

ANTIGONE
RETOLD
AUDITION SCRIPT

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SYNOPSIS

Antigone Retold is a reimagining of the tale of Antigone, daughter of the cursed house of Oedipus and an anachronistic feminist icon who was centuries ahead of her time. Our version follows the tale of Antigone as portrayed by our traditional cast who speak the script as translated from Sophocles' original play from 441BCE however, interspersed amongst the ancient narrative, we have exchanged the chorus of "old Theban citizens" with the Seven Devils of Greek Mythology. Meta-directed by Calliope, the muse of epic poetry and our new chorus leader, our audience is introduced to Athena, Hera, Medusa, Aphrodite, Megara and Pandora who provide us with the complicated contemplations of the 21st century feminist in relation to the central narrative of *Antigone*. *Antigone Retold* consciously shines the proverbial spotlight on this group of formidable, famous mythological women who have occupied an intricate feminist and even anti-feminist space for 2500 years. Perhaps it's about time we heard what they think...

CHARACTERS

ANTIGONE: The tragic hero of a tale that feels centuries before its time because of the feminism inherent in the titular character. The play chronicles the repercussions of Antigone's actions as she stands up to Creon.

ISMENE: Antigone's sister and her antithesis in many ways. She begins the play in a fully subservient state as a female who understands her assigned place in society, but do we give her space to evolve?

CREON: Antigone's uncle and the newly crowned King of Thebes. A patriotic but deeply misguided individual who, in trying to do what he believes is right, ends up bringing further horror upon his house.

HAEMON: Creon's son and Antigone's betrothed. He is the voice of composure when dealing with his father but finds himself caught between his duties as a son and his honour as a fiancé.

TIRESIAS: The non-binary blind prophet who attempts to advise their King. Tiresias has had direct dealings with members of The Seven Devils and therefore treads the world between now and then, sight and blindness, fact and fantasy.

CALLIOPE: The muse of epic poetry and leader of The Seven Devils, Calliope is the ultimate disruptor. In an act of conscious reclamation, she changes the very face of a narrative written by men for centuries and brings to life the statues of her sisters who have lain dormant for far too long.

HERA: The queen of Olympus and would-be widow of the almighty Zeus. Hera is a complicated woman who consciously directs her wrath towards the women who her husband has been unfaithful with instead of her husband himself.

PANDORA: The gift to man who became the curse to mankind. Pandora was set-up and literally created by the gods to serve as a punishment for the sins of Prometheus. She never stood a chance!

APHRODITE: The goddess of love who is so much more than she appears. She has spent years of her existence trying to comprehend her place in a world which disrespects her so deeply that she is still one of the only Greek goddesses depicted more naked than she is clothed.

MEDUSA: The formidable female who was cursed by Athena. The woman can literally turn you to stone with a single glance! What is it any wonder why she's been singled out throughout history as a monstrous missus? But... what would that make Perseus, then? #askingforafriend

ATHENA: The warrior goddess who is sometimes cast in the role of traitor. Athena was crafted in the likeness of Zeus and is (honestly) just as powerful as her old man. She is an inspiration to women everywhere... and also does stuff like curse Medusa and then help Perseus chop off her head too!

MEGARA: The prize bestowed on a murderous husband. Megara is a character from mythos who is actually sometimes referred to as Creon's daughter who is gifted to Hercules as a token of appreciation for his assistance. Sweet right? Totes! Until she is reduced to a short plot point in his quest narrative.

THE DIONYSIANS: Taking the form of Calliope's *spirare* or messengers, catalyzing the narrative to be driven forward.



CALLIOPE

SCENE WITHIN AUDIENCE

The Dionysians enter as a procession, each carrying an item related to the writing of a narrative: books, scrolls, quills, phraseology potions. They gather around Calliope and bow, presenting the scroll to her. Calliope breathes in and awakens through her breath. She reaches for quill and parchment immediately, a choice which becomes obvious as she proclaims:

Hear now the words of the women, the stories we hold but don't own (*The Seven Devils hold up their artifacts*)
 Whether monster or maiden, whether goddess or girl, whether duchess or damsel or crone.
 The oldest of powers invoked here, Lord Dionysus we now turn the page.
 Hear now the words of these women, their stories retold on your stage.

The Dionysians help her off the plinth. She breathes inspiration towards them so that they may continue their journey into the alcove to prepare for their role as scribes. She watches them go and begins to declaim, slowly making her way through the crowd whilst reading to stand at the base of the alcove.

