

DIDASKALIA 

The Journal for Ancient Performance



*Didaskalia is an electronic journal dedicated to the study of all aspects of ancient Greek and Roman performance*

# DIDASKALIA

## Volume 12 (2015)

<http://didaskalia.net>

ISSN 1321-485

## About Didaskalia

Didaskalia (διδασκαλία) is the term used since ancient times to describe the work a playwright did to teach his chorus and actors the play. The official records of the dramatic festivals in Athens were the διδασκαλία. *Didaskalia* now furthers the scholarship of the ancient performance.

*Didaskalia* is an English-language, online publication about the performance of Greek and Roman drama, dance, and music. We publish peer-reviewed scholarship on performance and reviews of the professional activity of artists and scholars who work on ancient drama.

We welcome submissions on any aspect of the field. If you would like your work to be reviewed, please write to [editor@didaskalia.net](mailto:editor@didaskalia.net) at least three weeks in advance of the performance date. We also seek interviews with practitioners and opinion pieces. For submission guidelines, go to [didaskalia.net](http://didaskalia.net).

---

### 2015 Staff

Editor-in-Chief:	Amy R. Cohen	<a href="mailto:editor@didaskalia.net">editor@didaskalia.net</a> +1 434 947-8117
		<i>Didaskalia</i> Randolph College 2500 Rivermont Avenue Lynchburg, VA 24503 USA
Associate Editor:	C.W. (Toph) Marshall	
Assistant Editor:	Jay Kardan	<a href="mailto:assistant-editor@didaskalia.net">assistant-editor@didaskalia.net</a>
Interns:	Grace Gardiner Kiaorea Wright Sophia Dill	<a href="mailto:intern@didaskalia.net">intern@didaskalia.net</a>

---

### Advisory Board

Caterina Barone	Oliver Taplin
John Davidson	Peter Toohey
Gary Decker	J. Michael Walton
Mark Griffith	David Wiles
Mary Hart	Paul Woodruff
Kenneth Reckford	

---

### Editorial Board

Dorota Dutsch	Dan McCaffrey
Allison Futrell	Marianne McDonald
Mary-Kay Gamel	Peter Meineck
John Given	Paul Menzer
Mike Lippman	Tim Moore
Fiona Macintosh	Nancy Rabinowitz
Willie Major	Brett Rogers
	John Starks

---

### Copyright

Readers are permitted to save or print any files from *Didaskalia* as long as there are no alterations made in those files. Copyright remains with the authors, who are entitled to reprint their work elsewhere if due acknowledgement is made to the earlier publication in *Didaskalia*. Contributors are responsible for getting permission to reproduce any photographs or video they submit and for providing the necessary credits.

Website design © *Didaskalia*.

*Didaskalia* is published at Randolph College.

**DIDASKALIA**  
**VOLUME 12 (2015)**  
**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

12.01	<b>Review - Euripides' <i>Ion</i> at Barnard/Columbia</b> Talia Varonos-Pavlopoulos	1
12.02	<b>Review - <i>Antigona</i> at West Park Presbyterian Church</b> Michael Goyette	7
12.03	<b>ADIP- The Masks of <i>Nō</i> and Tragedy: Their Expressivity and Theatrical and Social Functions</b> Gary Mathews	12
12.04	<b>Review and Interview - <i>Stink Foot</i> at The Yard, London</b> Julie Ackroyd	29
12.05	<b>Review - <i>Bacchae</i> at Theatro Technis, London</b> Julie Ackroyd	33
12.06	<b>Roman Comedy in Performance: Using the Videos of the 2012 NEH Summer Institute</b> Timothy J. Moore and Sharon L. James	37
12.07	<b>Interviews and Reflections on the NEH Summer Institute on Roman Comedy in Performance, or What We Did at Roman Comedy Camp</b> Mike Lippman and Amy R. Cohen	51
12.08	<b>Review - <i>Oedipus the King</i> at Randolph College</b> Cristina Pérez Díaz	56
12.09	<b>Review - 51st Season of Classical Plays at the Greek Theatre in Syracuse: Aeschylus's <i>The Suppliants</i>, Euripides's <i>Iphigenia in Aulis</i>, and Seneca's <i>Medea</i></b> Caterina Barone	59
12.10	<b>Review - <i>Fatman</i> at Move to Stand and <i>Orpheus</i> at Little Bulb Theatre</b> Stephe Harrop	63
12.11	<b>Review - <i>Medea</i> at The Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film</b> Amy R. Cohen	66
12.12	<b>Dictating Parody in Plautus' <i>Rudens</i></b> Seth Jeppesen	69

