

Antigone through a digital lens: in conversation with Helen Eastman (Artistic Director / Creation Theatre)

September 2024

Speakers: Giovanna Di Martino; Claire Barnes; Helen Eastman

Giovanna: Hello, Claire.

Claire: Hi, Giovanna. Hi, everyone. Welcome to the APGRD podcast. For this episode, we caught up with Dr Helen Eastman, who will no doubt be familiar to regular listeners of the podcast and followers of the APGRD. Helen is currently Artistic Director at Creation Theatre.

She's been at the forefront of radical contemporary adaptations of Greek drama for several decades now. You might also know her through her work with, for instance, Barefaced Greek, who produce short films in ancient Greek. We can share some links to that as well in the description for this episode.

But for this particular conversation we caught up with her about a new Antigone that is due to come out through creation. And this is a digital production, she makes a really compelling argument for why digital theatre continues to become increasingly relevant in today's world, not just in terms of accessibility, but also in terms of really kind of pushing the boundaries of what can be done creatively, when engaging with otherwise very familiar plays such as Antigone.

Giovanna:

Yeah, and you can go to the production as we'll, we'll be saying with, Helen at the end of this episode, which we really, really hope that you enjoy. On 26th, 27th and 28th of September and the 21st to the 23rd of November. And you can visit the website www.creationtheatre.co.uk, show Antigone, and book your ticket there.

So, yeah, why did we invite Helen? We thought, A, we thought it was a very interesting project. As someone who's interested in adaptations and new performances of Greek drama, I was very much interested. Curious about what, Helen would do with, a Greek play like Antigone, a Greek tragedy, probably the most performed.

Claire:

She does drop in a couple of spoilers, for the play in the interview, but hopefully that will whet your appetite more rather than give anything away. The general conceit is that we're attending, to begin with, at least a press briefing on the current political situation in Thebes. And there's quite a lot of interactive elements as well, which really appeal, I think, particularly if anyone listening, is a teacher or has children who are currently working on, Antigone. A lot of young people at GCSE and A level, in the UK at least, we'll look at Antigone. both through classical civilization but also drama, and this performance invites audience members to really get involved and participate in that unfolding news situation using some of the things that, that Zoom invites into the space. So, for instance, there's an opportunity to contribute. through the chat, where members of the cast will also be kind of jumping in and hijacking and trying to take control of that narrative.

I think, Haemon has a YouTube channel, for instance, and is trying to go up against his father, uh, by spilling the news through that outlet.

Giovanna:

Yeah, yeah, I think what really sort of comes through, in the way that Helen talked about this, this production of Antigone is the sort of liveliness of, the production, notwithstanding or perhaps, you know, through the digital medium. So, I really hope you enjoy the episode, and we'll see you on the other side.

Claire: Hi Helen, thank you so much for joining us. So I guess the first question we'd like to start with is looking at digital theatre itself and how that's become so associated with Creation. Lots of people will be very familiar with going to see really radical reimaginings of plays through Creation, both pre and post pandemic. So what did that introduction of a digital component mean? I think might be quite a nice place to start.

Helen:

So, in lockdown, my predecessor as the director of creation Lucy Askey did an absolutely amazing job really of being very quick to realise that theatres were closing and that live performances were going to have to stop. And did some amazing programming of digital work. In doing so, she employed huge numbers of actors, Directors, writers, designers through the pandemic by making really cutting-edge digital shows and building quite a following for them globally.

Creation won a lot of awards for that work in terms of digital innovation and also received some innovation funding had a very good relationship with a local organization that was building a new platform for digital theatre. Lucy really was very quick to see Not only the opportunity in that, but also a way to keep freelancers working through the pandemic.

And some of those shows can still be watched through digital theatre or through archival material on our website. But I think the creation artists were really thinking about how to play with formats, different ways of making digital work, interactive or not interactive, audience led, allowing people to explore stories through being able to go into different rooms, interact with the shows they were watching.

And that was a really exciting time of innovation, I think the company. It also meant that Creation suddenly had two audiences, our very local, very loyal, brilliant Oxford audience and a very new, global audience for the international work and the digital work. That was also supported as well by our education department who also were very quick to put stuff online, so suddenly we're working with lots of children and young people.

