Production Concept Package

Prepared for the Blackfriars of Agnes Scott College and Department of Theatre and Dance production of Antigone by Jean Anouilh adapted by Louis Galantiere

Directed by
David S. Thompson

Scenic, Lighting, and Costume Design by
Dudley Sanders

Performance dates
October 29-31 and November 5 & 7, 1999

Prepared by
David S. Thompson, Ph.D.
DIRECTORIAL CONCEPT AND PRODUCTION IMAGERY

Background

When I first started working with the Blackfriars and the play selection committee, I encouraged the students to look at classical and neoclassical plays. Those segments of the canon contain many themes relevant to "the world for women." Such a work would provide a challenge as well as recognizable titles and imagery. As a bonus, last season was a big year, at least in major theatre capitals, for the Greeks and their later French counterparts, particularly Sophocles and Racine ("celebrating" the 300th anniversary of his death). As we started looking at scripts, however, I discovered that memory had played some tricks on me. Most of the titles we considered that claimed to be about women actually had relatively small roles for women. (Notable exceptions include Medea and the Trojan Women, plays that we rejected for logistical reasons.) Dudley suggested that we revisit Anouilh's Antigone because of its structure and the available roles for women. We agreed that we had found a winner--a modern play with both classical and contemporary resonances.

From a practical standpoint, the script affords the possibility of changing the gender of some roles to benefit our student body. From a thematic standpoint it concerns several issues that should strike the campus community as relevant. Below I have listed some of the ideas that I find most interesting and compelling. The list is by no means exhaustive, nor is it meant to assume a finality of concept. As with all productions, the collaborative process should lead to sharing of ideas, discoveries, adjustments and reconsideration of various aspects of the work.

Individual Honor vs. Societal Authority

I have always found that coming of age in society is a tough time of soul-searching. To what degree do we assimilate? To what degree do we rebel? How do we resolve personal or internal conflicts; how do we deal with "cognitive dissonance"? Naturally college student frequently find themselves thrust into the midst of such issues—sometimes as a consequence of their studies, sometimes in spite of them, always in addition to them. Lewis Galantiere (the adapter) echoes the lines of Anouilh's Chorus and suggests that every age has an Antigone, just as every age and culture has versions of other literary and dramatic icons. I think there's a lot of truth in what he says. She may not always bear the name Antigone, but I believe that she or her sisters or daughters are there nonetheless.

With the identification of a kindred spirit, whether or not she is taken as a role model, viewing Antigone might become a matter of degree. Is there an absolute honor? Can we blind ourselves to a picture larger than our own frame of reference? Is there a chance of compromise? Creon take on the role of the logician in his confrontation of Antigone, does this suggest that martyrdom does not makes sense due to its lack of pragmatism or practicality?

Conflict and Destruction

Anouilh wrote his play during the Nazi occupation of France. Although I do not want to set the production with specific references to WWII, I think many will be reminded of the setting, particularly with the renewed interest generated by recent war films and studies of the "greatest generation." Additionally, the seemingly endless series of conflicts worldwide during the last half of the twentieth century reminds us of the great toll imposed by conflict—the wasted energy of destruction and enormous cost in time, money and human effort to rebuild. Often ambition and ego play key roles here. Just as frequently, ambition and ego disguise themselves as honor, duty, fate or necessity. One concept that I would like to highlight involves these qualities as embodied by Creon--the King and Antigone's uncle. It is clear that he could have resolved much of the play's conflict by walking away, ignoring the situation, or more boldly, making a healing proclamation. However, such moves would diminish Creon's perceived strength. In the end, instead of resolving conflict, Creon would rather be king of nothing. He prefers to preserve his hold upon the rubble and remains of a once great Thebes rather than relinquish some measure of absolute control to work toward a new greatness. In this regard Creon is reminiscent of tyrants throughout history.
Modernity

