



Antigone pours it all on

THEATRE

Antigone
 By Sophocles (adapted by Eamon Flack)
 Thinice Productions
 Subiaco Arts Centre
 Review: Ali Taulbut

It seems there's quite a buzz about young director Matthew Lutton. That said, Perth stage hands must tremble at the thought of a Lutton production with his trademark liking for onstage fluids. During Wednesday night's premiere of the classic Greek tragedy *Antigone*, onstage musicians were surprisingly nonchalant about the big pool of water rippling just a few metres away from their electric instruments.

Antigone's plot is straightforward enough, and Eamon Flack's adaptation included a brief prologue to clarify the Oedipus connection. Oedipus has died, mad with the realisation that he married his mother. His uncle Kreon takes the throne of Thebes after war in the city. Oedipus' sons have killed each other on the battlefield: one is a hero; the other, Polynikes, a traitor.

At the play's opening, Kreon has decreed, against his adviser's counsel, that Polynikes' body should be left unburied where he fell. Antigone, Polynikes' sister, defies the law and

buries her brother, prompting Kreon to overreact in spectacular Greek tragedy style and sentence her to a gruesome death.

The shallow water pool dominated the stage space and was integral throughout the play as a performance space, standing as a clear metaphor for the shifting political waters in which the citizens of Thebes were wading in the aftermath of a bloody war. Transparent panels formed a back wall and provided a space for some of the usually unseen images of death and moments of violence. Particularly effective was the mud-smeared figure of Polynikes, an ever-present reminder of the nearness of death, a literally restless soul.

An excellent cast was dominated by Colin Moody as Kreon. He began as the smooth statesman with wifely support, talking the talk, certain of his moral rectitude. Brylcreemed and black-clad, he looked for all the world like Tony Soprano, sharing the charismatic mafia boss's misogyny and gnawing insecurities as he sprinted into despotic autocracy.

We saw repeated ritualised cleansing — corpses were sponged down, water dripped and Kreon's wife Euridice muttered laments over the sodden clothes of the dead before lowering them reverently into her washing machine.

Nicola Bartlett as Euridice spoke volumes in her constant but silent presence, embodying female socio-political powerlessness. Her eventual despair and lonely death made a haunting image.

Kate Mulvaney's stubbornly defiant Antigone was perhaps a shade too much the modern woman. But as she faced inevitable death her primal screams of, "Look men, men look, look at what you do, men", over loud amplified music were heart-wrenching.

The chorus took the occasionally distracting shape of singer Rachael Dease, but functioned in much the usual way.

Lutton's decision to "show" where tradition usually "tells" was effective and congruent where it could have been gratuitous and gimmicky. Individual audience imagination was still a compelling component of his taut direction.

A fusty facsimile of ancient Greek theatre would be a pointless exercise. Flack's adaptation is linguistically sharp and direct yet poetic. It is relevant and comprehensible to a modern audience whilst being faithful to the form.

Lutton's *Antigone* is imaginative, artful and thoroughly entertaining.

Antigone ends on March 7



Outpouring: Colin Moody in *Antigone*, directed by Matthew Lutton, at Subiaco Arts Centre.

Picture: Bill Hatto