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It's Happened A Thousand Times Before:

The Process of Adapting *Ariadne - A New Musical*

Michael Oosterhout

May 24, 2018

Introduction: Why I Chose to Adapt the Myth of Ariadne

The process of my adapting the myth of Ariadne into a musical theatre piece began over a year ago in the Spring of 2017, but holds its roots in a course I took a year earlier in the Spring of 2016. The course, “Myths of Marriage,” taught by Vassar Professor Emeritus Robert Brown, was designed, in his words, more or less as an excuse to read and discuss the poem known as “Catullus 64.” After being introduced to the poem, I could certainly understand that perspective: it is perhaps Catullus’ greatest work, one of history’s most gorgeous poems on countless levels.

While the poem is ostensibly about the marriage of Achilles’ parents, Peleus and Thetis, Catullus is distracted partway through by the “coverlet” upon their wedding bed, which displays the following image: Ariadne, half-dressed, hair torn, mad with sadness and rage, stands under the morning sun on an empty beach, reaching out to the sea ahead; a fleet of ships, carrying her lover Theseus, sails away on the horizon; behind her, unseen, Dionysus and his entourage of Bacchantes approach, bringing a cacophony of noise. From her falling in love to her abandonment, Catullus’ rendering of Ariadne’s story is utterly heart-wrenching, moving, and deeply beautiful. Since first reading it, I have never forgotten that image of lonely Ariadne, left alone on the shore, and still today, I can’t walk away from it.

Even after “Myths of Marriage” finished, I found myself with many remaining questions about Ariadne. Chief among them were the following queries: What agency, as a woman from ancient Greek myth, does Ariadne have? Do ancient women—and indeed modern women—have the free ability to balance duty to their family and duty to the ones they love? What duty do they have to themselves?

Furthermore, what is the true reason that Theseus abandons Ariadne? Is it, as Catullus suggests, a “forgetful mind”? Or, as other traditions of the myth suggest, due to pressure from Bacchus? Is it simply a masculine, privileged arrogance? Or beyond that, is it something deeper within Theseus that cannot be easily explained?

Lastly, is Ariadne’s marriage to Bacchus truly a happy ending? In other words, after such a devastating betrayal, with a heartbreaking loss described in such detail as this, can Ariadne successfully love another? Catullus does not show his readers the end of the tale: as Bacchus approaches loudly, yet unseen by Ariadne, the poet cuts back to the narrative of Peleus and Thetis’ wedding. What, therefore, truly comes next?

As it came time to decide my thesis topic, I wanted to revisit this story and see if I could answer my lingering questions. As a double Music and Greek and Roman Studies major, with a focus in composition, I believed the best way to investigate this myth was to delve into it, call on my creative abilities, and adapt the story on my own as an original work of musical theatre.

I was also inspired by my Spring 2017 participation in the course “Then & Now: Reinterpreting Greece and Rome,” which in part discussed modern adaptations of ancient works. Based on our class discussions, I felt that it was critical that in this work, I be very conscious of how my adaptation interacts with the ancient world and what message I wanted to send about that world to my modern audience. I understood several ideas: that the ancient world and the modern world need to be in back-and-forth conversation with each other; that the differences in the adaptation from the original story tell more meaning than the similarities; and that the adaptation should ultimately aim to use the ancient world to explore issues which still affect the

modern. My chief goal, therefore, was to tell an old story in a new way, which would make the ancient world feel both poignant and relevant to life at Vassar College in 2018.

In this paper, I will walk through some of the themes of *Ariadne*, and discuss along the way my experience of adapting these parts of the myth, as well as what I learned and interpreted from the ancient world in doing so. While I believe that the musical stands well on its own as a story, my hope in sharing my knowledge and reflections here is that it might deepen understanding for others of my adaptive choices and help to further the discussion of this undying tale as it continues today to connect the past to the present.

