

# British Theatre Guide

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## Antigone

Sophocles adapted by Brendan Murray

Tales Retold

The Hope Theatre

23 February–12 March 2016

Brendan Murray's adaptation of *Antigone* by Sophocles opens with five women sheltering in a windowless room as planes fly overhead and bombs are exploding nearby.

They are dressed in leather that suggests this is a future society. All are restless. To break the tedium, they open a book and begin to enact *Antigone*.

The tight, sixty-minute *Tales Retold* production directed by Matthew Parker is poetic, accessible, and faithful to the play written by Sophocles.

All the parts are played by a five strong female cast whose acting is clear and sensitive. The male characters played by women are completely believable.

The chorus mostly becomes short generally upbeat unaccompanied close harmonies composed by Maria Haïk Escudero and sung by all five.

The story they enact begins with Antigone (Cassandra Hodges) trying to persuade her sister Ismene (Holly Cambell) to join her in burying the body of their brother Polyneices who had led an army against the State of Thebes and lies dead on the battlefield.

The problem with this idea, as Ismene points out, is the law. Creon (Amanda Bailey) the new ruler of Thebes has declared that no burial should take place.

Antigone's personal decision increasingly threatens the stability of Thebes as others are forced to take sides. In turn Creon's initially hard but reasoned application of the law becomes more dangerous and destructive to those around him.

Amanda Bailey plays Creon as a strong generally unsympathetic figure. He is prepared to execute both Antigone and Ismene. He even remains unmoved when his son Haemon who is well performed by L J Reeves tries to tell him what other citizens of Thebes are saying sympathetically about Antigone to each other but are afraid to say to him. Creon, in many ways inconsistent, is certain that he will not be swayed by a woman or his own child.

This is a sharply political play about the abuse of state power and the way even the most private impulse of the individual has the capacity to undermine that power and win some kind of justice.

**Reviewer:** [Keith Mckenna](#)