



New life for ancient heroine

THEATRE *Antigone*

By Sophocles, adapted by Eamon Flack.
ThinIce. Subiaco Arts Centre, Perth,
February 25. Tickets: \$35. Bookings: (08)
9484 1133. Until March 7.

CREATIVITY surges through ThinIce's version of *Antigone* as surely as Kreon, new king of Thebes, turns his hard and fast rules into weapons of execution. One of the most striking aspects of this modern-day adaptation is not Matthew Lutton's full-blooded and heartfelt direction, although he has admirably achieved both these stated ambitions in his second production for Perth International Arts Festival.

The feat that impresses first is that adapter Eamon Flack has taken Sophocles's words and made them vivid to an audience nearly 2500 years after they were written. Flack took his job seriously, teaching himself to read Greek and then reworking the ancient drama into modern English that almost never jars on the ear.

Elevating the text even further are the superb original song cycles crafted by Schwendes band singer and lyricist Rachael Dease. The raven-haired songstress commands a pivotal place on stage; she sings live with her three fellow musicians, forming a modern-day Greek chorus that comments on the tragedy as it unfolds.

If language is the star of the show, the eight cast members are its inspired messengers. As a petite and feisty Antigone, Kate Mulvany seethes with the indignation of a young woman who won't be broken by her city's oppressive ruler; she will give her disgraced brother a fitting burial against Kreon's express wishes. Samantha Murray is a good foil as her more conformist sister Ismene.

Colin Moody's excellent performance as Kreon conjures up a leader who addresses his people with the air of a smug and mildly sinister local mayor. Obey my rules and we'll get along fine, he says. Highlights are Kreon interrogating a terrified guard (played amusingly by Gibson Nolte) and, later, Kreon crumbling as his rigid convictions claim the lives of those he loves.

This production is so admirably bold that small problems seem petty: a shallow pool of water that actors slosh through is distracting in the early scenes; and Dease's sung pearls of wisdom are inaudible in a couple of places.

Lutton has chosen his team wisely for *Antigone*, from his long-standing collaboration with set and costume designer Bryan Woltjen and sound designer Kingsley Reeve to the exciting new input of Dease. *Antigone* is the product of a highly satisfying blend of many talents.

Victoria Laurie