Citation for published version (APA):
Edward Nesbit

Antigone

Chamber Opera in three parts
for five voices and piano
ANTIGONE

EDWARD NESBIT

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Part I of Antigone was first performed by Shadwell Opera in The Octagon, Queen Mary University of London on 20th February 2018 under the title The Grief of Antigone.

CHARACTERS

ANTIGONE - Mezzo-soprano
THESEUS/CREON - Tenor
CHORUS - Soprano, Soprano, Alto

Piano

Duration c. 60'

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PERFORMANCE NOTE

Grace notes should be played before the beat.

SYNOPSIS

Part I

The closing passage of Sophocles’ play Oedipus at Colonus. The child Antigone has just received news of the death of her father Oedipus. She mourns her father and yearns to return to her home in Thebes, conversing with and receiving comfort from the chorus. At the end of the scene Theseus, King of Athens, enters, again offering comfort and promising to return Antigone to her homeland, where her brothers Eteocles and Polyneices have been killed.

Part II

The opening passage of Sophocles’ play Antigone. Antigone tells the chorus news of Creon’s decree that her newly dead brother Polyneices is a traitor and may not receive a burial. Antigone is resolved to bury her brother regardless and face her punishment. She attempts to persuade the chorus to join her, but they refuse.

Part III

A passage towards the end of Sophocles’ Antigone. Antigone has buried Polyneices, and Creon has decreed that she be buried alive in a tomb. Antigone contemplates her fate, while Creon shows her no sympathy.
Mezzo-soprano

Now is it for me to be wail in full the curse on my blood de-

riving from my father! In former time I bore the long toil without pause,

and now at the last I bring to tell a sight and experience that baffles

reason. Precisely in the way you could most wish for: indeed,

He is gone? He is gone?

He is gone? He is gone?
in a way in which neither Ares took him, nor the

sea, but instead he was

snatched away to the fields which no one may see,

by some swift, strange doom.
For me a night like

Death has descended on my eyes;

How shall I find my hard livelihood?

Roaming to some far
land, or on the waves of the

If only mur-

der-ous Ha-
des would

join me_ in death to_ my ag-
ed fa-

M-S. Pno.

Pno.

Pno.
ther! I cannot live the life that.

must be mine.

Best of daughters, you must

Best of daughters, you must

Best of daughters, you must

bear the will of the gods. Do not be inflamed with too much

bear the will of the gods. Do not be inflamed with too much

bear the will of the gods. Do not be inflamed with too much
S. 1

Pno.

M-S.

S. 2

A.

H

87

Pno.

M-S.

S. 1

S. 2

A.

Ped.

91

Pno.

M-S.

Pno.

There is blamed.

blamed.

blamed.

blamed.

longing even for woes.


M-S. Pno.

What was in no way dear was

M-S. Pno.

dear, so long as I held him

Pno.

in my embrace.

M-S.

Fa - ther, Dear, clothed in the darkness of the

Pno.
M-S.

un-der-world for- e - ver!

Pno.

ver in your ab-sence will you not be de- ar to me.

Pno.

Gently Flowing

= 48

He fared, as he de- sired, He

He fared - In what way?

He fared - In what way?

He fared - In what way?
M-S. died on the foreign ground that he desired; he has his well-shaded bed.

In what way?

M-S. beneath the ground forever; and he did not leave behind unwept sorrow.

In what way?

M-S. With these weeping eyes, father, I lament.

Cease from your grief, Cease

Cease from your grief, Cease

Cease from your grief, Cease
M-S.

_ you_ nor do I know how in my wretchedness I must still my grief for you_

S. 1

from your grief, dear girl, Cease from your

S. 2

from your grief, dear girl, Cease from your

A.

from your grief, dear girl, Cease from your

M-S.

_ that is so immense_ A-lass!

S. 1

grief, your grief, Cease

S. 2

grief, your grief, Cease

A.

grief, your grief, Cease

M-S.

You wanted to die in a foreign land, but you died without me near_ from your grief, since his end is

S. 1

from your grief, since his end is

S. 2

from your grief, since his end is

A.

from your grief, since his end is
Let me hast-en back. A long-ing fills my

soul to see the ne-ther-world home of my
father. He perished without a tomb,

a-part from everyone. Lead me there, and then kill

me, too. A-ban-doned and

helpless. where am I now to live my
Dear girl, do not be afraid.
191  mean?

