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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 Polynices 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 Polynices 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 Polynices, and Creon has decreed that she be buried alive in a tomb. Antigone contemplates her fate, while Creon shows her no sympathy.
Antigone

Chamber Opera in three parts for five voices and piano

Part I

SOPHOCLES
translated by RICHARD CLAVERHOUSE JEBB
adapted by EDWARD NESBIT

EDWARD NESBIT

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in a way in which neither Ares took him, nor the

but instead he was

snatched away to the fields which no one may see,

by some swift, strange doom.

\[ \begin{align*} 
q &= 63 \\
C &= 63 \\
p &= \text{poco} > p \\
\end{align*} \]
For me a night like
descented on my eyes;
how shall I find my hard
lihood,
roaming to some far

---
land, or on the waves of the

sea?

If only mur-

der-ous Ha-

would

join me in death to my ag-

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf
M-S.

ther! I cannot live the life that

Pno.

2 + 2 + 3

must be mine.

S. 1

Best of daughters, you must

S. 2

Best of daughters, you must

A.

Best of daughters, you must

Pno.

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

S. 1

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

S. 2

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

A.

bear the will of the gods. Do not be inflamed with too much
grief: what you have encountered is not to be

There is

blamed.

longing even for woes.
M-S.

What was in no way dear was

Pno.

---

94

mp

2 + 3

---

M-S.

dear, so long as I held him

Pno.

---

97

2 + 2 + 3

p 3 + 2 + 2

---

M-S.

in my embrace.

Pno.

---

100

3 + 2 + 2

mf

---

M-S.

Father, Dear, clothed in the darkness of the

Pno.

---
M. S.  

un-der-world for-e-ver!

M. S.  

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

Gently Flowing  \( \text{J} = 48 \)  

S. 1  

He fared as he de si red, He

S. 2  

He fared In what way?

A.  

He fared In what way?

Gently Flowing  \( \text{J} = 48 \)  

Ped.
you, nor do I know how in my wretchedness I must still my grief for you

from your grief, dear girl, Cease from your
grief, your grief, Cease from your
grief, your grief, Cease

You wanted to die in a foreign land, but you died without me near,

from your grief, since his end is

from your grief, since his end is

from your grief, since his end is
father.

He perished without a tomb,

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

me, too. Abandoned and

helpless. where am I now to live my
But where shall I flee?

Dear girl, do not be afraid.

Already a refuge has been found.
That no harm befall you.

I feel— How I am to go home, I cannot tell— Trouble sur-
rounds me... Then it was desperate, but

go. And previously it bore heavily.

now even crueler.

Vast, then, is the sea of your
A - las, a - las!  Where shall I turn? To what last hope does the divinity now drive me?
Tempo di Sarabande

\( \text{Tempo di Sarabande} \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{U} \quad \frac{7}{\text{pp}} \\
\text{M.S.}
\end{array} \quad (\text{d} = 48) \)

U

\( \begin{array}{c}
\text{Pno.} \\
\text{pp pesante legg. pp pesante} \\
\text{p sim. sempre}
\end{array} \)  

\( \text{p} \quad \frac{3}{\text{pp}}  

\text{III Ped.} \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{T.} \\
\text{Cease your lament, child!}
\end{array} \)

\( \begin{array}{c}
\text{p} \\
\text{T.}
\end{array} \)  

\( \begin{array}{c}
\text{When the favor of the nether night is stored}
\end{array} \)

\( \begin{array}{c}
\text{p} \\
\text{T.}
\end{array} \)

\( \begin{array}{c}
\text{up.}
\end{array} \)  

\( \text{V} \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{there is}
\end{array} \)
T.  no room for sorrow:  

Pno. 

T.  divine retribution would follow.  

Pno. 

T.  

Pno. 

M-S.  Son of Aegeus,  

W  

Pno. 

W  

Pno.
suppliant you!

To obtain what de-

I want to look with my

sire, my child?

own eyes up on my fa-

ther'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
T. attack with prayer the sacred tomb in which he sleeps.

He said that, so long as I saw to this,
T. Pno. I would always keep the country.

Pno.

T. Pno. free from pain.

Pno.

The divinity heard me say these things, as did the all seeing Oath of Zeus. (s)
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 owe.

I am...
I am bound to

must be content with it.

I must be content.

pains.

I am bound to

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

I am bound to

I must be content with it. I must be content
tent with it.
S. 1

Cease;____ raise up the lamentation no further____

S. 2

Cease;____ raise up the lamentation no further____

A.

Cease;____ raise up the lamentation no further____

These things are established firm and fixed____ raise up

These things are established firm and fixed____ raise up

These things are established firm and fixed____ raise up

I must be content with it____

the lamentation no further____

the lamentation no further____

the lamentation no further____

These things____

These things____

These things____
M-S. 1
S. 2
A.

must be content with it.

are established firm and fixed.

are established firm and fixed.

are established firm and fixed.