---

**Note**

*Didaskalia* is an online journal. This print representation of Volume 12 is an inadequate approximation of the web publication at [didaskalia.net](http://didaskalia.net), which includes sound, video, and live hyperlinks.

## Antigona

Directed by Martín Santangelo  
 July 13-August 15, 2015  
 West Park Presbyterian Church (165 W. 86th Street)  
 New York, New York

Reviewed by **Michael Goyette**  
*Brooklyn College*

“Vamos a cantar y bailar antes que empieza la tragedia!” (“Let us sing and dance in the face of tragedy!”) Thus intones a member of the chorus in the opening scene of *Antigona*, proclaiming the spirit of this flamenco interpretation of Sophocles’ *Antigone*. A complex amalgam of music, song, and dance, flamenco is an art form that cannot easily be pinned down, and the same is true of this unique performance, which could be described as a dance play, musical theatre, or some combination of the two. Directed and produced by Martín Santangelo, *Antigona* was performed in Spanish (with English supertitles) by the world-renowned Noche Flamenca touring company at West Park Presbyterian Church from July 13 to August 15, 2015 (note: Noche Flamenca will return for a second run of *Antigona* there from December 11, 2015 through January 23, 2016).



*Soledad Barrio as Antigone*  
 (photo: Zarnik Moqtaderi)

Flamenco may seem a surprising medium for Greek tragedy, and I am not aware of any other performance that has attempted to integrate these seemingly disparate modes of creative expression.<sup>1</sup> A multicultural art form that evolved in the Andalusia region of Spain in the 15th–17th centuries, flamenco was partly born out of the repression and expulsion of such groups as the Jews, Arabs, and Romani. It thus wields sufficient pathos and historical weight to channel the anguish of Greek tragedy. Sophocles’ *Antigone*, with its themes of tyranny, loss of life, passion, female empowerment, and the strength and division of family, is particularly apt for such an interpretation.



*Soledad Barrio as Antigone*  
 (photo: Zarnik Moqtaderi)

According to the program notes, the idea for this production came to Santangelo in 2010, when a Spanish judge, Baltasar Garzón, was suspended for his efforts to honor those opponents of the Franco regime who were buried in mass graves. For Santangelo, Garzón’s effort to allow their families to give them proper burial evoked Sophocles’ play and suggested its persistent relevance. *Antigona* was developed in the years that followed, and it premiered in October 2014 at the University of Washington in Seattle, following a two-week residency Santangelo completed there.

West Park Presbyterian Church might seem a curious venue for such a show (I cannot but note the peculiar feeling of watching a Greek tragedy from a church pew), but it effectively accommodates the performance’s captivating barrage of sights and sounds. The questions that the performance raises about

fairness, integrity, and human dignity also seem in keeping with the Church's avowed mission "to serve as an incubator for social justice and progressive activism."<sup>2</sup>

Over the past few decades, *Antigone* has surely been one of the most frequently performed Greek tragedies,<sup>3</sup> especially when one factors in high school and college productions. But it would be wrong simply to call *Antigone* a performance or even a "version" of Sophocles' famous play. With fifteen "scenes" (as outlined in the program notes) and a cast that incorporates Polyneices, Eteocles, Oedipus, and Jocasta as characters, it is in fact significantly broader in narrative scope than the Sophoclean tragedy. It dramatizes events that occur near the end of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannos*, including Jocasta's suicide and Oedipus' self-blinding, as well as the combat between Polyneices and Eteocles that is related in Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*. For spectators unfamiliar with the mythological background of the play, these scenes helpfully contextualize the events that later transpire among Antigone, Ismene, Creon, and Haemon. Some of the transitions between scenes, however, are a bit abrupt or obscure, forming a loose collection of vignettes through which the narrative moves in a sometimes-meandering path.