That no harm befall you.

I feel— How I am to go home, I cannot tell. Trouble sur-

What do you think? Do not seek to

What do you think? Do not seek to

What do you think? Do not seek to

That no harm befall you.

That no harm befall you.

That no harm befall you.
Then it was desperate, but

And previously it bore heavily.

And previously it bore heavily.

And previously it bore heavily.

And previously it bore heavily.

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And previously it bore heavily.

And previously it bore heavily.

And previously it bore heavily.

And previously it bore heavily.
M-S. 1

S. 1

S. 2

A.

M-S. 2

S. 1

S. 2

A.

M-S. 3

S. 1

S. 2

A.
Tempo di Sarabande

M-S.  p

229

T.  Cease your lament, child!

Pno.

III Ped.

232

T.  When the favor of the nether night is stored

Pno.

236

T.  up. is

Pno.
T. no room for sorrow:

Pno. di-vine re-tri-bu-tion would fol-low.

T. mp

Pno. pompo-so

T. mf

Pno.  

M-S.  

W  

Son of Ae-gae-us,
suppliant you!

To obtain what dese-

I want to look with my

sire, my child?

own eyes up on my father's tomb.
What do you mean, lord, ruler of Athens?

It is not right to go there.

Child, he told me that no one should draw near that
place,
or

proach with prayer the sacred tomb in which he

sleeps.

He said that, so long as I saw to this,
I would always keep the country free from pain.

The divinity heard me say these things, as did the all-seeing Oath of Zeus.
If this is his

in ten - tion, I must be con - tent with it.

Send me to an cient Thebes.

I will
do this for you

and for the

newly departed under the

earth, according to the
I must be content with it. I must be content with it. I owe. I am bound to spare no pains.
I am bound to tent.

I must be content with it.

I must be content.

I am bound to
I must be content with it. I must be content to spare no pains.

I am bound to
S. 1

Pno.

S. 2

A.

These things are established firm and fixed.

II

These things are established firm and fixed.

M-S.

I must be content with it.

S. 1

the lamentation no further.

S. 2

the lamentation no further.

A.

the lamentation no further.
M-S.

S. 1

S. 2

A.

LL

M-S.

S. 1

S. 2

A.

M-S.

S. 1

S. 2

A.

MM

These things are established firm and fixed.

These things are established firm and fixed.

These things are established firm and fixed.

must be content with it.

must be content with it.

must be content.

M-S.

S. 1

S. 2

A.

M-S.

S. 1

S. 2

A.

M-S.

S. 1

S. 2

A.
M-S. 1 must be content.

S. 1 These things are established firm and fixed.

S. 2 These things are established firm and fixed.

A. These things are established firm and fixed.

M-S. 2 must be content.

S. 2 These things are established firm.

S. 1 These things are established firm.

A. These things are established firm.
Know you what ill there is, of all be-queathed by Oedipus, that Zeus ful-fils not for me while I live? No-thing pain-ful is there, no thing fraught with ru-in. no shame, no dishonour.
that I have not seen in my woes.

And now what new edict is this?

of which they tell, that our Captain hath just published.

To all Thebes?

Know you aught? Have you heard?
Or is it hid-den from you____ that our friends are threat-ened____ with the doom of our foes?

No_____ word of friends,____ An -

No_____ word of friends,____ An -

No_____ word of friends,____ An -

ti go - ne,____ Glad - some____ or pain - ful.
S. 1
S. 2
A.
Pno.

hath come to us,

E

hath come to us,

S. 1
S. 2
A.
Pno.

Since you were be reft - others - twain,

E

Since you were be reft - others - twain,

S. 1
S. 2
A.
Pno.

killed in one day by

F

killed in one day by

F

killed in one day by
I knew it well, and therefore sought to bring you beyond the gates of the court, That you might hear a -

What?

What?