The Historical Basis of the Characters

1. Chorus

Ariadne — *A New Musical* begins with a Prologue by the show’s “Chorus.” The Chorus begins by sitting in the audience, musing aloud many of the same questions I was seeking to answer as I explored this story. After asking these questions, the Chorus literally invoke the ancient Muses in the style of ancient epic as they sing the opening number, “Sing in Me, Muse,” and recite the events of the original myth.

The role of my Chorus in *Ariadne* was one which was deeply important for me as I adapted this tale. I looked heavily to the ancient theatre tradition of Greek tragedy throughout writing this piece, and I knew from the beginning that in one way or another, I should include a chorus in the show. Featuring a chorus would allow me to draw connections to the ancient world, reflect on the original myth, and force the audience to interact with both the ancient and modern perspectives in a prominent way.

The chorus, which played such an important role in ancient theatre, served many functions: they helped to tell the story, to frame the narrative outside of the main characters, to serve as an onstage representation of the audience’s reactions, to reflect on the larger implications of character’s choices, and more. The chorus, however, while they could tell the story and interact with the main players, could not change the story’s trajectory. One can recall the chorus of Euripides’ *Medea*, serving as the local women of Corinth: they beg Medea not to murder her own children to punish her faithless husband, they discuss going inside the house to stop her—but Medea cannot be convinced, and not one of the women acts to intervene.

The chorus was indeed the original source of theatre, which began as a full act of audience participation: a call-and-response event, socially and ritually important, featuring stories performed and shared by the whole community together. Over the course of time, individual leaders stepped out of this audience-chorus one by one, acting out the narrative: first a “Chorus Leader,” who had specific lines and took charge of directing the chorus. Then eventually, one actor, who played a specific role important to the story with pre-determined lines, became a critical part of the storytelling experience. Soon, a second actor was added, allowing the characters to engage with one another and play out events of the tale in real time. Finally, by the height of Athenian drama in the 5th century B.C.E., three actors were present, playing multiple characters, exchanging meaningful dialogue, and bringing fully-fledged plays to life in an important cultural and religious context. But the chorus, always engaging with the story at hand, maintained its original importance in shaping the meaning of the story with its prominent odes, scattered throughout the narrative of the tragedy.

I intended my Chorus, played by each of the show’s five actors besides the actor for the role of “Ari,” not to represent the characters these actors played, but a collective group of figures who would remain ambiguous to the audience. The audience would wonder, are these ancient beings, ghosts? Are they modern college students? Are they the actors themselves? With this ambiguity, and by having the Chorus literally rise up out of the audience, I hoped therefore to harken back to theatre’s origins and blur the line between actor, chorus, and audience. The audience, without whom no production would exist, are just as critical as the actors in theatrical storytelling. The chorus, though many modern audiences do not understand it when watching performances of Greek tragedy, is just as much (if not more) critical to shaping the story than the

main actors. The actors also, having historically originated as part of the audience itself, likewise watch the story go by as they tell and experience it. Through the meta-narrative I created by the Chorus, I hoped the audience would thus gain some insight into an ancient theatre experience, and that they would be engaged with the myth's origins from the start.

2. Ariadne

I decided to adapt Ariadne's character into a college student early on. In addition to the college world being relevant to Vassar's campus, Ariadne's actions and feelings are ones which are familiar to me as a college student. Ariadne, as Catullus describes her, is completely swayed by Theseus' arrival in an instant. Much like a modern college student, she sets off for lands unknown, leaving her family behind, off in a blaze of youthful adventure to make a new life and identity for herself. I believe that Ariadne, though Catullus does not explicitly mention it as such, saw Theseus as more than her potential lover, but as an opportunity to "break free" from the limited nature of her family life and responsibilities.

