conception 'the hero' in society and the struggle to maintain a relationship between one's identity and the other. At times the video image / virtual image extends the narrative, at other times the video disrupts the narrative—giving to the imagination/memory another path.