What?
What is it? 'Tis

plain that thou art brooding -

plain that thou art brooding -

plain that thou art brooding -

some dark tidings - - -

some dark tidings - - -

some dark tidings - - -
What? hath not Cre-on des-tined my bro-thers,

the one to hon-oured bu-ri-al, the o-ther to un-bur-ied shame?

E-te-o-cles, they say, with due ob-serv-ance of right and cus-tom, he hath laid in the
...earth, for his honour among the dead below.

But the hapless corpse of Polyeuctus as rumour saith, it hath been published to the town that none shall entomb him or mourn, but leave unwept, unseulphred, a welcome store for the birds, as they spy him to feast on at will.

(sempre p)
Such 'tis said, is the edict that the good Cre-on hath set

forth for me, and is com-ing hi-ther to pro-claim it clearly

to those who know it not; nor counts the mat-ter light, but, who-so dis-o-beys in aught, his

doom is death by ston-ing be-fore all the folk.
You know it now; and you will soon show whether you are nobly bred, or the base-daubters of a noble line. Poor girl— and if things stand thus, what could we help to do or un-
Consider if you will share the toil and the deed.

Will you aid this hand to lift the dead?

Thou wouldst bury him, when

I will do my part, and yours, if you will not. False
to him will I ne- ver be found.

Ah, o-ver- bold! When Cre-on hath for- bid- den!

Nay, he hath no right to keep me from mine own.
Think, think, girl, how your father perished amid hate and scorn, when sins bared by his own search had moved him to strike both eyes with self-blinding hand; then the mother wife, two names in one, with twisted noose did despite unto her life;

Think, think, girl, how your father perished amid hate and scorn, when sins bared by his own search had moved him to strike both eyes with self-blinding hand; then the mother wife, two names in one, with twisted noose did despite unto her life;

Think, think, girl, how your father perished amid hate and scorn, when sins bared by his own search had moved him to strike both eyes with self-blinding hand; then the mother wife, two names in one, with twisted noose did despite unto her life;
your two brothers in one day, each shedding hapless one, a

and last and last.

kins-man's blood, wrought out with mutual hands their common doom.

kins-man's blood, wrought out with mutual hands their common doom.

And now we in

And now we in

And now we in

And now we in
S. 1
turn left all alone

S. 2
turn left all alone

A.

Pno.

S. 1
think how we shall perish,

S. 2
think how we shall perish,

A.

Pno.

more miserably than all the rest, if,

more miserably than all the rest, if,

more miserably than all the rest, if,
in defiance of the law, we brave a king's de-
cree or his powers. -
Nay, we must re-
Nay, we must re-
Nay, we must re-
we were born women.

who should not strive with men;

next, that we are ruled of the stronger, so that we must o -
Par - don, seeing that force is put on us here in, will hearken to our rulers.

Par - don, seeing that force is put on us here in, will hearken to our rulers.
I will not urge you, no nor, if you yet should have the mind, would you be welcome as a worker with me. Nay, be what you will; but I will bury him: well for me to die in doing that. I shall rest a loved one with him whom I have loved, sinless in my crime; for I owe a longer allegiance to the dead than to the living: in that world I shall abide forever. But if you
will, be guilty of dishonouring laws which the gods have established in

We do them no dishonour; but to defy the

Such be your plea: I, then, will

state, we have no strength for that.

go to heap the earth above the brother whom I love.

A - las, un-happy one! How we
Fear, not for me: guide your own fate a right.

At least, then,

Oh, denounce it!

dis-close this plan to none, but hide it closely and so, too, will

You will be far more hate ful for your silence, if you proclaim we.

Thou hast a hot heart for chilling
not these things at all. I know, that I please where

deeds.

Aye, if thou canst;

but thou wouldst what thou canst not. A

strength fails, I shall have done.

hope less quest should not be made at all.
If thus you speak,

you will have hatred from me,

and will justly be subject to the last lingering hatred of the
dead. But

leave me, and the folly that is mine alone,

to suffer this dread thing; for I shall not suffer aught so

dreadful as an ignoble death.
Part III

Marche Funèbre $\frac{\text{}}{\text{}} = 58$

Piano

$\text{mf}$ pesante

con ped.