Ancient Greek women were deeply marginalized in society: they were seen as inherently sexually voracious and immoral, they were generally prized as simply vessels for childbirth, and they suffered under strictly-observed ideals of pure, virtuous womanhood. Such truth of real life experience bled into their myth-making, of which Ariadne, with her limited agency, is a perfect example. Were she a real-life woman, Ariadne would have certainly felt all of the pressures of maintaining proper femininity: as a princess in the public eye, suffering under the thumb of a strict, vindictive father, she would be watched closely as a model of virtuous behavior, with little room for error. She likely would have been betrothed in an alliance without her consent and consigned to a life of early motherhood, with no chance of fulfillment from love or of her

personal desires. Under all these societal and familial restrictions, Ariadne's desire to gain some sort of agency for herself could have understandably been palpable. Theseus, a foreign hero claiming love for her, could only help fan the flame of the rebellious spirit already within her, which would have longed to be free of such confines. Just as the original Ariadne sought to find who she was outside the bonds of her family, my Ari seeks to do the same on her journey to college and in her relationship with her girlfriend, Theo.

3. Minos

Minos, being the one male character in the show, indeed represents the overbearing, constricting, dominant masculinity of the ancient world (something indeed familiar to the modern world as well). In one sense, Minos is also the helicopter parent who won't leave their college-age child alone; he is the parent who insists upon a perfect GPA from his child above all else; he is the parent who dictates their child's daily existence, so that upon entering the real world, they are lost without personal experience. But my Minos also, like his ancient counterpart, is obsessed with power, seeking to obtain it at any cost. He does not insist on controlling Ari's college experience out of a misplaced sense of love, but for personal, narcissistic gain. To him, Ari is a tool to be used for his benefit, a way to maintain the "legacy" that he hopes to leave in the world. This legacy, which he never clearly defines, is an amorphous guiding light for Minos throughout the story. Perhaps he seeks to better the world, perhaps he seeks to be immortalized in glory, but nothing will stand in the way of his legacy—certainly not his daughter.

The mythical Minos similarly is cruel, vindictive, and self-centered: as described in Plutarch and Catullus' versions of the myth, he immorally requires annual sacrifice of the

Athenian tributes as an act of political retribution; he hides away the shame of his monstrous stepson in an inescapable labyrinth; he effectively disowns Ariadne upon her aiding Theseus. His downfall happens not for any lack of strength or cleverness to outside threats, but ironically, due to his blindness to the will and agency of one close to him. In my interpretation of Minos, I thus sought to balance the comedic effect of his ridiculous attempts to control his daughter and the uncomfortable effect of the realities of patriarchal control. I hoped Minos would seem funny, yet, in his toxically masculine role, perhaps a little too familiar.

The Gender of the Characters

1. Theo and Aegea

A lot of careful thought went into my decision to change Theseus and Aegeus' gender in my adaptation—I struggled with the question throughout the writing process. Theo and Aegea were male in early drafts of the story, which I felt would reflect the power and gender dynamics and structures of the original myth. However, as I considered the alternative, I decided there were far more pros to switching Theo's gender in particular: the change would allow me to explore additional modern issues with the myth and furthermore would solve a problem I had in answering one of my critical questions about the myth for the audience.

When confronting the true reasons why Theseus abandons Ariadne in the myth, I found that the easy answer was to say that Theseus left because he is a man. There is certainly some truth to that idea: men, as we have seen, had the ability to deny women's agency in the ancient world, and indeed sometimes exercised that ability, cruel as it was, by abandoning women after obtaining sexual pleasure from them. However, I felt that solely looking at that angle of Theseus' motivations was oversimplifying the answer too much and would invite the audience to

only look at that aspect of the question. I felt that to get to the heart of Theseus' choice, I had to look beyond Catullus' explanation that Theseus was simply "unmindful" (Catullus 64.58) or "forgetful" (Catullus 64.208) when leaving, as well as the obvious answer of the prince's callous entitlement by virtue of being male. By making my Theo female, I therefore eliminated that part of the equation, hopefully forcing the audience to ask the harder questions about the societal pressures, inner desires and goals, and emotions underlying Theo's choice to abandon Ari.