As I’ve indicated above the text is classically based, but decidedly modern. As with many modern works, ambiguity surfaces in some interesting places. The (relative) moral certainty of the Sophocles version posits Antigone’s case as the correct one: honor dictates that she must bury her fallen brother. Creon’s opposition is personal and political. Antigone ignores her own best interests and presses on. Thus, Antigone’s story is a tragedy. Anouilh’s version twists the certainty a bit. We still recognize right and wrong, but the reasoning is not as clear. After having her arrested Creon confronts Antigone in a scene that comprises over a quarter of the play. As the debate develops, Creon makes a lot of sense—almost seductively so, as if drawing us into a Theban “dark side”—while Antigone sounds brash, headstrong and shortsighted (in fairness some of this belongs to Sophocles as well). Furthermore, the character of the Chorus (played by a single person as in Seneca or Renaissance revenge tragedies) offers compelling ideas regarding hope v. resignation and tragedy v. melodrama, ideas which I hope will cause the audience to examine personal assumptions. In seeing the interest in the play, I have decided to expand the Chorus to three actors, but have them function simultaneously as a single unit/entity and three individuals. My hope is that the compromise will involve more students in the production, but also recall elements of various types of choral work in dramatic literature.
PRODUCTION DESIGN: SCENIC CONCEPT

Dudley and I began working on production concept some months ago. From our earliest discussions we agreed on many points and shared several images that warranted exploration. Clearly the undercurrent of recent events hangs like a shroud over the city. The downfall of part of a royal household and the threatened disintegration of the remaining family remain prominent. Images of war and battle, both between kingdoms and within families, also underpin much of the action. The historical and mythological components carry the common features of death and destruction, which should serve as a dominant, but not obvious, scenic element.

Minor themes playing as variations of the dominant strains include Creon’s nautical and military evocations of the ship of state, the obligations of royalty, and the nature of duty. Similarly, Antigone discusses the need to bury Polynices as a sacred promise. Her vision of honor and stately compulsion drive the conflict through the world that Creon has made for all the characters.

Proceeding from the notion that the play has classical features, but remains modern, I have proposed that we move away from images of classical Greek amphitheatres (or theatrons). We should, in the same vein, avoid reliance upon traditional views of symmetry and balance associated with classical and neoclassical designs depicting temples and palaces. I have also proposed that the war imagery extend to the set and realize a world reduced to rubble, or at least a crumbling or diminished version of its former grandeur. Dudley has proposed playing off of images of death, destruction, stateliness, and the formality/power of the bridge on the ship of state. Accordingly, Dudley has developed a set that seems to rise out of detritus of Thebes. The central playing space may is reached via one of four ramps. The ramp upstage left passes beneath an imposing arch that serves as a doorway or “architectural” entrance. The arch will feature the appearance of an elegantly appointed interior (at the doorway) that becomes increasingly distressed as the distance away from the center of the unit increases. In short the closer to the former interior, the better or more preserved it looks. The shape of the arch will evoke image of a bombed building, a tombstone, and possibly the deck of a ship.

The entire playing space will look like a sea of rubble. The rubble will play a symbolic rather than actual role in depicting debris. Our discussions have included considerations of foam, shredded tires, wood mulch and other relatively consistent textures rather than a collection of random trash. The image should include one of a city reduced to bits and pieces, not one on the edge of the city dump.

The pros and cons of the preliminary spatial design seem deceptively simple, but even the apparent disadvantages should work in favor of the production. The sense of symmetry of a Greek arrangement is preserved but not in a static, vertical format. The floor plan is balanced, but not in an exact mirrored relationship. The structural unit is situated upstage left, a traditionally weak stage position, which serves to offset the strength of center and down right. One of the strongest areas, down center, is not available, but space is available center stage and even in the first row of the house. In short, by evoking a regularized space but executing it in a slightly irregular manner several goals are achieved. We create more dynamic staging opportunities. We evoke classical and modern ideas. We avoid locking ourselves into a recognizable tradition.

To further assist the production, particularly to streamline movement and scene transitions, I would like to minimize the use of scenic pieces and properties. In particular, I want to avoid emulating the original production’s use of tables and chairs that had to be shifted across a set resembling a temple. With the planned ramps and platforms we should have plenty of levels to provide visual interest and even seating if necessary. Likewise I would like to use only those props that are absolutely necessary and that a character might logically carry onstage. The handcuffs used by the Guards provide one example.
PRODUCTION DESIGN: COSTUME CONCEPT

Once again, costuming as a visual element should reflect the modernity of the play. My preference is that members of the production team feel free to explore the full range of twentieth century fashion and costume design for inspiration. As with the scenic concept, I hope that the each of the costumes will, in its own way, have a slight sense of classical influence. By that I do not mean that we should look to the fifth century BC for silhouette and line, but should include, when possible, accessories that remind the audience of the drape of a himation, the flow of a tunic, or the grandeur of a mask. With that in mind some of the preferred costuming images follow.