Both our normal Oxford cohort of young people were receiving all their educational drama online but also there were wider families coming to us because we were providing that kind of digital interaction during the lockdown. And so, when I came in as artistic director last year, we thought really seriously about how to continue the digital strand of the work in a post pandemic way.

When we were getting back to in person producing, audiences were going back to the theatre, it felt amazing and exciting and brilliant to gather again to re-engage with our very Oxford specific audience and to start making site specific work around Oxford again and exploring spaces and places. But we didn't want to cut off the audience that we'd built more globally through making digital work.

And also, there's a very strong access case for continuing to make work digitally because for a lot of people with access issues, whatever they might be, they have more access to the arts during lockdown than they normally do because suddenly everything was being platformed digitally.

And, or there was a digital way of accessing a lot of the work. And the last thing we wanted to do was to cut off those audiences who'd suddenly had more access during lockdown. So, we started to think about making digital work and what that might look like. And obviously it is a smaller audience than it would have

been in lockdown because the majority of people now are able to get back to going to stuff in person.

And I thought a lot about what that might look like. And I decided that it'd be a really joyful thing to combine two things I was really thinking about. One of which was digital work, and the other is bringing some Greek drama, Greek theatre to creation. Obviously, I've spent a lot of time thinking about radical new ways to engage with classical material.

And I was very conscious of the fact that a lot of teachers often approach me when they're teaching Greek plays in the classroom, looking for new ways to engage young people and audiences, they didn't always have the resources for theatre trips. There isn't always a relevant production on, and I've done quite a lot of work in that space with Barefaced Greek, the film company that Maureen and I started to make films in ancient Greek. And that was originally a pedagogic project to create more resources for people teaching Greek tragedy in the classroom. So, bringing all those things together, I thought maybe I should make a digital production of a Greek tragedy.

And what could that mean? Or how might that work? What would that experience be? Why would people be gathering online? And I say gathering because gathering is really important to me. Gathering is the point of theatre to gather people and to witness the story together. The start of this adaptation was thinking about what gathering and witnessing means in a digital context.

And obviously, throughout lockdown and beyond, we've all done a lot of gathering on Zoom. It's hard to imagine that three or four years ago, none of us would I'd used the word Zoom as an adjective really or as a noun, or as a verb, or had any idea how to use online meeting platforms, and now they are, an extraordinary part of our ubiquitous part of our working week.

And I thought, how might we gather and witness a story in a digital form? Space. So, I started thinking about the idea of a of the morning of the day in which Antione takes place as a story. And all the classicists to listening will know that most Greek tragedies have what we call unity of time and place.

That means the story plays out in the same place on the same day, often in something approaching real time. So, Antigone as a story plays out over a few hours in real time on a very particular day and that day is the day after a very brutal civil war has been fought and has concluded with the death of two brothers who've ended up fighting on opposite sides and killing themselves in action.

So, I started to think, okay, what if we had gathered for a press conference? about what had happened the night before and then during the course of that press conference as we gathered on Zoom, the events of the play Antigone unfold. And the reason we chosen Antigone was partly as, as again, as many of us will know, it is the most performed play globally and in, in the history of theatre.

And it's been radically adapted by pretty much every. culture and country and in most time periods. And it is widely studied in the UK for UK listeners. It's often studied at the Department of GCSE Drama. And so, it felt interesting to think about how we could take that story and explore it in digital space.

I was also really conscious about accessibility. One of the things with great plays is they can presuppose you've got a bit of a knowledge of the mythical landscape that play is operating within. And it suddenly occurred to me that if actually we started the play with a press conference to think about the events of the night before, we'd be able to just fill in our audience on the backstory and what was happening as we started the play in a way that felt quite organic.

That we, if we gathered to be given, the backstory and that was the point of the gathering, it was a press conference to discuss what had just happened. We'd be able to let our audience into what had already happened in the story. Get them up to speed, and then let the story play out from that.

So, we started working on it and working on the idea, therefore, that actually the central character would be this young PR who was running this press conference and whose job was to gather us because Creon was about to give his first address, which is the first sort of, major event of the year.