After much thought, I decided that my Theo had several different reasons for abandoning Ari, which she explored aloud in the song "I Lose It All." Prompted by many voicemails from her mother, Theo has to face several questions at hand in her life as she sings: what love really means to her, what she wanted out of sleeping with Ari, what she wants for her future and whether it is attainable, and what might come from abandoning Ari. Theo discovers after she says, "I love you" to Ari, that she was not actually in love. She instead simply feels pressure to care for Ari, who is a lost woman in need, just like her mother. Theo thus feels held back by her commitment to both Aegea and Ari; she is stuck again in the same pattern, having lost her chance to forge a path ahead. Much like Ari herself throughout the show, Theo in this moment has to decide what her duty is to her family, the girl she supposedly loves, and ultimately, to her own destiny and desires. Ultimately, Theo makes the decision to throw away all duty to others for what she perceives as her duty to herself, discovering too late that it is the wrong choice.

While my Theo's motivations might not be the exact same ones that Catullus' Theseus experiences in his "forgetfulness," they certainly exist in parallel to one another. Theseus, like Theo, faces countless societal and familial pressures and commitments, with his eye constantly focused on his future achievements. Ultimately, although we may not be able to pinpoint

Theseus' exact thoughts, my hope is that the audience opens us up to the idea that there may be more going on in Theseus' mind during the abandonment than the myth would have one believe.

Beyond Theseus' inner motivations, changing Theo's gender served another important purpose: allowing me to explore the issue of Ariadne's sexuality in the myth. For a modern gay college student, exploring one's sexuality is a critical part of developing one's own identity; such is clearly true as well for Ariadne, who is able to explore her sexuality for the first time with Theseus. Both Ari and Ariadne break outside the bounds of their expected behavior through the act of sex—for both, the choice serves as part of their search for inner freedom and agency, partially confused with the feeling of love. Thus it is even more heartbreaking that both Ari and Ariadne, having trusted someone with their newly-admitted sexuality, having fallen into what they believe is their deep first love, would be abandoned by that person. Ultimately, I also believed that such a story would be familiar on Vassar's campus, where LGBTQ-related topics are an important part of the culture, and indeed that the ancient world, whose concept of sexuality is far more ambiguous and open than the modern's, would be a good vehicle for exploring some of these modern, relevant issues.

Lastly, following the change in Theo's gender, I thought appropriate that the closeness of the father-son bond between Theseus and Aegeus from the original myth should be maintained. I felt that such would be better represented by a mother-daughter bond instead of a father-daughter bond, especially since I was already exploring the latter dynamic in Ari and Minos' at-odds relationship. As a result, I altered Aegeus' gender to female as well.

2. Dion

The change of gender for the character of Dion, based on Bacchus, happened more by accident (as such changes will in theater productions). Originally, Dion was a hyper-masculine, hard-partying “frat boy,” which I felt was a fairly accurate representation of Bacchus’ boisterous and domineering character in the original myth. However, in the course of casting, our production team found that we had no males audition who fit the character as originally envisioned. However, we did have one female actor audition who presented the wild, excitable, and comedic traits which I felt were key to Dion’s nature. Therefore, the production team and I decided to cast her anyway, and I instead rewrote the part to suit the actor. Dion thus became a character who identified as non-gender binary (another issue of gender relevant and widely discussed on Vassar’s campus that I also thought appropriate for the character—gods can indeed transcend gender in the metaphysical realm), who was over-involved in and overcommitted to various activities on campus, and who, like the ancient Bacchus, simply took up a lot of space with their boisterous character. Dion would, of course, still remain a hard partier—something critical to any adaptation of Bacchus.

Though these aspects of Dion’s character were not part of my original plan for the role, I think the change actually served the story better in several ways. Dion, rather than perhaps seeming predatory in his overtly-masculine, dominating pursuit of Ari, presented more as a sympathetic, relatable college student, simply lost in their feelings for a girl they genuinely cared about.