As part of our preliminary discussions we have considered the use of masks for some of the characters. I would like to develop the masked image as part of the rehearsal process. In this application I am not interested in sculpted character masks that in any way resemble those of Classical Greece. Instead I would like to investigate the use of plain white or neutral masks as a device to reinforce power themes. Masked characters, likely including Eurydice, Page, Guards and Messenger, would indicate those with diminished power or some degree of loss of self (ego, identity, individuality).

Antigone  As the rebel in this picture of society, Antigone should have the feel of a young woman from outside the dominant structure. Any costume should recognize and pay tribute to some element of twentieth century subculture. While I am not in favor of 1960s hippie garb or late 70s disco attire, we should look for some element that separates her from halls of power, business and government. Urban street culture should provide an image here.

Creon  The Broadway production attired the men in evening wear. While the notion of formal garments seems fine, I do not want the look to remind us of a banquet or wedding, simply an elevation in status. A suit or tuxedo that has unusual features, yet remains recognizably stylish might work here.

Haemon  As his father’s son I would like Haemon’s attire to echo Creon’s in some fashion. By no means should they be identical. However, contrasting or coordinating elements, perhaps in terms of color, cut or accessories presents possibilities.

Ismene  Since we encounter her in the middle of the night, Ismene should wear something akin to a nightgown. It should not read as lingerie, but have a sense of style and flow. If the same garment could serve as the basis for her later scene after Antigone’s confrontation with Creon, either with an added piece or something of similar shape, that would carry a lovely image.

Nurse  Since she goes on about the hour—the middle of the night—placing the Nurse in some sort of matronly robe or housecoat seems the only logical option.

Page  The Page should reflect Creon in some way, only not as sophisticated.

Guards  I would like to avoid military in favor of paramilitary or “pseudomilitary” meaning retaining the shape of a uniform, without some of the details that identify time and place.

Chorus  Coordinating, but not identical, perhaps with common pieces or similar styles.

Eurydice  Simple, yet elegant, possibly an evening gown.

Messenger  Work clothes, laborer.
PRODUCTION DESIGN: LIGHTING AND SOUND CONCEPTS

Since the action ranges among so many places, and since we are trying to simplify or streamline the set, lighting should be our major tool. We need to range from outdoors to various points around the castle as well as a neutral space for the Chorus. Given the staging concept, I hope that subtle shifts in intensity can isolate the action and suggest movement.

Similarly the sound or sound effects should remain non-literal. Any sound that we use should reinforce mood rather than determine actual occurrence.
The following European composers had moved from Europe to the United States by 1940. Presumably each was trying to escape either persecution of the growing Nazi threat or simply escape the horrors of the war itself. The relative stability afforded by life in the United States also enhanced the possibility of witnessing the orchestral music in performance.

Schöenberg  
Stravinsky  
Bartók  
Hindemith  
Krenek  
Milhaud  
Weill  
Toch  
Kálmán  
Benatzky  
Abraham  
Stolz  
Oskar Strauss

The following composers working during the 1930s might also provide some insight:

Shostakovich  
Britten  
Prokofiev  
Ravel

The sound crew should also located rhythm instruments for possible live sound effects:

Rhythm sticks  
Triangle  
Tambourine  
Small drum  
Wood blocks
Antigone

AUDITIONEES
PLEASE PREPARE:

REQUIRED:
1. Completed audition form
2. Memorized passage
   (a stanza/paragraph from a familiar poem, song,
   or nursery rhyme)
3. One newspaper story
   (samples provided)

OPTIONAL:
1. Prepared audition piece
   (1-2 minute dramatic monologue)
2. Résumé
3. Photo
CALLBACK LIST

MEN

Jason Armit
Adam Fitzgerald
Jeroy Hannah
Tal Harris

WOMEN

Shannon Allen
Kristin Carlson
Abby Cross
Lauren C. Davis
Christina Dresser
Mary Entwistle
Amber Gugino
Lee Hayes
Anna Jensen
Christina Johnson
Cecily Lewis
Melanie Luschen
Amanda Schrier
Antigone

CAST

Chorus .................................................. LEE HAYES
                                        KRISTIN CARLSON
                                        ABBY CROSS

