

Vine & Light Productions Rhymes With Purple proudly presents:

ANTIGONE: A TOWN HALL MUSICAL

Venue: Gilded Balloon: Patter House – The Other Yin
Dates: 5th – 29th August (not 17th or 24th)
Time: 3.05pm (60 minutes)
Previews: 5th & 6th August

'Antigone: A Town Hall Musical, developed with award-winning dramaturg Ken Cerniglia (*Hadestown*, *Peter and the Starcatcher*), is making its world-wide premiere at this year's Fringe at the Gilded Balloon Patterhouse – The Other Yin, for the month of August.

This is a bold, contemporary one-act retelling of the Greek tragedy, set in 1989 in Thebes, California at the height of AIDS activism and gay-rights upheaval. Driven by the emotional and theatrical force of Chris Rayis' music, the piece explores moral courage, political spectacle, and the cost of silence.

"As a longtime student of both drama and democracy, I've been recently re-energized by the fact that in the Western world, the art form and the governing form were born in the same place – the city-state of Athens - and inextricably linked. At a time when the arts and civil liberties are under fire once again, I'm finding hope in exploring Sophocles' ancient text with fresh eyes and finding connections with another period in our recent past, when standing up for justice was a matter of life or death." **KEN CERNIGLIA**

The Oracle summons audience-citizens and invokes the ancient rites of drama and democracy to address a crisis. Two brothers – gay activist Nikolas and conservative cop Elias – are dead after a protest on the capitol steps. When the Governor proclaims one a hero and the other erased, defiant sister Tig and best friend Henry risk everything for justice and love. The score delivers both burden and joy as it navigates human need, political greed, and grassroots resistance as survival. *There is no sitting out.*

The questions at the heart of *Antigone* have returned with force: when does obedience become complicity? When does silence become violence? What does it cost, personally and collectively, to speak? By placing this story inside a moment when lives were politicised, grief was dismissed, and public indifference had deadly consequences, the musical insists this is not ancient history. It is a mirror.

The piece treats theatre as a civic space: a place where audiences do not simply witness events but recognise their relationship to them. Musical theatre helps bypass intellectual distance. Music, humour, and rhythm open the door before fear shuts it. The cast will be made up talented students from North Carolina's Elon University's music tether course.

CREATIVE TEAM:

Elizabeth McKoy (concept, director, producer) has over the past 26 years has encompassed directing, producing, performing, teaching, arts leadership, and devising new works. In 2007, she founded the award-winning professional theater, The *Berkeley Playhouse*, and has successfully led the organization's vision and mission as it has grown to over 1,400 students and 35,000 annual attendees. As an ardent believer in new musicals, Elizabeth has commissioned eight, including the acclaimed *Bridges*, which premiered at the Playhouse in 2016 and was recently seen in New York. At the Playhouse, Elizabeth has directed many professional Mainstage shows, including *Peter Pan*, *Cinderella*, *Willy Wonka*, *The Sound of Music*, *A Little Princess*, *Tarzan*, *A Christmas Story*, and *James and the Giant Peach*. In 2000, Elizabeth also helped launch the Bay Area affiliate of New York's Lincoln Center Institute for Arts Education. She has developed workshops and partnerships with Bay Area organizations, including SF's Museum of Modern Art, SF Opera, and the California Shakespeare Theatre.

Ken Cerniglia (book): is a dramaturg, writer, editor, and organizational leader, best known for dramaturging the innovative Broadway hits *Hadestown* (8 Tony Awards, including Best Musical) and *Peter and the Starcatcher* (5 Tony Awards). As resident dramaturg and literary manager for Disney Theatrical Productions for 16 years, he developed over 70 stage titles for Broadway, touring, international, and licensed productions, including *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Aladdin*, *The Little Mermaid* and *High School Musical*. Current new musical dramaturgy includes *Redwood* by Tina Landau and Kate Diaz (directed by Tina Landau), *Basura* by Karen Zacarías and Gloria & Emily Estefan (directed by Michael Greif); *Evening Train* by Mick Flannery (directed by Julie Kelleher); and *In My Own Little Corner: My Moods, My Mom, and Me.* by Chryssie Whitehead (directed by Bryan Knowlton).

