

The University of Warwick

WARWICK CLASSICS PRESENTS...

ANTIGONE

BY SOPHOCLES



23rd-24th January 2017
7pm

Warwick Arts Centre

£5 tickets (+ £1 booking fee)



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

BY EDWARD VILLERS



A rebel, a leader, a peacemaker, a lover, and a mother: directing 'Antigone 2017' has rather been like living through the personalities of Antigone, Creon, Ismene, Haemon and Eurydice.

Firstly, I am a rebel. After studying *Antigone* as part of my Classical Civilisation AS, my Drama and Theatre Studies A-Level, my undergraduate study of Greek Culture and Society, and now at honours level in my Ancient Greek Theatre module; it is a staple tradition in my education. But like Antigone, I have grown weary of tradition. In four years of study, I have experienced several interpretations of Antigone and all have been bound by predictable characterisations and uninspiring uses of the chorus. Initially, I was apprehensive to stray away from these stock interpretations. However, after Dr Bakola and I explored a variety of scholarship (notably Charles Segal) I was encouraged to transgress. An example of this includes my direction and creativity concerning the character Tiresias. Much to Holly Cowan's delight I did not approach her with a stick-on beard and men's clothes in order to undertake the role; instead I presented her with a dress. Given that Tiresias provides the voice of reason to the misogynistic and tyrannical Creon, I believe much greater weight and intrigue is acquired when a female embodies this. Creon's epiphany is far more dramatic and controversial as, he not only listens to advice for the first time but he listens to a woman. Moreover, I hope to have reinvigorated the role of the chorus. Usually restricted to minimal movement and portraying aged Theban citizens, I have adopted a more abstract approach. I have taken their introverted and

innately Theban quality to the extreme and costumed them to portray part of the Theban walls. They are so representative of Thebes and so crucial to its foundations that they are appearing as the physical foundations themselves.

Secondly, I am a leader. Throw me into a popular lecture or one of many of the University of Warwick's social events and it is a struggle to get me to stop talking (not that you have already gathered from one of the lengthiest director's notes known to man). However, directing a cast and crew of over 39 and simultaneously commanding all of their attention is an entirely different task. Directing *Antigone* has taught me invaluable leadership and organisation skills, and the respect I have gained from each member of the cast and crew has been one of the most humbling experiences of the entire process. One of the most valuable lessons though, a lesson that Creon never quite learns throughout the entirety of today's performance, is that you do not need to shout to gain response: listening to people works pretty well too.

I am a peacemaker, a lover and a mother. I began this project in March 2016 and after ten months of constant efforts, nurturing and perseverance it has become a huge part of my life that I have grown much attached to. It is not only the project itself that I have grown to love but also all the people: all of the *Antigone* family involved. Do not get me wrong, families fight (as you will see in the performance) and after a few no-shows at rehearsals and fluffed monologues, I had to parent the cast through our trickier moments. However, it is a role that I would not have swapped for the world. One moment that stands out for me is our setting of some of the final scenes. It was late in term and this play parent was feeling overworked and a little overwhelmed. I gave the cast a very short brief and then...magic. It is the only word I can use to describe it. Tears streaming down my face, the cast's performance completely touched me. Not only because of their phenomenal acting, not because it was a moment of 'I did it', but because it was a moment of 'we did it'. I hope that you're able to experience a few of these magic moments tonight.

ANTIGONE – DEALING WITH DEATH

BY DR MICHAEL SCOTT

Many ancient Greek tragedies have story lines that take place in Thebes. So it's tempting to imagine that the Athenians watching these tragedies - sitting safely in Athens in the Theatre of Dionysus - felt a good distance from any of the activities going on on the stage – after all, those were the kind of things that happened elsewhere... (Remember that immortal line in Disney's Hercules when the satyr trainer Philoctetes tells Hercules "Saddle up kid, we're going to Thebes – it's a real problem town!")

But Sophocles' Antigone – while taking place in Thebes – deals with issues that strike right at the heart of how ancient Greek – including Athenian – society operated, what it believed about life and death and what happened to the soul after death. This was a play in which the action was happening elsewhere – but the central problem was one that could confront Athenians just as much as Thebans.

The central issue is one of burial, and particularly access to correct and full burial rights, irrespective of how the person being buried had behaved in life.