Antigone .............................................. CECILY LEWIS

Nurse .................................................. SHANNON ALLEN

Ismene .................................................. CHRISTINA JOHNSON

Haemon .................................................. ADAM FITZGERALD

Creon .................................................. JEROY HANNAH

First Guard .......................................... TAL HARRIS

Second Guard ....................................... AMANDA SCHRIER

Third Guard .......................................... MELANIE LUSCHEN

Messenger ............................................ CHRISTINA DRESSER

Page .................................................. AMBER GUGINO

Eurydice ............................................. LAUREN C. DAVIS

NOTES:

1. Many thanks to all. Your hard work and dedication made for an enjoyable and impressive process.
2. Rehearsals will begin Monday, September 13 at 7:00pm with a read-through in the Green Room.
3. The cast will receive further information regarding rehearsals and schedules at the first rehearsal.
4. I will answer questions about the process and your particular audition on an individual basis. Please make an appointment for such concerns.
# Antigone

## REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

The standard rehearsal schedule for Blackfriars production is 7:00-10:00 p.m., Sunday through Thursday. However, frequently we will need extra time to complete the activity for the evening. To allow for such cases, the director requests that the cast allow for an extra thirty minutes, meaning that rehearsal will end no later than 10:30 (naturally, dress rehearsals and performances may run slightly later). The rehearsal schedule is subject to change as necessary. Additional details regarding times, dates and activities will be provided as needed. If the college cancels classes, protocol dictates that we also cancel rehearsal. If in doubt, please check with the assistant director/stage manager or check outgoing message updates at 404-471-6250.

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<td>M 13 Read-through</td>
<td>S 17 Work selected scenes</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 14 Walking read</td>
<td>M 18 Run through for crew; work rough spots</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 15 Block scenes 1-2</td>
<td>T 19 Run through for crew; work rough spots</td>
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<tr>
<td>H 16 Block scenes 3-6</td>
<td>NO LINE CALLS</td>
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<tr>
<td>S 19 Block scene 7</td>
<td>W 20 FALL BREAK</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 20 Block scenes 8-10</td>
<td>H 21 FALL BREAK</td>
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<td>T 21 Work scenes 1-3</td>
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<td>W 22 Work scenes 4-7</td>
<td>M 25 Tech Rehearsal</td>
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<tr>
<td>H 23 NIGHT OFF: MARGARET EDSON</td>
<td>T 26 First Dress</td>
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<tr>
<td>S 26 Work scenes 8-10</td>
<td>W 27 Full Dress</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 27 Run/Work scenes 1-3</td>
<td>H 28 Final Dress</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 28 Run/Work scenes 4-7</td>
<td>F 29 Opening night (w/ English classes)</td>
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<td>W 29 Run/Work scenes 8-10</td>
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<td>H 30 Stumble through</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S 3 Work/Run scenes 1-6</td>
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<tr>
<td>S 17 Work selected scenes</td>
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<td>M 4 Work/run scenes 7-10</td>
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<td>M 18 Run through for crew; work rough spots</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 5 Scenes 1-6</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 19 Run through for crew; work rough spots</td>
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<td>W 6 Scenes 7-10</td>
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<td>W 20 FALL BREAK</td>
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<td>H 7 Run through</td>
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<td>H 21 FALL BREAK</td>
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<td>S 24 FALL BREAK</td>
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<td>S 26 Work scenes 8-10</td>
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<td>M 25 Tech Rehearsal</td>
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<td>M 11 Work through</td>
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<td>T 26 First Dress</td>
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<td>T 12 Work/Run</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 27 Full Dress</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 13 Run through OFF BOOK</td>
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<td>H 28 Final Dress</td>
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<tr>
<td>H 14 NIGHT OFF: BLACK CAT</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 29 Opening night (w/ English classes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>S 4 Performance (w/ Photo Call)</td>
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<td>S 5 Performance</td>
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<td>S 6 NO PERFORMANCE</td>
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<tr>
<td>S 7 Performance (matinee + strike)</td>
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| S 10 Work scenes TBA |
| H 4 Pick-up rehearsal |
| M 11 Work through |
| F 5 Performance |
| T 12 Work/Run |
| S 6 NO PERFORMANCE |
| W 13 Run through OFF BOOK |
| S 7 Performance (matinee + strike) |