$\text{loco loco loco loco loco loco loco loco}$

$\text{Me, ci-ti-zens of my fa-ther-land, setting forth on my last}$

$\text{way, looking my last on the sun-light that is for me no more;}$
no. Ha - des who gives sleep to all leads me liv - ing to A - che - ron's shore;

who have had no por - tion in the chant that brings the bride, nor hath a - ny song been mine

for the crown - ing of bri - dals; whom the lord of the Dark Lake shall wed.

I have heard in o - ther days how dread a doom be -
fell our Phrygian guest, the daughter of Tantalus,

on the Sipylian heights; I how, like clinging ivy,

the growth of stone subdued her;

and the rains fail not, as men tell, from her wasting form, nor fails the snow.
while beneath her weeping lids the tears be dew her bosom; 

and most like to hers is the fate that brings me to my rest. 

Yet she was a goddess, 

Yet she was a goddess, 

Yet she was a goddess.
 thou know-est, and born of gods; we are mortals, and of

mortal race. But 'tis great renown for a

mortal race. But 'tis great renown for a
wo-man who hath perished
that she should have shared the

wo-man who hath perished
that she should have shared the

wo-man who hath perished
that she should have shared the

doom of the god-like,
in her life, and after-
doom of the god-like,
in her life, and after-
doom of the god-like,
in her life, and after-

pp

pp

pp
I am mocked! In the name of our fathers' ward in death.

 gods, can ye not wait till I am gone, must ye taunt me to my face, O my city, and ye, her wealthy sons? Ah, fount of Direce,
and thou holy ground of Thebes whose chariots are many; ye, at least,

will bear me witness, in what sort, unwept of friends, and by what laws I

pass to the rock closed prison of my strange tomb, who have

no home on the earth or in the shades,
no home with the living or with the dead. (d)
Thou hast rushed forward to the
Thou hast rushed forward to the
Thou hast rushed forward to the

ut most verge of daring; and against that

throne where justice sits on high thou hast fallen, my daughter, with a

throne where justice sits on high thou hast fallen, my daughter, with a

throne where justice sits on high thou hast fallen, my daughter, with a
M-S.

S. 1 grievous fall. But in this ordeal

S. 2 grievous fall. But in this ordeal

A. grievous fall. But in this ordeal

Pno. 3

M-S. You have

S. 1 thou art paying, haply for thy father’s sin.

S. 2 thou art paying, haply for thy father’s sin.

A. thou art paying, haply for thy father’s sin.

Pno. 3

M-S. touched on my bit-ter-est thought, a-wak-ing the e-ter-new la-

Pno. 3
ment for my sire and for all the doom given to

us, the famed house of Labdacus.

Alas for the horrors of

the mother's bed! Alas for the
wretched mother's slumber

side of her own son, and my sire!

From what manner of parents did I

take my miserable being!
And to them I go thus, accursed, un-

wed, to share their home. Alas, my

brother, ill-starred in thy marriage,
M-S.

done________ my life!

Pno.

176

2 + 2 + 3

\[ \text{Re - ve - rent ac - tion claims a cer - tain claim for re - ve - rence;} \]

180

Pno.

184

S. 1

Re - ve - rent ac - tion claims a cer - tain claim for re - ve - rence;

S. 2

Re - ve - rent ac - tion claims a cer - tain claim for re - ve - rence;

A.

Re - ve - rent ac - tion claims a cer - tain claim for re - ve - rence;

Pno.
but an offence against power cannot be brooked by

him who hath power in his keeping. Thy self-willed
M-S. 1

unwept...

Pno.

unfriended, without a marriage... song.

M-S.

I am led forth... in my

Pno.
red eye; but for my fate no tear is shed, no friend makes moan.
Know ye not (t) that songs and wailings - before death would never -

---

cease, if it pro-fit ed to ut - ter them? A - way with her - a -

---

way!
And when ye have enclosed her,

according to my word, in her vaulted grave, leave her alone, forlorn whether she wishes to die, or to live a buried life in such a home.

2 + 3
Our hands are clean as B.

But this is

Touching this maiden.
she shall be

loco

of her so-journ in the light.

of her so-journ in the light.

very long

Marche Funèbre $j = 58$

Tomb, bridal-chamber eternal prison in the caverned rock, whither go to find my own.
those many who have perished, and whom Persephone hath received among the dead!