The story line is as follows: in Thebes, during civil war, two brothers had fought on opposing sides. The brothers Polynices and Eteocles killed one another in battle. Creon, now ruling the city, ordered that Polynices, who brought a foreign army against Thebes, not be allowed proper burial rites.

Their sister, Antigone – believes this act to contravene the much more important cultural, religious and social convention that burial rites should always be given to everyone – irrespective of their behaviour – in order to ensure that their soul makes it way safely through the underworld and that the gods are not angered by human disrespect.

So who is right? This was a question for all of Greek society – specifically including every Athenian in the audience watching. It offers what

Greek tragedy does most brilliantly: set in motion a number of different people reacting to a difficult and knotty problem and watches as they each make choices, crucially leaving the audience to decide who they thought made the best of it (there is never a perfect solution to the problems posed in tragedy – the best that can be hoped for is making the best of a bad job!).

In this play, the audience has to decide whether the question of burial is one that should be decided by the political rulers of a polis (that's Creon's view), or whether it is an issue that supersedes all earthly authority and where religious convention wins out (that's Antigone's view). But there are also a number of points of view within the play that sit on the spectrum between these two extremes. Ismene – Antigone's sister – agrees with her sister in principle but can't summon up the courage (or the desire) for the fight against the political authorities. Haemon – Creon's son – does not necessarily disagree with his father in principle but does disagree with how he is going about imposing his will (like a tyrant), not listening to the advice of others. And the chorus – where do they stand? They change their opinion through the play, becoming, especially after they have heard the warnings of the soothsayer Tiresias – very critical of Creon's choices.

And of course everyone's reaction to this knotty problem is coloured by their particular position in society, their family ties and their more general character. Creon is the ruler – he has to unite a city torn about by civil war. His is the problem of governance – does that make his decision to take such a hard line understandable? Haemon is Creon's son and so owes him filial loyalty but is also in love with Antigone. Does that discredit his stance? Antigone is scornful of anyone who does not have the courage to stand up to civic power – including her sister – and seems almost hell bent on a stance to the death. Does that mean we like her less and buy her argument less fully?

In reality, there will be very few people watching this play who end up agreeing with Creon. Unusually for a Greek tragedy, there are very strong indications given that his was not the right course of action. None of the characters by the end of the play, for example, agree or sympathise with him. Creon ignores the soothsayer's words of warning (always a bad sign in

tragedy), he loses his son (who kills himself alongside Antigone) and has lost any real hope of ruling and uniting the city. He ends the play realising his own failure. So we as the audience are strongly encouraged not to side with Creon. But that does not mean we necessarily side instead with Antigone. Indeed there are lots of points on the spectrum where each of us may feel much more comfortable – that is for each of us to decide as we watch. And at the same time, we can all hope that we never have to make this decision for real.

THE HOUSE OF OEDIPUS AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN ANTIGONE

BY DR EMMANUELA BAKOLA

Sophocles' *Antigone* is one of the most widely read and frequently performed Greek tragedies today, as it was in antiquity. The play's reflections on the clashes between state and family, public and private, law and custom, authority and freedom, male and female have captured the imagination of generations of readers and scholars since antiquity. These themes are as relevant today as they were when the play was composed, and debate surrounding them has never subsided. For all their richness, however, discussions surrounding this complex tragedy have all too often reduced the play to the judgement of two personalities, Antigone and Creon.

Thinking about the clashes and the dilemmas that unfold in the *Antigone* while reading the play as a mere text is very different from engaging with it as the performative entity that it was conceived to be. In Greek theatre – as in all theatre – it is not only the words of the characters that should be understood to produce meaning; equally significant is the meaning produced through performance. The meaning conveyed by the symbolic characterisation of the spaces in which chorus and characters move



Schematic reconstruction of the space of the theatre of Dionysus at the time of the production of Sophocles' Antigone. A wooden stage-building of considerable dimensions formed the backdrop of every play.

and with which interact, and the ways that the images they use are mapped on the theatrical space cannot be conveyed through text alone. All these performative elements offer a deeper, richer and more refined meaning to characters' words, and significantly enhance the complexity of the play.

The dramatic action of *Antigone* takes place in front of the

palace of Thebes, the house of the royal Theban family, the Labdacids, the most famous member of which was Oedipus. In performance, the house (represented by the theatre's stage-building, the skene; see figure) does not function as a mere backdrop, nor is it a space with a representational function only. Rather, it is something which carries a much richer symbolic meaning, a space that evokes the tragic history of the Labdacid family and serves to haunt the characters from the beginning to the end. It is a space that hides terrible memories of murder, incest, self-mutilation and suicide in its darkness, and reflects the history of a family that is plagued by inescapable flaws and their terrible consequences.

