

Sophocles rocks MSC

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A classic endures time. *Antigone*, now playing in Memorial Auditorium, is a classic that has taken a long time—all semester—for MSC's Mainstage Theater Series to put together, and as director Geoffrey Newman, dean of the School of Fine and Performing Arts, says, "present a classic piece and make it relevant to today's world."

It does just that, and some. Written by the great Sophocles, *Antigone*, part of the Oedipus trilogy, deals with much more than a bunch of Greeks with fatal flaws. Sophocles wrote about human nature and Antigone's struggle, and her "not to hate was I born, but to love" still moves audiences today.

Folks, don't be scared. Although the play is the original translation, the lights, music and staging is modern. It's not like those renditions of the old Greek plays. There are no masks here! And Creon wears pants! "It's more like Battlestar *Antigone*, by Sa-focals," said chorus member, Debbie Giordano.

"The hardest part was dealing with the language," confessed Director Newman. But director, that's the test of great acting! Can these actors and actresses convey the emotion with language we only read in ancient literature?

Well, this is one test *Antigone* aced. All the acting is professional and superb, to say the least (except you do have to

crane to hear the chorus at times).

When Creon (fabulous job, John Wooten) grabs Antigone (another fabulous job, Maureen O'Dowd) and pushes her down in rage, anger and tense music fills the theater. "We'll have no woman's law here while I live!" proclaims Creon. We are angry and while the chorus lines the stage, our anger subsides.

Then, moments later, we are caught in a father and son battle where Haemon (excellently portrayed by Christopher DeBari) is torn between defending Antigone, whom he loves, and his father, Creon, whom he obeys. We feel his pain. We feel his struggle, and we feel Creon's frustration in his deep throat beckon, "Haemon!"

And Teiresias! (wow! Jeffrey L. Wingfield) That purple mystical prophet who echoes words of wisdom and warning is just mesmerizing.

This play works. Ismene (Linda Walsh) and the messenger (Roger Mazzeo) are perfectly cast and the whole chorus interacts and balances the protagonist's dramatic clashes with art.

But how is the play relevant today? Director Newman listed a few of the many themes:

"There's the male vs. female," there is. Ismene says to Antigone, "We are but women. It is not for us to go against men." Creon agrees, "Better if it must happen that a man should over set me. I won't be called weaker than womankind," sure to make all women's blood boil.

"There's the state vs. personal

beliefs," there is. Antigone would rather not "live and defy the laws of Heaven" while Ismene "cannot go against the laws of the state!"

"Hey," director Newman says, "this is what the times are all about right now! Even the demise of the Eastern Bloc makes these kinds of issues interesting and important today."

So Sophocles still shines and so does this production. Audience—you don't have to be English majors or be versed in Greek literature to appreciate all the work that went into this. You do have to listen, but after a few minutes the language will seem natural.

If it doesn't, just go to appreciate the work of the guest artists - Robert Klinghoefer (scenic designer), Kari Margolis and Tony Brown (movement direction and sound design) and Bill Simmons (lighting designer).

All do an outstanding job of non-verbally communicating the human element, struggle and emotion that remains universal before Sophocles' time right up to today.

A powerful ending to MSC's Mainstage Theater Series! And, a powerful visual ending that Sophocles may not have envisioned.

This is quality theater. This is one production all MSC students should see not only to appreciate what a professional job their peers are doing, but to easily understand the timeless relevance of the words Sophocles wrote centuries ago.