The play Antigone is that Creon comes to the podium to take power, and we worked from there, and from there we tried to get as much of the as many aspects of the dramaturgy of the original in. We tried to think about chorality, we tried to think about music, we tried to think about storytelling about what a messenger speech might look like in that context, so to take all the elements of the play.

Antigone and look at how they might play out within real time in a digital space where we were there thinking we were just arriving to for Creon to make his sort of maiden speech, having tried to establish peace. In the aftermath of a civil war and then suddenly events overtaking him and that escalating and the news agenda then moving incredibly fast because the things were happening faster than they could be communicated to an audience.

Giovanna:

Wow that's really fascinating. You talked about gathering and maybe because I've just read your chapter with Alex Silverman on chorus and chorality in a book that just came out, edited by David Bullen and Christine Plastow which I find really interesting, and I think there's a lot of that kind of work on chorus and chorality that might feature in this idea of gathering that you have been talking about to us just now.

So, if you could maybe elaborate a bit more about how you are going to bring a chorus together in this digital space. And then the other question that I have is, you said that Antigone is probably the most translated and most kind of performed play of Greek drama. So, my question is which translation have you picked? If you've picked a translation, if you've not done it yourself, and, or if you were using ancient Greek, and the reasons behind that choice, just your thoughts on how the story is told today through the lens of translation.

Helen:

Brilliant set of questions I'll work through.

Chorality, I think is really interesting, how on earth do you do the chorus in an online space. We've used a couple of different, techniques to feel the presence of a wider community around the central characters of the play. One is music and singing. So fairly early on we referenced the fact that people have been gathering at the city walls to flowers like candles and a sort of peace vigil and we looked at lots of different peace vigils in lots of different cultures and we ended up setting a section of the ancient Greek, which is sung by our rep company in a new setting by Alex Silverman and that is wound into the press conference that they're sharing some of the images from that vigil.

So that's one way that we're looking at chorality. A second way we look at it is we effectively hijack the chat function of zoom to mean that questions are frequently coming in to the discussion and the zoom space from members of the audience between us and our we start that off by having a number of people within the production team who have, who are starting to feed that into the chat function of the zoom and then audiences tend to pick up on it and take it over themselves.

So, we have a call or questioning of the characters going on throughout the production. That is audience. Antigone does have a tendency to try and hijack that and end up in conversations with the group or subgroups, and that's part of

the way the show works in that people can interact chorally themselves with her during the production.

And she often reaches out and asks for help from the wider audience. community in the way that Antigone appeals to the chorus in the play. And then the third way we brought chorality into it is through the character of Tiresias. And it's a little bit more of a radical departure from the original, but we spent a lot of time thinking about how to represent Tiresias in our secular space contemporary space.

And I think that's one of the interesting challenges of doing that. Staging Antigone, and I've had the privilege of directing the play before in a couple of contexts, and I've come up with very different solutions to that question in different theatrical contexts. And but in this particular context of the digital space, I was thinking about what would make, the key thing about what Tiresias does narratively in the play is make Creon change his mind a massive U turn.

And what would make a politician in that play. scenario changes mind. And I slightly owe my thinking on this. I've been thinking a lot about it. And I've been thinking about, the representation of Tiresias in some of the more recent adaptations in YLM's Tiresias at Regent's Park. And, when I did Antigone a decade ago or so ago Tiresias was in fact, a blind countertenor.

It was very operatic reworking of that. But trying to think about it in the space we were in. And I was in a car with Professor Christopher Marshall in Vancouver, and we were chatting about this question of Tiresias in a modern digital space and I said, but what would make a leader radically change their course and do a complete sort of 180 pivot on policy and he said opinion polls, surely.

And so, in the middle of the production polling is taking place. And that is genuinely, we are polling the audience at one point. And they interact with both through the Zoom space and through QR codes on their phone. So, members of the audience are receiving updates on their phone throughout the show as well, if they've opted into that.

And so, in the middle of the show they are polled both quantitatively and qualitatively. I think I'm giving away there that my late mother was the director of a market research company, and I left off far too much about market research. The audience, and they feed into the show at that point, and feed into Creon's decision making.

That feels very choral, and in fact, my favourite moment of that Which was one of the most glorious moments of surprise outreach. I think I've ever been involved with was in one of the performances, we knew that we had quite a lot of people watching the show who were screening it within schools, within educational settings.