Last of all shall I pass thither, and far most miserably of all,

before the term of my life is spent. But I cherish good hope that my coming will be welcome to my father, my mother, and
rit.......

M-S.  Pno.  
thee, my brother; for, when ye died, with mine own hands,

rit.......

Pno.  
senza ped.

I washed and dressed you, and poured drink offerings at your graves;

and now, Polynices, 'tis for tending thy corpse that I win such re-

pense as this. And yet I honoured thee, as the wise will deem, right-

ly.
Never, had I been a mother of children, or if a husband had been moulder ing in death, would I have taken this task upon me in the city's des-

pite. What law, ye ask, is my warrant for that word? The husband

lost, another might have been found, and child from another to replace the first-born;
but, father and mother hidden with Hades, no brother's life could ever bloom for me again. Such was the law whereby I held thee first in honour; but Creon deemed me guilty of error there in, and of
out - rage, ah bro - ther mine! And now he leads me thus, a cap - tive in,

his hands; no bri - dal bed, no bri - dal song hath been mine, no

joy of mar - riage, no por - tion in the nur - ture of chil - dren;

but thus, fo - lorn of friends, I go liv - ing to the vaults of death.
And what law of heaven have I transgressed?

Why, hapless one, should I look to the gods any more, what ally should I invoke, when by piety I have earned the name of impious?
Nay, then, if these things are pleasing to the gods,
when I have suffered my doom, I shall come to know my sin;
but if the sin is with my judges,

I could wish them no fuller measure of evil than

they, on their part, mete wrong fully out to me.

cresc. poco a poco
Still_______ the same tempest_______ of the soul vexes this

Still_______ the same tempest_______ of the soul vexes this

Still_______ the same tempest_______ of the soul vexes this

Pno.

poco

maiden_______ with the same fierce gusts_______

S. 1

S. 2

A.

Pno.
Then for this shall her guards have cause to rue,

Still the same tempest of the

Still the same tempest of the

Still the same tempest of the

Ah me! that word hath come very -

their slowness.

soul vexes this maiden with

soul vexes this maiden with

soul vexes this maiden with

Pno. (loco) sffzz

Pno. (loco) sffzz

Pno. (loco) sffzz
near to death.

I can cheer thee with no hope that this doom is not thus to be ful-filled.

the same, the same, the same, the same,

Oh city of my fathers in the land,

fierce gusts, Still the same,

fierce gusts, Still the same,

fierce gusts, Still the same,
of Thebes! Oh ye gods, eldest of our race!

tempest of the soul vexes this

They lead me hence now, now, they

maiden with the same

SS

f

(loco)
fierce gusts.

fierce gusts.

fierce gusts.

(foco)

(foco) (foco)

f

sfffz

M-S.  S. 1  S. 2  A.  Pno.

M-S.

S. 1

S. 2

A.

Pno.

Be - hold____ me,____ prin - ces____ of Thebes.

Still____ the same tem - pest____ of the

Still____ the same tem - pest____ of the

Still____ the same tem - pest____ of the

TT

TT

TT

TT

TT

TT

TT

TT

TT
with the same fierce gusts.

Pno.

M-S.

the last daughter of the house of your kings,

S. 1

soul vexes this maiden

S. 2

soul vexes this maiden

A.

soul vexes this maiden

Pno.

M-S.

see what I suffer, and from whom,

S. 1

with the same fierce gusts.

S. 2

with the same fierce gusts.

A.

with the same fierce gusts.

Pno.

M-S.

soul vexes this maiden

S. 1

soul vexes this maiden

S. 2

soul vexes this maiden

A.

soul vexes this maiden

Pno.

M-S.

see what I suffer, and from whom,

S. 1

with the same fierce gusts.

S. 2

with the same fierce gusts.

A.

with the same fierce gusts.

Pno.
because I feared to cast away the
still the tempest of the soul vexes
still the tempest of the soul vexes

still the tempest of the soul vexes

fear of Heaven!
this maiden.
this maiden.
this maiden.

(exremely long)