



[Transcript] [09/20/09]



Welcome to the first *Brilliant Minds* podcast! This is Peter Arcese.

Theater is about direct presence and direct perception.

When we attend the performance of a play we become more fully present *because* we need to look, to perceive, to see and hear what is happening in front of us. Even if we are only reading the play off the page, we enact it through our imagination, experiencing the action by seeing it happen *now* in our minds' eye. In an actual theater, we have the performers physically present to our senses. But even when we are reading, we can deeply imagine being in their presence, and what they would look like right now, speaking and acting out their roles. Either way, we become more fully present when attending or reading a drama, because drama is about direct presence and direct perception.

Think about Euripides' drama *Helen*. This play is all about presence and perception, raising the questions of: Where is the real Helen, now? Where has she been? Where will she go? And the play is also all about perception: Here *is* this woman. You see her before you. Is she the real Helen? Who or what, then, was the phantom Helen at Troy? How did all this happen? Why did it happen? What do we do now? Well, *we* don't have to decide to do anything more than to stay present, keep watching, and keep perceiving. We watch the actors play out the action, decide moment to moment what to do, creating what happens next, all for us to perceive and experience, with the whole range of thoughts and emotions that the drama raises in us.

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