

Adriana Mater

(2005)

an opera in seven scenes

Music by Kaija Saariaho
Libretto by Amin Malouf

translated from the French
by Barbara Bray

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CAST:

ADRIANA (mezzo-soprano)

REFKA, *Adriana's sister* (soprano)

YONAS, *Adriana's son* (tenor)

TSARGO, *Yonas's father* (bass-baritone)

TIME:

The present

PLACE:

A country at war

Synopsis

SCENE 1

Just before the outbreak of war. A young woman, Adriana, relaxes outside her house, singing a haunting old song. When she tries to go inside, she finds her way barred by a young man called Tsargo, who is drunk. He makes a tipsy attempt to engage Adriana in conversation, reminding her that they danced together a year ago. She rebuffs him, and he goes away crestfallen, to lie down and finish off his bottle nearby. Refka, Adriana's sister, who has watched all this, herself unseen, rebukes Adriana for even speaking to Tsargo. Night falls, and a dream sequence is enacted, though we do not know whether the dreamer is Adriana or Tsargo or both of them [Note from BB. Cf. p.13 of the French text, where the suggestion is that not two but three of the characters (including Refka, might be doing the dreaming.)] In the dream, Tsargo gets ready to take Adriana dancing, but when she puts her hand on his arm he turns into a bottle, which Adriana drops and breaks. Adriana wakes up laughing both in the dream and in reality. Her laughter, and the sound of breaking glass, awakens Tsargo. He feels humiliated, and rushes off uttering threats.

SCENE 2

As if echoing Tsargo's fury comes the rumble of war. Tsargo re-enters dressed as a soldier and carrying a gun. He knocks at Adriana's door, but she snubs him as sternly as before, disregarding both the fact that he is armed and his claim that he needs to go up on the roof to observe the movements of the approaching enemy. So he breaks down the door, and we deduce that he rapes her.

SCENE 3

Adriana is pregnant. She quarrels with her sister, who reproaches her for deciding to have the child. Refka tells Adriana of the dream she had the previous night, which reflects not only Refka's own anxieties about the child that is to be born, but ~~also~~ ^{CURTAIN} the fears of Adriana herself, who wonders who her son will turn out to resemble -- Cain or Abel?

SCENE 4

Seventeen years later. Yonas, Adriana's son, has just learned through people outside his family that, contrary to what Adriana has always told him, his father did not die heroically, trying to defend Adriana and their son. The young man is furious, and Adriana tries to explain that she had not meant to tell him the truth until he was old enough to deal with it. Yonas is still angry with all concerned, especially his unknown father, a rapist whom he swears to kill. The scene ends with another dream where the identity of the dreamer is not clear, and in which we see Yonas throwing off all

disguise and slaying his whole family -- first Tsargo, next Adriana and Refka, and finally turning his weapon against himself.

SCENE 5

Refka enters to tell Adriana some news, but comes instead upon Yonas, who upbraids her too for having lied to him about his father. Adriana enters, and Refka tells her, in Yonas's presence, that Tsargo is back in the country. Yonas charges off vowing to kill him. Refka wants to go after him and restrain him, but Adriana remains impassive. "If he is meant to kill him, then he will kill him," she says.

SCENE 6

Yonas meets his father, makes sure he really is Tsargo, and rebukes him. Tsargo's back is turned throughout this sequence, and he doesn't hesitate to admit who he is and what he's done. He doesn't boast of it, but nor does he show much remorse. Yonas announces that he intends to kill him, but not wanting to attack him from behind, asks him to turn round and look at him. Tsargo turns slowly, and we see that he is blind. Yonas is taken aback. Unable to keep his vow and kill his father now that he is disabled, he flees.

SCENE 7

All four characters are on stage at once, but independently of one another. All are distraught, consumed with anxiety and remorse. Only Adriana and Yonas eventually meet. Yonas asks his mother to forgive him for failing to avenge her. Adriana questions him calmly about what happened, and tells him how before he was born she wondered night and day whether her son would turn out to be a killer like his father. Now she knows the answer: Yonas is *her* son, sprung from *her* blood, and not the son of a monster. "We are not avenged," she tells him. "But we are saved." The gates of Hell can close again.

Names of scenes

- 1. Light*
- 2. Darkness*
- 3. Two hearts*
- 4. Confessions*
- 5. Rages*
- 6. Duel*
- 7. Adriana*

SCENE I

Dusk in a modest part of a town, before the war.

A young woman leans against the wall of her house, relaxing at the end of the day and singing a kind of traditional rondeau full of longing and passion.

ADRIANA

When the eyes of the city close
I reveal my voice!
The voice I gathered
In an autumn garden
And pressed in the pages of a book;
The voice I brought back from my country
Between my brimstone-coloured sheets;
The voice I tucked into my bodice
Under the folds of my heart.