In my own understanding of the myth, the change in Dion’s gender also helped me realize that there may be a softer side to the ancient Bacchus which the original tradition does not necessarily display. Perhaps beyond the outlandish orgies of the Dionysian Mysteries, the

sexually voracious satyrs which surround him, and the ever-flowing wine which encourages all this superficial behavior, Bacchus has a uniquely caring interior. For a god to place his mortal wife's constellation in the stars upon her death (or to make her an immortal goddess, depending on the tradition), he must hold an especially strong, deep love for her. I therefore decided that maybe, Dion's character, having not yet found that selfless love for another, could be just as confused as any other college student, seeking to discover themselves in activities and parties instead of through self-reflection. Dion then, guided by their love for Ari, could eventually have their own character arc, opening to new possible self-paradigms and learning that they too have the freedom to define their role in life.

Thematic Adaptation Choices

1. The Minotaur, Thread, and Labyrinth

Over the course of the adaptation process, I realized that if I was going to make a realistic, modern version of the myth, I could not represent the famous figures of the Minotaur, the labyrinth, and the thread with direct parallels—a mythical monster entering the show would certainly make it lose some of its emotional punch. Instead, I would have to represent them through choices which made thematic parallels to the original figures, thinking carefully about what how they were understood by the ancients.

Ultimately, I decided that in the original myth, the Minotaur actually at its heart represents a deep family secret, which Minos shamefully hid away from the light of day. Theseus' travels through the labyrinth, in turn, can be described as the long and difficult search to reveal the secret. Ariadne provides the ability for Theseus to navigate the path to uncovering the secret, i.e., the thread, and end its trouble once and for all. Ariadne's choice to provide

Theseus with the thread, i.e., revealing the secret, is thus a big turning point for her character in the myth, where she betrays the interests of her father and puts her newfound duty to her lover ahead of her lifelong duty to her family. All of these themes I decided to represent in my adaptation, making them similarly critical points in Ari's journey over the course of the story.

In my version, Ari finds the evidence of the secret of her father's shame herself, bringing the knowledge of her mother's abortion and subsequent death to Theo, knowing it will lead to the downfall of Minos' career. Ari makes the choice for several reasons: she acts partially to help Theo, partially to seek revenge on Minos for depriving her of familial love for so many years, and partially to discover her identity apart from her family by cutting off all ties to it with an extreme act. Just as Ariadne reflects on her dereliction of familial duty in Catullus' poem, Ari too comes to regret her hasty actions and learns from the choices she has made.

2. Aegeus' Suicide

Another aspect of the original myth whose modern parallel I thought was key to address in my adaptation was the event of Aegeus' suicide. In the original myth, Aegeus' suicide is problematic: it is part of Theseus' "punishment" for the way he treated Ariadne, and she in fact "causes" the event through an angry prayer to the gods. Mental health being such the important topic of discussion which it is today (and one which is also dear to me personally and often discussed at Vassar), I knew I wanted to face this issue head on and include it as part of my adaptation.

One of the questions I had regarding Aegeus' suicide was about what responsibility Theseus should feel for the event—can he really be held responsible for his father's feelings and actions, even after treating Ariadne so horribly? My Theo indeed felt a responsibility for her

parent's well-being throughout the story, as well as a desire to be free of that responsibility; yet tragically, after the moment where she tries to throw away that duty to her family entirely, she "loses it all." In the real world, when someone kills themselves, their loved ones often take on that question of responsibility: what could they have done differently to prevent this event? Such thoughts can be devastating and unanswerable, as well as unwarranted for the surviving loved ones. Theo indeed, as the ancient Theseus must have done, experiences those same thoughts of guilt and struggle, taking all the blame unjustly onto herself.

The message I wished to send to my audience, however, is an uplifting one. Ultimately, when dealing with the suicide of a loved one, it is important to move past the trap of blame and guilt, and instead remember the person as their best self, how they themselves would have wished to be remembered. Theo remembers her mom was happiest when she saw Theo coming into her own, striving to succeed and make the world a better place. Theo, rather than holding onto the despair and shame of the past, thus eventually decides to honor her mother's legacy in a positive way and to follow her own dreams. In a way, this is in fact what all students of history should do when dealing with regretful incidents of the past: study them closely from all sides, learn the lessons they have to offer, and then find positive solutions to improve the world moving forward.