Chris Rayis (music & lyrics): is a composer, lyricist, pianist, conductor, orchestrator, arranger, copyist, producer, historian, and lecturer from Ohio with over two decades of professional experience in the musical theatre. Rayis' career began as a concert and studio pianist, performing with artists at Carnegie Hall, the Grand Ole Opry, and the recording studios of Nashville, Tennessee. As a musical theatre musician, his credits include the Broadway production of *Frozen*, multiple Off-Broadway productions including *Far From Heaven* (starring Kelli O'Hara and Steven Pasquale), frequent work on national tours including *Hamilton* (as Music Assistant to Alex Lacamoire), the film adaptation of *The Last 5 Years*, regional productions including *The Nutty Professor* (directed by Jerry Lewis). Rayis creates musical theatre for adventurous audiences, including the Appalachian epic *Deep Water Ballad*, the song cycle *Strange Music for a Strange Time*, and the children's musical *Jenny and the Paper Pirates*.

Tanaka Dunbar Ngwara (Assistant Director/Costume Designer): is a Zimbabwean-American performer, writer/composer, and costume designer based in London. A recent graduate of The Royal Academy of Music's MA in Musical Theatre, she also holds a BA from Princeton University in Music and Theatre, with a focus on composition and costume design. While at University, she designed costumes for a wide variety of productions, including a short film of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Hello Girls* the musical and *Tea*, the play by Velina Hasu. Professionally, Tanaka has designed and produced costumes for a production of *Antony & Cleopatra* with The Baroque Chamber Orchestra of Colorado and styled Black Thought from *The Roots* to play Othello in The Oregon Shakespeare Festival's "Quills Fest". Tanaka is currently working in the wardrobe department at London's Hampstead Theatre.

CAST

The Oracle – Helena Padial - Comical and prophetic the Town Hall moderator who foresees the destructive consequences of unchecked power. With a powerful, female-identifying civic voice, she enlists the audience as both witness and response. Inspired by Sophocles' Tiresias, this new character will draw on a number of Greek antecedents as host, moderator, and prophet, from Cassandra to RuPaul.

Calvin – Trevor Hudson - The polished governor rules through spectacle, fear, and intimidation; master of media and narrative control. Inspired by Sophocles' Creon, Calvin is the slick politician who for personal gain transactionally taps into the rising political capital of the 1980s "Moral Majority" (which in ensuing decades will morph into the powerful and consequential Evangelical Right, MAGA, etc., fueling populist White Nationalism) — but then becomes beholden to it, unable to break free, because in the process he has eroded any internal sense of integrity he may have started with.

Antigone – Emmalyn (Emma) Bruce - "Tig" – sister of Issa and deceased brothers Nikolas and Elias; fierce truth-teller; unyielding, principled, and unshakeable. Inspired by Sophocles' title character, and the only one bearing her original Greek name in this adaptation, Antigone has unique access to the deep well of the ancestors from which to draw to fuel her pursuit of justice.

Issa – Sierra Safran - Vain, anxious, cautious; her journey transforms fear into courage. Inspired by Ismene, Antigone's only remaining sibling has experienced the same familiar trauma, both distant and now fresh, but her response is quite different. Where Antigone plows ahead with indignation and self-righteousness, Issa retreats, out of fear, exhaustion, and self-preservation.

Henry – Elliot Choate - Son of Calvin, betrothed of Antigone, best friend of Nikolas, and secret Resistance activist, tender, romantic, and quietly funny. Inspired by Sophocles' Haemon, the perfect "golden boy."

Nikolas / Guard – Jonah Uffelman

The Guard – A rookie on Calvin's security detail who obeys out of fear, not belief, and draws the audience into the cost of silence. Inspired by Sophocles' Guard, like many individuals throughout the ages who have sought or have been recruited for employment in security, law enforcement, or the military, The Guard feels a deep commitment to "protect and serve" and a respect for the chain of command. And yet, in moments of political crisis, like this one, The Guard's personal values and professional allegiances are tested through cognitive dissonance that rapidly approaches an unbearable breaking point.

Nikolas – Antigone's gay resistance brother, who had joined an activist group that went to extreme lengths to wake up the government and the citizenry to an epidemic that was quickly affecting, and destroying, every family and could no longer be marginalized and ignored. Inspired by Sophocles's Polyneices, he is the archetypal descendant of the family "black sheep."

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