So, I'd said to the actors, there are only. Quite a small number of people logged on to this, but don't be deceived, it's not actually a small audience. It's just that each of those logins is somebody who's showing it to a classroom or showing it to a hall of kids. And we'd given them a way that the kids could participate.

So, we got to that section and there were, and I said that it might be that teachers just type in on behalf of their whole group some suggestions. We're just about to move on from that moment. We're building a word cloud was building on the screen of words being fed in by the audience. And suddenly, clearly, one or several brilliant teachers had managed to get it to work for their young people to contribute.

And hundreds of contributions were coming into the, to the screen. And the whole thing was just growing and swelling, a massive word cloud of suggestions from teenagers around, their thoughts on Creon's behaviour and whether he was making the right decision or the wrong decision.

And it just exploded in terms of a community response to being asked the question as to whether he was doing, the right thing. And that was exactly what we were trying to achieve that, that there would be a community choral input into the production at that point, which is what makes, it's engineered by Tiresias, but it makes him change his mind at that point and make a massive U-turn in his decision. So that, those are different ways. We thought about chorality in a digital space during lockdown. I made a film for bare face group of a chorus from, and we spent quite a lot of time there thinking about onscreen chorality.

And in fact, in that we have lot of choral imagery built around the idea of people being in separate spaces, creating choral patterns. So, within that there's some choreography by Abigail Rosser, where everybody in their individual spaces has the same dance choreography and they're performing it sitting on a chair in their individual spaces, and then it is all built through the screen into a choral performance.

So, there are hundreds of people in separate spaces. being built into a chorus and we also recorded hundreds of people singing in different places and pulled

them together into a chorus. So having explored that in lockdown, literally making chorus out of people in lots and lots of different spaces, that wasn't what I wanted to do with this because we've done that thing of stitching together loads of performance from all over the place into a chorus that you watch. What we actually wanted to do was to involve the audience in being part of a chorus and what that meant. So effectively we, in this show, we're using lots of different ways for the audience to create choral moments.

In terms of translation and text, I don't think Antigone is just the most popular tragedy performed, I think it is the most popular play performed globally and historically. So, it is very interesting to think about how people access it and translations that they can access the text from.

And there are some decent freely available online translations. In terms of more recent translations that are readable, Oliver Taplin's translation or I really enjoy sometimes working with the Blake Morrison translation which does a few unusual things. The beginning is inverted, the chorus comes before the scene with Antigone and Ismene, but it's like reading Inua Ellams' version I think is very interesting for those studying the play.

It is not a translation, and it obviously restructures and tells the story in a slightly different way, but I think on a sliding scale, there are quite a few options there. In this production I translated the speeches myself. So, the text that Creon uses that is, mainly uses Eurydice's silence and the text for a lot of those key moments is a translation I did specifically for this production.

And while Creon is mainly quite tightly scripted, particularly when he's making a public address Haemon, who is making much more undercover contributions, is has a lot more improvised improvising space around the text. And there are flexible relationships to how tightly we've asked the actors to stick to those translations and how much they can improvise within the performance.

Antigone's performance is mostly improvised around a skeleton. Translation, text yeah, I would say on the scale of it, Creon is the most tightly scripted and I have translated that very much in the tonality of a contemporary politician making a statement outside, Downing Street or where else that might be at Antigone has a lot more freedom in her performance to be responsive to the moment and the audience.

We use a I don't want to give too much away, but we use a translation by another poet of one chorus deliberately because there is a moment in the piece where the poet laureate has been invited to not the actual poet laureate. It's not

Simon Hermitage The poet laureate in the world of play has been asked to comment on events and we use a very specific translation of one of the courses to do that and there is some ancient Greek in there, so The messenger speeches are effectively delivered as eyewitness speeches accounts that are news reportage and they are in the original ancient Greek with subtitles because it gives you the feel of something happening and somebody who has who doesn't necessarily speak your language as their first language is the person who's witnessed it and is giving the report in their own language and that is being mediated through a translation in the way that when we watch news reports and eyewitness accounts, they often are mediated Through translation.