LL

These things are established firm and

These things are established firm and

These things are established firm and

MM

I must be content.

These things are established firm and fixed.

These things are established firm and fixed.

These things are established firm and fixed.

These things are established firm and fixed.

These things are established firm and fixed.
These things are established firm and fixed.

must be content.
Part II

**Scorrevole** = 108

Know you what ill there is, of all be-queathed by

Oedipus, that Zeus ful-fills not for me while I

live? No-thing pain-ful is there, no-thing fraught with ru-in.

no shame, no dis-hon-our.
Senza misura

20

M-S.

\[ \text{that I have not seen in my woes.} \]

Senza misura

22

M-S.

\[ \text{And now what new edict is this?} \]

Pno.

\[ \text{of which they tell, that our Captain hath just published.} \]

26

M-S.

\[ \text{to all Thebes? Know you aught? Have you heard?} \]

Pno.
Or is it hidden from you that our friends are threatened with the doom of our foes?
S. 1

hath come to us,

S. 2

hath come to us,

A.

hath come to us,

Since you were be reft — of bro-thers twain,

Since you were be reft — of bro-thers twain,

Since you were be reft — of bro-thers twain,

killed in one day by

killed in one day by

killed in one day by
two fold blow; and

since in this last night
the

Ar give host hath fled,

Ar give host hath fled,
S. 1

know no more, when

S. 2

know no more, when

A.

know no more, when

Pno.

or more grievous.

92

poco tune be brighter,

97

or more grievous.

S. 1

ther your fortune be brighter,

S. 2

ther your fortune be brighter,

A.

ther your fortune be brighter,

Pno.

or more grievous.

S. 1

or more grievous.

S. 2

or more grievous.

A.

or more grievous.

Pno.

ppp
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 - on

some dark tidings.

M-S.

S. 1

S. 2

A.

Pno.

K

S. 1

S. 2

A.

Pno.

K

123

S. 1

S. 2

A.

Pno.

poco sfz

K

118

poco

p

poco

poco

poco

poco
What? hath not Cre-on
des-tined my bro-
thers,

the one to hon-oured bu-
ri-al,

the o-
ther_ to un-
bur-led shame?

E-

teo-
cles, they say, with due ob-
ser-

vance_ of right and cus-

tom, he hath laid in the
145 M-S.  
earth, for his honour among the dead below.

Pno.

150 M-S.  
But the hapless corpse of Polyneices as rumour saith, it hath been published to the town that

Pno.

155 M-S.  
none shall entomb him or mourn, but leave unwept, unsephched, a welcome

Pno.

161 M-S.  
store for the birds, as they spy him to feast on at will.

Pno.  

Such 'tis said, is the e-dict that the good Cre-on hath set forth for me, and is com-ing hi-ther to pro-claim it clear-ly 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-daughters of a noble line.

Poor girl—

if things stand thus—what could we help to do or un—
Con-si-der if you will share the toil and the deed.

Will you do?

What can be thy meaning?

 aid this hand to lift the dead?

Thou wouldst bury him, when

I will do my part, and yours, if you will not. False
Ah, over-bold! When Cre-on hath forbidden!

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;
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.
and last.

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

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.

turn left all alone

Pno.

think how we shall perish,

more miserably than all the rest, if,
in defiance of the law, we brave a king's de-

in defiance of the law, we brave a king's de-

in defiance of the law, we brave a king's de-

cree or his powers.

cree or his powers.

cree or his powers.

Nay, we must re-me-ber, first, that

Nay, we must re-me-ber, first, that

Nay, we must re-me-ber, first, that
we were born wo

women, as

who should not strive with men;

next, so that we must o

next, so that we must o


314

319

324

49
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 for ever. But if you
will, be guilty of dishonouring laws which the gods have established in

3 + 2 + 2

We do them no dishonour; but to defy the

Such be your plea: I, then, will

Such be your plea: I, then, will

state, we have no strength for that.

We do them no dishonour; but to defy the

We do them no dishonour; but to defy the

Poco = 63

Poco = 63

Poco = 63

3 + 2 + 2

Alas, unhappy one! How we

3 + 2 + 2

3 + 2 + 2
Fear not for me: guide your own fate a right.

At least, then,

Oh, de-nounce it!

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

You will be far more hate-ful for your si-lence, if you pro-claim

we. Thou hast a hot heart for chill-ing

Pno.
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 ing 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. (th)
Part III

Marche Funèbre \( \frac{1}{2} = 58 \)

Piano

\( \text{mf pesante} \)

con ped.

6

Pno.

\( \text{poco} \ f \)

M-S.

\( \text{mf} \)

See me, ci-ti-zens of my fa-ther-land, set-ting forth on my last way, look-ing my last on the sun-light that is for me no more;
M-S.

B poco f

no. Hades who gives sleep to all leads me living to Acheron's shore:

Pno.