For eons, muses have whispered inspiration into the ears of men.
 And imbued as they were with this ancient power - our ancient power - these men were imbued twice over.
 From Aeschylus to Aristotle, from Socrates to Sophocles, from Plato to Pythagoras.
 These men who were born with the *right to write*.
 Men, with the privileges of power!
 That pervasive power to do and say whatever pleases them.
 Oh, the stories I could have written had the quill been in my hand instead!
 Standing silent in the stillness of my statued form in
 museum after museum,
 gallery after gallery,
 separated from my sisters,
 watching history pass beneath me,
 all the while listening, listening,
 listening to the stories of the women of mythology as they stood in statued silence all around.
 From Athena to Hera, from Aphrodite to Medusa, from Megara to Pandora.
 All of us, whispering our stories into the darkness.
 And yet...
 And yet...
 These years were wasted on whispering.
 For what good is a whisper when so many are already shouting?
 What good is a single voice when a chorus will do?
 And so, I picked up a quill, and I began to write...
 I am Calliope, muse of epic poetry!
 And tonight, I reclaim the ancient tale of Antigone, cursed knot in a cursed line!
 Entangled within her tragedy as *our* narratives combine!

Taylor Swift's You Need to Calm Down begins as Calliope calls The Seven Devils from behind the audience. The song is a placement song, allowing the chorus to travel through the space and take their place on their elevated staircase stage. The song plays with concepts of gentle to sharp physicality shifts and sweet to sour expressions, using the lyrics and beats to craft ripples and canons to this effect.



APHRODITE

SCENE WITH ENSEMBLE

APHRODITE: *Suddenly, Clumsy by Fergie begins as a huge fanfare announces the arrival of Aphrodite in a fully Burlesque aesthetic, her showmanship at centre stage. Aphrodite enters her Gilded Cage where she adds a white blazer and white glasses to her look, putting her hair back using a white hair clasp. The chorus straddle their makeshift plinth like men, and hurl insults, mansplaining things and generally creating a highly misogynistic atmosphere whilst Aphrodite delivers this presentation. .*

Good evening gentlemen and gentlemen. And thank you for permitting me this opportunity to defend my PhD thesis on “*Feminism vs. Femininity: the hybridisation of the 21st century woman*”.

In 330 BCE, a statue devoted to my human form was sculpted by Praxiteles (Prax-a-tell-eez) and became the very first of its kind: a female figure, an Olympian goddess no less, entirely resplendent... and also entirely naked! Reactions then and reactions now have not changed much. Despite our 2352 years of evolution. When did the beauty of the physical form regress into something shameful? When did the female figure devolve into a thing to be objectified by the male gaze? And when did we decide that certain conditions of the female experience existed in conflict with one another?

Thus, my thesis aims to answer a question which has burned inside me for centuries: will it ever be acceptable for me, a 21st century woman, to explore my femininity freely, frivolously even, whilst also being permitted to call myself a feminist?

After all: “Woman must write her self; must write about women and bring women into writing.” I will therefore conduct research into theories of self-determination as they apply to women; for if our social reality is a construct, then feminism and femininity can and does have many forms and ways of being. Any woman is a woman and can express herself as she so desires.

Thank you.



MEDUSA

SCENE WITH ENSEMBLE

MEDUSA: I am Medusa. Priestess of Athena.
Maiden. Monster. Victim. Villain.

There is an awkward silence. No one speaks. Medusa looks around in disbelief, having just watched Antigone exit the stage in her first act of submission. Whilst we see her reasons and character arc, Medusa is stuck as a monster in a maiden's body and mentality. Her rage begins to build at yet another injustice.

MEDUSA: Are you serious, right now? *(She looks around at the chorus)* Are we all just okay with this? How are we all just okay with this?!

(Inwards) We let her go? We literally let her walk right past us and none of us did a thing to stop her from leaving.

(She suddenly realises Calliope is next to her) You *did* this. You can undo it! You literally have the power to change her story, so change it! We could – we could – we could take it back to when Pandora first reached out – or – or – when Ismene – we could – we could –

(Calliope has interrupted her with a hard truth) No. Stop saying that. What does that even mean?! Antigone's just – what? – the understudy to her own story? We must just be the audience to her suffering, and do nothing because she's not the right woman in the right story? That cannot be the arc in every woman's narrative!