When the eyes of the city close
I reveal my heart!
The heart I gathered
In an autumn garden
And pressed in the pages of a book;
The heart I brought back from my country
Between my stone-coloured sheets;
The heart I tucked into my bodice
Under the folds of my skin.

(A young man, Tsargo, approaches, walking unsteadily and carrying a bottle in his hand. He stands between Adriana and the door of the house, as if to prevent her from entering. Refka, herself unseen, watches them from inside the house.)

When the eyes of the city
close I reveal my skin!
The skin I gathered
In an autumn garden
And pressed...

(When Adriana finally notices the young man, she stops singing and makes for the door.)

TSARGO (*barring the way*)
 She won't speak to me
 Now!
 Adriana doesn't know me
 now!

ADRIANA (*wearily, and with
 disdain*) Yes, I know you, Tsargo,
 And that is why
 I won't speak to you.
 Get out of my way!
 Go and get drunk somewhere
 else!

TSARGO
 I am not
 Drunk!

ADRIANA (*more and more
 contemptuously*) No, Tsargo, you're sober,
 As anyone can see.
 It's your bottle that's drunk,
 Your bottle that can't stand up!
 Will you please take it out of here?

TSARGO (*more and more unsteady on his
 legs*) I am not
 Drunk!

TSARGO
 I came to talk to you, Adriana.
 Listen to me!

ADRIANA
 Come back and talk to me
 Some time when you're sober!

TSARGO
 If I was rich as well as drunk
 You'd listen to me, Adriana.
 If I was powerful as well as drunk,
 You'd already have asked me in --
 I'd already be sitting on your bed.

ADRIANA
 A man doesn't have to be rich or powerful
 To be allowed to sit on my bed.
 One day, Tsargo, I might even ask *you* in.
 If I saw you walking along the street
 Sober and upright.

*(As she speaks, Adriana mimes the scene she describes, and
 Tsargo begins to believe in it.)*

You might appear in front of me, and the way wouldn't be barred;
 You might say the words I've always waited to hear,
 And the words I no longer expected.
 Your voice would breathe through my hair
 Like a familiar breeze.
 That day, Tsargo, I'd open my door to you
 Even if you were still poor. That day
 I'd let you sit on my bed.
 (Pause)
 But that day will never come!

(This last line strikes Tsargo like a blow. He moves away, sits down, and finishes off the bottle. Adriana goes into the house, where her sister is waiting for her.)

REFKA
 Why bother to waste your breath
 On drunken scoundrel?

ADRIANA
 Perhaps you'd have liked me just to beg him
 To be kind enough to let me pass?

REFKA
 No, Adriana, I'd have liked
 You to keep
 Your distance.
 Not to notice him.
 Not to utter his name.
 Not to bandy words with him.

ADRIANA (*mockingly*)
 Distance!

ADRIANA
 You mean you'd have liked me to keep quiet.
 To let him attack me, and say nothing.
 To let him bar my way
 And not even tell him to clear off!

REFKA
 I'd have liked you to answer him
 With contempt, Adriana.
 Nothing but contempt.

ADRIANA
 Even more contempt than I did show?
 You saw how he crawled away!

REFKA
 You don't understand, Adriana.
 I'd have liked

ADRIANA (*under her breath*)
Just one dance!

REFKA
One dance too many!
It's because of that he's hanging around
here.

ADRIANA
Look down there --
He's asleep propped up against the wall.
Too drunk to go home.

REFKA
Don't even look at him, and don't speak so loud
-- it's late!

(The light in the house goes out and the two sisters sleep. On stage is enacted what is evidently a dream, though it is not clear which of the characters is the dreamer; perhaps all three. We see Tsargo, dressed in his best, knocking at Adriana's door; he has come to take her to the dance. Both he and she wear eye-masks, but they are recognisable from their clothes.

She comes out to join him, but when she takes his arm she finds she has got hold of a bottle. She bursts out laughing and drops it. It falls to the ground with a crash of broken glass and a shower of liquid. Adriana's laughter changes from dream to reality. Tsargo, who hears it and seems to have had the same dream, gets up and rushes off uttering threats.

During this sequence, voices off relate what is happening. The voices mingle and overlap in a kind of chorus, but every so often those of the individual characters can be recognised.)

VOICE OF ADRIANA	VOICE OF REFKA	CHORUS
When the eyes of the city close	When the eyes of the city close	
I reveal my skin	Our dreams awaken.	When the eyes of the city close
	One world drives out another	One world inherits another
	One world inherits another	Bringing its own noises,
Between my stone-coloured sheets	Bringing its own noises, Its lights	Its own lights, Its own lies.