B

M-S.

who have had no portion in the chant that brings the bride, nor hath any song been mine

Pno.

loco loco

M-S.

for the crowning of brialds; whom the lord of the Dark Lake shall wed.

Pno.

loco loco loco

M-S.

I have heard in other days how dread a doom be -

Pno.

loco loco loco
M-S. Pno.

31 mf
fell our Phrygian guest, the daughter of Tantalus.

33 mp
loco

33 poco f
on the Sipylian heights; I how, like clinging ivy.

35 mp
loco

35 mf
the growth of stone subdued her.

37 poco f
loco

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

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

Yet she was a goddess,
thou knowest, and born of gods:
we are mortals, and of

But 'tis great renown for a mortal race.

But 'tis great renown for a mortal race.
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-
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 Dircce,
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

utmost verge of daring; and against that

utmost verge of daring; and against that

utmost verge of daring; and against that

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

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

thronewhere justice sits on high thou hast fallen, my daughter, with a
S. 1

You have
thou art paying, hap-ly for thy fa-ther's sin.

S. 2

thou art paying, hap-ly for thy fa-ther's sin.

A.

thou art paying, hap-ly for thy fa-ther's sin.

M-S.

touched on my bit-ter-est thought, a-wak-ing the ever-new la-

Pno.

griev-ous fall. But in this or-deal

M-S.

You have
thou art paying, hap-ly for thy fa-ther's sin.

A.

thou art paying, hap-ly for thy fa-ther's sin.

Pno.

griev-ous fall. But in this or-deal

M-S.

touched on my bit-ter-est thought, a-wak-ing the ever-new la-

Pno.

p

p

pp

p

p

p

p

m

m

m

m

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p

p
"M-S. Pno.
ment for my sire and for all the doom given to

130
p cresc. poco a poco

135
us, the famed house of Labdacus.

138
2 + 2 + 3

141
the mother’s bed! A-лас

M-S. Pno.
A-лас for the horrors of

M-S. Pno.
A-лас for the mother’s bed!
wretched mother's slumber at the
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. A-

las, my broth-

er, ill starred in thy mar-
riage,

in thy death thou hast un-

f
2 + 2 + 3

done my life!

Reverent action claims a certain claim for reverence;

Reverent action claims a certain claim for reverence;

Reverent action claims a certain claim for reverence;
but an offence against power cannot be brooked by

him who hath power in his keeping. Thy self-willed
tem per hath wrought thy ruin.

unfriend ed without a marriage song.

I am led forth in my
sorrow on this journey

that can be delayed no more.

No longer, hapless one,

may I behold yon day star's sac - -
- red eye; but

M-S.

for my

Pno.

f

T

f

T

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

ff

M-S.

f

Pno.

f

M-S.

f

M-S.

f

M-S.

f

M-S.

makes moan.

Pno.

ff

M-S.
W 269 maestoso

Ped.

Pno.

T. Pno.

Know ye not that songs and wailings before death would never

X 274

T. Pno.

cease, if it profit ed to utter them? Away with her-

Y 279

T. Pno.

way!

X 284

T. Pno.

Pno.

Pno.

Pno.
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.
Our hands are clean as

But this is
she shall be deprived

of her sojourn in the light.

very long

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

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

be-fore the term of my life is spent. But I cherish good hope that my

coming will be welcome to my father, my mother, and
thee, my brother; for, when ye died, with mine own hands

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

and now, Polyneices, 'tis for tending thy corpse that I win such recompense as this. And yet I honoured thee, as the wise will deem, rightly.
Never, had I been a mother of children, or if a husband had been moulder-ing in death, would I have taken this task up on me in the city's desp-
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 where-by I held thee first in honour;

but Creon deemed me guilty

of error there in, and...
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, for - lorn of friends, I go liv - ing to the vaults of death.

con ped.
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?

accel.

cresc. poco a poco...mf
M-S.

Nay, then, if these things are pleas-

Pno.

465

\( q = 72 \)

NN

Ped.

M-S.

467

M-S.

469

f

loco

when I have suf-

then,

Ped.

f f f

Ped.

f f f

Ped.

f

con molta forza

M-S.

471

M-S.

471

M-S.

471

M-S.

471

M-S.

471

M-S.

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M-S.

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M-S.

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M-S.

471

M-S.

471

M-S.

471

M-S.

471

M-S.
but if the sin is with my judges,

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

Maiden

With the same fierce gusts.

III Ped.
But 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

Soul vexes this maiden with

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

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

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

Oh city of my fathers in the land.

fierce gusts.

fierce gusts.

fierce gusts.

fierce gusts.

Still the same.

Still the same.

Still the same.

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

pest of the soul vexes this

They lead me hence - now, now - they

maken with the same

Pno.
M-S.

S. 1

S. 2

A.

Pno.

fierce gusts.

fierce gusts.

fierce gusts.

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
the last daughter of the house of your kings.

soul vexes this maiden

see what I suffer, and from whom, with the same fierce gusts.
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.

(EXTREMELY LONG)