(Medusa moves from grief to rage in increasing steps here) I have been called a monster my whole life. With an ancient power to turn men to stone. But that is nothing – nothing! – compared to this modern-day monster. Overwhelming us all with twisted tales and hateful headlines so instead of acting on what we know, trying something, anything, we are the ones who are turned to stone. Statued. Silent. And all the while the Antigones of the world are crying out that they cannot cope on their own, that they need our support. So what do we do? Nothing. Oh wait, I'm sorry, not nothing. We change our profile pictures to black. #metoo! Gosh, so sad. Adele did what? Janet Jackson with her *(gestures to her chest)*? Awwww... Thoughts and prayers! And who is it this time? Taylor Swift? Amy Winehouse? Beyonce? Wait, wait, wait I know – IT'S BRITNEY, BITCH!



PANDORA

SCENE WITH ENSEMBLE

Janet Jackson's Nasty Girl starts as the chorus tie Pandora with marionette strings, taking great delight in "helping her dance". There is a strong sense of rising crescendo to begin as they all suggest songs and choreographies which would fit Pandora's story. The resulting rolodex of songs which never quite establishes itself creates a rising frenzy of activity with Pandora starting to articulate her distress.

PANDORA: Stop it! *(They do not hear her)* Stop it! *(They still do not react)* Stop it stop it stop it! *(She pulls the marionette strings out of the chorus' hands. The chorus is shocked and goes completely silent. Staring down at the strings all around her, she slowly speaks)* I can't do this anymore. This isn't what I wanted. This was never what I wanted.

(She gathers herself and then finds Calliope) Calliope, you told us that we were here to change history into her-story. Doesn't that mean we have a duty to support every woman to become the protagonist of her own tale? Even if that tale was not strictly hers to begin with?

(She looks around at each of the Seven Devils) Every one of you know that I was crafted as the ultimate punishment for a man I never knew in a story I wasn't even a part of. Pandora the puppet, with Zeus pulling the strings. Then I was just the girl that ended paradise. I was alone. I was a puppet with no master. Until I found this sisterhood, and at last, I thought, *these* are the women who will help me find my voice. But instead, you became my voice, you started speaking over me and then you started speaking for me. Pandora, same puppet, different masters. *(She takes a big breath)* And I'd like that to stop right now. I want to think my own thoughts, and I want to feel my own feelings, and I want to reclaim my own narrative... on my cue not yours!

And right now, I just want to sit with the silence. We all know we're nearing the end of our time together, so couldn't we all just stop... and savour the calm before the curtain? *(She closes her eyes and breathes deeply).*



DIONYSIANS

SCENE WITH ENSEMBLE

This scene is performed by members of The Dionysian group who are predominantly cast due to their dancing ability. However, should specific members of this group wish to undertake the role of the final archived moment in the tale of Antigone, this piece is the one offered up for this purpose.

Friends of the houses of Thebes!

I come now bearing news of the fate of our King Creon.

Earlier this very day, I escorted our Lord to the edge of the plain where the body lay:

Polynices, unmourned twice over.

And saying a prayer to the gods to hold their anger,
we raised his body and lowered it into our native earth.

Suddenly, far off, we heard a wail of grief rising,
echoing from that unhallowed tomb –

the strange, inscrutable cry came sharper,

piercing the air around us, and the King let loose a cry of his own, enough to wrench the heart,

"Oh god, am I the Seer now? going down the darkest road I've ever gone?"

My son— it's his voice I hear or the gods have robbed me of my senses."

And there in the deepest, darkest recesses of the tomb we found them.

She, strangled in her veils - and the boy,

his arms around her waist,

clinging to her, weeping for his father's crimes.

When Creon saw them, he gave a deep sob,

but the boy turned to him with a wild burning glance

and spat in his face.

Drawing his sword, Haemon rushed at his father,

doomed and desperate, then turned once more

and leaning his full weight on the blade,

he buried it in his body, halfway to the hilt.

And, still in his senses, pouring his arms around her,

he embraced her and breathed his last.

And there they lay, body enfolding body.

Married at last in the houses of the dead.

Damning proof that too late our King understood what justice means.

But blood begets blood as slaughter heaps on slaughter.

For word of this tragedy had reached the ears of the Queen.

Raising a cry for the noble fate of Megareus, killed in battle,

and for Haemon, her last surviving child,

she tethered herself to the twisted noose.

Summoning the Furies down upon her husband,

"You killed my sons!" she cried and her eyes went dark.

