INANNA: A MODERN INTERPRETATION

By

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for a Degree with Honors
(Communications, Theatre)

The Honors College
The University of Maine
May 2019

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ABSTRACT

Sumer has a culture lost to history. Currently, the University of Maine offers no courses about ancient Mesopotamia, one of the first civilizations. Over the years, historians have been translating the cuneiform tablets containing their religion and history. There has been one adaptation of those translations, by Diane Wolkstein in 1983 to bring the stories to a wider audience through a collection of stories around the goddess Inanna. Wolkstein’s *Inanna* is a second wave feminist icon but reliant on an essentialist idea of womanhood. This thesis seeks to broaden her audience, analyze the context in which Wolkstein produced her adaptation, and present the stories of Inanna from a modern perspective, through the process of writing and directing an adaptation of the myths of Inanna.

Theater is a platform that gives playwrights a way to share their adaptations of untold stories, and directors a place to interpret. It is a place to introduce new re-tellings of old stories with room for creativity at each stage. This stage adaptation considers Wolkstein’s Inanna, as well as tablet translations from Samuel Noah Kramer, to produce Inanna for a modern audience.
“Inanna’s scribe…gave me her words.
I have sung them as best I can.
Now, we pass them on to you”

- Diane Wolkstein, 1983
To my family, for their constant love and support.
And to the wonderful cast and crew who made this possible.
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INTRODUCTION

I began writing a stage adaptation of the myths of the Sumerian goddess Inanna in the spring of 2018. I took a selection of myths from Ancient Sumer, as well as a few from the later Akkadians, and used theater as a platform to tell their message about strength, and resilience through mistakes. It was also important to keep in mind the way that Inanna has been represented as a feminist icon in the past and explore how to apply modern feminist values to my own adaptation. Stories can be framed and adapted within the context of their re-telling. The success of those retellings relies on how the author used their current social context to bring them to a new audience. My adaptation of these myths considers the environment of past adaptations, removing the previous lenses and crafting a new interpretation. The writing and direction together show how untold stories can be adapted for a new audience while still maintaining their integrity. My adaptation seeks to provide this integrity, telling the relatively unknown stories of Ancient Sumer and giving them a space where they can be adapted to reflect a modern perspective.

This project was developed over the course of about a year, with the full concept coming from several specific interests developed over my college career. The foundations were laid in my freshman year, when I was taught Inanna: Queen of Heaven and Earth by Samuel N. Kramer and Diane Wolkstein, one of the first texts that Honors students are exposed to. Then, there was my involvement with the Feminist Collective and Women’s Resource Center on campus at the University of Maine which fueled my interest in feminist issues, and the challenges of introducing feminism to a wider audience. Finally, there was my progress through the Theatre department, with brief forays into directing
that were then encouraged by other student directors and my own desire to learn what
directing a production fully entails.

**Ancient Sumerian Mythology**

I chose the mythology of ancient Sumer specifically because there is a distinct
lack of translations available of Sumerian cuneiform. There are few examples of
publicized Sumerian mythology, primarily relying on the work of Samuel N. Kramer, a
leading cuneiform expert, who produced some of the most reliably accessible insights
into Sumerian culture. He has worked with others, like the Electronic Text Corpus for
Sumerian Literature published by the University of Oxford, to make these translations of
Ancient Sumer as a whole more available, not just those with Inanna. In 1983, Diane
Wolkstein, in conjunction with Kramer, wrote an adaptation of the myths surrounding the
goddess Inanna, called *Inanna: Queen of Heaven and Earth, Her Stories and Hymns from
Sumer*, to provide readers with a more easily digestible story. She framed them as a series
of poems, like the original cuneiform myths, and chose a few of the stories that most
strongly featured Inanna.

Black, Cunningham, Robson, & Zolyomi explain in *The Literature of Ancient
Sumer*, the goddess Inanna is connected to sexual love and agriculture, often depicted by
equating sex to plant growth. An early myth shows the Shepherd-Lord Dumuzi winning
Inanna’s affection from a farmer and their relationship is a defining point of Inanna’s
power (Black, Cunningham, Robson, & Zolyomi, 2004, p. 63). Her power extends
beyond sex, into war and rage. In Inanna’s descent to the Underworld, she strives for
control of Kur, the Great Below, the domain of her sister, Ereshkigal (Black,
Inanna is born to the god Nanna, who is the son of Enlil, one of the original creation deities. According to Wolkstein and Kramer’s version, her story begins when she finds a tree on the banks of the Euphrates river and plants it in her “Holy Garden” (Wolkstein, Kramer, 1983). It becomes overrun with evil beings, and she asks her brothers Utu and Gilgamesh to help her. Gilgamesh does, but Utu does not. Inanna gets power from this tree. The next story has her visit Enki, the God of Wisdom and father of Dumuzi and Gilgamesh. He gives her a portion of the Holy Me, decrees of the gods that create civilization. She becomes the High Priestess of Heaven. The next myth has her marry Dumuzi, but it is full of aggression and lacks any real love or support. Finally, Wolkstein includes Inanna’s descent to Kur. Ereshkigal kills Inanna, and she must be resurrected by Enki. Inanna returns to Earth on the condition that she send someone to take her place. She sends Dumuzi because, when she returns, she realizes he has taken her throne and did not mourn her death, unlike her handmaiden, Ninshubur, or her children, who offer to take her place (Wolkstein, Kramer, 1983; Jacobsen, 1987).

A large portion of the mythology of ancient Sumer is contradictory, with different people or gods appearing under different names, or with overlapping storylines. This is partially due to the Akkadian interpretation of the Sumerian deities. Over the years, Akkad added their own influences, and some of the original tablets were lost. Wolkstein and Kramer’s text accounts for most of those discrepancies, and the stories included are primarily from Sumerian cuneiform only. This is where my interpretation begins to become its own entity. The Akkadians took over the region of Sumer around 2300 BCE (Mackenzie, 2016), at which point they assimilated the Sumerians, forming one empire. The Akkadians took the Sumerian gods and made them their own. Most Sumerian
scholars agree that Inanna was one of the most powerful deities (Black, Cunningham, Robson, & Zolyomi, 2004; Jacobsen, 1987; Kramer, 1986). For the Akkadians, Inanna became Ishtar, and she was depicted as a type of femme-fatale. Her strength was stripped from her and replaced with seduction and a short temper. This is best exemplified with the story of Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven, dating from the middle of Akkadian reign. Here, Gilgamesh spurns Inanna’s (Ishtar’s) advances, and so Inanna is given the Bull, husband of her sister, Ereshkigal, to fight him. The Bull is killed, and Ereshkigal resents Inanna for her role in his demise. I chose to include this story in my script despite it showing the less pleasant side of Inanna. I felt it important to include because it is a concise way to start her journey and gives a reason for the rest of the stories that follow. This is Inanna at her weakest and makes her relatable for the audience. It gives Ereshkigal a reason to be mad at her sister, and a place for their relationship to grow from. It provides the basis for every important relationship that she develops, and is where she begins to grow her power.

Feminism in the United States

The stories that Wolkstein chose to include frame Inanna as a powerful, sexual being with focus on her genitalia and the power that comes from it. This can be explained by Wolkstein’s connection to second wave feminism, which was at its peak as she wrote her text.

Feminism in the United States has gone through several distinct phases, or ‘waves’ since the first suffragette movements of the late 1800s and early 1900s. The Second Wave began in the 1960s and lasted for more than two decades, framing Wolkstein’s perspective. The Second Wave was defined by its focus on stereotypically
feminine biology, such as breasts, vulvas, and menstruation, as a source of power and femininity. Prior to the Second Wave, discussion of female bodies and their sexuality were taboo. In 1970, a group of women in Boston produced a booklet entitled “Women and Their Bodies”, later “Our Bodies, Ourselves”. The booklet spoke openly about female sexuality, and abortion. It emphasized women’s ownership over their own bodies, an idea revolutionary for its time, and that bodily autonomy became a key facet of the Second Wave movement.

To support this, there were “genital diversity” (Fahs, 2015) workshops that would teach women that their vulvas were unique. There was also a focus on menstruation as female empowerment, with “menstruation extractions” (Fahs, 2015), where women with vaginas would extract their own menstrual blood to embrace their femininity. These were focused on empowering women to accept and understand the parts of their bodies that were not spoken of before. It is understandable that Wolkstein used the term “vulva” to convey Inanna’s power. It would have been powerful at the time to focus on female sexuality. When Wolkstein introduces her text, she explains that her desire for this story came from the fact that she believes “…all of us, both women and men, have long needed a ‘grand’ story of a woman” (Wolkstein, Kramer, 1983, p. xv). Gender was still seen as a binary, with the workshops were centered around the diversity of vulvas only, and did not include women with penises, or any other combination of visible genitalia; However, these demonstrations paved the way for modern feminism to move even further towards total acceptance.

Modern feminism includes aspects of the Second Wave’s focus on bodily autonomy, but also highlights intersectionality and inclusivity. This includes a heightened
discussion on what constitutes sex and gender, specifically the idea that gender can be a spectrum and sex is not a binary. In 2014, Janet Mock released a memoir detailing her life as a transgender woman. Her perspective gives a detailed overview of how feminism is beginning to be approached in the 21st century. Mock writes about how her experience with sex work taught her how “we are more than our bodies…our bodies are ours to do what we want with” (Mock, 2014, p.172) and attributes that lesson to the other women she worked with, leading to her own self-acceptance. This reflects the early 70s emphasis on bodily autonomy, but with the inclusion of transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals.

For me, it was important to remove Wolkstein’s addition of xx chromosome specific genitalia as a source of Inanna’s femininity and power because that type of specific indication was not as necessary to include as it was in the 1970s. The original Kramer translations do not specify any type of genital when referring to Inanna, and this opened the possibility for me to explore the gender spectrum in the presentation of Inanna’s stories. Wolkstein’s focus on Inanna’s sexuality was important for her time but did not fit into my retelling. I had framed the story through a discussion with a child, and blatant sexual acts felt out of place; However, I would like to find a way to include it in further adaptations because of Inanna’s importance as a fertility goddess, and because women still struggle to be accepted as sexual beings on the same plane as men.

