

Review: 'Antigone' has a new relevance

This revival resonates differently today because of changes in our world.

[Rohan Preston](#), Star Tribune

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Call the fire department. "Antigone" is hot, loud and explosive.

Three years ago, director Greg Banks staged a muscular production of the Greek antiwar classic at Intermedia Arts for the Children's Theatre Company.

Banks and star Sonja Parks, who played the title role, are back in a revival colored with even more immediacy and urgency. The Cargill Stage at the Children's Theatre is bigger than Intermedia Arts, so the space is filled with more whiplashing action and more percussive drumming. The show remains a promenade-style production, where the actors move among standing audience members, but it resonates differently now. The Iraq war, with its debilitating body counts, has affected how we receive this 2,000-year-old classic.

Adapted by Banks from Sophocles, this 70-minute one-act centers on a morally upright young woman, Antigone, whose brothers, fighting on opposite sides, have died in battle. One brother, Eteocles (Samuel G. Roberson) is given a proper burial. By order of stubborn King Creon (Luverne Seifert, trying not to breathe fire), the other brother, Polynices (Shawn Hamilton) is left to rot in the

open -- on an elevated platform -- where the body becomes food for scavengers.



King Creon (Luverne Seifert) warns his niece Antigone (Sonja Parks) that treason is a crime punishable by death in "Antigone" on the Cargill stage at The Children's Theatre Company.

Antigone buries Polynices herself. For this act of insubordination, she must die. But she is part of a complex web. Her death leads to others, including Creon's son, Haemon (Hamilton), and wife, Eurydice (marvelous Marvette Knight, who also plays blind seer Tiresias). Creon is left wondering what he did wrong.

Banks gets thrilling performances from this cast, especially Parks, a

protean talent both regal and fierce. Hamilton is also quite strong, giving his characters intelligence and compelling physicality. Knight has a large, affecting stage presence. Her Eurydice dies like a fallen bird and her blind seer is riveting.

As Creon, Seifert displays a reasonableness that was lacking from the prior staging.

There is much to admire in the kind of active, street-like engagement afforded by the promenade staging. This style is perhaps most apt for productions where characters make direct appeals.

With "Antigone," as with the "Macbeth" that played at the Guthrie Lab a few seasons ago, you cannot be just a passive spectator. You are a citizen-theatergoer, moving around and witnessing the action.

You also have to decide what actions to take in your life, based on what you see and witness, in all its power and immediacy.

As one student from the Perpich Center for Arts Education said after the performance, "it wakes you up."

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