VOICE OF REFKA	PART OF CHORUS	OTHER PART OF CHORUS
In the dream, Tsargo Had a date with Adriana.	In the dream, She waited.	She waited. They spent a long time getting ready
In the dream	Getting ready	Getting dressed
In the dream, the door opened Adriana took his arm	But the arm changed into a chilly bottle dropped the bottle	Tsargo's arm
In the dream Adriana Crash of glass and red drops Everywhere	dropped it on the round	Adriana dropped Let it smash to pieces.
VOICE OF ADRIANA Tsargo wept	VOICE OF TSARGO Adriana laughed	
	VOICE OF TSARGO Adriana laughed! Her sister laughed The whole world laughed and laughed. Adriana laughed.	CHORUS Adriana laughed! Laughed and laughed...
	VOICE OF REFKA Suddenly the dream faded Night washed up on the shore of dawn The motionless body of the dream Like a drowned sailor.	
VOICE OF ADRIANA Then Tsargo went away Fled to the depths of Darkness Like a fallen angel	He fled to the depths of Darkness A fallen angel	CHORUS Damned, Damned, Damned.

SCENE 2

Dusk; the same part of the town as before; war-time.

Adriana is in her house. Tsargo strides on to the scene, no longer a poor young man. He is self-assured now, and has apparently become a local chief. He is carrying a weapon, and is followed at a distance by a group of men who take their orders from him. He wears a bandage round his arm or head. He knocks at the door.

TSARGO: Adriana, open up!
Open up, and fast!

ADRIANA (*suspicious; opening the door just a crack*):

Have you been wounded?

TSARGO:
Never mind that.
That's not why I'm here.
The Other Side are starting to infiltrate nearby.
I need to go up on the roof to watch the roads.
Let me through!

ADRIANA (*still holding on to the door and barring the way with her body*)
Why do you need to watch the roads
From my house, Tsargo?
There are lots of taller places!

TSARGO:
If everyone talks like that
The Others will swarm through our streets
Cutting all our throats, man and women alike,
As they did in our fathers' time.
They've been readying their weapons for years,
They're thirsty for vengeance,
And now they're ready and on their way.
They're coming! They're almost here!
Go up on the roof at night and hold your breath
And you can hear the din they make already!

ADRIANA:
Don't try to frighten me,
Tsargo!
Don't think you can make me tremble!
You're not coming into my house!

TSARGO:
If they reach here

ADRIANA:

No!

No!

No!

No! No! No!

TSARGO:

No, Adriana, I wish you no harm.

I'm just trying to defend you.

But I have to make sure that the Others

Haven't reached here yet.

I must get through!

I must come in!

I must go up on the roof!

Get out of the way!

TSARGO:

This time I'm coming in whether you let me or

not.

I've been very patient.

You've made me suffer enough.

Whether you let me or not,

This time I'm coming in!

ADRIANA:

No, you are not!

Only over my body!

TSARGO *(drawing back a pace as if to charge, but still with one foot in the door):*

If it has to be over your body, Adriana,

Then over your body it shall be.

ADRIANA: No!

No! No! No!

(He shoves at the door. Adriana tries to shut it completely, but he is too strong for her. He breaks into the house and vanishes into the darkness, out of which a shriek is heard. Sounds of rape backed by sounds of war. Indistinct cries from the Chorus mingle with sounds of instruments and Adriana's repeated cries of "No!." The effect is of aural illustration rather than articulate words. It's the music that tells the story of the crime now being committed.)

SCENE 3

Dusk; the same part of the town; just after the war.

Adriana, evidently pregnant and still afflicted by the attack of which she was the victim some months ago, is sitting with her sister.

REFKA:

I don't blame *you* at all, Adriana.
It's myself I reproach
For not being here that evening --
For leaving you on your own.

ADRIANA:

But I see in your eyes
All the reproaches
You'd like to hide.

REFKA:

No, not reproaches, little sister.
But I do so wish that things
Could be otherwise.
I keep thinking your path should never
 have crossed
The path of such a monster;
That you should never have set eyes
On the miserable wretch;
And that you should never, never have
 kept his child!
But you know all that, Adriana.

ADRIANA:

It's not his child, Refka -- it's mine.
It will be like me!

REFKA:

God grant it, Adriana -- God grant it!
But how can you know?

ADRIANA:

I do know, Refka -- I feel it
As surely as I feel
This other heart beating near mine.

flowers!
everyone -

Adriana is having a baby --I *must* give her some
And I began to run through the streets, asking

The killers, the wounded, even the dying:
"Can you tell me where I can find some flowers?"
In the end I came upon
Two men, one grey-haired, the other very young.
They too had the same face, or the same mask.
The grey-haired man had his hands up,
Like a prisoner or a hostage.
The young man was holding a weapon, as if about
to

strike him down.