As Evans explains in *Feminist Theory Today: An Introduction to Second-Wave Feminism*, “middle-class white heterosexual women do not a movement make. Or rather, we might. But it would not be the feminist movement. Some indeed would doubt whether it can be a feminist movement at all” (1995, p. 11). Today’s feminism emphasizes
inclusion of all types of women, regardless of genitalia, race, or other characteristic. My adaptation attempted to take these intricacies of modern feminism into account. In writing, that meant choosing stories that did not focus solely on the relationship between Inanna and Dumuzi, instead highlighting the journey she takes towards redemption with her sister, Ereshkigal. Wolkstein has an essentialist ideal of womanhood, which relies on using sex as a source of power, specifically the vulva. By drawing attention away from that aspect, it diminished the opportunities for essentialist portrayals of womanhood. In directing, that was achieved by having gender blind casting, by having the actors focus on motivations and energies as opposed to stereotypes, and through costuming. To figure out how to do this effectively, I researched directorial theory and explored the important connection between the director as an artist with an interpretation, and an understanding of how Inanna’s journey can be told to a modern audience.

Directing for Theatre

Michael Bloom authored one of the few functional texts on the modern directorial process, *Thinking Like a Director: A Practical Handbook*. He explains that a modern director requires a “dual perspective” (2001, p. x) that explores both the inner workings and outward structure of a play, with a system of checks and balances between both parts. The overall goal of a director should be to bring the text to life, by discovering energy through the “deepest desires and flaws” (2001, p. 6) of the characters without sacrificing structure. Bloom makes the comparison to a car. When analyzing both the structure and function, how it runs and why, allows for a deeper understanding of how the car exists as a unit as opposed to a description of the surface. This translates to being able to recognize
more than just overall themes of a play. For me, this meant making sure my actors understood the depth of what I was trying to achieve, and not take the script at face value.

Bloom (2001) argues that the role of the director has shifted from manager to artist, explaining that up until very recently, directing was a craft that was hindered by a “background in literature and ideas” (p.12). Directors were void of artistry and focused more on replication of past productions. Now, theaters will hire directors for their specific aesthetics, identified by their “sensibility, taste, and vision” (Bloom, 2001, p.12) which are things that Bloom believes can only be gained from studying outside of theater. He explains that technique is not everything, highlighting passion above all else when it comes to overall directorial success. As he puts it, a good director “must have something to say” (2001, p.11) and therefore I felt confident taking on the role of director. I had a specific message to tell, and I wanted to have the full platform to tell it. Inanna as represented through Wolkstein is no longer a feminist icon, but she is still a strong woman with a story that needs to be told, and which has the potential to showcase modern feminist ideals. My individual interpretation is what made it unique.

Adaptation vs. Interpretation

Directors now need to have an interpretation every time they direct a play and be aware of how they are presenting the story. Bloom (2001) explains that this has been a recent change, happening in the late-twentieth century because of a “rise in relativism and psychoanalytic theory” (p.13). Language has many meanings, and interpretation impacts how the words of the script are perceived. In theater, this is directly connected to the separation between playwright intent and directorial interpretation. As Bloom (2001) explains, “it would take hundreds of pages of notes to convey what is meant by every line
of a play” (p.14). Meaning, the play itself was an adaptation, but the production was created as a specific interpretation of both the story overall and the script.

H. Porter Abbott explains in *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* that there is a powerful difference between adaptations and interpretations. Interpretations “have to work with the whole text” (2002, p.100) whereas adaptations are complete, stand-alone works. Both Wolkstein and I created an adaptation of the original mythology. Wolkstein stays very closely to Kramer’s original translations but puts them in a form that brings it to a wider audience, a collection of the stories strung together in a way to make them feel more complete. However, she also focuses on keeping the goddess Inanna in a certain frame, interpreting the stories through a second wave feminist lens, which changes the way the way that we understand the story. Wolkstein uses poetics, and deliberate mistranslations of words, like taking Kramer’s translation of “genitals” and changing it to “vulva” to fit her perspective. My script is a different adaptation of the same mythology. I took the Kramer translations, and Wolkstein’s story arc, and formed them to fit the context of my work, including the feminist frame and the idea that the script would eventually be produced for the stage.

Despite the differences between the two, adaptation and interpretation often work together to tell a complete story. As Kristopher Mecholsky writes in *Adaptation is Anarchist: Understanding Narrative Through Complexity*, “differences between adaptations can lead to dramatic changes in the interpretation of a narrative” (2015, p. 176). He also argues that these changes can have equally negligible effects on interpretations, but that there needs to be that recognition. Wolkstein interpreted the stories from a second wave perspective and adapted the myths accordingly. I recognized
Wolkstein’s interpretation of Inanna as a feminist icon within her adaptation and created my own adaptation to demonstrate my own interpretation. The production itself allowed for a new level of interpretation, as I used my role as director to convey my interpretation to the audience.

Any new adaptation of a work requires a deep understanding of the original for there to be any connection and viable storytelling. This applies equally to direction of a stage play, where the story must be understood for its parts and for any additions or changes to be made. When tackling feminist topics, it is also important to keep in mind the perspective from which and the audience to whom the story is being told as that will impact the overall story. Sumerian mythology is a story that has not been widely adapted, and its messages need to be carefully conveyed in new ways.
THE WRITING PROCESS

The initial script only accounted for the stories in the Wolkstein text. The first draft, when read aloud, was less than thirty minutes long, and felt like it was lacking an arc. I realized that this was my opportunity to tell more stories than just the ones that Wolkstein had chosen. Diving deeper into Sumerian mythology led to a host of creation myths, some of which informed the deities actions in the stories I was already telling. Specifically, I made sure to include the origins of each important deity for the story. There are many different versions of creation, but the most popular is that there were Anunnaki. I ended up piecing a few options together to create a group of four: An, Ki, Enlil, and Enki. Some mythologies claim that Enlil and Enki are children of An, but they hold large importance to the stories. Enlil is responsible for the separation of Heaven and Earth, and Enki controls the Holy Me. I also chose to omit the god Nanna, who is the son of Enlil, and Inanna’s father. Nanna plays a minor role in the myths, and it made it less confusing for Inanna to come directly from Enlil.

There are other things that I changed for artistic reasons, and for the practicality of producing this as an unknown play on a university level. First, there was the difference between the Annuna (Judges of the Underworld), and the Galla (demon-like creatures of the Underworld). Both exist to serve Ereshkigal, but the Judges in the original text remain in the underworld and it is the Galla which accompany Inanna back to the surface. They are demons that Kramer describes as “ruthless, cruel, friendless, loveless, amoral creatures” (Kramer, 1963, p.492). I combined the two parts, calling them the Judges. This was, again, to reduce the number of different characters. I also completely cut the character of Utu, Inanna’s brother and God of the Sun. He appears only to deny Inanna’s
cry for help when the Holy Garden is overtaken, and then to free Dumuzi from the clutches of the Galla, temporarily prolonging Dumuzi’s capture. In the original mythology, when Inanna ascends from the Underworld and sentences Dumuzi to take her place, he initially escapes capture when Utu turn him into a snake and he hides away in a field with his sister, Geshtinanna. Geshtinanna is tortured by the Galla but refuses to give up her brother’s whereabouts. When Dumuzi is finally discovered, he is beaten and dragged to Kur.

In further edits, I would like to stay true to the characters of the stories, for example, keeping the Judges and Galla separate, and having Inanna be the daughter of Nanna. Specifically, the story of Geshtinanna needs to be elaborated. I shortened her name in the script to avoid confusion with the titular character, but her role is more important than I made it seem. Initially, I was worried about cluttering the story and throwing too much at the audience. There is a fine line between how many characters and stories there can be before it becomes confusing, but with more thought as to how double casting could work and clarifying with the Storyteller, there is the potential to add more from the original stories.

Inanna’s stories do not have a natural beginning or ending as presented in Wolkstein’s text. It feels incomplete as a story arc. One of the last things I added was the frame of the Storyteller and the Child. This gave the stories structure, with the Storyteller using the idea of the seasons as the through-line for the Child to follow the story. In the final scene, the Storyteller is able to explain the importance of knowing Inanna’s stories, not just because of the seasons, but because her flaws and strengths make her a powerful figure to look up to and learn from.
In future editions, I would specifically like to research what follows Dumuzi’s return to Heaven, and where Inanna grows from there. The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature has a daunting collection of translations that I was barely able to scratch the surface of. To be able to tell this story completely, I would need to take more time to fully understand all the possibilities. Both Wolkstein and I aimed to create a version of Inanna that would be palatable to our respective audiences. She “condensed sections, added and edited- always with the idea of ‘story’ in mind” (Wolkstein, 1983, p. xviii). This idea of a story is vital in any retelling of mythology. The myths are a series of vignettes that need to be connected in a way that will make sense to an audience. I started with the stories Wolkstein chose but there are many more possibilities; However, just like Wolkstein’s text, a project like that would take years of research and collaboration.
THE DIRECTING PROCESS

This production began with the intent of turning it into a staged reading. I wanted to keep the focus on the script, while still maintaining a professional atmosphere. My first step was to find an assistant director, someone I could filter ideas through to make sure I was maintaining some degree of separation between myself as the playwright and as the director. That ended up being Owen Sinclair, who also served as my stage manager.

My plan for a staged reading began to change as more students showed interest in participating in the production. Sophia Crockett-Current reached out to me before I had officially announced this production to see if I needed a costume designer. I originally intended for everyone to be in stage blacks, but I was happy to expand on that to find ways to make the characters more distinguishable from one another. In January, I visited a local theater that was giving away their costume collection, and I chose an assortment of things that could theoretically work, knowing that there was essentially no budget for the production. Using those items, the actor’s personal wardrobe, and a few items pulled from the theatre department’s costume storage, Crockett-Current created a collection of costumes that blended modern and ethereal. The general response is that the final product was “a little rough around the edges” (Anonymous Student #1, 2019). In future productions, I would work with the designer more in the beginning to create a more complete and planned design for every character.

There are also several key props that are referred to in the stories, such as the holy me, and Inanna’s royal adornments. This meant I required a properties master. When I sent out a call for crew, Asher Mason responded. He was a freshman with little
experience, but this show would give him the chance to experiment. He was extremely prepared, reading the script multiple times and making plans for each prop needed. A lot of the items were created at the last minute, but they were mostly what I had envisioned.