And as if the stage presence of this space, with its significant dimensions, is not impactful enough, the characters and the chorus refer to it repeatedly, serving to bring it to life in the minds of the audience.

Furthermore, in the play the house is spoken of as a space that conceals a power which the Greeks understood as having both a psychological dimension and a powerful association with the supernatural: namely, an Erinys/Fury, a Curse:

From ancient times I see the troubles of the dead

of the Labdacid house falling hard upon one another,

nor does one generation release another,

but some one of the gods shatters them,

and they have no means of deliverance.

For lately the light spread out above the last root in the house of Oedipus;

it too is mown down by the bloody chopper of the infernal gods,

folly in speech and the Erinys of the mind. (Soph. Antigone 594-604)

These words are part of the song that the chorus performs at the first climactic scene of the play, immediately after the clash between Creon and Antigone, which results in the latter being sentenced to be buried alive, and the house-arrest of the two sisters. Albeit shifting and convoluted, the imagery of this passage constructs an extraordinarily rich picture of the Labdacid house and the destructive force that plagues it. The song reflects on what the audience had earlier on through the alarmed words of Ismene and the chorus members, namely the details of the family's history. The most shocking part of it, is of course, the story of Oedipus, Antigone's father. Once a powerful king and hailed as saviour of Thebes, Oedipus discovered that he had in fact murdered his father Laius, slept with his mother Jocasta and had children with her. At the realisation of these unwitting crimes, Jocasta killed herself in the house, with Oedipus subsequently taking his own life (in this play). But the wheels for the tragic events had been set in motion a generation earlier, with Laius' falling out of favour with the divine and bringing a 'Curse' upon the family. This lasting effect of the Curse can be seen as late as the recent mutual killing of Antigone's brothers, Eteocles and Polynices, who turned on each other over the rule of Thebes.

What was this Curse, however, that caused so many members of the family such tragic suffering? Was it something that operated independently

of the characters? Were the characters, including Oedipus, just passive victims of it? Not exactly: a force like a Curse in Greek tragedy operates both on a psychological and on a supernatural level, and these are not mutually exclusive.

In tragic texts, Curses are usually attributed to families and are physically located in the house of those families. In this sense, the dark interior space of the Labdacid palace looms large in the background. In this way, the psychopathology of a family, that inner power that pervades its members generation after generation and both pushes them to their actions, but also ensures the punishments they suffer, is captured by that highly significant space – the house. The best examples of this dramatic effect are two works of Aeschylus, the *Oresteia* and the (now incompletely surviving) trilogy which contained the *Seven Against Thebes* and which drew on the same mythic cycle as Sophocles' *Antigone*. In both of these works, the house has a huge significance and it is important that in composing *Antigone*, Sophocles has drawn on, and alluded to, both. In these trilogies, the power of the Curse/Fury pervades both the house and the characters' minds. Aeschylean dramaturgy makes the interiors of house and the inner world of the characters mirror each other in more ways than one. Thus, the house's constant looming presence in the background and the characters' interaction with it serve to inform the way that we understand the characters.

What does this mean for *Antigone* and the eponymous heroine? It is no secret that in the play it is not only Creon's tyrannical behaviour that is disturbing, but also, as generations of scholars have pointed out, *Antigone's* own behaviour, which tends to excess. Her aims are noble, but her manner and the degree of her passion betray something deeply problematic. For all that we sympathise with the heroine, and for all that we see that her aims are noble, we cannot easily escape suggestions – including the choral reflections above – that a destructive power dwells inside her.

Understanding the importance of the house that looms in the background, the space that contains a most disturbing family history, can help us to shift our criteria from psychological realism (which does not really

do justice to this play, and nor does it do to any Greek tragedy) to something more complex and more subtle. In many ways, the house embodies the very spirit of the Labdacid family, their psychopathology, the metaphorical and supernatural curse that pervades them, and tragically, drives them to destruction even when their aims are noble.

