



# Antigone

- Play by Sophocles
- Produced by **The Classical Theatre of Harlem**
- Ty Jones, Producing Artistic Director/Daniel Kaplan, Managing Director
- Inspired by the adaptation by Paul Roche
- Direction: Carl Cofield
- Choreography: Tiffany Rea-Fisher
- Stage Manager: Megan Sprowls\*
- Music Direction: Kahlil X. Daniel
- Dramaturg: Shawn Rene Graham
- Scene Design: Christopher Swader & Justin Swader
- Costume Design: Lex Liang
- Lighting Design: Alan C. Edwards
- Sound Design: Curtis Craig
- Projection Design: Katherine Freer
- Props Design: Samantha Shoffner
- Assistants & Interns: Amandla Jahava, Margaret Goldrainer, Rocio Perez, Erin Earl Fleming, Caleb Craig, Ian McCain, Desne Wharton, Suzanne Coliman, Renata Cerda, Sujotta Pace\*, Louise Crossan, Mary J. Price
- Press: GoGo PR

## THE CAST (^Members of the Elisa Monte Dance Company)

- Teiresias: Kahlil X. Daniel\*
- Haemon: Avon Haughton

- Creon: Ty Jones\*
- Antigone: Alexandria King
- Ismene: Ava McCoy
- Principal Guard: Anthony Vaughn Merchant\*
- Eurydice: Adaku Okpi
- Chorus: Ryan Alvarado\*, Denzel D. Fields, Nedra Snipes
- Dancers: Samantha Barriento^, Daniela Funicello^, Brynlie Helmich, Jovonna Parks^, Thomas Varvaro^ (dance captain)
- Guards: R. J. Foster\*, Lamin Leroy Gibba

### **SYNOPSIS** (paraphrased from the program)

Set in a dystopian future, the struggle for power, glory and the City of Thebes has shattered the bonds of brotherhood, leaving the last two sons of Oedipus, Eteocles and Polynices, lifeless. Creon, the new king, proclaims Eteocles a hero and Polynices a usurper, leaving his limp body lying in the street as an example to those who dare act against the state. The citizens of the city avert their eyes due to fear, turning instead to Creon, who vows to restore order to the war torn city. But the sister of the slain young men, Antigone, cannot look away, and she breaks faith with everything she has ever known in order to set things right. As a result (in this version), she is put to death.

### **BACKGROUND**

Originally written in 441 BCE, *Antigone* is one of seven extant plays by the noted Greek playwright Sophocles. He wrote 120, but only these few have survived into modern times. There have been many versions of this famous play, notably a French version by Jean Anouilh, written in 1944 in the context of the anti-Nazi French resistance. Interestingly, this provides an excellent example as to why *Antigone* has been so often translated, adapted, and rewritten.

It is a timeless story, as pertinent today as it was in Ancient Greece. A fascist comes to power, he faces resistance, and reacts with extreme violence. This has happened so often in our history, that it's almost a cliché. In modern day America, not only has *Antigone* been used to protest racism, as in this case, it has also been recast as a feminist polemic protesting against the appalling policies of our current president.

There are two Greek myths regarding *Antigone*. One ends tragically, as in Sophocles' play. One ends happily, with *Antigone* marrying Haemon, Creon's son, and living happily ever after. Why this is so, is a question that can only be answered by some ancient Greek. But, Sophocles chose the totalitarian version, which is the one that has come down to us. We can only guess why, but, perhaps he knew how important the message would be in the future. It's amazing, sometimes, how wise those people were. They had such a remarkable understanding of human nature, at

a time when it was thought that gods made rain. But, their minds were open. That's something that could benefit us today.

## THE PERFORMANCE

Sophocles would be thrilled. Indeed, any playwright would be thrilled by such a classy rendition of their play. **The Classical Theatre of Harlem** has mounted a stunning production, almost operatic in its scope. Of course, it may just seem that way because almost everyone is dead by the end of the play, a common definition of grand opera among those who are misinformed. But, the Greeks raised that resolution to the level of high art almost 2,500 years ago; death or destruction caused by one's own actions. It is the very essence of great tragedy.

The Richard Rogers Amphitheater at Marcus Garvey Park couldn't be more perfectly suited for this production. Monumental sound effects open the performance, and fine, original music punctuates the action throughout, produced by a sound system that is obviously state-of-the-art. Tiffany Rea-Fisher's choreography, which opens the play, is simply stunning, and the polished dancing of the Elisa Monte Dance Company do it justice, offering a gripping picture of the traumatic effects their recent war has had on the citizens of Thebes.

The stage is wide, deep, and high, providing director Carl Cofield with a broad screen on which to project exquisite, shifting color patterns, and visual effects. It is dressed appropriately, in a fashion entirely in sync with the production's intent; to focus the audience's attention on the attacks on our citizens that have been all too common since T\*\*\*p took office. At the end, the stage lights dim, and the names of Freddie Gray, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, and Sandra Bland (among many others), are projected, alongside "Justice for Antigone," onto the back walls.

The famous chorus, which the Greeks used to provide comments on the play's action, was beautifully characterized by Ryan Alvarado, Denzel D. Fields, and Nedra Snipes, three excellent singers representing the elders of Thebes. Their vocalizations were soulful and elegant, appropriately attuned to the play's moods, and the tragic destruction visited by the gods upon Creon's family. This brings up my only criticism. Who composed the music? I could find nothing in the program as to who it might have been, which is a real shame, because it is really beautiful. Correct this, guys. The person who wrote your music deserves it.

As Antigone, Alexandria King was angry and determined, as one might expect from the daughter of Oedipus. Once she decided to bury her brother, it was clear that even the threat of death couldn't stop her. Her scenes with her uncle Creon, were fraught with defiance. As one of the last two royals of Oedipus' family—her sister Ismene, sympathetically played by Ava McCoy, being the other—her demeanor was haughty and regal. She was every bit a queen.

Ty Jones was a powerful Creon. In what could be said to be the most difficult role in the play, Mr. Jones took the stage and kept it. His characterization was

strong, and his attitude toward Antigone and his son, Haemon, well played by Avon Houghton, was as arrogant and demanding as might be expected from any incipient fascist.

Anthony Vaughn Merchant, as the principal guard, was hysterical. The audience reacted to his entrances with laughter and applause. The guard is frequently overlooked. He doesn't even have a name. Basically, he's there to inform the audience as to what's been happening off stage, which can be a thankless task. But, Mr. Merchant brought such humor and humanity to the part, that I think he deserves some recognition. Excellent, Anthony. We look forward to next time.

Adaku Okpi, as the queen mother, Eurydice, was regal and elegant. In a fairly small role, she made a sympathetic impression, decrying the destruction of her family to great effect, shortly before committing suicide. Kahul X. Daniel, as the ever-present Teiresias, the blind sooth-sayer, was as sinister as might be expected from a character who prophesies death for practically everyone in the play.

As must be obvious, I really liked this *Antigone*. It was gripping and memorable. The production was as grand as it gets; the dancing, music, acting, and message, quite remarkable. It runs in Marcus Garvey Park until the end of the month. AND, IT'S FREE. Go see it. Take your children. I guarantee, they'll be just as thrilled as Sophocles would have been. VERY HAPPY FACE

#### **REMAINING PERFORMANCES:**

- July 9th – 29th, 2018
- The Richard Rogers Amphitheater
- Marcus Garvey Park
- 6316 Mt. Morris Park West, NYC
- The Classical Theatre of Harlem
- (212) 722-3800
- [www.cthnyc.org/antigone](http://www.cthnyc.org/antigone)