If this was going to go any farther as a full production, I would need some lighting and sound. So, I reached out to two students, Elijah McTiernan, who designed the audio for a senior thesis play in 2018, and Jacob Siegel, who was looking for some practical lighting experience. McTiernan used specific sound effects like thunder to denote the gods and used Iraqi music for transitions and bows, referring to the location from which these myths originated. Siegel and I discussed how to use color to signify spaces and characters. The Anunnaki on their high perch would be highlighted with blue, the Great Below would have purple overtones, and Enki’s shrine would be bright gold. It gave the audience another way to visualize the separation between spaces.

It was extremely important to me to present this story in an intimate setting. Once I had decided to pursue turning my script into a full production, I knew I wanted to perform in a space like the Al Cyrus Pavilion Theater on the University of Maine campus (Appendix C). It is a stadium style thrust stage, with a curtain hung to create a backstage area. There are also two vomitoria that cut through the audience to allow alternative places for the actors to enter and exit. One of these was used solely for the passage to and from the underworld. In small spaces, it is important to find ways to delineate important spaces. This was also accomplished with our set piece, which was a series of platforms resembling a ziggurat (Appendix D). The top tier was given to the gods, and power was determined by who was highest. When Dumuzi takes Inanna’s throne, he steps into a
place he as never been allowed before. When Inanna chases after Gilgamesh, she rushes down the steps in anger, forgetting her own power.

There are scenes, such as Ninshubur’s defense of the Holy Me, and the death of the Bull of Heaven that I did not have the skills to direct. So, I worked with Austin Wojchowski, a dancer and choreographer, to design the fight scene with Ninshubur, and for the movements of the Gates in the Underworld. For the fighting, I was lucky to call in Angela Bonacasa, a fight choreographer, to teach my actors how to fight safely, and to choreograph the piece itself. Both choreographers worked to make these specific scenes fit with the storybook aesthetic of the rest of the production and accomplished what I would not have been able to do on my own.

After removing most of Wolkstein’s changes, I wanted to make sure that I was consciously working to make the text fit modern feminist ideals. This was first done by casting the show gender blind, which is something I have personally rarely encountered in theatre. Auditions were open, and actors were able to read for any part they wanted regardless of gender. From this, I chose to cast three women as the male Anunnaki, and a man as the demon Lilith (Appendix B). None of these were chosen arbitrarily, or because they were the opposite gender. They fit the energies I wanted from each of the characters. Overall, I believe this was accepted positively. One student responded the way I had hoped:

“As shown through [Erin Butts’] casting style, gender is fluid and cannot be placed within the confines of some box, or defined by a set of labels. Each of the actors were able to set aside their own personalities and gender identities aside for the night and focus solely on how the character is meant to be represented… We
shouldn’t sequester feminist ideals to just celebrating these facets of femininity and womanhood” (Anonymous Student #2, 2019).

There are always risks to casting actors in roles that do not align with the way they physically present. Audiences will see that as a choice, not simply as a person playing a part. It is a choice, one to subvert what we normally associate with the masculine and feminine. Ideally, actors could play any character without critique, but it is important to recognize that most audiences will not be thinking of it in that way. As a director, I had the ability to make that choice to contradict what my audience might expect from a part, and I took full advantage of that artistic freedom. There were no directly negative responses from the audience, so I believe the choices I made were accepted well enough in this environment. I presented this on a liberal university campus and targeted the performances towards students who had already studied this as a feminist text. It would be interesting to see if or how gender-blind casting would work in a different environment.

I ended up casting everyone who auditioned for the show, something I was not planning on doing. That meant I ended up with fifteen people, a sizeable cast for the first time directing. I found over the rehearsal process that the days where I worked with a small group of actors in a scene were the most productive. It is easier to maintain focus when there are less people to work with. The number of actors made it easier to convey to the audience who was who, but it was a difficult process.

We held a read-through on February 15th, 2019 and began rehearsals on February 18th. For the first few weeks we had only two or three per week, with only certain scenes each time. Starting after spring break, we had rehearsals with the full cast nearly every
day. Overall, we had about twenty rehearsals total. This felt like a standard amount of rehearsal time, and my actors were able to maintain that schedule.

It was extremely important to me that my actors understood where their characters came from. So, I developed a character worksheet (Appendix F) for them to fill out for each of their characters. This forced them to explore who they were representing in a practical way, because there is an actual historical background to what they are representing. I wanted them to get a feel for all the stories and myths that exist outside of the play. They got creative, coming up with what their astrological signs would be, what their favorite book was, but they were always able to validate their choices.

As I worked to put the script on stage, there were several things that I had to change. There were times they would say a line and I would realize that a word was repeated too often, or I missed a detail, and we would go back and change it. Then, there were moments that I scripted but did not work in Pavilion Theater. For example, Inanna addresses the people of Uruk in Act 4 when she returns from meeting Enki. The script calls for the ensemble to be on stage for her to distribute the me to, but the stage felt too cluttered, and so we changed it so that Inanna would address the audience as if they were the citizens. The same thing happened when Dumuzi is taken to the Underworld. The city of Uruk is supposed to be cold and barren, and the citizens are struggling. I had a few ensemble members onstage the first few times we ran this, and they would say their lines about being cold and losing the king, but it was again too cluttered, and Geshti’s entrance was lost. So, we removed the ensemble and it opened the interaction between Inanna and Geshti. I believe if this were to be performed in a proscenium setting, with a larger stage,
the ensemble pieces would work better, but we found they are only necessary when Inanna does not have an audience to address directly.

I do not know if I was honestly prepared to take on this process to the degree that it was done. But from what I have gathered from other directors that I spoke to, most of the problems I had were understandable in my situation. For example, after the first week or two of rehearsals, I began to see a pattern of actors who would show up late, and actors who would message me at the last minute telling me that they were not coming to rehearsal because they had a project or paper to finish. I had provided a tentative schedule for the entire show at the first read-through, and we stuck to it religiously, except to shorten or cancel rehearsals. My stage manager would post a daily call reminding them who was supposed to be at rehearsal that day. That was not working, and so I decided to post a call at the beginning of every week for every rehearsal in addition to the daily calls, with the following note attached:

“Hi folks,

We have decided to post the rehearsal schedule a week in advance to give you all time to plan accordingly! We're getting closer to mid-semester exam season, and while I understand that you have other commitments and things do come up, it is your responsibility to make sure you have everything under control. We can be flexible, but as of today we have exactly three weeks worth of rehearsal days left and I need you all to be present and accounted for. Please try to arrive at least 15 minutes before rehearsal is scheduled to start so that you can be ready to go on time.
Thank you to everyone for your efforts today! We are making some great progress!”

In retrospect, that was likely not as strict as it should have been, but I was directing my peers and hesitant to be “too mean”. The reminder still didn’t work, and so the next time an actor told me that they would not be coming to rehearsal, I responded with the fact that they signed a contract, and that they had made a commitment to the production. They had to be there, and that was the end of the matter. That actor proceeded to show up 30 minutes early that day and was exceptionally engaged, with multiple apologies. That certainly was not the end of everyone’s tardiness, but it showed me that there are times when I will have to step outside of my comfort zone and play the stricter side of leadership.

On a more positive note, there were also unique problem in directing that were fun to try and solve. One of my actors had to act drunk in one of the scenes, and while her initial interpretation was funny, it was not believable. Two of my professors attempted to explain to me how to convey it better, and one even spoke to her directly, but nothing seemed to click. I reached out to Angela Bonacasa again, and asked if she had any advice. She walked me and a few of my peers through an exercise where we would interact in a space as if we had all had been drinking, and then we slowly increased the level that we were at. I brought this exercise back to my actors, and had them all do the same thing, where they would move about the space, acting increasingly more inebriated. We then talked as a group about what they noticed, and what key factors made an individual’s performance believable. My actor took these pointers and applied them to her performance. Unfortunately, it was still not where it needed to be, and so, during tech
week she and I spent an extra two hours after one rehearsal choreographing each individual movement. This is what seemed to help the most. We took the pointers from each of the directors, and from Bonacasa’s exercise, and combined them into a planned series of movements that she could remember. This was a specific example of how different actors process instruction differently and taught me that what works for one actor may not work for another. Some can improvise, but others need specific instruction to create the correct illusion.

Overall, I realized the parts that succeeded the most were the things that had a concrete plan at the beginning of production. Direction requires delegation, which I did with things like lighting and sound, but not as much with costumes and properties. I was directly involved in pulling costume pieces for the show, sewing things myself, creating the crowns and jewelry, and finding other assorted props. More strict preparation with a concrete plan early in the process would have made it easier for me to step back. I had an overall idea for how I wanted this story to be shown, and I was pleased with the way it turned out, but there are things I would like to change if it were done again.
CONCLUSION

Over the course of the three performances, we had over 150 people attend the show. They were mostly students in the Honors college and various professors. My goal was to reach as many students as possible. This is a story and culture that not many people are familiar with, and I wanted to share that with everyone, to spark an interest and have them leave with more than they came; However, Honors students who had only been exposed to the one perspective in their studies were specifically targeted, to show them alternative. It was ultimately successful, as proven by the talkbacks we did on Saturday and Sunday after the show, and the written student responses. The audience asked questions about the direction process, about the writing of the script. They were able to probe the actors about the choices that they made. I was able to explain most of my reasoning, and about why I chose this project.

Following the production, I spoke with members of my cast and crew to reflect on my job as a director, so that I could identify places of improvement for the future. Overall, the actors felt as though I did not give them enough artistic freedom. This was my first time directing anything longer than a ten-minute skit and as such, I wanted to make sure that each scene would have a specific structure. I pulled from my own experience with directors, who would block out every movement for every scene and then step back to see how the actors adapted that. In retrospect, this style was not the best for a novice director, and in further productions I would like to let the actors run through each of the scenes before I give them much direction, so I can see truly what they can do. This would also likely help to keep the actors engaged in the production and make them more excited to participate.
Another issue was that often I could not explain what I wanted in the most effective manner. I would take the long way around to explain what I needed an actor to do. For example, there was a moment where I was trying to tell an actor that they needed to go up a different set of steps than what they were doing, but instead of simply telling them to go up those stairs, I was phrasing it as “turning towards stage left to leave and circling around to go up the side steps”. This was too much. It confused the actor and it took longer than it should have to move on because I could not figure out another way to phrase it in that moment. I must work on my ability to communicate my ideas.