So, it is filmed and assembled exactly in that way that somebody is speaking in another language, and they are being captioned in that. So if you want a little fix of some ancient Greek, there is there is a bit of ancient Greek in there when we get to the Messenger speeches and you get a little hit of the original language and the first chorus, a bit of the first chorus is in there in the original l, ancient Greek, but you absolutely don't need to know any Ancient Greek to watch it whatsoever. I think because of the style of the show and how interactive it is, we'd have struggled to use an existing translation faithfully, because the actors have to have a bit of space to, to respond to what is happening.

And, of course, we've got this very central character of the sort of PR who's trying to anchor the press conference, which is not in the original play at all. And so, it wasn't so much an act of creative megalomania to do the translation myself. It was more that if it's my translation, I can absolutely give people permission to improvise around it, or be clear about what matters and what can slide in a way that it's more tricky if you're working with something that pre-exists, or that you've asked somebody else to translate and, it may or may not be that in a certain performance, All of the words get said in the right order.

So yes, so it's that was a really enjoyable part of it. And actually, we did a bit of changing it on the hoof. So, we, some bits of the show are pre-recorded. That's a bit of a spoiler. You can't necessarily tell that because there's a few bits that are live feeds that come in, but they are, some of them are pre-recorded.

And when we were filming them, we were filming them all against a green screen in the North Oxford sunshine in a side alley. near a deep consecrated church in Summertown. It was a very hot day and what's quite funny is that we'd only costumed anybody from the waist up because everyone was delivering from the podium.

So, if you look at a photo of the recording like Creon is there in a very, looking very dapper in a very smart suit and tie and shirt, but actually, was in his beach shorts from the waist downwards. And so yeah there's absolutely no point in investing in costumes from the waist down if nobody's going to see them.

It was a very funny filming session, but I had my pencil out and as we were filming was occasionally changing bits of translation or scribbling on the translations and updating things just to, to make them work when we saw it happen in, absolutely in performance and Emily Woodward who many of creation's audience will know, she's in the creation rep company, and she's been outstanding in a lot of creation shows this year. Extraordinary. She played Rosalind in *As You Like It* this summer. She plays Ismene in those moments. And We gave her a lot of space around the text to find her own sort of truth through that moment of deciding to make her own public statement which serves that moment in the text, where it is mainly tries to take responsibility for what's happened, obviously that it's not true, she didn't take part in it, and So filming it with those actors was a real journey of discovery, and it, When you know a play very well, And you've had a decades long relationship with it, It is amazing to discover completely new things in it when you're working with a different group of actors, And they pull different moments out of the text, or they pull different ideas out of the language, or they, pull different things out of the relationships that they're building with each other and for me it's been I genuinely feel like I've learnt more about the play through trying to present it in a radically different genre because you work out what's really important to the storytelling or to the relationship so what, what is absolutely at the heart of it if you try and, transplant it across to a different medium.

But I also felt like it was a show that I couldn't have made. 20 years ago because I could only make it in that way because of a long and sustained relationship with the play, which meant I knew it well enough to feel confident making those choices about what was important and what needed to be in the adaptation and what we could let go of and felt confident enough doing that, on the, with actors in a way that was collaborative and joyful.

So, I think it's, it feels like it's not something I could have made much, 10 years ago in the same. Same way. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, that that sort of versatility and semi-improvised content sounds really exciting as well. And yeah, it does probably require quite a lot of mastery of the text to be able to play with it effectively.

Claire:

You mentioned Inua Ellams' *Antigone* actually any listeners who are interested in learning a bit more about that. We actually have on our YouTube channel an interview which Helen conducted with in a couple of years ago now, which I can't believe it's been that long. And that was the back of my mind as well while you were talking even before you brought it up and it made me think of a sort of *Antigone* and politics have never been devoid of each other in their reception history, but there's something that was going on around that time, maybe a couple of years prior as well, with Kamila Shamsie's novel, *Home Fire*, associating *Antigone* with clashes of politics, identity, and the news you can trust, and the authorities you can trust, and to which of those one wants to be answerable. And I wondered if that kind of taps into that sort of peri and post Covid cultural moment a little bit as well. So obviously the nature of the press briefing makes us think, certainly in the UK, of those Boris briefings that we're all getting. And a lot of news being disseminated via online news channels that are possibly more open to fake news or, vulnerability or misconstrued in that way. And I, yeah, I just wondered if obviously the ideas for these, for this performance kind of would have been closer to COVID than we are now. Was there a sense of tapping into kind of cultural, political discourses that were happening at the time? Thinking particularly in terms of a lot of the audience are likely to be younger people as well.