I tapped the young man on the shoulder
And asked him too:
"Can you tell me where I can find some flowers?"
He turned to me and said:
"Are you looking for flowers, Refka, in the middle
of a war?
You're mad. Wake up! Wake up!"

(A pause. The dream fades. We return to reality.)

And I did wake up...
Don't ask me the meaning of that
dream. I've been brooding about it
since morning, Trying to fit the pieces
together,
Trying to understand what night told
me. I'm still very perturbed by it all.
I had to tell you about it.

ADRIANA (*worried*):

Now I'm going to be haunted by it too,
And I too shall try to understand what it means.

(Pause)

Sometimes our dreams teach us a lesson,
As if they were passing on the wisdom of our
dead. Don't you think there must be
Some hidden wisdom in your dream? But what?
There must be some buried wisdom.
But what?

REFKA:
There must be!
There must be!

REFKA:
Anyhow, the die is
cast.

You've chosen to keep the child. Too late to
change now. I'd
much rather you'd chosen otherwise...
A disaster has fallen upon you.
I wish you hadn't let it
Invade your body,
Pervade your life.
How can you ever forget the war
If you've agreed to carry his child?
But I don't want to torture you worse than life
has done.
If you're sure you're doing the right thing...

ADRAINA:

Yes, I'm sure, I'm sure, Refka. I'm sure...

*(As Refka exits, Adriana repeats these words as if to convince herself.
She is talking to herself, even though she pretends to continue the
discussion with her sister.)*

ADRAINA:

No, Refka, I'm not sure of anything.
I only feel, and I feel a heart,
A second heart beating close to mine.
Who is this stranger inhabiting me?
A brother? Another self? An enemy?
In his veins two bloods flow -- two mingled together:
The blood of the victim and the blood of the
aggressor. How can you spill one without spilling the
other?
One day my child will be born. I'll hold him in my arms,
Feed him at my breast.
But that day,
Yes, that day,
I'll still be wondering, as I'm wondering now,
As I wonder every moment, day and night,
Who is this creature I carry?
Who is this creature I feed?
To comfort myself I sometimes think
That every woman, ever since Eve,
Might have asked herself the same questions:
Who is it I carry?
Who is it I feed?
Which will my child turn out to be -- Cain or Abel?

CURTAIN

SCENE 4

Seventeen years have gone by. Adriana's son is now a young man. She looks on with growing anxiety as he bursts through the door, then shouts:

YONAS:
Is there anyone here who can tell
me What my name is?

ADRIANA:
What do you mean, Yonas?

ADRAIANA:
I have told you.
Yonas.
You are called Yonas.
Is that what you want to
hear?

YONAS:
Questions deserve answers.
If you know what my name is,
Tell me!

YONAS:
And you -- are you really called Adriana?

ADRIANA (*we can see that she is impatient, but she is trying to conceal her anxiety*): And I -- I am called Adriana.

YONAS:
And you're really my mother?
And we're both of us
Really alive?

ADRIANA:
Why these childish questions,
Yonas?

YONAS:
I wanted to make sure that about that at least
You haven't lied to me!

ADRIANA:
Come and sit down and tell me
What is worrying you.

(He moves slightly nearer, but doesn't sit down.)

YONAS (*choked with emotion*): Today I've learned
Two things:

My father wasn't a hero,
And my father
Is not dead.

ADRIANA:
Who told
you?

YONAS (*exploding*)
What does that matter?
Just tell me
If it's true!

ADRIANA (*after a last
hesitation*):
Yes, Yonas. It's true.

YONAS:
So when you told me my father died
The year of the civil war
You were lying!
When you said my father died
Trying to protect us from the killers
You were lying!
Ever since I was born I've swallowed nothing
But lie upon lie with every mouthful of milk --
Lie upon lie
Like bread in soup.
And you dared to say to me, day after day:
"My son, let your word be your bond!"

ADRIANA:
Seeing you so angry, I realise
That I did wrong, Yonas.
I shouldn't have lie to you.
Forgive me. But
I was afraid...
(*pause*)
I was afraid the truth
Might be too much for you to bear.
You were only a child.

YONAS
And don't you think lies
Are even harder to bear?

ADRIANA:
 Will you listen to me,
 Yonas?
 Will you just give me

When everyone knows the truth about you
 Except you yourself?
 When everyone around you whispers,
 Pitying you, looking down on you,
 And you can't guess why?
 When I alone am trammeled in ignorance,
 And everyone else, young and old,
 Scoffs at and mocks me?