My actors also agreed that I did not offer enough positive reinforcement. I focused more on things that needed to be changed rather than the good things that they were doing. From my perspective, I believed I was praising them when they would do things particularly well, but I now see that I was not doing enough. I need to encourage a more positive environment in the future, where I regularly identify the strengths of my actors while helping them to further their performances.

It would be helpful to have a concrete overall image of what I want for the show so that I can answer any questions that my actors pose while also allowing them to have the freedom to explore their characters. I did not plan as much as I should have. I did not stick to my rehearsal schedule, often cancelling rehearsals because of various actor conflicts, or illness. When we would have rehearsal, I would often change what we were scheduled to work on. If I am going to direct again, I need to be able to balance a strong plan, while still making sure my actors have artistic freedom. That is a skill I will have to work on over time.
Working on this production taught me a lot about how I work as a director and as a leader. I was allowed the creative freedom to take the stories of Inanna and tell them in my own words, and to explain them the way I saw fit. It was a difficult process, but despite my challenges as a new director, the final product successfully told the story that I wanted it to tell.

For me, it all goes back to the origins of Diane Wolkstein’s text at the peak of the second wave. It was such a stark contrast to Kramer, whose translations attempted to have provide the most authentic representation of the original. I wanted to tell the story of Inanna in the same engaging way that Wolkstein had, but while staying true to the original translations and framing it from a modern perspective. Most of the Honors students who reacted to the play said that they believed Inanna was represented well. As one of them wrote, “all of the actors… portrayed the characters to the same strength as I remembered them being depicted when I read Inanna as a first year Honors student” (Anonymous Student #2, 2019). There were a few outliers. One student in particular wrote that the Wolkstein text “… was a story that was positively portraying women and the play didn’t seem to touch on that a lot… In this interpretation, the women were seen more negatively, they seemed vengeful and mean” (Anonymous Student #1, 2019). I understand how they came to this conclusion, because of the addition of the story of the Bull, and how the play highlights Inanna and Ereshkigal’s relationship. The play aims to show that all the characters have both strengths and weaknesses, including the women. I think expanding the play to include more stories could help tell that better, while still showing Inanna’s power. The Wolkstein adaptation was presented in Honors as a prime example of feminist literature, without acknowledgement that feminism has shifted from
the time it was authored. I believe that was why my initial approach to this production was to make it an example of modern feminism. By the end of this process, I realized that it was less important for me to make Inanna a feminist work, but instead to strip away what Wolkstein had added. This does not negate the choices I made to cast gender blind, and to focus on the role of power dynamics, because I believe both of those contributed to telling the story authentically.

There are many ways to interpret a story like Inanna’s, and infinite ways to adapt it. Kramer explains in his preface that he “…turned [the stories of Inanna] over to Diane Wolkstein, who proceeded to arrange, combine, and mold their raw contents in a way that would make them alive and meaningful to modern readers” (1983, p. xiii). That is the goal of all storytellers. I chose theater because it is one of the most expressive ways to tell a story. It is personal in a way that other mediums are not. It allows itself to be interpreted each time it is performed or directed. For me, it was the only way to tell Inanna’s story.


INANNA:
A Modern Interpretation
of the Ancient Sumerian Deity

Or, At the Whim of Heaven and Earth

By Erin Butts

Story.
A summation of Sumerian myths surrounding the goddess Inanna.

INTRODUCTION

Scene: CHILD is seated, playing with a doll. Enter STORYTELLER, drying hands with a dish towel.

STORYTELLER. It’s almost dinnertime, go set the table.
(CHILD continues playing.)
STORYTELLER. Now, please. (Starts to leave, but stops when CHILD speaks.)
CHILD. What are we having anyway?
STORYTELLER. (Turning back to CHILD) Roast chicken.
CHILD. (Disappointed, almost whining) I don’t want chicken. We always have chicken. I want strawberries.
STORYTELLER. We don’t have any strawberries right now.
CHILD. But why not?
STORYTELLER. It’s too cold. Strawberries can’t grow when it’s cold out.
CHILD. But why is it cold out?
STORYTELLER. (Smiling) Because it’s winter.
CHILD. Why does it have to be winter? *(Irritated)* I wish it was summer all year round.

STORYTELLER. *(crossing to CHILD and sitting beside them)* What if I told you it wasn’t always like this? It used to be that the flowers would always bloom, the fruit would always grow. Everything was bright and green, all the time.

CHILD. Really? What happened?

STORYTELLER. *(Standing)* Let me tell you a story… *(Lights out. Exit CHILD and STORYTELLER)*

ACT 1. THE BEGINNING

Scene. Dark. ANNUNAKI, FARMER, SHEPHERD, MAN, and ENSEMBLE scattered on stage at various levels, frozen. STORYTELLER at the center.

STORYTELLER. In the first days,

COMPANY. *(Lights up)* In the very first days,

STORYTELLER. In the first nights,

COMPANY. In the very first nights,

STORYTELLER. In the first years,

COMPANY. In the very first years.

STORYTELLER. Everything needed was brought into being. *(AN, KI, ENLIL, and ENKI stand center.)* The four Gods of Creation, the Annunaki, lived in the universe. An, God of the Sky, was married to Ki, Goddess of the Mountains, and so Heaven and Earth were one together. *(AN and KI step forward, hand in hand)* This was the world. *(pause)* On the Earth, Ki created all manner of creatures. The Gods did not wish to toil and care for the Earth themselves, and so, with a bit of clay, Enki, the God of Wisdom, created man, *(ENSEMBLE begin to move)* and set them to roam Earth at the base of Heaven. To help them prosper, the Gods created Sheep and Grain to sustain them. Mankind accepted these gifts, but they were not content. They began to quarrel. *(FARMER and SHEPHERD step forward.)*

SHEPHERD. We can’t destroy the fields with waterways for your crops. My sheep need large pastures to roam.

FARMER. Your sheep aren’t any more important than my grain.

SHEPHERD. They provide meat and milk and wool. Their skin can be used for leather, and their oils for perfume. What can your grain do that my sheep can’t?

FARMER. Yes, sheep can be eaten, but the leather and perfumes are not necessities. My grain is used to make bread, and to make beer, just as good as your meat and milk.

SHEPHERD. Ridiculous. We will call on the Gods to settle this.

STORYTELLER. The Shepherd and the Farmer knelt before the mountain of Heaven, and called to the Annunaki to declare a winner.
AN. Why do you quarrel, children?

SHEPHERD. The Farmer claims that their grain is better, more useful than my sheep. To grow their crops, they have to dig waterways in my fields to irrigate. My flock cannot travel freely. But my sheep, as I have told the farmer, give us meat and milk, as well as leather, wool, and oils. I can’t see how grain can do more than that.

KI. What say you, Farmer?

FARMER. It is true, the sheep give us many things. But my grain can also sustain us, with bread and beer.

ENKI. But what of the other things? Sheep provide more than just sustenance, but what else does grain do?

FARMER. (smug) What else? (pause, smirking) My lords, it feeds the sheep.

STORYTELLER. And with that, the argument was settled, and the world continued on. (FARMER and SHEPHERD return to the ENSEMBLE) Sustained, humanity grew. They were supported by Ki, who urged them to create cities, and places of worship. (ENSEMBLE speak quietly to themselves, growing louder as the other half make their way onstage. ENLIL grows increasingly frustrated, holding his head in his hands, pacing etc.) But as they grew, their noise became too much for the Annunaki, and Enlil, God of Air, decided that Heaven must separate from the Earth. And so he pushed them apart, (ENLIL pushes the ENSEMBLE away angrily) but the great god still could not escape the sounds from below. He went to the others with a plan.

ENLIL. Humanity has grown too far. They are too loud, their noise prevents my sleep. I believe we should do away with them.

ENKI. Do away with them? I created those men myself, bore them from clay.

AN. (Raising a hand to silence ENKI, turning to ENLIL) How do you propose we do this?

ENLIL. A flood. We will send one down and wipe them away. Then we can start again. We can make them better.

ENKI. (With anger) You would wash them away so easily?

KI. (With frustration) And what of my creatures? They have not disturbed you.

ENLIL. Sister, you can make more creatures.

KI AND ENKI. (Overlapping) How could you? We have worked so hard. An, don’t let this happen. Why?

AN. (To KI and ENKI) Hush. (To ENLIL) Fine. Prepare your flood. We will begin again.

STORYTELLER. Unable to persuade An to keep their creations, Enki and Ki decided they would send out a warning. They departed from Heaven, and approached one of the people.

ENKI. (Approaching MAN) Leave your home, and build yourself a ship, large enough to hold all you see. Take the creatures of this land with you. (MAN nods, and exits. KI AND ENKI return to Heaven)
STORYTELLER. The Man listened, and crafted a ship, large enough to hold each of the living things from the land around him. He secured himself inside, and awaited the danger that the god had foretold. Sure enough, An and Enlil soon sent a monstrous flood to dissolve the Earth. (ENSEMBLE exit) It covered the plains, and washed away all they had created. When the waters finally subsided, the Man tore a hole in the side of the ship, releasing the creatures back on to the land. (MAN enters, kneels before the ANNUNAKI)

AN. Who is responsible for this? (ENKI and KI step forward) You have gone against our agreement. Why was this one spared? (silence, then with anger) Explain yourselves.

ENKI. (Defiant) We could not let them all be washed away. This one has been proven worthy, An. Let them live.

ENLIL. I can’t believe this.

KI. An, please.

AN. (Pause. MAN looks up at the ANUNNAKI. AN glances at ENLIL, then with a sigh) Fine. This is where we will begin again.

