



Synopsis

A young girl stands at the altar. A nation holds its breath. The winds have stopped. The Greek fleet is stranded. King Agamemnon is told by the gods that there is only one way for his army to reach Troy: he must sacrifice his daughter, Iphigenia.

This striking reimagining of Euripides' classic text confronts the timeless question: what do we owe our country – and what do we owe our children?

Blending the brutal beauty of ancient tragedy with voices of today, this bold new production features contemporary testimonies from mothers who have lost children to war. Their raw, intimate and fiercely honest words reframe the myth for a modern world.

A story of sacrifice, motherhood and the human cost of war – then and now.

Serdar Biliş – Director & Adaptor

Serdar Biliş was born in Istanbul, where he studied theatre before moving to London to pursue a career in directing. He holds an MA in Theatre Directing from Middlesex University and works internationally, particularly in London and Istanbul. In London, he was invited to the prestigious National Theatre Directing Course and received the Channel 4 Director's Award.

In the UK, Serdar has served as an associate director at both the Arcola Theatre in London and the Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse, focusing on developing new plays and adapting classic works. He is the artistic director of his independent theatre company, Pürtelaş Theatre, which has co-produced Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü and Afife, both of which received critical acclaim.

Serdar is also deeply committed to education. For the past decade, he has been a lecturer at Kadir Has University, where he teaches postgraduate directing and collaborates with final-year acting students on devised projects. Since 2018, he has also been teaching and directing at Teatro Della Toscana, Scuola di Formazione del Mestiere dell'Attore, in Florence.

Credits include: *Time Regulation Institute, Afife, War* (Zorlu Centre, Istanbul); *May Queen* by Stephen Sharker, *Proper Clever* by Frank Cottrell-Boyce, *Bright Phoenix* by Jeff Young @ Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse; *A family Affair, Tartuffe* @ Arcola Theatre

Praise for Serdar Biliş' Work

“It’s a superior work of art” — Orhan Pamuk for the Guardian on *The Time Regulation Institute*

“Serdar Biliş’s production provides a cascade of images” Guardian on *Bright Phoenix*

“Biliş manages to present an ensemble work with a star-studded cast. His uniqueness is, again, there for his audience that appreciates his form of art. *The Seagull* is definitely a must-see for the ones that couldn’t see it this season.” Broadway World on *The Seagull*

On Realfake Theatre

“Realfake is a tremendously exciting new company, breaking form and pushing the boundaries of live performance with their genre-defying, brilliantly entertaining work. It’s exciting to see they are developing their producing capacity to support other artists.”

— David Luff, Executive Producer (Main House programme) and former Creative Director at Soho Theatre

On Realfake Community Work

“I loved the workshop. It proved to me that we have a lot of potential and it comes out of us when we do not think about how we should do it. Just stay in the moment and believe in yourself.”

— Migrant theatremakers workshop participant

“I was given a new perspective on Shakespeare and English theatre.”

“I was deeply inspired and felt totally seen. It resonated with so many aspects of my experience. Thank you.”

— Turkish affinity night audience member

Press on English Kings Killing Foreigners

“A Shakespeare deconstruction destined for the West End” — CITY A.M.

“Overwhelmingly entertaining and raucous”  — Mind the Blog

“Astutely silly”  — The Reviews Hub

“An unflinchingly truthful piece”  — The PEG

“Makes you laugh as much as it makes you think”  — Everything Theatre

“A witty, self-aware and thought-provoking drama, centering the political power of theatre, the knotty clash of generational perspectives on immigrant identity and the self-conscious exclusivity of the acting world”  — The Upcoming

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Tuesday 16 December 2025

Re: Letter of Support for "Iphigenia" - produced by Realfake Theatre

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to offer Arcola Theatre's full support for Realfake Theatre's upcoming production *Iphigenia*, a powerful adaptation of a classic, transforming Euripides' timeless tragedy into a striking reflection on the human cost of war. Adapted and directed by acclaimed Turkish-British director Serdar Biliş in an English version by prolific English playwright Stephen Sharkey, this cross-cultural collaboration forges a powerful connection between ancient myth and voices of today, interweaving contemporary testimonies from mothers who have lost children to war. Exploring sacrifice, grief, faith and duty, the production asks: what do we owe our country – and what do we owe our children?

Philip Arditti, Nina Bowers and their company Realfake have been the recipients of long-term support and development through Arcola Theatre, mentored in the process of becoming a producing company, and we now look forward to engaging them as trusted collaborators. Most recently, their production *English Kings Killing Foreigners* was developed at Arcola through our LAB initiative - which offers refugee and migrant artists free research and development space, and in-house support, at our theatre. *English Kings Killing Foreigners* went on to perform at the Camden People's Theatre and, later, Soho Theatre Upstairs for a five-star acclaimed run.

Now launching as a producing company with *Iphigenia*, we believe this work will make a significant contribution to the cultural landscape by:

- Bringing urgent social issues to audiences as compelling, accessible storytelling
- Providing opportunities for migrant artists and creatives to develop/present work
- Engaging young people (schools/universities) and local communities in meaningful dialogue about inequality, humanitarian issues and the impact of war upon civilians
- Demonstrating the power of collaboration between established venues and emerging voices reshaping British theatre

We firmly believe this project merits Arts Council support and reflects the ambitious, socially conscious theatre-making that enriches our cultural ecosystem.

The Arcola, as intended co-producers, are committed to fundraising for this production equally, and will commit to support *Iphigenia* further with capital investment of £10,000, cash support for captioning performances £900, in-kind rehearsal space (£1,400/week x 4 weeks - £4,200 total), in-kind PR Manager and Marketing Manager (£3,000 each - £6,000 total), workshop space (£250/day - £750), WIP showing space (£500), Tech support (£350), Producing support (10 day x £250/day - £2500), Admin/General managing support (£750), Ticketing support (£300) Community Engagement Support (£400), Dramaturgical support with Katherine Farmer (£800).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Leyla' or a similar name.

Leyla Nazli - Executive Producer, Arcola Theatre