A chance to explain .
 Today I've found out I was wrong
 To hide the truth from you for so long.
 Forgive me, Yonas --
 I was so young, and life had hurt me.
 I was frightened of everything --frightened for myself,
 And above all for you.
 I had to protect you from the hateful truth
 As long as possible --
 Until your branches had grown
 Strong enough to bear the weight.

YONAS:
 How old would I have to be before you told me the
 truth? Thirty?

ADRIANA:
 How old?
 I don't know
 How old, Yonas!

YONAS:
 Yes, how old?
 How old? Tell me!

No more questions, *please!*
 Since you're grown-up all of a sudden,
 Put yourself in my place for a moment --
 In the dock!
 Now it's your turn to answer.
 At what age should I have told my son I was raped,
 And that the rapist was his father?
 At what age, eh? Four? Eight?
 Ten? Twelve?
 Heaven didn't send my sone to me wrapped in silk
 With instructions for use!
 I had to make up a future, a past, and a way of life...
 (A pause, in which she gets her breath back and adopts a new tone.)
 I loved you as best I could, Yonas.
 Now it's your turn to love me
 As much as you can.

YONAS (*finally sitting down and, after a
 moment, taking her hand in both his. Now he
 is calmer, too:*)
 Was he -- was that man --
 Really called Tsargo?

Was it really him that people called
Tsargo the Protector?

ADRIANA:

That's what he wanted them to call him.

YONAS:

Was he...Was he really
The monster people said he was?

ADRIANA:

He wasn't always a monster.
Just a nobody, a lay-about.
He drank a bit, and went around
With other lay-abouts.
Perhaps he'd never have become the best of men
But he mightn't have become the worst, either.
Then came the war...
And that year all the young men
Thought they'd been born again --
Unfettered, above the law, virtually free,
Masters of the streets, the laws and the night,
Masters of women and things,
Dispensers of death.

YONAS:

Dispensers of poisoned life.

ADRIANA (*startled*):

Whose life are you referring to?
Yours, Yonas? The life of my own son?
Think again! Your life isn't poisoned.
Neither your hands nor your soul have been affected
By the corruption of war.
I have protected you from men. You are my son --
Pure being and my revenge.
War ended the day you were born.
You are the death of death!

YONAS (*rising*):

And he? The one who's not dead?
What's become of him? Where did he
flee?

ADRIANA:

I wasn't his only victim that year.
He roamed the streets like a wild beast,
Killing, looting, holding to ransom,
Surrounded by a gang
Who followed him everywhere like a pack of hounds.

People hated and despised them all
 But in public pretended to respect them.
 Tsargo even got some to bow when he passed,
 And call him Our Protector.
 This madness lasted a year,
 Then Tsargo was wounded and taken to hospital
 On the other side of the river.
 He came out again after a few weeks,
 But by then his followers had melted away,
 A truce had been agreed, and the war was almost over.
 The people here could hold up their heads again
 And Tsargo dared not come back.
 So ended his miserable career...
 Since then, every two or three years,
 I hear rumours that he's been seen somewhere or other.

YONAS (*as if to himself*):
 If he comes back I'll kill him.

At first I was afraid and thought of running away
 Or hiding.
 But now I don't pay much attention
 To such rumours --
 I don't think he'd dare show himself here now!

YONAS (*more audibly*):
 If he comes back I'll kill him.

YONAS (*out loud*):
 If he comes back I'll kill him.

ADRIANA (*as if not replying directly*):
 If only we could both forget him
 And go on as we were before!

YONAS:
 You may forget him, efface
 him from your life,
 But I, how could I forget him?
 The monster's blood runs in

my

veins.
 How could I forget my own
 blood?

ADRIANA:
 My blood. our blood, his blood...
 Such misleading words!
 They sully everything!
 Blood is held responsible for virtues,
 preferences, Even opinions and words:

"I feel it in my blood," "The blood rushed to my head" --
 Your tells you nothing, Yonas.
 It has no words, no voice, no memory.
 It can't tell you what to do.
 If you think you ought to do something, do it,
 But never speak to me again of your blood!

(Adriana heads for the door. Yonas sits down on the floor and buries his head in his hands. Then they both freeze, and in the sombre red light that always heralds a dream sequence a kind of sacrificial is enacted in slow motion, A masked character whom we identify as Yonas, tears off the others' masks and throws them on the fire. It's as if he were stripping them of their souls, and they all collapse one after the other, in a blaze that at once destroys and purifies. A short dream this time, without any commentary -- only music, and perhaps a few recaps of previous words or phrases, including some from the preceding scene.

This "vision" acts as a link between Scenes 4 and 5.)

SCENE 5

Adriana emerges into consciousness and exits, just before Refka enters opposite. Yonas is just coming to when he hears Refka calling.