STORYTELLER. And so it was that the Anunnaki created their people once more, this time from their high perch in heaven. (COMPANY slowly re-enter the stage) Along with them, they created the land of Kur, the Underworld, a place far below Heaven and Earth, where mortals would be sent for eternity when they passed. There, they would be ruled by the goddess Ereshkigal, Queen of the Great Below. (ERESHKIGAL enters) The Anunnaki could live in peace, watching over their creations, no longer fighting the congestion of Earth. They settled, giving way to more of their own kind. To each new diety, Enki bestowed a portion of the Holy Me, (ENKI hands out the me to ENSEMBLE) decrees of the Annunaki which form the pillars of humanity and civilization. The young gods were given cities to guard, to protect. (ENSEMBLE exit, leaving only GESHTI, DUMUZI, GILGAMESH, and INANNA)

And this is where our story truly begins, for Enki became father of three children, the Warrior Gilgamesh, and his brother, the Shepherd Lord Dumuzi, and their sister Geshti. GILGAMESH step forward when called, and are handed me, then exit.) And Enlil gave rise to the Goddess of love and war, the Morning and Evening star. The Queen of Heaven and Earth. (INANNA steps forward, and is handed me) Inanna. Let me tell you her story.

(ANUNNAKI exit.)

ACT 2. THE HULUPPU - TREE

Scene: STORYTELLER and ENSEMBLE with TREE are clustered around the stage. TREE is led to place by one of the company. INANNA stands to the side.

STORYTELLER. After the great flood, a tree was planted on the banks of the Euphrates river. (TREE in child’s pose with hands on head. As the STORYTELLER speaks, TREE slowly stands.) It grew, nurtured by the water until the South Wind toppled it and the river carried it away. (TREE is pushed by ENSEMBLE, before being picked up and moved downstage near INANNA where TREE collapses on the stage.) It carried the tree all the
way to the banks of Uruk, Inanna’s new city. (INANNA makes her way to TREE, kneeling beside them) She saved the tree, bringing it back to her home. (As the STORYTELLER speaks, INANNA pulls TREE to their feet, and guides them to the side, lightly straightening their hair and clothes) Inanna cared her. She planted it in her Holy Garden, and tended the earth around it.

INANNA. This tree will be my crowning joy. (to TREE) I can feel your power. I will protect you, always. From this tree, my throne, my place among the Annunaki, will rise.

STORYTELLER. Five years passed.

ENSEMBLE. (ENSEMBLE steps forwards, bringing TREES arms up) Ten years passed.

STORYTELLER. (As the STORYTELLER speaks, ENSEMBLE exit. SERPENT, BIRD, and LILITH enter, surround TREE) The tree grew. As it blossomed, other creatures began to notice its beauty. A serpent made its home in the roots of the tree. A bird made its nest in its branches. Lilith, the dark maid, possessed the trunk.

INANNA. Go, go away! Please, don’t do this, you can’t do this! Leave her alone!

STORYTELLER. Inanna wept, but they wouldn’t leave her tree. She called to the warrior Gilgamesh.

INANNA. Help me, Gilgamesh. (Enter GILGAMESH) My garden, the holy garden, it’s been defiled. They have taken over my tree. I will lose my power. I will lose everything she has. Please, can you save her?

GILGAMESH. I will stand by you, Inanna. (GILGAMESH nods and walks towards INANNA.)

STORYTELLER. (As STORYTELLER speaks, GILGAMESH removes SERPENT, BIRD, and LILITH from TREE. They exit) Gilgamesh stood by Inanna, entered the holy garden. He struck the serpent. The bird fled. Lilith loosened her grasp. The tree was free from burden. (ENSEMBLE enter, lead TREE offstage) It could now be transformed. From the trunk came a royal throne for Inanna. From its roots, came power. And from her branches, (ENSEMBLE enters with a throne, TREE follows behind. INANNA sits. TREE kneels in front of INANNA. GILGAMESH stands to the side, arms crossed.)

INANNA. What is your name, maiden?

TREE. Ninshubur, my Queen.

INANNA. (Standing, pulling NINSHUBUR to their feet.) Ninshubur, I promised to care for you, to protect you. Will you stay by my side?

NINSHUBUR. (Smiling) Of course, my Queen.

INANNA. Inanna. Call me Inanna.

NINSHUBUR. Yes, Inanna. Of course. (INANNA squeezes their hand, and sits. NINSHUBUR stands at her side. ENSEMBLE exits. GILGAMESH walks downstage and wipes his face with a rag, runs hand through hair. INANNA turns to watch GILGAMESH.)
ACT 3. INANNA AND GILGAMESH

Scene: INANNA sits watching GILGAMESH. NINSHUBUR stands beside her. INANNA stands, waves NINSHUBUR away with one hand. NINSHUBUR exits.

STORYTELLER. The Goddess of Love was young, restless. Her string of lovers were no secret, each cast away when she grew tired of them. Gilgamesh was a noble warrior, and clearly devoted. He could be a worthy partner, to rule Heaven and Earth alongside her.

INANNA. (Walks towards GILGAMESH) Thank you for your loyal service, Gilgamesh.

GILGAMESH. (Bowing his head) It is a pleasure, my Queen.

INANNA. Together we could do wonderous things. Be mine, lord. Be my partner, my husband. I will give you a great chariot, adorned in gold and lapis lazuli. Come to my home. Kings, ladies, princes.. They will all kneel at our feet. Son of Enki, our power would be unparalleled.

GILGAMESH. Pardon my words, but what do I possibly have to give you that you do not already have? (Pulling away from INANNA) I have seen how you treat your lovers, Inanna. They are your playthings, that you cast away when you tire of them. And now me? I will gladly bring you wine, oils, anything you desire, but I will not be tossed aside at the whim of the goddess of love. Find a lesser fool to toy with, my Queen. (Exit GILGAMESH)

INANNA. (Enraged) Excuse me? You cannot walk away from me! Gilgamesh! (With a huff) You will regret your words.

STORYTELLER. (Enter ANUNNAKI) And so Inanna ran to the Annunaki to inform them of what the warrior had said.

INANNA. Father, Gilgamesh has insulted me, called me all manner of hateful things. He has to be punished! Grant me the Bull of Heaven, the great husband of Ereshkigal. He will fight Gilgamesh in my honor. That will teach the Warrior to insult me.

ENLIL. Child, do you not warrant his remarks? Your relationships are no secret. We have all seen how they end.

INANNA. I did not deserve to be mocked! Gilgamesh did not have to laugh at my actions. Give me the Bull to fight him!

KI. Do you truly believe this will make things right, Inanna? If you can assure me, we will retrieve your fighter from Kur.

INANNA. (With frustration) I swear, I will scream! This is the only way to show Gilgamesh that he is not more virtuous than me. The Bull will show him that.

ENLIL. (KI and ENLIL look at each other. KI nods slightly. With a sigh..) Very well.

INANNA. Thank you. You won’t regret this, thank you.

(Exit INANNA)

AN. Are you sure of this?
KI. *(Knowingly)* We will not be the ones with regret.

ENKI. She has a spark. *(smiling)* I like it. But she has little control.

ENLIL. Inanna must learn. She is still a child. *(pause)* She will grow from this.

STORYTELLER. And with that, they called Ereshkigal’s husband from the Great Below. *(Enter BULL. ANNUNAKI begin to exit, KI last. KI holds BULL’s face in her hands before exiting. Enter INANNA.)*

INANNA. *(Running to him, smiling)* Your power is mine. You will fight in my name. He needs to be punished. *(BULL nods. INANNA calls offstage.)* GILGAMESH. WARRIOR LORD. Come meet your match. *(GILGAMESH enters)*

GILGAMESH. Inanna, do not do this. You don’t want me to fight him. You don’t know what you’re doing.

INANNA. I know *exactly* what I am doing. Great Bull of Heaven, take him!

STORYTELLER. And so they fought.

*(GILGAMESH and BULL fight. ERESHKIGAL enters, watching from almost offstage. GILGAMESH kills BULL. GILGAMESH steps back.)*

ERESHKIGAL. *(running to BULL)* No. NO! *(GILGAMESH looks at INANNA over the couple, with disgust and sadness. He shakes his head.)*

STORYTELLER. Unknown to Inanna, Ereshkigal had been watching from the shadows. She had seen the death of her husband. She had seen it all.

INANNA. Sister. Ereshkigal. I’m so sorry. Sister, I’m so-

ERESHKIGAL. Enough! You have done enough.

*(GILGAMESH exits. INANNA steps towards ERESHKIGAL, reaching out. With a second thought, she pulls back and lowers her head. INANNA runs offstage.)*

**ACT 4. INANNA AND THE GOD OF WISDOM**

*Scene. INANNA sits in her throne. NINSHUBUR stands beside her. DUMUZI waits nearby, leaning on his staff. ENSEMBLE as citizens of Uruk clustered, seated.*

STORYTELLER. Some time had passed since the death of the Bull. Ereshkigal retreated to the Underworld in mourning, and Gilgamesh left the kingdom, not to be seen by Inanna again. She and her handmaiden sat in Inanna’s Holy Garden, alongside the shepherd lord Dumuzi, the younger brother to Gilgamesh and her longtime friend. The city of Uruk was still in its infancy. Inanna watched her people, functioning but not prospering. As the figure for the city Uruk, Inanna felt that Enki’s distribution of the holy me, those decrees of the gods, had left her people wanting. *(INANNA holds her crown. She looks around disappointed, and places the crown on her head.)*
INANNA. (To herself; then NINSHUBUR) There must be more I can do for them. Uruk has extraordinary potential. I need more that I can work with. (pause, then looking at DUMUZI) Dumuzi?

DUMUZI. My Queen, I can’t say. You have given them all you can.

INANNA. It’s not enough.

NINSHUBUR. Inanna, what about Enki? He might still have the power to give out the me. Do you think it’s all gone?

INANNA. I’ll guess we’ll have to ask. Let’s go! (INANNA takes NINSHUBUR’s hand. As they exit...) Good bye, Dumuzi! (DUMUZI waves after her, smiling. He stares after her for a moment before exiting the opposite way. Exit ENSEMBLE.)

STORYTELLER. And so Inanna set out to see the God of Wisdom. (ENKI, ISIMUD, and CREATURES enter. ENKI sits at a table with several papers [the me] spread in front of him. ISIMUD stands behind him. CREATURES settle at his feet.) Enki, sensing her approach, calls to his servant, Isimud.