3. Fate and the Role of the Storyteller

At the very beginning of the show, the Chorus, among their other questions, brings up three issues to the audience: What is the role of "Fate" in this story, in our lives? Just how flexible is this ancient myth? And who are the tellers of this story you are about to see? Though I introduce those questions early, I actually came to them far later in the process of adapting the

myth. I realized, as I continued to struggle with the role of the Chorus in my writing, that these were interrelated questions which actually got to the heart of what it means to adapt an ancient story for the modern world.

The Chorus in some ways represents a form of Ariadne's tale that has been set in stone, controlling the events of the story along the way. Such a way of looking at the past is familiar to us: in the Vassar course "Then & Now," we often discussed the modern paradigm of the ancient world as a perfect "golden nugget"—incontrovertible, unquestionable, non-nuanced, and stagnant in all its purposes, meant to be kept on a shelf and admired when studied, held up as a beacon of cultural light for only the best and brightest torch-bearers of Western civilization. Indeed the Homeric epics themselves, once improvised, reshaped, and altered by bards for the immediate response of their communal audience, were eventually written down in a particular format and have since remained supposedly stagnant. It is easy for the modern world to think, for example, "Odysseus' adventures happened in this specific order and included these particular episodes, leading to this particular climax, with always the same beginning, middle, and end along the way." But such would not have been true for the ancients; the *Odyssey* would have been ever-changing depending on the teller and on the audience. There are certainly episodes of Odysseus' adventures which never got included when the epic was written down that have been lost to time; indeed, it is unclear to us just how moldable and flexible the very events of these myths could be. Odysseus has to fight in the Trojan War, has to be trapped on Ogygia for eight years, and has to return home triumphant...doesn't he?

I decided that in my own adaptation, there was room to push the boundaries of that question, and that making any alterations to the original myth would in fact be more true to the

ancient traditions of myth-telling than one might expect. From the beginning of the show, the Chorus points out to the audience that myth, by its nature, is moldable, changeable, and adjusts over time. The number of variations in Ariadne's story throughout history is proof enough of this fact (even in the ancient world, Plutarch references in his *Parallel Lives* the several contradictory traditions of what happened to Ariadne, depending on the teller). But the Chorus also notes that when, over the course of retelling, the roles of the characters in the myth begin to be too well-defined, when the plot points get too numbered (both feelings we all experience even in our own lives), is when those same elements which had once been tools of improvisation and freedom in the story begin to be restrictive. Ari too feels this way: that the role and path set out for her in life is not what she wants it to be. She faces external pressure to follow her role and internal pressure to break out from it, never knowing exactly what is right or what it is she truly wants.

It is in Ari's feelings regarding her restricted role in life that the question of "Fate" comes into play. In stepping out of the path set for her, Ari attempts to break from what she calls "Fate," i.e., the seemingly predetermined nature of her personal story, which leaves no room for free will or personal agency. But the ancients, as I discovered over the course of the adaptation process, actually had a very different understanding of Fate's power in their world. While they do understand the outcome and path of their lives as predestined, that destiny is also built on the foundation of their life choices, for which they ultimately have free will. While Oedipus may have been fated to kill his father and marry his mother, it was ultimately his own choices, of which he was always in charge, that led to his downfall—he was thus held responsible for those choices. The ancients thus understood that both predestination and free will could exist

simultaneously, that even though the roles and events of a myth may be “set in stone,” ultimately, the players in that myth are always in control of their destiny.

The point in my story that most directly faces this question of Fate and predetermination is Ari’s reconciliation with Minos. Minos reveals to his daughter that, just like her, he believes that he hubristically, arrogantly attempted to change Fate by trying to save his wife from her inevitable death. But together, through singing “Taking Back My Story,” Ari and Minos come to realize that no matter what the events of life hand them, no matter their past mistakes or failures, they are ultimately in charge of their own story going forward. They actually do have the ability to “reshuffle the deck” of the myth, adjust the cards as they will, and rewrite the ending, because that’s the nature of these stories: their elements are constantly shifting based on who is telling them.

