

## 'Iphigenia' April 1-4 at PSU Hazleton

The Penn State Hazleton Society of the Arts and Department of Theater Arts will present the music-theater piece, "Iphigenia," April 1-4 in the Commons Building.

Penn State Hazleton lecturer in theater arts, Dr. Stephen A. Schrum, will direct the production, which will feature music and arrangements by local musician and former PSU Hazleton student Jeremy dePrisco, and book and lyrics by Schrum.

"Iphigenia" is essentially two ancient Greek tragedies by Euripedes, "Iphigenia in Taurus" and "Iphigenia in Aulis," which Schrum has adapted and updated to the 20th century.

The first act is set in 1957. The Greek armies have gathered in Aulis Bay and are waiting for the weather to clear before setting off to Troy to attack that foreign land and bring back Helen, the wife of one of the Greek generals, Menelaus.

The second act, "Iphigenia in Tauris," is set in 1970. As it turns out, Iphigenia, at her sacrifice, had been rescued by a goddess and brought to Tauris, which is being ruled by a cult leader who believes in the ritual sacrifice of foreigners and invaders.

Schrum has scripted a brief news show following intermission to inform the audience about what happens in the 13 years between Aulis and Tauris.

For more information, call 450-3054.

### LOCAL

# PSU instructor trying to bring theater to the masses

■ A modern version of "Iphigenia" will be staged at the Hazleton Campus this week.

By MIKE JESKY  
Standard-Speaker

Living in an age of television, it's easy to forget about an age-old art known as theater.

The Penn State Hazleton Campus Theater is working to make sure you don't.

Their spring production, "Iphigenia," will be running Wednesday through Saturday at the Penn State Hazleton Commons Building.

The play's director, campus theater instructor Dr. Stephen Schrum, said the play, which originally was written in the 5th century B.C. by the famous Greek playwright Euripedes, has been extensively reworked.

In fact, the play is set in modern time — 1957 and 1970.

"We start in 1957 with a young woman who decides to sacrifice herself for the good of the country. In the second act we discover that she's been spared, but she

now discovers that she may have to sacrifice her own brother," Schrum said.

This is not a new concept for Schrum. He has updated ancient plays before, including the 1666 play "The Misanthrope," by French comedy writer Moliere.

"What I've done is adapted the text, bringing it into the 20th century. I wanted to make it more accessible to the audience," Schrum said.

In what he calls "a major overhaul," Schrum has taken characters from 2,500 years ago and given them new life.

"I also did it to allow for the songs of the 20th century. In the first act, there's very rock-oriented music. In the second period, it's very Janis Joplin-esque," he said.

The updating was done for two reasons — to attract more paying customers who help pay for the costumes and set, as well as to try to coax a larger number of people to become exposed to theater, an art form that has lost popularity due to television and movies.

Despite television and movies being more visible since they are mass media, Schrum said theater, as an art form, is

always needed in society.

"We don't get a lot of community people (attending our plays) unfortunately. We're hoping that this, as a musical, may draw more people," Schrum said.

Bus trips to New York City are relatively common out of the Hazleton area, but they are mostly for the larger Broadway shows, such as "The Lion King" and "Cats."

Smaller shows often are overlooked by anyone not deeply involved in the theater, said Schrum.

"(Larger shows) unfortunately give a very narrow idea of what theater can be. They are missing out on a lot of really interesting, fascinating and funny plays of the past that people often ignore when they go to spend their entertainment dollar," Schrum said.

Hazleton should have a larger theater-going audience, he said.

"It's a great value at \$4 for a ticket. Also, it's a chance to participate in the culture of the community. You don't have to travel to New York to see a very good production," Schrum said.

The Penn State Hazleton production — a "music theater piece" — is done on a

very small budget, with a cast of 28 volunteer actors who are university students, along with a crew of seven.

"The set is not incredibly elaborate," Schrum said, but it serves its purpose.

"We really concentrated on the music, acting and singing," he said.

With the play being a musical, Schrum had to come up with music.

For that, he collaborated with local musician Jeremy dePrisco, himself a former Penn State Hazleton student.

"Jeremy has composed music for the lyrics I wrote. It's been really great, a really tight collaboration between us," Schrum said.

Much of the music was actually written and critiqued over the Internet — dePrisco lives in Harrisburg.

"I moved to Harrisburg in September of last year," dePrisco said in a telephone interview.

"I wasn't going to be present for this play" but he was still eager to help with the production.

"Steve and I only really met in person two or three times throughout the entire writing process."

Through what's known as a MIDI file, which stands for Musical Instrument Data Interface, dePrisco was able to create music through instruments hooked up to a computer and send the composition to Schrum in Hazleton via the Internet.

DePrisco won't have to be present to perform the music, either, as it has all been recorded with guitar added to it.

"I don't have to come in to perform, but I'll be there Friday and Saturday nights to attend," dePrisco said.

Artistically, MIDI technology also helped, dePrisco said. "The most important thing it did for me is I could just come up with an idea and play it out — it creates the sheet music for me. On the screen, I can move the notes around, adjust the tempo, without having to play it again," he said.

As for his musical career, dePrisco said he's recording his debut album — a sophisticated, progressive folk rock sound — that he's hoping will be out in mid-1999.

Tickets for "Iphigenia" cost \$4 for adults and \$2 for students and senior citizens. Call 450-3054 for information.