ENKI. Come, Isimud. When Inanna enters the holy shrine, bring her here. Feed her, refresh her. (Pauses) Treat her as an equal. Greet Inanna at the table of heaven. (INANNA enters with NINSHUBUR. INANNA is carrying a drawstring bag. INANNA pauses at the entrance, turning to NINSHUBUR)

INANNA. You must wait for me here, Ninshubur. I’ll join you when he has given me the me. We will give them safe transport back to Uruk. (ISIMUD crosses to INANNA and leads her to the table where ENKI sits. Exit NINSHUBUR. ENKI rises.)

ENKI. Welcome, Inanna! Come, sit. Have a drink with me. (INANNA sits. ISIMUD exits.)

INANNA. (Smiling) Thank you, Enki. (ISIMUD returns with a pitcher and two cups for the table, pouring for the two)

ENKI. To the world! (They drink)

INANNA. To your people. (They drink)

STORYTELLER. They drank together. They toasted each other, and challenged each other. Inanna met Enki, cup for cup.

ENKI. What brings you here, child? (ENKI drinks)

INANNA. My people, my city. They need help.

ENKI. Ah! Uruk! To Uruk! (They drink. ENKI noticeably tipsy)

INANNA. To Uruk.

STORYTELLER. They drank more together.

CREATURES. They drank more and more together.

INANNA. Lord Enki, I came here to ask about the holy me.

ENKI. Me! Of course, yes. Me.

INANNA. I would love to take some back to my city, to help them grow. I feel I wasn’t given enough.
ENKI. *(drunkenly)* Of course! The *me*. In the name of my power, in the name of my holy shrine! Inanna, I will give you the high priesthood! Godship! The noble, enduring crown! *(ENKI gestures to ISIMUD for a pen. ENKI signs a few of the papers and pushes them towards INANNA. CREATURES are begin to become concerned.)*

INANNA. *(INANNA smiles)* Thank you, Enki.

ENKI. Truth! Descent to the Underworld! *(ENKI signs a few more of the papers, pushes them towards INANNA.)*

CREATURES. *(with worry)* Truth? Descent?

INANNA. Thank you, Enki. *(She stands and collects the papers, placing them in her drawstring bag)*

STORYTELLER. Inanna took all of the holy *me*.

INANNA. Uruk won’t forget this.

ENKI. *(ENKI gestures to ISIMUD)* Isimud. She is about to leave for home. She must reach her city safely. *(ISIMUD nods and leads INANNA to the exit. ENKI sits and settles to sleep in his chair)*

STORYTELLER. Inanna took the holy *me*, and departed. *(INANNA exits, clutching the papers. Pause. ISIMUD begins to clear away the pitcher and cups. CREATURES look at ENKI in concern. ENKI awakes from his stupor)*

ENKI. Isimud - *(ENKI frantically begins to look around the table, searching for the papers)*

ISIMUD. My king?

ENKI. The *me*? Isimud, the *me*. The high priesthood? The crown? Where are they?

ISIMUD. My king, you have given them to Inanna.

ENKI. And truth, the descent into the underworld?

ISIMUD. *(Hesitantly)* My king, you-

ENKI. *(Increasing in distress)* The giving of judgments? The making of decisions!

ISIMUD. My king, you have given them to the Inanna. You have made her high priestess of heaven. She is one her way home to Uruk.

ENKI. *(Frantically)* How far is she?

ISIMUD. Not far, she left not long ago.

ENKI. *(Angrily)* Go! Take the creatures! Bring her back!

*(ISIMUD exits with CREATURES. INANNA enters opposite side of the stage with NINSHUBUR, showing her the *me.)*
ISIMUD. (From offstage) Inanna! (ISIMUD rushes onstage after INANNA. Out of breath) My queen, Enki sent me. He must not be disobeyed.

INANNA. (Surprised) What did he say?

ISIMUD. He has sent me to return with the holy me.

INANNA. (Angrily) He has changed his word! He has broken his promise! Deceit! (mocking Enki) 'In the name of my power! In the name of my holy shrine!' Deceitfully he sent you to me! (CREATURES rush onstage. ISIMUD raises a hand to halt them)

STORYTELLER. As she spoke, the wild-haired enkum-creatures braced to attack.

INANNA. Come, Ninshubur, faithful servant of the Holy Garden of Uruk. My warrior, defend the me.

STORYTELLER. (NINSHUBUR fights the creatures, forcing them to retreat) Ninshubur sliced the air with her hand and uttered an earth-shattering cry, and the creatures were sent hurtling back to Enki. He gave them more power, sent them back again and again. But each time they failed. Each time Ninshubur protected the me for Inanna. (CREATURES return to ENKI. ISIMUD watches INANNA, hidden)

NINSHUBUR. My queen, we are almost home. (Enter ENSEMBLE)

INANNA. (With a breath of relief, to ENSEMBLE) Uruk, celebrate! You will sing the name of Inanna! (Turning to NINSHUBUR) Ninshubur, we are home.

STORYTELLER. When they arrived in Uruk, Inanna took the me and began to impart them on her city.

(INANNA takes the me and begins to hand them to ENSEMBLE.)

ENKI. Isimud.

ISIMUD. (solemnly) My king. (pause) She has arrived at Uruk. Inanna is home.

ENKI. (with resignation) She must have aroused wonder there.

STORYTELLER. With the arrival of Inanna and her handmaiden, with the gift of the holy me, the people of Uruk began to flourish.

ENSEMBLE. (overlapping) Inanna brought the me. Inanna brought allure. She brought art, patience. She brought judgements. She holds the power of the me. We are saved. Saved. Saved.

INANNA. We are all blessed. These me, a gift from Father Enki. He has saved you all. He has helped me bless you all. It is with his gift I will rise from your Queen, to the High Priestess. The Queen of Heaven and Earth. Bless Uruk. (ENKI watches the people of Uruk praise INANNA)

ENKI. (to ISIMUD) She holds an extraordinary power.

ISIMUD. She did so long before the me, my king. That was for her people.

ENKI. Let it be, then. The Queen of Heaven and Earth. She will do great things. In the name of my power, in the name of my holy shrine, keep the holy me in the city of Uruk. Let the people prosper. Let the people of Uruk rejoice. Inanna can keep her power.
ACT 5. THE COURTSHIP OF INANNA AND DUMUZI

Scene. Lights rise on INANNA. She is sitting, tending to a small plant. STORYTELLER stands off to the side.

STORYTELLER. Inanna, now with more power than she’d ever had, began to grow restless. Her friend, the shepherd Dumuzi, young brother to Gilgamesh, had heard that the Queen intended to marry a farmer. (DUMUZI approaches, kneels)

DUMUZI. Hello, my queen. (INANNA looks over at him. He nods his head.)

INANNA. (smiling) Dumuzi. What brings you, shepherd?

DUMUZI. (standing) I heard you- well, my father told me- (pause) Enki, told me- that.. you are planning to marry the farmer.

INANNA. He heard right, I think I will. The farmer tends the grain, he loves the earth and cares for its nature...

DUMUZI. True. He can give you bread.

INANNA. (teasing) And beer.

DUMUZI. (laughing) Yes, and beer.

INANNA. And I guess I will have to learn to live without the wool from your sheep.

DUMUZI. And cheese! (DUMUZI smiles. They pause, and look away from each other. Turning back to INANNA...) Why are you set on the farmer, my queen? Is his wealth really so great?

INANNA. He can give me many lovely things. And he is new, Dumuzi. He’s different. (INANNA begins to leave. DUMUZI grabs her arm.)

DUMUZI. Why can’t you see that there’s another option?

INANNA. (snapping, pulling her arm away) Shepherd, you forget yourself. Don’t you dare try and- and- ugh!

DUMUZI. Inanna, please, don’t start a quarrel. My father is as powerful as yours. My mother is as good as yours. (almost angrily) I am as good as my brother. Inanna, you know that. My queen, please let us talk about this.

INANNA. Dumuzi. I can’t just forget what happened. My sister won’t speak to me, she just sits down there, hiding away. All her power. And Gilgamesh. He said such awful things. I had to..

DUMUZI. I am not my brother, Inanna. (INANNA slowly sits. DUMUZI sits beside her. He takes her hand.) I will always be there.

INANNA. I know.

DUMUZI. We can do great things together.

INANNA. I know. (INANNA looks up at DUMUZI, then kisses him)
**STORYTELLER.** And so, Inanna and Dumuzi were married, blessed by the Anunnaki. *(INANNA and DUMUZI stand. ENSEMBLE and ANUNNAKI enter.)* The gardens flourished, and plants grew high by their sides.

INANNA. I will guard you. I will watch over your life. We will protect the fates of the land.

DUMUZI. I will take all you offer. I will fight for you, I will protect your kingdom. I will always be beside you. *(DUMUZI kneels)*

INANNA. I decree a sweet fate for my shepherd Dumuzi. In battle, I am your leader. With our people, I am your advocate. You, the chosen shepherd, the king, the faithful provider of Uruk. In all ways you are fit to hold your head high, to sit on the throne beside me, to wear the holy crown. What the gods have granted, may it not be changed.

DUMUZI. My queen, my Inanna. I stand beside you.

*(ENSEMBLE begin to disperse in pairs. INANNA, lifts his head, pulls him to his feet)*

INANNA. My beloved.

*(INANNA and DUMUZI kiss. They dance.)*

**STORYTELLER.** From their partnership, they bore two children, Sharah and Lulah. From Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth, and her new king, Dumuzi.

### ACT 6: THE DESCENT OF INANNA

Scene: INANNA sits in her throne, with DUMUZI and NINSHUBUR standing beside her. STORYTELLER stands to the side.

**STORYTELLER.** Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth, she had her king. She had the me. She understood her realm, knew all that was the Great Above. But, ever curious, she lacked the knowledge of the Great Below. The realm of her sister, Ereshkigal, was unknown. Those who travelled there did not often return. Ereshkigal was still in mourning for her partner, the Bull of Heaven. Inanna would use this to open her ear to the Great Below. She wanted the power of her sister, and she believed her remorse would get her through the gates. *(NINSHUBUR hands INANNA each item.)* Inanna gathered her holy power. She placed the crown on her head. She tied lapis lazuli around her neck. She wrapped herself in her royal robe, placing gold rings on her fingers, and shining bracelets on her wrists. She held a shield. She clutched the royal scepter. She abandoned her office of holy priestess to descend to the underworld. *(DUMUZI kisses INANNA’S hand. INANNA embraces NINSHUBUR.)*

NINSHUBUR. Inanna.