The Chorus asks the audience at both the beginning and the end of the show a poignant question: Who gets to tell this story? Do we rely solely on the words of the ancients? Do we reinvent it ourselves? If so, who makes those choices? Only the writers, the actors? Does the audience take part? Eventually, the Chorus offers the possibility that maybe the characters of the myth themselves can also take part in that storytelling—maybe they can finally come into their own and help determine their own roles.

4. A Hopeful Ending

The Chorus at the beginning of Act II asks (in a not-so-subtle reference to the musical *Hamilton*), “What comes next?” Indeed, in this myth, Catullus does not tell us—we have to guess for ourselves the possibility of a happy ending. As I reflected much on the nature of Ariadne’s sad story over time, I came to the conclusion that as long as she is repeating the cycle

—trapped by the pressures of “Fate,” never in control, falling prey again and again to the same “Endless War” of love leading to loneliness—she can never achieve that satisfying conclusion. My Ari, having gone through so much over the course of her story, learned that she does ultimately have the ability to shape her own destiny; therefore she could do nothing else than finally “break free” of that cycle, having come to a new understanding of what it means to do so.

In order to break free, however, Ari had to leave behind those aspects of her past which one would normally consider as leading to a “happy ending.” Given the opportunity to maintain her relationship with Dion and even to rekindle her relationship with Theo, Ari had to choose to let them go and discover her identity apart from them. Ari also had to let go of the anger she held for Theo, to forgive her—not for Theo’s sake, but for her own, so that she could break the cycle of revenge that history had set for her, and move on. Free of the past, Ari could then finally take the story into her own hands, comfortable with her duties to her family, herself, and others, finally holding them all in balance. She could finally reclaim for herself the agency which the original myth denied her.

Since Ari doesn’t “get the girl” in the end, and her future is unclear, it is hard to necessarily call the ending of *Ariadne* a “happy” one. But I like to believe it is “hopeful” one; I believe that even though Ariadne’s original story may be deeply heartbreaking and sad, when we come to look at it with modern eyes, understand the myth from a new perspective, and retell it in our own time, that there is room for new hope in this old story.

Conclusion: What is Next for *Ariadne*

Overall, the process of adapting *Ariadne* was both incredibly trying and deeply rewarding. In taking a closer look at this ancient myth and attempting to make its characters my

own, I found I engaged with the ancient material in several unexpected ways. I have been newly enlightened about what messages it can send and the myriad issues the ancient world can help us explore. I believe there is so much that I can continue to learn from Ariadne's story—her triumphs, her pain, and the people overtime who have talked about it.

Seeing my vision of the story brought to life in performance was particularly gratifying. By working with the production team, cast, and receiving feedback from the audience, I was able to interact with ideas and perspectives from people who all had different understandings of this story than I did. Whether they were intimately familiar with the original myth or not, I found that everyone brought new insight into the story I was trying to tell. Most everyone was willing to engage with the ancient material as well as the modern, which made me very excited to see that goal of mine fulfilled. Furthermore, I felt that the characters themselves, even as I directed their words, even as the actors took their roles and began to shape them in their own image, they began to take on lives of their own. As Ari and her friends developed their own personalities, both distinct from their actors and from their ancient counterparts, I found that through coming to better understand them, I better understood the ancient material and indeed the needs of my own story. Ariadne, having discovered herself in a new form, feels more real to me today than she did when I was first struck by her in Catullus' words two years ago.

I also, even after all this time, have found that I am not quite ready to let this story go yet. I know that there is still more to research about Ariadne, her history and the interpretations of her over time; there is more feedback to be hear from audience and scholars alike; there are already several aspects in the show I would like to edit, cut, and change, having seen them played out onstage; and even now, there are still questions about Ariadne herself that I would like to answer

—questions that perhaps can never be satisfactorily answered. But I look forward to continuing work on *Ariadne* in the future and attempting to answer them anyway: one way or another, Ariadne has more to offer me in my understanding of both the ancient and modern worlds. I feel truly privileged to take part in that ongoing conversation between the past and present with my own exploration of this undying story.