The cast numbers fifteen, including eight chorus members, five of whom also take on the role of a character. They are accompanied by a band of four talented musicians (two acoustic guitarists, one electric guitarist/bass player, and one percussionist), all of whom remain on stage throughout the performance. Whereas both the actors and chorus members wore masks in the time of Sophocles, in this performance masks are donned by the chorus members and by the musicians, but not by the actors. A bit strangely, they wear the masks on the side or even on the back of their heads. It is clear that the director is utilizing the masks to toy with the conventions of ancient Greek drama, but the purpose of these particular effects remains opaque for this reviewer.

There is no doubt that the star of the performance is Soledad Barrio, who plays Antigone and exhibits her talents as a world-renowned flamenco dancer. She conveys the passion of the character with the technical prowess and sheer intensity of her dance, physically embodying the theme of female empowerment that is central both to Sophocles' play<sup>4</sup> and to the art of flamenco itself. In comparison with the highly energetic dancing of Antigone, Ismene's choreography is—while still undeniably skillful—generally more restrained. This difference in dynamics effectively contrasts the daring and rebellion of the former character with the tentative and obsequious nature of the latter.

The performance opens with all of the cast members and musicians on stage, seated in chairs that form a semicircle. Perched above them is the prophet Tiresias (Pepito Jiménez), who leads the ensemble in a prayer asking Zeus to lift the curse from the royal family of Thebes. The actual altar of the church serves as his divinatory altar—a fortuitous convergence of performance space and dramatic space. Wearing all-black clothing, a stately beard, and dark sunglasses, this Tiresias is an imposing presence. He cries out in the flamenco singing style known as *cante jondo*, or "deep song"—a form of incantation closely related to the woeful chanting of the Sephardic Jews exiled from Andalusia. This mode of expression suits the tortured clairvoyance of an ancient Greek prophet, and his magnificent delivery of the *cante* is simultaneously enrapturing and foreboding.

Following Tiresias' prognosticatory wailing, Ismene addresses the audience, introducing herself and other members of her family while also giving some important background information. For a few lines, she suddenly and inexplicably breaks out into English, joking at one point that she is "bilingual"—then only to continue in Spanish for the rest of the play. Both the abruptness of this linguistic modulation and the briefness of the English interlude are startling, and I wondered exactly what it is meant to achieve. Furthermore, Ismene's few lines of English are spoken in a stereotypical "Valley girl" accent; she states, for example, that her family is afflicted by "like a super-evil curse". While these speech idiosyncrasies may serve to characterize her as less mature than her sister Antigone, this shtick digresses from the overall tone of the performance, veering toward the realm of farce.

As Ismene relates the family's calamitous history, Jocasta makes her brief appearance as a character and acts out her suicide; Oedipus then seizes her "hairpins" (two chopsticks lodged in a bun of hair) and mimes blinding himself in a rather melodramatic gesture. The family then suffers further bloodshed in the dramatized battle between Polyneices and Eteocles. A stare-down anticipates their duel: intersecting spotlights beam upon each character, and an electric guitar blares a moody, operatic rock solo—a sonically dazzling departure from traditional flamenco music. Despite all of this build-up, the battle itself is a bit anticlimactic. As the brothers finally engage in hand-to-hand combat, a strobe light starts to flash and the actors move their bodies and limbs so as to produce a slow-motion effect, which saps the scene of some of its intensity and impact. While the rest of the performance exudes a highly visceral passion and vivacity, the choreography of this important moment is relatively languorous.

More effective is the chorus' chanted demand for "Sangre! Sangre!" ("Blood! Blood!") in the lead-up to both Oedipus' self-blinding and the dramatized battle between Polyneices and Eteocles. The repetition of this savage refrain emphasizes the inescapable cycle of strife and killing that is perpetuated through multiple generations of this tortured family. The motif of blood is also accentuated by the wine-colored dress that Antigone wears in most scenes of the performance. This striking garment evokes both the family's unending cycle of bloodshed and the passionate nature of the character herself.