INANNA. No, my warrior. You can’t come. But, if I do not return, weep for me. Both of you, please. Dumuzi, Ninshubur. Send help. Go to the temple of Enlil, beg his help at his shrine. Weep before my Father. If Enlil will not help you, go to the temple of Ki, or An. If they refuse, try Enki. He knows all things. Surely, they would not all let me die. Go
now. \textit{(NINSHUBUR exits, DUMUZI follows her. Lights out. Enter ERESHKIGAL, NETI, JUDGES, and GATES. Lights up on INANNA, standing at the gates of the Underworld.)}

\textbf{STORYTELLER.} Inanna arrived at the first gate of the Great Below, guarded by Neti, the chief gatekeeper.

\textbf{INANNA.} Open the door, gatekeeper! \textit{(NETI approaches the first gate from the opposite side)}

\textbf{NETI.} Who are you?

\textbf{INANNA.} I am Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth, the Holy Priestess of Heaven.

\textbf{NETI.} What brings you on the road from which no traveler returns?

\textbf{INANNA.} My sister, Ereshkigal. Her husband, the Bull of Heaven has died. I have come to witness the funeral rites.

\textbf{NETI.} Wait here. I will speak to my queen.

\textit{(NETI approaches the throne where ERESHKIGAL sits with her JUDGES. NETI kneels.)}

\textbf{NETI.} My Queen, a woman is waiting outside of the gates. She calls herself Inanna, the Holy Priestess of Heaven. She wears the crown. She comes adorned in her power.

\textbf{ERESHKIGAL.} My sister has grown restless. Bolt the seven gates. Then, one by one, open each a crack. Let Inanna enter. As she does, remove her royal garments. Let this holy priestess of heaven enter bowed low. She needs my forgiveness. \textit{(NETI nods. Lights dim on ERESHKIGAL. Lights up on INANNA.)}

\textbf{NETI.} Come, Inanna. Enter.

\textbf{STORYTELLER.} \textit{(INANNA steps between the GATE. They remove her crown. They separate as she passes and bring the crown to ERESHKIGAL) As Inanna entered the first gate, from her head her crown was removed.}

\textbf{INANNA.} What is this?

\textbf{NETI.} Quiet, Inanna.

\textbf{ENSEMBLE.} The ways of the Underworld are perfect. They may not be questioned.

\textbf{STORYTELLER.} \textit{(INANNA steps between the GATE. They remove her lapis beads. They separate as she passes and bring the beads to ERESHKIGAL) As she entered the second gate, the small lapis beads were torn from her neck.}

\textbf{INANNA.} What is this?

\textbf{NETI.} Quiet, Inanna.

\textbf{ENSEMBLE.} The ways of the Underworld are perfect. They may not be questioned.

\textbf{STORYTELLER.} \textit{(The previous motions repeat) As she entered the third gate, the shield was pulled from her hand.}

\textbf{INANNA.} What is this?

\textbf{NETI.} Quiet, Inanna.

\textbf{ENSEMBLE.} The ways of the Underworld are perfect. They may not be questioned.
STORYTELLER. *The previous motions repeat* As she entered the fourth gate, the scepter was torn from her hands.

INANNA. What is this?

NETI. Quiet, Inanna.

ENSEMBLE. The ways of the Underworld are perfect. They may not be questioned.

STORYTELLER. *The previous motions repeat* As she entered the fifth gate, the rings were pulled from her fingers.

INANNA. What is this?

NETI. Quiet, Inanna.

ENSEMBLE. The ways of the Underworld are perfect. They may not be questioned.

STORYTELLER. *The previous motions repeat* As she entered the sixth gate, bands were slid from her arms.

INANNA. What is this?

NETI. Quiet, Inanna.

ENSEMBLE. The ways of the Underworld are perfect. They may not be questioned.

STORYTELLER. *The previous motions repeat* Finally, at the seventh and final gate, her royal robe was torn from her body.

INANNA. *weeping* What is this?

NETI. Quiet, Inanna.

ENSEMBLE. The ways of the Underworld are perfect. They may not be questioned.

STORYTELLER. The judges of the Underworld, attendants to Ereshkigal, watched as Inanna knelt at the edge of the throne room, bare and vulnerable. *(ERESHKIGAL rises from her throne. INANNA starts towards her, but ERESHKIGAL walks forward with an outstretched hand on which is painted an eye)*

ERESHKIGAL. You come here without remorse, Inanna. My sister, you are not here to mourn. I see your true intent, your appetite for power. Always more power, Inanna. Always such greed. With the eye of death, I will strip you of this desire. Your life, as you took my husband’s, is mine.

STORYTELLER. Ereshkigal spoke the word of wrath. *(ERESHKIGAL cries out)* She cried out her guilt. Inanna was lost.

*(JUDGES carry INANNA, and hang her on the wall. ERESHKIGAL collapses, weeping. Lights out. All exit.)*

**ACT 7. THE RETURN**

Scene: DUMUZI sits on INANNA’s throne. NINSHUBUR is pacing. Storyteller to the side.
Three days and three nights had passed, and Inanna had not returned.

NINSHUBUR. Dumuzi, we have to go.

DUMUZI. I’m sure she’s fine.

NINSHUBUR. She told us three days! It’s been three days, we have to talk to Enlil. Something’s wrong. I can feel it.

DUMUZI. I’m sure they’re just.. catching up. Besides, Uruk is doing just fine without her.

NINSHUBUR. (With anger) Fine. Do what you want. I’ll take care of it.

And so, Ninshubur set out for the temple of Enlil, alone. (DUMUZI and NINSHUBUR exit. ANUNNAKI and CREATURES enter. NINSHUBUR enters and bows before him)

NINSHUBUR. Oh Father Enlil, do not let your daughter be put to death in the underworld. Do not let the Holy Priestess of Heaven and Earth be put to death in the Great Below.

ENLIL. My daughter craved the Great Below just as she craved the Great Above. She who seeks to take the knowledge of the underworld will stay there. She who goes to the Dark City will not return. (Exit ENLIL)

Rejected, Ninshubur retreated to the temple of Ki and An.

NINSHUBUR. Oh Mother Ki, Father An, do not let Inanna be put to death in the underworld. Do not let the Holy Priestess of Heaven and Earth die in the Great Below. Oh Mother Ki, please.

KI. The child craved the Great Above. She got it. Inanna craved the Great Below.

AN. If she knows the Great Below, she will stay there. She who goes to the Dark City will not return. (Exit KI and AN)

Ki and An would not help, so in a final attempt, Ninshubur went to the temple of Enki.

NINSHUBUR. (in desperation) Oh Father Enki, do not let your daughter be put to death in the underworld. Do not let her be covered with the dust, the wife of your Dumuzi, his Queen. Please, do not let the Holy Priestess of Heaven be put to death.

ENKI. What has happened? What has she done?

NINSHUBUR. She has gone to visit Ereshkigal, to attend the funeral rites of the Bull of Heaven. It is unlikely that Ereshkigal accepted her warmly.

ENKI. Indeed. I believe I can help. (ENKI beckons to CREATURES)

Enki called forth two of his creatures. (ENKI hands them each a vial) He gave them the food and water of life.

ENKI. Go to the underworld, enter the gates like flies. Ereshkigal, the Queen of the Underworld, is weeping. When she cries, you cry. When she moans, you moan. She will be pleased at your sympathy and will offer you a gift. Ask her only for the corpse that hangs from the hook on the wall. One of you will sprinkle the food of life on it. The other will sprinkle the water. Inanna will rise. (Exit ENKI)
NINSHUBUR. Come, I’ll lead you to the entrance. (Exit NINSHUBUR and CREATURES. Lights out. Lights up on ERESHKIGAL, the GATES, and the JUDGES)

STORYTELLER. (As STORYTELLER speaks, CREATURES approach the GATES. They slip between them. As they approach ERESHKIGAL, they bow their heads and begin to cry with her) They set out for the underworld. Silently, they slipped through the cracks of the gates. They entered the throne room of the Queen of the Underworld. She wept. They wept. She moaned. They moaned. Ereshkigal stopped. She looked at them.

ERESHKIGAL. Who are you, crying, moaning, weeping with me? (Pause) I thank you. Let me give you a gift. (Pause) Take the rivers.

CREATURES. We do not wish it.

ERESHKIGAL. I will give you the fields in harvest.

CREATURES. We do not wish it.

ERESHKIGAL. Speak then! What do you want?

CREATURES. We wish only the corpse that hangs from the hook on the wall.

ERESHKIGAL. That belongs to Inanna.

CREATURES. It is what we wish. (ERESHKIGAL nods. GES take INANNA from the wall and hand her to CREATURES)

STORYTELLER. They were given the body of Inanna. They sprinkled the food of life on her. They sprinkled the water. Inanna arose.

INANNA. Dumuzi?

CREATURES. Enki, master, sent us. Sent us to you. Your fighter waits outside the gates.

STORYTELLER. They turned to leave, but before they could escape, Inanna was seized by the judges of the underworld.

JUDGES. No one ascends from the underworld unmarked. (CREATURES flee)

ERESHKIGAL. If my sister wishes to return from the underworld, she must provide someone in her place. (To JUDGES) Take her home, she will choose.

STORYTELLER. And so Inanna rose from the underworld, with the judges clinging to her side. (Lights out. All exit. Lights up on NINSHUBUR pacing. Enter INANNA and JUDGES) When she saw her Queen surrounded by the demons, she threw herself at her feet.

INANNA. Ninshubur! Oh my council, you came. Where is my love?

NINSHUBUR. (With sadness) Oh my Queen-

JUDGES. Walk on, Inanna. We will take Ninshubur in your place.

INANNA. No! Ninshubur is my constant support. She is my warrior who fights by my side. Because of her, my life was saved. I will never give Ninshubur to you.

STORYTELLER. They kept on. They reached Shara and Lulah, Inanna’s children. Seeing her surrounded by the judges, they threw themselves in the dust at her feet.
SHARAH/LULAH. Mother, Inanna, we will go for you.

JUDGES. Walk on, Inanna, We will take Shara and Lulah in your place.

INANNA. No! My children. I will never give them to you!

