

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

By William Shakespeare

Declan Donnellan	Director
Nick Ormerod	Designer
Jane Gibson	Associate and Movement Director
Judith Greenwood	Lighting Designer
Catherine Jayes	Music

Produced by Cheek by Jowl in a co-production with barbicanbite08; Les Gémeaux/Sceaux/Scène Nationale; Koninklijke Schouwburg, The Hague

A Synopsis

Seven years into the Trojan War and the Greeks and Trojans have reached a stalemate.

Rather than take to the battlefield, Prince Troilus pines for Cressida, daughter of Calchas, a Trojan who has defected to the Greeks. Cressida's uncle Pandarus tirelessly champions the young prince to his niece. Mortified by his lack of tact, Cressida nevertheless admits to having feelings for Troilus but vows to keep them hidden, hoping to retain the power she perceives women have whilst being wooed.

In the Greek encampment, Achilles refuses to fight and remains in his tent with his lover Patroclus. Agamemnon attempts to rally his generals and Ulysses attempts to entice Achilles back into the war by sending a rival, the headstrong Ajax to meet a challenge from Prince Hector.

Hector, Troilus, Paris and the other Trojan princes quarrel over the Greeks' latest demand to return Helen. Cassandra, their sister, prophesises doom if the war continues but Troilus convinces Hector that Helen should not be returned.

Pandarus finally arranges a meeting between Troilus and Cressida. They exchange vows and spend the night together. The same night, Cressida's father agrees an exchange with the Greek generals; a prisoner will be returned to Troy in exchange for his daughter.

The next morning, a party from the Greeks, led by Diomedes, arrive to make the exchange. Pandarus breaks the news to the dismayed lovers who make oaths of constancy and exchange tokens before they are parted.

Cressida is led by Diomedes through the soldiers assembled for the fight between Ajax and Hector. She is welcomed with a kiss from each of the commanders. The fight is a draw and a truce is declared whilst the soldiers feast. Achilles seeks out Hector to make a challenge. They agree to fight when next they meet.

As the party disperses, Troilus remains and Ulysses takes him to Cressida. Hidden from view, Ulysses and Troilus witness Cressida pledging herself to Diomedes. Troilus returns to Troy heartbroken.

The next day, Hector's wife, father and sister beg him not to go to battle. Eager to confront Achilles, however Hector is unmoved. In contrast to the apprehension of the rest of his family, a vengeful Troilus is bloodthirsty for the battlefield.

In the ensuing fray, Achilles' lover Patroclus is slain and Achilles is finally moved to rejoin the war, baying for Hector's blood. They meet and fight, but neither can defeat the other. Achilles withdraws.

Achilles returns with a gang of soldiers to find Hector unarmed and alone. The gang set upon and kill him. Achilles drags Hector's body around the walls of Troy and returns to the Greek encampment, his status as war hero restored.

Troilus brings news of his brother's death to the Trojan generals. The Trojans return to Troy to mourn their hero.