

# Antigone

## nytheatre.com review

[Julie Congress](#) · October 28, 2009

The SITI Company's *Antigone* is a modern, edgy, and poignant reinvisioning of the classic Greek tragedy. Thebes is being torn apart by a bloody civil war. Brothers Eteocles and Polyneices battle for the throne and end up dying in each others arms. As a result, Creon becomes the de facto leader and, as a message to the people, gives Eteocles a heroic burial but condemns Polyneices's body to be left out in the sun to rot and be eaten by vultures. But Antigone, sister to the brothers, daughter of Oedipus, niece of Creon, will not have it so. She will give her brother a proper burial, though the punishment is death.

SITI's *Antigone* is a lesson in minimalism and subtlety. During nearly all of the play, the actors are seated at a large square table. It feels like you are looking into the Oval Office. Brian H. Scott's stark, white lighting shifts suddenly and harshly and Christian Frederickson's original music keeps perpetually just a little on edge with a few sparse tones. The cast is barefoot though they are wearing modern suits or dresses.

The highly-physical training of the SITI Company is ever-present in the very still production, every little gesture deliberate, precise, and full of meaning. By tilting his head up 45% degrees and clenching his eyes shut, Tom Nelis becomes almost unrecognizably different as he shifts from an Elder to the blind seer Tiresias. And no one can walk like a member of SITI. The act of taking a step—of placing your heel down and then the ball of your foot and then the toes and then the other foot going from the heel to the ball to the toes always with an unwaveringly consistent momentum—is more like a slow train than a person walking. This precision, focus, and professionalism are what distinguish this company. It was my privilege to have one of the members of the company as a teacher, and perhaps that has left me predisposed to admire them, but I do think that every actor should see their work, to be inspired by how high they've raised the bar in specificity. The ensemble, led by director Anne Bogart, is comprised of Akiko Aizawa, Will Bond, Barney O'Hanlon, Leon Ingulsrud, Tom Nelis, Makela Spielman, and Stephen Webber. Spielman portrays Antigone's bravery and defiant nature well, but there was an emotional connection lacking. Antigone is acting out of love and honor for brother, and the slightly dispassionate, oratorical quality of performance that works well for many of the other characters does not make as much sense for her.

Jocelyn Clarke's uber-accessible adaptation is both lyrical and pointed. It uses repetition skillfully and poetically and takes deliberate liberties with Sophocles's original. The civil war that rages in Thebes is viewed as much about getting valuable iron from Argos as it is a struggle for the throne. The parallels between the world of the play and our own current entanglement in Iraq are unmistakable. But it doesn't just preach to the choir. There is a heavy emphasis on remembering the past and the dead because that is what shapes who we are. There is also a surprising amount of humor.

*Antigone* is ultimately a play about people doing what they think is right, highlighting both the

### VENUE

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### OPENED

October 28, 2009

### CLOSED

November 1, 2009

### CREATORS & ARTISTS

#### Cast

Akiko Aizawa, Will Bond, Barney O'Hanlon, Leon Ingulsrud, Tom Nelis, Makela Spielman, Stephen Webber

#### Author

Jocelyn Clarke

#### Director

Anne Bogart

#### Sets & Lighting

Brian H. Scott

#### Music

Christian Frederickson

#### Costumes

Melissa Trn

#### Stage Manager

Kris Longley-Postema

#### Producer

SITI Company

heroism and danger that such righteousness brings. SITI's production of the tragedy is bold and powerful, giving a unique, timely new look into this classic.

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