Note by the set design team: *In this production, the house of the Labdacids has been rendered as an oppressive space that weighs heavily over the members of the family, trapping them (both metaphorically and physically) in an ever perpetuating cycle of loss and death. Furthermore, its shape evokes a tomb, playing on, and accentuating, the irony that Antigone is sent to an offstage tomb to die. The real deadly space, however, that looms in the play is the spatial heart of the family that they so tragically try to preserve, but also so tragically drive to destruction – the house.*

MAIN CAST



ANTIGONE — KATE WHITEHOUSE

I've been in the Classics play for the past 2 years (last year as the owner of a rather large comedy phallus) and so here we are again. I was incredibly grateful to the casting crew for - unexpectedly - making me the lead but rehearsals have been going well, the cast are all fab and massive shout out to the incredibly talented director for pushing me to connect with my inner 'woman on the edge'. Antigone is a highly complex and emotional character and I hope to go some way in doing her justice.



ISMENE — TUNRAYO OLAOSHUN

I'm a second year Ancient History with a year abroad student. I've really enjoyed the process so far, and I love the character development because I'm used to playing much more feisty characters than Ismene, so I feel like I'm really exploring new parts of my acting ability! Outside of Classics, I'm heavily involved with music theatre, both on the stage and in the bands with my double bass, but the Classics play is a high point of my year and one particularly close to my heart.



CREON — CHARLIE COOPER

I am greatly looking forward to performing in my first proper play as a Warwick student, in my first leading role. As a fan of Greek Tragedy, I have enjoyed the process of creating the character of Creon with the director and bringing him to life.



CHORUS LEADER — RAMYA JEGATHEESAN

I am an English Literature Postgraduate Student. I have studied Antigone since secondary school and have won Classics awards for my work on it and other Classical texts. I have been acting for more than ten years now, both on TV and onstage. I perform in both English and other languages. I pursue theatre academically, professionally and for pleasure. This is my first production at Warwick University.



SENTRY — JENNY BENTON

Hi, I am a first year student at Warwick, and so far I am highly enjoying my time here! I studied Antigone at A level, and so I was thrilled to get the role of the sentry. The rehearsal process has been great fun, and the play as a whole is one of the parts about Classics and the society that I love the most. We've all put a lot of hard work in, and I hope that you all enjoy the play!



CHORUS LEADER — FRANKIE WARD

'Antigone 2017' is my first time doing a Classics play at Warwick (I'm only a wee fresher), but it's been really easy to get on with everyone and to feel welcome amongst the cast and crew. For me both the audition and rehearsals were really fun and relaxed, while still being satisfying to see all the elements of the show come together. It's fairly intimidating when you first enter the vast drama scene at Warwick, so it's been great to have an enjoyable, inviting group of people to experience putting on a play with.



CHORUS LEADER — CHLOE CLEWS

I am a second year Ancient History and Classical Archaeology student and I have previously been in a number of Classical plays during my time at a performing arts college, and performing as part of the Birmingham Rep Youth Theatre. Having studied *Antigone* at A level I was incredibly excited to discover that it was this year's play. I've loved every second of the audition and rehearsal process so far, having had a ton of fun, which is always guaranteed with the Classics society and taking part in the annual Classics play.



HAEMON — VIJAY HARE

I first got into drama through my lifelong quest to seek attention from my peers. This production seemed a brilliant way to do this, as well as a great alternative to doing any real work. I once overenthusiastically waved a spear about in a school production of *The Bacchae*, and I hope that playing hormonal Haemon tonight will help me go out with a bang! The last time I did a Warwick Classics play, I wore a tank-top and denim miniskirt, and danced around while rapping about being a woman. Still can't remember how they talked me into that one...



TIRESIAS — HOLLY COWAN

Before beginning university in October I'd previously been involved in various performances with Brighton Theatre Group and my sixth form college, where I studied drama at A-Level before turning my attention to Classics. Being a part of *Antigone* with the Classics society has been great, and I'm honored to have been given the part of such an interesting character. The opportunity to incorporate drama with Classics was one of the main things that drew me to the society and has been a fantastic experience.



MESSENGER — EMMA JOHNSON

My name is Emma and I'm a third year Classical Civilisation student at Warwick. In my first year, I took a main role in the Classics play and then, in my second year, I was the play director. This year I wanted to remain involved in what is one of my favourite experiences of my time at university. Ancient Greek theatre is one of my most enjoyable topics and the play has given me numerous opportunities to experience it in practice.