After the mutual slaughter of the brothers, Creon is inaugurated as the new king of Thebes. This elaborate scene assembles most of the cast members, many of them playing kazoos to announce and celebrate his coronation. The buzzing of these puerile instruments seems to herald a reign of folly, but Creon and his acolytes march in superciliously unaware. The kazoo is not a musical instrument typically associated with flamenco, but its use in this scene is a clever touch, signaling the absurdity of Creon's tyranny.

The prime example of Creon's despotism is, of course, his inflexible refusal to allow the body of Polyneices to be buried. Before Antigona defiantly sneaks in to bury him, Polyneices' body sits exposed onstage for some time—first, the actual body of the actor, and then, following a change of scene, a mutilated figure made of papier mâché or a similar material. When the remnants of the body are finally absent from the stage, much time has passed. For those familiar with the inspiration behind this production, it is impossible not to think of Franco's fallen enemies, long denied the dignity of proper burial.

Refusing to accept this treatment of her brother, Antigona dances passionately around his body in a seeming attempt to conjure him back to life. In this spectacle, as in other scenes, music, song, and dance combine to produce a shamanistic effect. Like Antigone herself, the art of flamenco seems capable of blurring the boundaries of life and death—indeed, to summon up the spirits of the dead.<sup>5</sup> Threatened by this power and by Antigona's insubordination, Creon sentences her to death.

Before dying, she experiences a brief moment of happiness with Haemon. This is a significant though not-unwelcome departure from Sophocles' text, in which these two characters never appear together.<sup>6</sup> Haemon expresses his love for Antigona, and they share a joyful dance. This affords a moment of respite from the otherwise gloomy events of the performance, and even brings a fleeting smile to Antigona's face. It also affords a moment to shine for Haemon (Juan Ogaglia), who clearly proves to be one of the most outstanding dancers in the cast. Here and in other scenes, the role of Haemon is elevated to one of greater importance than in most productions of *Antigone*.

A somber mood quickly returns after the dance of Haemon and Antigona. Having been sentenced to death by Creon and still stricken with great pain on behalf of Polyneices and the rest of her family, Antigona chooses to commit suicide. In one of the most dramaturgically creative moments of the show, Antigona lies on top of a long white cloth laid across the stage, while her brothers—or rather the dead

shades of her brothers—pull one end of the cloth, literally dragging her toward death. This striking and memorable image, laden with symbolism, portrays the brothers as chthonic forces that share responsibility for her end. It is thus not only the intransigence of Creon but also the unresolved fraternal discord that kills Antigona, far more explicitly than in Sophocles' play.

The extended length of cloth also evokes the image of the thread of Fate, as if Antigona is being processed to her inevitable doom. Even more morbidly, the cloth may suggest the noose with which she is about to hang herself. Finally, it resembles a long, trailing bridal veil—a reminder of the living marriage from which Antigona is being drawn, and of the “marriage” to death toward which she is instead being taken.<sup>7</sup>

The suicides of Antigona, Haemon, and Eurydice are acted out in rapid succession, with intervals of mere seconds between them, producing an impression of near simultaneity. As usual in Greek tragedy, Sophocles does not portray these deaths onstage but has them related by a messenger. In Sophocles' play the messenger first reports the death of Haemon (v. 1175) to the coryphaeus. Having overheard parts of this speech, Eurydice enters and fearfully asks the messenger to clarify (vv. 1183–1191); the messenger then explains that Haemon has killed himself after seeing Antigone hanging (v. 1221). Creon enters and the messenger leaves, only to reappear shortly thereafter and report that Eurydice has just killed herself as well. In *Antigona* the narrative is even more compressed, to both positive and negative effect. On the one hand, this approach is successful in illustrating the chain of causation and familial consequences that are set in motion by Creon's decree (even though the order of the deaths does not correspond to their order in Sophocles). At the same time, the abruptness of the suicides in *Antigona* lessens the impact of each individual death.