REFKA:
 Adriana! Adriana!
 Oh, it's you, Yonas.
 I wasn't expecting to see you.

YONAS (*not rising*):
 I suppose you wanted to speak to
 my mother.

REFKA (*unsuspecting*):
 Isn't she here?

YONAS:
 What did you want to speak to

her

about?

REFKA:
 You're very inquisitive, Yonas.

things

YONAS:
I suppose you want to tell her

I'm not supposed to hear.

REFKA:
What's the matter, Yonas?
I hardly recognise your voice.

YONAS:
That's because my voice has
broken.
I'm a man now.

REFKA:
You've been a man
For a long time.

YONAS:
Apparently not! Until yesterday
I was still a child.
There were things I wasn't
supposed to know.
Isn't that so, Refka?
You don't say anything?
It seems there were things
That everyone could know,
But not I.
Still nothing to say?

REFKA (*embarrassed, evasive*):
There are so many things one would rather
Not know!

YONAS:
There are also things
That one needs to know
But that others hide from you.
Even you, Refka, whom I took to
be so close --
You lied to me.

REFKA:
What about?

REFKA:
 You must keep calm, Yonas!
 You too, Adriana.
(Pause)
 It seems...
(Another pause)
 It seems that he --
 Tsargos-- is back.
 Several people have seen him
 Near his parents' old house.
 They say he means to live
 there.

YONAS*(as if to himself)*:
 I'm going to kill him.
 Monster.

REFKA *(pale)*:
 Calm down, Yonas, you frighten me.
 Calm down and let's talk it over.

YONAS *(as before; as if
 he hadn't heard)*:
 The monster's going to die.
 I'll kill him with my own hands.

(They all freeze, and we have a brief glimpse of the vision at the end of Scene 4, like a sudden swift recall in the minds of the characters themselves. When the vision fades, Yonas rushes out. Refka is terrified, and is about to run after and try to stop him, but is arrested, chilled and shocked by Adriana's complete placidity.)

REFKA *(outraged)*:
 Are you just going to stand there? Just let him go?
 He's completely changed, unrecognisable.
 And he means what he says.
 He's going to kill him, I'm sure of it!

ADRIANA *(motionless, almost abstracted)*:
 If he's meant to kill him, then he'll kill him.

REFKA:
 You'll regret thos words tomorrow!
 Run after him and bring him back -- it's not too late!
 If you let him go in that state he'll commit murder,
 Then it'll be your son himself who'll die,

ADRIANA *(to herself)*:
 If he's meant to kill him,

Then he'll kill him.

By his own hand or that of others...
Call him back, Adriana, run after him -- it's not too late!
Can you really be so indifferent?

ADRIANA:

If he's meant to kill him, then he'll
kill him.

SCENE 6

An elderly man stands in the midday sun in front of an antique door. We see only his back. A young man, Yonas, comes up behind him, carrying a weapon.

YONAS:

I'm looking for a man called Tsargo
Who had people call him the Protector.
Are you he?

TSARGO:

All that was a long time ago, young man.
How old are you?

YONAS:

My age doesn't matter.
I just want to know if you're Tsargo.

TSARGO:

I must have been your age in those days.
I too carried a weapon, and used it to reinforce my

voice.

And I spoke to other people, young or old,
With the same arrogance I sense in you...

YONAS:

It's not surprising if I'm as arrogant as you were.
Unluckily for me, I was born of your blood!

TSARGO:

I lost that blood in the war,
Right down to the last drop.
They infused a different blood into my veins.

YONAS:

I am Adriana's son.

TSARGO:

Adriana, Adriana, Adriana,
The most beautiful girl in the country.

With the most beautiful hair,
 The most beautiful voice...
 If she hadn't been so
 Haughty
 We might have been lovers...

YONAS:
 Say the word "love" once
 more With reference to her,
 And you're a dead man!

TSARGO:
 And if I don't say it
 You'll spare me?

YONAS:
 No, I'll kill you anyway.
 You lost th right to live
 Along time ago!

TSARGO:
 Yet if you really are who you say you are,
 You owe your existence to me.

YONAS:
 I owe my existence to Providence.
 All I owe you are the circumstances. Need
 I remind you of them?
 Need I remind you of that accursed night?

TSARGO:
 What is your name?

YONAS:
 My mother named me Yonas.

YONAS:
 I forbid you to utter my name,
 Or my mother's.

TSARGO:
 Yonas, Yonas, Adriana,
 You might both have been my life.

TSARGO:
 If you're resolved to kill me
 You can hardly forbid me anything.

YONAS:
 Don't try any tricks.
 You aare at my mercy.
 Your life will end exactly
 When I decide it will.