JUDGES. Then walk on to your city, Inanna. We will go with you to Uruk.

STORYTELLER. They arrive in Uruk, at the palace of Inanna. There sat Dumuzi, adorned in his royal garments. He is in her place. He has taken her throne and he does not move. (INANNA stiffens)

INANNA. Dumuzi? What have you done?

DUMUZI. (standing) Inanna, let me explain-

INANNA. No. (nods to judges)

STORYTELLER. The judges seize him. (INANNA holds out a hand on which is painted the evil eye) Inanna fastened on Dumuzi the eye of death. She spoke against him the word of wrath. She uttered against him the cry of guilt. (INANNA cries out)

INANNA. Take him! Take Dumuzi away. (JUDGES grab DUMUZI. DUMUZI lets out a wail as he is dragged offstage. INANNA stands, stunned.)

ACT 8: THE RESOLUTION

Scene: INANNA sits on her throne. ENSEMBLE as citizens of Uruk are scattered around, forlorn. NINSHUBUR stands, hand on INANNA’s shoulder.

STORYTELLER. Dumuzi, having taken Inanna’s place on the throne, having not mourned her absence, would now take her place in the Great Below, dragged down to Kur by Ereshkigal’s judges. Months passed. The crops would not grow, the sun would not shine. The ground was cold and barren. (Enter GESHTI) Dumuzi’s sister, Geshti, mourned him constantly. As the Queen watched her people, as she saw Geshti’s sadness, the full weight of her actions settled on her heart. She too, began to grieve.

ENSEMBLE. (scattered) It is so cold. So cold. My lady weeps for her husband. Inanna weeps bitterly for Dumuzi. Woe for the young love! Woe for the city.

STORYTELLER. Inanna wept for Dumuzi.

INANNA. Oh my love. Turning to GESHTI) Dumuzi was not the only one to let their hubris cloud their judgement. (GESHTI rushes towards INANNA and collapses at her feet.)

STORYTELLER. Inanna sat with her.

GESHTI. I have to find my brother! I could comfort him! I could share his fate!

INANNA. Geshti, your brother is gone. I can’t take you to him, I can’t return to the Underworld.

GESHTI. Then I’ll go myself. Ereshkigal! Ereshkigal let me see him! Give me back my brother.
INANNA. It won’t work like that, Geshti. You’ve done nothing wrong. Ereshkigal’s husband is gone because of me. I never made things right. I was selfish. There was the power, with Ninshubur, with the me, and none of it was ever enough. I guess Dumuzi was the same. And I forgive him. Now I just need Ereshkigal to forgive me.

GESHTI. Please. She has to listen to you.

STORYTELLER. And so Inanna called to her sister, hoping that she would hear her, hoping that she would listen.

INANNA. (Kneeling) Sister, hear me. You have seen through the years, I have often been impatient, impetuous. I know, I have caused pain. I feel it now, the loss of Dumuzi hurts not just me, but all of Uruk. We are in darkness, everything is cold, the crops are barren. I hurt you, Ereshkigal, in a way that cannot be forgiven. I have hurt myself the same. (ERESHKIGAL enters) Please. Accept my grief, Ereshkigal. (INANNA looks up as ERESHKIGAL crosses to her) Oh, sister- (ERESHKIGAL pulls her to her feet and embraces her.)

ERESHKIGAL. I hear you, little one. (ERESHKIGAL turns and beckons to DUMUZI who enters from offstage.)

GESHTI. (Running to DUMUZI) Dumuzi! (They embrace)

DUMUZI. (Relieved) Geshti.

ERESHKIGAL. (Turning to GESHTI) I’ll accept your offer. There will be a place for you in Kur, you can live there alongside me. (Turning to INANNA) For half the year, Dumuzi will serve his sentence. Uruk will be cold. The plants will not grow, there will be no green. For the other half, Geshti will live with me, learning the ways of the Underworld. Uruk can have its shepherd king, the animals will thrive and crops will grow. This is how it must be.

INANNA. (Nods) I understand, sister. I’m sorry.

ERESHKIGAL. I know.

(DUMUZI runs to INANNA and they embrace. ERESHKIGAL takes GESHTI’s hand and exits. Lights out.)

THE END

Scene: CHILD and STORYTELLER, seated.

CHILD. So that’s why we have winter? They didn’t teach me that in school...

STORYTELLER. I know, this is just a story, but most stories have some very real lessons we can learn. Think about your doll. Remember last week, when you left her outside and it rained?

CHILD. She got all dirty and you had to fix her.

STORYTELLER. Yes, but I can’t fix her every time. If you kept doing that, eventually you wouldn’t have her anymore. It works the same way with everyone. Like your friends from school.
CHILD. So if I’m mean to my friends, like Inanna was to Ereshkigal, they won’t want to be my friends anymore.

STORYTELLER. Exactly. Everything we do impacts someone else; that’s something we need to be aware of. Our actions have consequences.

CHILD. (A realization) So that’s what the seasons are for! To remember to be nice!

(INANNA enters, unseen. She watches the CHILD and STORYTELLER)

STORYTELLER. (laughs) Kind of! That’s why it’s so important that we tell Inanna’s story correctly because otherwise, over time, the lesson can get lost or twisted. There have been other interpretations of her, ones that ignore her strengths and only highlight her imperfections. We need to remember her in a way that doesn’t forget those parts, but also shows us her strength, her constant desire for knowledge. We can still learn from her.

CHILD. (Smiling) Oh. I think I get it.

STORYTELLER. Good. Now, will you please go set the table for dinner?

CHILD. (Smiling) Okay

(STORYTELLER looks up at INANNA and has an exchange with her as if to thank the STORYTELLER for telling her story)
APPENDIX B: Cast List

Child - Emma Dryer-Neiman
Storyteller - Sarah Tantawy
An - Anna Bishop
Ki - Nellie Ickes Coon
Enlil - Ael Fitzgerald
Enki - Libbey Masse
Farmer- Danielle Jarosz
Shepherd - Caitlyn Rooms
Inanna - Katie Luck
Serpent - Danielle Jarosz
Bird - Alissa Johnson
Lilith - Connor Bolduc
Gilgamesh/Dumuzi- Will Bickford
Bull of Heaven - Asher Mason
Tree/Ninshubur - Pooja Rawat
Enki's Creatures - Caitlyn Rooms and Danielle Jarosz
Isimud - Alissa Johnson
Neti - Danielle Jarosz
Ereshkigal - Ivy Flessen
Judges - Connor Bolduc and Asher Mason
Geshtinanna - Danielle J.
APPENDIX C: Cyrus Pavilion Theater Floorplan
APPENDIX D: Set Photos
AUDITIONS:

INANNA

A Modern Interpretation of the
Ancient Sumerian Deity

January 28, 6pm in the Cyrus
Pavilion Theater
Callbacks on January 30, 6pm

Sides located outside the SPA office.
Please wear clothes you are
comfortable moving in.

For a copy of the script, or if you have
any questions, please email
erin.butts@maine.edu or
owen.sinclair@maine.edu
APPENDIX F: Character Worksheet

CHARACTER ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

Actor ______________________ Character ______________________

DRAMATIC ACTION for the play:
What is the character’s through-line of action for the entire play? (Typically a verb, like “to survive”)

EXPECTATION:
What does the character expect in the end? Consider five basic human needs.
1) Winning  2) Survival  3) Validation  4) Love  5) Happiness

Answer these questions:
Why do I expect to get it?

Why does it excite me?

What will I do when I get it?

OBSTACLE:
The person or thing that is preventing them from getting what they want. Consider: What or who is standing in their way?

Answer these questions:
From whom (in the play) do I want it? Why?

Who in the play can help me? Why?

Who in the play can hurt me? Why?

What are my deepest fears? Why?

TACTIC:
Character’s relative strength in attaining his wants or desires. Consider: How strong or weak is their inner strength? Do they have any sense of moral responsibility to others?

Answer these questions:
How can I get it? Why?

How (and whom) can I threaten? Why?

How (and whom) can I induce? Why?
CHARACTERIZATION

INTERNALS

1. Background (culture, childhood, upbringing, special memories)
2. Mental (intelligence/common sense, right/left brain…)
3. Spiritual (religion, beliefs and values)
4. Emotional (calm, angry, gentle, .. when and why)

EXTERNALS

1. Movement (bounce, sway, swagger, …)
2. Posture (slouched, straight, leads with head/hips/chest…)
3. Voice (pitch, rate, volume, inflection, quality)
4. Mannerisms (habits the character does without a prop)

CHARACTER PROFILE QUESTIONS

1. What is your full name?
2. When and where were you born? Current age? (Or, how old do you act?)
3. What is your astrological sign? Explain.
4. Who is your greatest role model?
5. What excites you?
6. What secrets do you have?
7. What are your deepest fears?
8. What are your hobbies?
9. What discoveries have you made in the last year?
10. What is your favorite…
   a. Color?
   b. Animal?
   c. Food?
   d. Book?
   e. Movie?
   f. Music?

PREVIOUS ACTION
What happened to your character before the play begins? What did they do?
INANNA

A Modern Interpretation

Directed by Erin Butts

April 5 & 6 @ 7pm
April 7 @ 2:30pm
Al Cyrus Pavilion Theater

Free admission

Thank you to the University of Maine SPA, and the Honors College for their support

The University of Maine is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution.
The car and crew have worked so hard to make this production possible, and I cannot thank them enough. Love and gratitude.

Project: The closing credits display "A Production of the Elektra Project." The people behind this project have worked tirelessly to make it happen.

When I take a step back and think about all the people involved, I am in awe of the work they have done. The Elektra Project is a testament to the power of collaboration and dedication.

The Elektra Project is a production of the Elektra Project, a group dedicated to creating music for a cause.

When I take a step back and think about all the people involved, I am in awe of the work they have done. The Elektra Project is a testament to the power of collaboration and dedication.

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AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHY

Erin Butts is a Communications and Theatre double major. She has been a member of the Feminist Collective and the Student Alliance for Sexual Health since her freshman year. She grew up in both South Carolina and Maine and has been involved in theatre since preschool. Erin currently works as a supervisor at the Collins Center for the Arts, with plans to pursue a career in television production while exploring further education in near eastern languages and cultures.