



## **Kingston Grammar School: *Antigone* - A Gripping and Poignant Retelling of a Classic Tragedy**

As an NSTA representative, I had the privilege of attending Kingston Grammar School's compelling production of *Antigone* by Jean Anouilh on Friday, 14th February 2025. This thought-provoking and intense interpretation, brought to life by a dedicated cast and creative team, was a powerful exploration of defiance, duty, and destiny.

Jean Anouilh's *Antigone* is a modern adaptation of Sophocles' classic tragedy, reimagining the ancient story for a 20th-century audience. The play follows Antigone, a young woman who defies the tyrannical rule of her uncle, King Creon, by insisting on giving her brother, Polynices, a proper burial despite the state's decree. As Antigone's unwavering moral convictions clash with Creon's rigid authority, the play delves into themes of family, resistance, and the consequences of personal choice. This adaptation preserves the original tragedy's weight while infusing it with contemporary relevance and existential undertones.

From the moment I entered the auditorium, the eerie atmosphere set the tone for the play's opening. A striking image of a 'hanging body' suspended above the stage was a bold and clever staging choice, immediately immersing the audience in the gravity of the narrative. The traverse stage was used effectively, drawing the audience into the action and heightening the tension. This setup worked exceptionally well, making every moment feel intimate and immediate.

As the ensemble slowly filled the stage, they introduced the prologue with clarity and commitment, fully engaging the audience. Each cast member projected their lines with excellent diction, and their use of unison to highlight key parts of the text was particularly effective. Their careful positioning and synchronised movements added depth to the storytelling.

A poignant moment in Act 1 featured younger cast members playing the four siblings, adding an extra emotional layer by showcasing Antigone's nostalgia and deep family bonds. When the chorus reappeared, they delivered their lines with regimented precision, reinforcing the play's thematic weight.

This production presented many challenges, but the young cast met them brilliantly. The weight of Sophocles' original tragedy, adapted for a modern audience, was fully understood and conveyed. The audience buzzed with anticipation during the interval, captivated by the gripping performances and eager for what was to come.

The large ensemble remained engaged and focused throughout, even during sustained periods of stillness in Act 2. Under the inventive and compelling direction of Miss M. Christmas, the production was meticulously crafted, ensuring every moment was purposeful and engaging. The balance between the soldiers' humour and the play's



overall intensity was finely tuned, enhancing the emotional impact of the piece.

Antigone, played by Ava, commanded attention from the moment she stepped on stage, even before speaking. Her performance was committed throughout, demonstrating an exceptional understanding of the role. Her interactions with each character were compelling and authentic, making her fate all the more affecting. Ismene, played by Lily, provided a strong contrast to Antigone, portraying the concerned sister with sincerity and depth.

Creon, an incredibly complex character played by Greg, had a commanding stage presence, delivering a powerful and authoritative performance. The intense Act 2 confrontation between Creon and Antigone was a standout moment, showcasing the actors' maturity and deep understanding of their roles. The use of unison from the chorus during Creon's speech at the start of Act 2 was excellently directed, highlighting key parts of the text and leading into the climax of the piece. This moment was particularly tense and appropriately dramatic, emphasising the weight of Creon's authority and the tragic inevitability of the unfolding events.

Other supporting roles were equally well-executed. The nurses, played by Rosie and Allegra, brought a maternal warmth to their characters beyond their years. Meanwhile, soldiers Jonas, Joseph, and Jules introduced moments of comic relief, balancing the tragedy with well-timed humour. Their chemistry as a trio was particularly strong, demonstrating excellent comedic timing and interaction. Haemon, played by Alexander, fully embodied his role as Antigone's fiancé, making their relationship feel genuine and heartfelt. His performance deepened the emotional impact of Antigone's fate, drawing the audience further into the tragedy.

The production's overall finish was highly polished. Thoughtful music transitions seamlessly enhanced the atmosphere, deepening the emotional resonance of each scene. Costumes, designed by Mrs C. Borrowes, were creative and well thought out, with clever use of colour and style to complement the play's tone. This was a mature and sophisticated piece of theatre, performed with professionalism and gravitas beyond the cast's years.

The play concluded with a tender moment featuring the younger versions of the siblings once more, bringing the production to a poignant and fitting end. This performance was a testament to the incredible talent, dedication, and teamwork of the cast and crew, making it an unforgettable theatrical experience and an absolute privilege to watch.

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