TSARGO:
 Do you think I came back to my own country
 For any other reason but to die?
 You've unwittingly anticipated
 Your father's wishes...

YONAS:
 What you say neither strengthens my purpose
 Nor makes me feel any compunction.
 The fact that you're ready to pay for your crimes
 Doesn't make you innocent.
 The fact that you're ready to die
 Doesn't give you back the right to live.

(For some time they both remain silent, motionless, at a loss, as if the whole space were crushed beneath the summer sun.)

YONAS *(trying to recover)*:
 Before you die,
 One last question.
 Did you know...?
(Pause)
 Know that my mother
 Had been pregnant
 And that I'd been born?
 Or did you find it out
 Only today?

TSARGO:
 I knew that year, the year of the war.
 And afterwards I did all I could to forget.

(Again they both remain silent for a while.)

YONAS *(his voice suddenly unsure)*:
 Turn round -- I don't want to strike you down from behind.

(Another long silence. Tsargo doesn't move.)

YONAS:
 Do you want to die
 Without ever seeing your son?

(Tsargo turns round slowly, his arms raised to hide his face.)

TSARGO:
 I can turn round if you tell me to,
 But I shan't see you.
 Two years ago I lost my sight.
 I can't even see my hands.

I can scarcely tell day from night.
 I shall never know if you look like me.
 I can only guess from the sound of your voice,
 The features of your face.
 And I can try to touch you...

(He moves towards Yonas as if to feel his face. Yonas draws back in horror. Tsargo takes another step forward. The young man seems about to strike him down, but can't bring himself to attack a cripple. He draws back again, then, distraught, exits backwards, his blind father groping after him.)

SCENE 7

All four characters are now pale and distraught. Refka is out of her mind with anxiety. Adriana pretends to be serene, but she too is consumed with anxiety and remorse. Yonas reproaches himself for lack of courage. Tsargo wanders through his own darkness in search of a death that eludes him. The scene that follows belongs neither to the world of dream nor to that of reality, but lies somewhere between the two.

Though they are all on-stage together they are not together, and each follows his or her own bent. They speak in monologues that sometimes overlap; the chorus too occasionally intervenes. Only the son and the mother finally come together.

ADRIANA:	REFKA:	TSARGO:	YONAS:	CHORUS:
That night				That night
				That accursed
				night
				The gates of Hell
That night	The gates of Hell			Opened up.

ADRIANA:
 Pain has placed
 A mask over my face
 And a carapace over my heart.
 Sometimes I say cruel things
 And next moment wonder
 If they came
 Out of my mouth.
 My skin has grown tough,
 And so has my expression
 Yet if anyone could see into my soul
 They'd still see an Adriana
 A sweet young Adriana

REFKA
 They'd still see an
 Adriana
 A sweet young

CHORUS
 They'd still see an
 Adriana
 A sweet young

Who trembles and weeps	Adriana Who trembles and weeps	Adriana Who trembles and weeps
Trembles with sorrow	Trembles with fear	Trembles with fear
And huddles herself up	And huddles herself up	

				So many other things
So many others	So many others	So many others	So many others	So many others
Have happened	Have happened	Have happened	Have happened	Have happened
	Other wars	Other wars		
		Other peaces		
Other births			Other crimes	
Other crimes			Other births	
	Other trials			
	Other reconciliations			
		Amnesty		
But nothing	But nothing	But nothing	But nothing	But nothing
Nothing ever	Nothing ever	Nothing ever	Nothing ever	Nothing ever
Has been	Has been	Has been	Has been	Has been
able to	able to	able to	able to	able to
efface	efface	efface	efface	efface
What happened	What happened	What happened	What happened	What happened
That night	That night	That night	That night	That night
That accursed	That accursed	That accursed	That accursed	That accursed
night	nightt	night	night	night

REFKA:
 Adriana let herself be turned away from her life
 By the ferocity of the world.
 And I let myself be turned away from my life
 By Adriana.
 I might have made her
 Take my advice.
 I should have taken her under my wing,

I should have...
 I should have... I
 should have...

I'm like the wise men
 Too wise to confront folly
 Too wise to confront the forces of death.
 Too wise, Refka
 Too wise...

YONAS:
 Too wise, Refka
 Too wise...

CHORUS:
 Landscapes have
 changed
 Season after
 season
 So many things
 Have happened
 But nothing
 Nothing ever
 Has been able
 to efface

YONAS:
 How I hate
 That far-off night
 That pursues me still!
 How I hate the past
 That bequeathed me
 Fear, hate,
 Hate, fear.
 Is it still in my veins,
 The blood of the killer,
 The blood of the
 monster?