They're going to be quite interested in, what it means to be listening to politicians, listening to authority figures. Yeah, do you interrogate that in any way or play with that?

Helen:

Yeah, I think it's really interesting to think about how we listen to news, how news is communicated and how we gather to experience global events or important events.

And the format of the kind of news conference did take on a whole new life in COVID when we all watched those press conferences. And I thought a lot about the people organizing those and coordinating those. And The difference between watching them, alone at home, the difference between watching in groups, and what it means to experience news in that way.

And actually, interestingly, Creation, we've had quite a few productions that we worked on this year that have looked at how tragedy in the broadest sense is mediated through news media in our lives now. Our production of *Animal Farm* earlier this year had a massive great screen that was Blurring out something akin to Phlox News through the whole thing.

And how we now mediate parts of our experience through that lens which obviously would not be part of an Ancient Greek experience you're gathering. But they were mediating their experience through the theatre and how the play talks about big questions about choices, justice, rule, whatever it might be.

The society was having those conversations through gathering and watching these plays. And what might it mean now for us to gather and around one of these plays, and the actions of it and See you It's fascinating in that sense, because it is the ultimate way to gather what existed. Five years ago, there was a bit of business conferencing going on, but it certainly wasn't mainstream in any sense.

And suddenly we went through this period where everyone was having, Friday night parties on Zoom and catching up for Zoom coffees and pub quizzes and cocktails. And we were learning how to gather in that. And maybe we've learned how to do that so we can reject it as a society. Maybe what we learn is that has no relationship to gathering in real space.

Or maybe we learn that there are Things we can take from gathering in a virtual space. And I hosted a poetry reading every Friday lunchtime for the whole of lockdown. I think I hosted 40, not the whole of lockdown, I hosted about 45 of them. And that became a community that met at one o'clock on a Friday.

And for a lot of people that was giving a shape to their week or a start to their weekend. And it was a place to, to listen and think and stop and reflect. And yes, I think it, there is a sense in which the production is catching that moment. The tail end, of the moment, and also being ready to look back on that.

I think the first novel I read that was set in lockdown, After lockdown Claire Pollard's absolutely brilliant Delphi. I realised how much our lives, and our worlds have changed very suddenly, and how little I'd processed any of that. And I don't know if anyone had a similar experience, but reading that novel, I was shocked to be taken back to moments of, the moments where we were all arguing over who got to go to the supermarket because only one person was allowed to go out of the house for an hour a day and standing in our queues. That actually so much had happened and so little of it had been processed. So, I think starting to make work that draws on the aesthetics of that period in our lives and the experiences of that period Our lives are, um, is essential for us to process collectively what happened to all of us in that sense.

I think there's another question there, which is about how we deal with news and being in, watching news and watching press conferences. And I think the

Boris Johnson era was a particularly challenging era for questioning the truthfulness of things that were being stated in the newsroom. In the public eye, and because it had so much impact on our lives during lockdowns, for most of us, that is the period of our lives where the government had the most impact on our day to day existence that we will probably live through, hopefully, unless there's something else around the corner but trying to negotiate what's true and what's not true what is genuine, what's Not genuine, how you feel about the choices that are being made in front of you and the speed at which things are changing is very much a feature of this production.

It's fast, like the whole film plays out in under an hour. And so, you go from, it's the morning after a civil war and we are celebrating peace and there are people singing in the streets and laying flowers because the civil war is over, to, here's a new leader. taking control of the situation to, they've made this decision, is it the right decision, is it the wrong decision, what on earth's going on, what are the repercussions of that decision, they're trying to u turn on the decision but it's too late, within about 45 minutes.

And the speed of the changing news agenda, the anxieties about what you believe and what you don't believe, watching public figures try to negotiate public space while also the personal impacts of that. I think it feels very much of this moment and an opportunity to reflect on what the press conference means.