EURYDICE — BELLE LIVINGSTONE

I'm a 2nd year Classics student at Warwick. I performed in multiple musicals and productions during my time at school, and have always loved the thrill of the stage, but this is my first foray into drama at Warwick. I've loved getting involved in Antigone, from the early learning of lines to the last minute rehearsals, and can't wait to perform this evening. Thanks to Ed and his crew for creating such a brilliant production and inspiring the cast!



MESSENGER — RAHUL BAGCHI

Hailing from nearby Birmingham, I studied at King Edward's School. Through my further studies, I found an interest in Classical drama (with special interest in Aristophanes, because he's a ten year old at heart). After a glittering acting career at primary school, I trod not the boards during my time at King Edward's School but have recently rediscovered the joy of acting. In my spare time, you may catch me in either of my two hobbies, reading or sleeping.

CHORUS

ALPHA



(From left to right) Chloe Clews, Leo Crozier, Jesse Chambers, Matt Trapp, Frankie Ward, Naomi Awre, Hannah Thorpe, Asha Martin, Rosie Mullen, Alice Saunders, Yifei Painter.

BETA



(From left to right) Harvey Aungles, Meg Christmas, Belle Casbarra, Ramya Jegatheesan, Chloe Highton, Jivan Kandola.

CREW MEMBERS



ASSISTANT DIRECTOR — ELLEN RODDA

My name is Ellen and I am the Assistant Director of this fabulous production. From the auditions right through to the dress rehearsals, the cast have amazed us with how consistently brilliant and creative they have been. They took to Ed's creative ideas like ducks to water and, as a Directorate, we could not be more proud of them! Two moments that stand out for me throughout this process would have to be the creating and making of the *Antigone* trailer and then transferring our show from rehearsal room to stage. The former required Grace, Ed, Kate and myself to stand in the middle of a freezing cold field whilst we gathered "aesthetic shots" of Kate, but it was totally worth it for what it ended up being. The latter is always exciting and slightly nerve-wracking for any production team, but the cast just went with it and, as a result, have completely filled the stage with drama, atmosphere and poise. My thanks go out to everyone involved in this production, but particularly to Ed and Grace for being such wonderful team mates; we did it and we hope you enjoy the show!



PUBLICITY & STAGE MANAGER — GRACE WALSH

My name is Grace and I organize the publicity for the play, and oversee the stage crew for *Antigone* 2017. My main role throughout the process has been to ensure that the production receives the attention that it deserves. Creating the publicity materials, from the logo to the cast head-shots to the production programme has been an amazing experience. Within the first few weeks of gaining our positions, the directorate worked out the key themes and angles that *Antigone* would be taking.

We had the and from that moment, the production started to grow into the new and intensely dynamic interpretation of the classic that we have today. The cast and crew have worked so hard to ensure that these ideas are produced to the highest standard and it has been so rewarding to see them come to life on stage. We hope that you enjoy the performance as much as we have enjoyed creating it!

TRANSLATION OF ANTIGONE

CLIVE LETCHFORD

MAKE-UP AND COSTUME

AMELIA VOSS

BETH DJORA

CLARE MAHON

LIZZY WU

ZOË BAKER

MILLY LAST

LUCY KITCHER

LIGHTING

BENJI LEVINE

AUDIO AND SOUND

JACK RAMPLIN

SET DESIGN

DR EMMANUELA BAKOLA

WITH THANKS TO...

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We would like to also thank the Warwick Tech Crew Society for staging, lighting and audio.

Finally, many thanks to IGGY, especially Emilia Monizko and Louise Lochee-Bayne for video-recording and immortalising the production!

WARWICK CLASSICS AND ANCIENT HISTORY UNIVERSITY OPEN DAYS

Friday, 23rd June 2017

Saturday, 24th June 2017

Saturday 23 September 2017

Saturday 21 October 2017

**THE OPEN DAY IS THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT OUR CAMPUS AND
EXPERIENCE WHAT IT IS LIKE TO BE A STUDENT AT WARWICK.**

**THE DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS AND ANCIENT HISTORY WILL BE
WELCOMING PROSPECTIVE APPLICANTS AND YOU WILL HAVE THE
OPPORTUNITY TO EXPERIENCE WHAT WE HAVE TO OFFER, TO MEET STAFF
AND CURRENT STUDENTS, AS WELL AS TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR
DEGREES.**



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