TSARGO:
 In the past
 Darkness was my territory.
 But now
 Darkness is my prison.
 Wherever I go
 I collide with its walls,
 Or its cold iron bars.
 I've come to desire death,
 But death -- death
 Does not desire me.
 I seek her, she eludes me.
 I invite her, she flees.
 I should have died
 The year of the war...
 No, I should have died
 Long before that!
 When I was still
 The shy lad
 Wondering
 What his life would be like.
 Now I know all too well
 What my life has been .
 I know all too well
 What I made of my life.

ADRIANA REFKA I should have...
 I should have... I should have...I should have...
 I should have... I should have...I should have...

I should have...
 Taken my sister under my
 wing And never leave her.
 I should have...

I should have...

YONAS
 I should have...
 I should have...

I should have...

I should have
 Kept my son with me
 Instead of putting him to the test.
 I should have...

I should have...

I should have...

I should have...
 Killed him
 Without even speaking to him,
 Without listening to him,
 Not letting my hand tremble.
 I should have...

I should have...

I should have...

I should have...
 Died at the fair,
 That year,
 Just after the dance
 That one dance with
 Adriana.

It's strange that my
 heart Should hate him so
 Yet I couldn't strike him.
 Could it be
 It's still in my veins
 The blood of the killer,
 The blood of the monster?

ADRIANA:
 I always thought
 The news of his death,
 When I heard of it,
 Would fill me with joy.
 But now I dread it.
 I spent my life hoping

For revenge.
 But now no longer. REFKA:
 I only want Only, only
 A peaceful dawn. A peaceful dawn.
 Please, God, Let Please, God,
 the dawn be Let the dawn be
 peaceful peaceful!
 And that I hear
 no noise!

ADRIANA:	REFKA:	SARGO:	YONAS:	CHORUS:
That night	The gates of Hell	That night	That night	That night
The gates	That night	Opened	The gates of Hell	The gates of Hell
Opened	It's time	Opened		That night
The gates				The gates of Hell
				Hell
It's time	They shut again			The gates
				The gates of Hell
				Be shut again
				The gates of Hell
				Be shut again.

(While the Chorus hammers out the last few phrases, Tsargo goes off as at the end of Scene I, and Refka becomes a silent spectator. Meanwhile Yonas and Adriana come together with a mixture of relief and apprehension. There is a moment's silence before they begin.)

YONAS:

Mother, forgive me --I've betrayed you.
 The monster stood before me. I should have
 Made him pay for his crimes.
 He was on the edge of a precipice. I could have
 Made him fall from life to death.
 Just a push would have done it..
 I didn't have the courage.
(Pause)
 He has lost his sight -- did you know?
 He turned round,
(Miming it)
 Moved towards me,
 Feeling for me with his hands.
 I ran away.
 I could have killed him.
 He was there in front of me, helpless,
 I could have struck him,
 Knifed him.

I hadn't the courage.
I ran away.
Mother, forgive me!

ADRIANA (*impassive, not looking at him, not consoling him*):
If he hadn't been blind, would you have
killed him?

YONAS:
Perhaps... I don't know...
I could have killed him then and there.
I didn't want to attack him from behind.
I told him to turn round.
And when I saw his sightless eyes
I hadn't the courage.

Did you speak to him?

I told him who I was,
And why he deserved to die.

But you were unable
To kill him...

I really had made up my mind to kill him!

(*still not looking at her son*)
That man deserved to die.

I know, mother -- forgive me!
I betrayed you!

(*more distinctly this time, and turning slowly towards him*):

That man
Deserved to die.

I hadn't the courage.
Forgive me!

(*Raising her arm to silence Yonas*)

That man
Deserved to die.

But you, my son,

Did not deserve to kill him.

Ever since you were born, and even before that,
I've wondered if you were capable of killing.

Even when you were in your cradle I couldn't help

Weighing your cries, your expressions, your movements.

I had to know

If the blood that flows in your veins

Is that of the killer,

Or mine.

Around me, people were anxious, suspicious,
But I did my best to believe
That blood was neutral and silent.
That blood determined nothing,
That it was enough that I loved you, spoke to you, brought you up honourably,
For you to be loving, thoughtful and honourable yourself.
But all the time, inside,
I was tortured with doubt.
With the endless unrelenting question:
If one day you should find yourself, weapon in hand,
Before a man you hate,
A man who deserves the harshest of punishments,
Would you kill him?
Or, at the last moment, would you draw back?
(Pause)
If you'd really been that man's son
You'd have killed him.
So now at last I have my answer...
The murderer's blood has been calmed by flowing near mine.
Today my life, which I had thought was lost,
Is found again at last.
We are not avenged, Yonas -- we are saved.
Come close and put your arms around me.
I need to rest my head for a moment on a man's shoulder.

CURTAIN