

BWW Review: Ancient Greek Drama Meets the Patriot Act in ANTIGONE PROJECT: A PLAY IN 5 PARTS, at Profile Theatre

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In response to the controversial Patriot Act of 2001, which allowed for wiretapping, surveillance, and other measures ostensibly to protect the United States against terrorism, five women wrote adaptations of Sophocles' *ANTIGONE*, a play about power, resistance, and what happens when we're denied those things most important to us.

In case you aren't up on your Sophocles, here's a brief summary:

ANTIGONE is Sophocles' third Theban play, following *OEDIPUS THE KING* and *OEDIPUS AT COLONUS*. Antigone is one of the children produced from Oedipus's incestuous relationship with his mother. At the opening of *ANTIGONE*, her brothers, Eteocles and Polynices, have both died fighting on opposite sides of the Thebes civil war. Creon, the current ruler of Thebes and Antigone's uncle, has declared Eteocles a hero, but Polynices a traitor, and forbade anyone from burying Polynices' body, an edict that Antigone defies. As punishment, Creon imprisons her in a tomb, where she hangs herself. Upon hearing of her death, Creon's son Haemon (who loved Antigone) tries to kill his father, but when he fails, kills himself instead. Out of mourning for her son, Creon's wife Eurydice also kills herself. No happy ending for anyone.

ANTIGONE PROJECT is a collection of five short scenes, each written by a different playwright, that pick up on one thread of the story. Some are directly related to the original, while others approach it more thematically. Together, the scenes don't each add up to a single cohesive play. It's more like looking at different sides of a prism. For example, in the first scene, [Karen Hartman's](#) *Hang Ten*, Antigone and Ismene are surfer girls, with Antigone forever searching for Polynices out on the waves. My favorite scene was the final one, *Red Again*, in which [Chiori Miyagawa](#) reimagines the end of the story in a way that provides some hope for the future, rather than the pure tragedy of the original.

The theme that ran through every piece, however, was an examination of what happens when we're denied something central to us as people. Antigone is denied the right to bury her brother, an essential part of the grief ritual. In some of the scenes, the consequences of losing this right are highly personal to Antigone and her family. In others, like *Red Again*, they are blown up to show us the consequences of losing our humanity on a global scale.

I particularly enjoyed the performances by [Chris Murray](#) in *Medallion* and *Red Again*, [Andrea Whittle](#) in *Antigone Arkhe*, and [Seth Rue](#) in *A Stone's Throw*. The real star, however, was Kay Blankenship's set, which reminded me very much of Mark Dion's "Curiosity Cabinet" at the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco ([see](#)

[pics here](#)). The set is a floor-to-ceiling and nearly wall-to-wall collection of items (some used as props) more or less relevant to different aspects of the story. I wish I'd had more time to examine them all individually. It also served as the backdrop for digital projection in the third piece, *Antigone Arkhe*, an imaginative Sophoclean version of *Night at the Museum*.

Overall, ANTIGONE PROJECT is my favorite offering in Profile Theatre's [Tanya Barfield](#) season so far (Barfield wrote the second piece, *Medallion*). If you go, be sure to brush up on your Sophocles beforehand.

Profile's 2016 season continues in October with Barfield's BRIGHT HALF LIFE. [Learn more here.](#)