Like Sophocles' play, *Antigona* concludes with Creon repenting his stubbornness and holding himself responsible for the deaths, and finally with the chorus professing the dangers of hubristic pride. The performance as a whole is satisfying, especially in its musical elements (the guitar work is particularly majestic) and choreography, most notably the dancing of Soledad Barrio and Juan Ogaglia. The performance departs from the narrative structure of Sophocles' play frequently and significantly, but it never professes to follow Sophocles line for line, and most of the departures are rewarding and thought provoking, especially when showcasing elements of flamenco.

While there are a few moments in which the performance wavers in tone and intention, *Antigona* is largely successful in bringing a fresh and innovative approach to a Greek tragedy that has often been performed, adapted, and reinterpreted. In the end, I was left with the impression that flamenco is well suited to the presentation of Greek tragedy—unsurprisingly, if we consider flamenco's mournfulness and aggression, its complex combination of music, dance, and other performative elements, and its use of deeply probing poetry driven by existential suffering: all qualities associated with Greek tragedy. I commend Martín Santangelo for perceiving the kinship of these art forms, and for having the creative vision to bring them together in a compelling union.

Of all the extant Greek tragedies, *Antigone* may be the one most suited to marriage with flamenco. Its themes of dictatorship, repression, loss, family, passion, and female empowerment all deeply resonate with the roots and spirit of the Spanish art form. None of these themes is unique to *Antigone*, however, and it is tempting to propose other ancient plays for flamenco interpretation. One enticing possibility is Euripides' *Medea*, which—like *Antigone*—has a passionate female lead who acts in defiance of a haughty and powerful man. *Medea* also deals with issues of multiculturalism, a matter germane to the very foundations of flamenco.

---

## notes

<sup>1</sup> Searching through the annals of Didaskalia, I found an original performance entitled *The World*

Mysteries: Mysteries of Eleusis (conceived, written, and directed by Vasilios Calitsis; co-written by Tasos Roussos) which incorporated a single flamenco dancer in its cast. This performance dramatized elements of the Eleusinian Mysteries and related mythology, and was performed at The Brooklyn Academy of Music in October 1998. See: [http://www.didaskalia.net/reviews/1998\\_10\\_16\\_01.html](http://www.didaskalia.net/reviews/1998_10_16_01.html).

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.westparkpresbyterian.org/author/editor>. Accessed August 30, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Close to the time this article was published, another interpretation of Antigone, based upon a translation by Anne Carson, was being performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (September 24–October 4, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> As Creon states in reference to Antigone's dissentious demeanor in Sophocles' play, ἢ νῦν ἐγὼ μὲν οὐκ ἄνθρωπος, αὕτη δ' ἄνθρωπος (Now I am not a man, but she is a man. v. 484). Note: when quoting the Greek, this article follows the Oxford Classical Text edited by A.C. Pearson (1924). The translations are my own.

<sup>5</sup> In the Introduction to his translation of the play, Richard Emil Braun observes that Creon condemns Antigone to a "living death," effectively making her an intermediary between the worlds of the living and the dead (Braun, Sophocles: Antigone, Oxford and New York, 1973, p. 14, see also 11–13). Antigone directly acknowledges this liminal aspect of her situation: "ὦ δῦστανος, βροτοῖς / οὔτε (νεκρὸς) νεκροῖσιν / μέτοικος, οὐ ζῶσιν οὐ θανοῦσιν" (Oh wretched me, I am a corpse among people—not among the dead—a metic not among the living, not among the dead. vv. 850–852).

<sup>6</sup> In fact, in Sophocles' play it is very possible that the actor playing Haemon also played the role of Antigone (otherwise, the actor playing Haemon would have also played the role of Ismene). On this point, see Antigone, trans. William Blake Tyrell and Larry J. Bennett, p. 63 n. 81.

<sup>7</sup> In Sophocles' play, Antigone speaks of her own death as if she is undertaking a marriage to Hades, e.g., καὶ νῦν ἄγει με διὰ χερῶν οὔτω λαβὼν / ἄλεκτρον, ἀνυμέναιον, οὔτε του γάμου / μέρος λαχοῦσαν οὔτε παιδείου τροφῆς... (And now, taking me by the hands he leads me away, unbedded, unwed, without obtaining a portion from the marriage and without a child to rear..., vv. 916–918; see also 1240–1241).