A surprising amount of the show plays out in press conference sort of aesthetics. People are at podiums making speeches. And then they're hijacking other media to try and give the counter narrative. So, without giving too much away, He's got the podium. He's got the official news. Broadcasts that are coming out and every time, there's an announcement that he's going to make a speech We get an alert to our phone that says he's about to make a speech and it's playing out on the screen and it's playing out on YouTube and it's playing out all around us.

Cleon's making a speech and that leaves Antigone to try and have to hijack the Zoom because she hasn't got the official platform. And then it causes chaos when Haemon decides to make his own unofficial statement, and he hasn't gone through his father, and he hasn't gone through the press channels, and he suddenly puts out a statement on YouTube and we are all persuaded to go and watch it rather than watch the official broadcast.

So, our audiences are being persuaded to try and dissect what is the main issue. news agenda, which is Creon's official broadcast, against what Antigone and

Hymen are giving us during the show. And particularly Haemon, who is going live on his own rogue YouTube channel, much to his father's absolute horror, because Creon can no longer control the story that Haemon is putting out.

At the moment Haemon, which is played by Herb Cuanalo, who you might know from what I read, but he is suddenly just recording stuff on his phone and putting it out there, which we can all now do, right? We can all now subvert the main news narrative if we get enough followers on our TikTok or, we, and actually, that is fascinating to watch people wrestle for control of the story and wrestle for control of the audience.

And that's the moment where Creon's really, losing his grip because suddenly he can't control the production anymore because these other characters are hijacking the ways of, the ways of communicating with the audience. The audience, if that makes sense. Try not to give too many spoilers, but no, that's fine.

Giovanna:

That's really interesting. Can I change topic and go to the poster for Antigone? What about this very kind of futuristic aesthetics? Does that kind of impact on the sort of images or imagery that you use in the performance and if so now, without too many spoilers, but if you could talk about it a little bit.

Giovanna:

Yeah, absolutely. That image is, for anyone who's not seen it, it's it juxtaposes a sort of what we might think of as a slightly archetypal, dare I say, colonial image of Antigone as a white bust statue, a sort of woman preserved in history as a Greek iconic Greek statue against a huge number of CCTV cameras, and a lot of slightly undecipherable newspaper copy.

And it's juxtaposing what we think of sometimes when we are preconceived notion of the ancient Greeks and plays and ancient culture as white marble statues in a pristine museum against a messy cottage news. landscape where there are cameras everywhere, which is the world in which the play plays out.

And so, the aesthetics of the production are completely contemporary. It looks like the here and now, but the reality of that is that we are mixing what looks like news footage and people, official press Release stuff with footage that people are self-filming, self-taping on phones as part of trying to grab the news

agenda themselves and some footage that is taken from CCTV, which is aesthetically really interesting.

We catch the final moments of Creon with Hyman's body. On a, what is effectively a long lens paparazzi camera catching the images through several bits of barbed wire designed to keep people well away. And so, it, so there's a sort of aesthetic interest in how we are fed images of people's public life and what they look like in the production. So yes, that that, that image on the poster is in some ways about placing a sort of perhaps what you might think of as an outdated, iconic image of a Greek woman into a more complex landscape of a modern life.

Claire:

I have a bunch of other things I want to ask, but I'm aware that we're at 40 should we start to wrap up a little bit?

I wanted to ask Helen, if we're directing people, I noticed there's a September, run and a November run on the website? So, is that the same thing for both if we?

Helen:

Yeah, so you can direct people. Shows on at the end of September and in November, and in both cases there's a number of performances clustered around a couple of days, and they're at slightly different times for different time zones.

And if educational groups want to, there's a special ticket they can buy, which just allows them to have access to a performance and screen it within a day. school or lecture hall, but actually if they'd like to schedule a specific performance for their group, we can schedule some additional performances in around those dates.

So, people should just in touch if they'd like to do one at a very specific time. So, it's in a particular lecture slot or in a particular classroom slot. That's great. And if people want to follow you, the artist's formula is Twitter. You're on X, I think, still. We are so creation theatre. On X, on Instagram, and also, if you go to our website, which is @creationtheatre.co.uk, you can join our mailing list and find out about things that we've got going on that are very specifically Oxford, so site specific shows in and around Oxford, and then things we've got going on that are deliberately for our wider, more global audience.