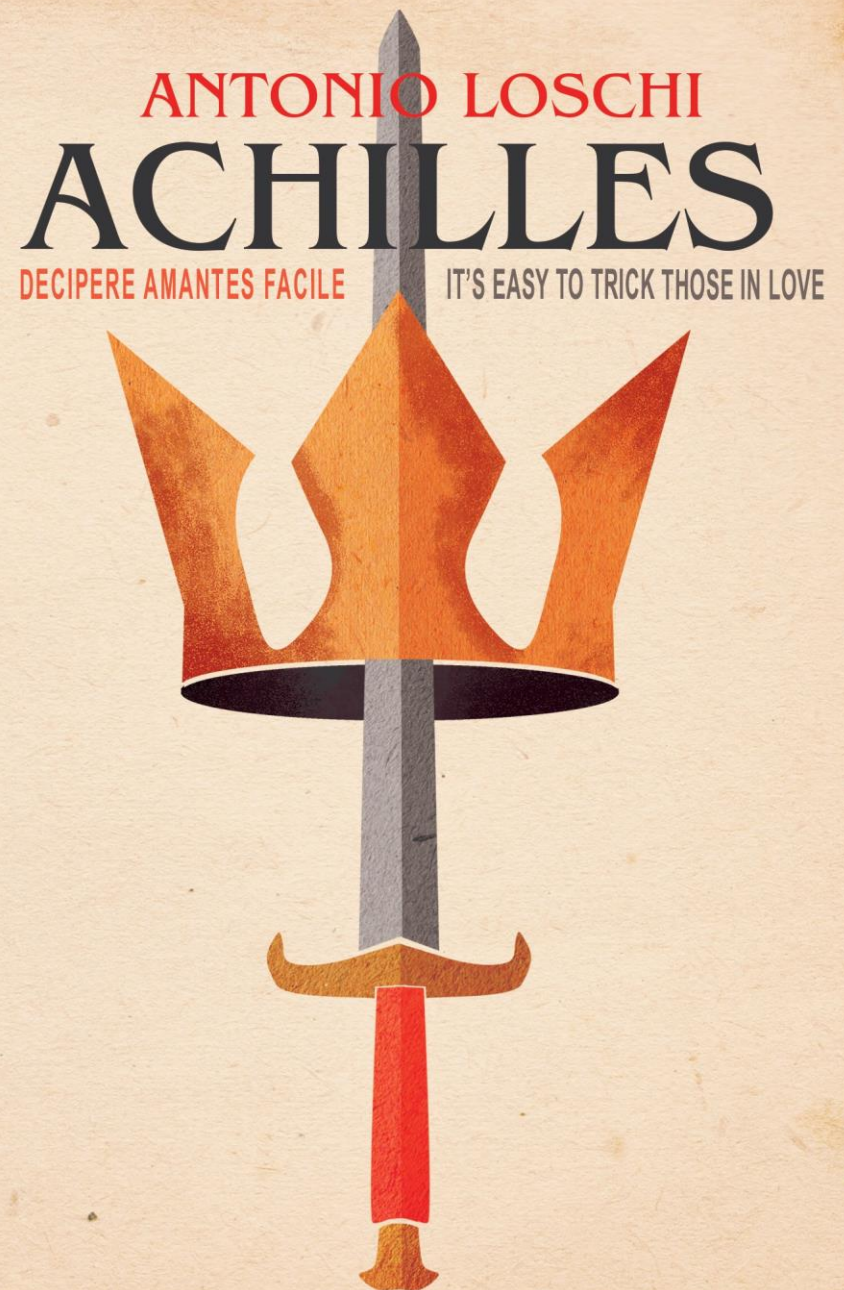


Loschi develops a version of the story of Achilles' death which was less-known in classical antiquity, but which he could read in medieval texts such as Dares the Phrygian's *De excidio Troiae historia*, Joseph of Exeter's *Ylias*, and Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie*. Furthermore, Loschi's *Achilles* significantly emphasises the concept of the power of love: in Act II, we listen to Achilles' monologue about Cupid's pre-eminence among the gods, followed by the chorus's reflection on the same topic. Also in representing Achilles as a lover and describing the power of Cupid, the play combines classical models, such as Seneca and Propertius, with images and concepts drawn from later authors, such as Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio. *Achilles* thus appears emblematic of the frequent interlacing of military and amorous motifs in late medieval and Renaissance literature (including epic), a trend which was partly linked to the contemporary fascination with Ovid.

Loschi's tragedy explores the tensions between love and war, and between the personal and the political: in Act V we learn that, like Achilles, Menelaus too is drawn into action by his private marriage interests. In this way, *Achilles* suggests that humans are moved by uncontrollable passions and ultimately led by superior forces, over which they have no command: both Paris and Achilles become instrumental to a plot with which they initially disagree. Likewise, Achilles, the ostensible protagonist of the play, makes a very limited appearance in the text and has no significant agency. In the end, in keeping with the Senecan inspiration of the tragedy, the main force in *Achilles* is Fortune, who overturns human life with the power of her fickle and inescapable will.

Dr Bianca Facchini (University College London)



DIRECTED BY CHAZ MAYO AND EMMA FINNEN

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

HECUBA , Queen of Troy	Mónica Ruiz Herrera
PARIS , Hecuba's son	Freya Xinge Yang
ACHILLES	Maria-Pia Aquilina
PARIS' FOLLOWER	Jiyue Shen
PRIAM , King of Troy	Nan Zhang
CASSANDRA , Priam's daughter, a prophetess	Freya Xinge Yang
AGAMEMNON , Greek commander	Nan Zhang
MENELAUS , Agamemnon's brother	Maria-Pia Aquilina
CALCHAS , a Greek seer	Jiyue Shen
MESSENGER	Chaz Mayo

ACHILLES IS PRODUCED WITH THANKS TO: Chaplaincy (KCL), Department of History (KCL), Tom Hunsinger, Bianca Facchini, Daniel Hadas, Dan Sherer, Kelly Coughlin, Zhanna Chernenko.

Introductory note

Written around 1387-90 by the humanist and diplomat Antonio Loschi (1369-41), *Achilles* constitutes an important benchmark in the revival of Senecan tragedy which took place in early Renaissance Italy. Fourteenth-century tragedies, however, generally focused on recent or contemporary history: Loschi is the first neo-Latin tragedian to look back to an ancient Greek subject, in keeping with Seneca's own example. Loschi's tragedy is set at the time of the Trojan War, has Homeric heroes as characters, and deals with the topic of Achilles' death at the hand of Paris.

Nevertheless, Loschi's treatment of the subject may be surprising for classicists and readers of Homer. Unlike Homer's *Iliad* or Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, *Achilles* presents the death of the great Greek hero exclusively as the result of human deception, rather than military contest or divine intervention. Moreover, in Loschi's play, Achilles is portrayed not only as a valiant warrior, but also as passionately in love with Polyxena, a daughter of Priam and Hecuba: Achilles's feelings for the Trojan princess are precisely what makes it possible for his enemies to trick him into a fatal trap.

Act I shows how Hecuba seeks revenge for Achilles's murder of her sons Hector and Troilus, and convinces a hesitant Paris to ambush the Greek hero in Apollo's temple after luring him there with the promise of a marriage to Polyxena. In **Act II**, a Trojan ambassador persuades Achilles to accept the presumed marriage proposal, overcoming his reservations about the Greeks' possible disagreement. The ambush leading to the death of Achilles is recounted retrospectively in **Act III**, where Hecuba triumphantly relates to Priam how Paris' arrows hit Achilles in Apollo's temple. **Act IV and V** revolve around the announcement of Achilles' death in the Greek camp and the Greeks' reaction to the news.

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