

WARWICK CLASSICS PRESENTS...

# OEDIPUS REX

30-31<sup>st</sup> January

2020

Warwick Arts  
Centre

Directed by  
Maximilian  
Stapleton



warwick  
arts centre

# Welcome to Warwick!

Welcome to the Annual Ancient Drama Festival hosted by the Department of Classics and Ancient History at Warwick! Our aim is to introduce students and the wider public to the many meanings of ancient drama through performance and talks. We are very proud of the production that the students have created; we hope you enjoy it!



Here at Warwick we are passionate about the opportunities Classics offers both intellectually, and in developing the critical skills of analysis, rigour and creativity which are needed in the modern world. Classics studies ancient cultures in the round, from a number of perspectives. Our degrees offer study of history, literature, languages, material culture and philosophy and use Classics and Ancient History to think afresh

about the key concerns of our times. If you'd like to find out more about the degrees we offer, and the opportunities they can open up, please do pick up a Departmental brochure and sign up for a University Open day:

<https://warwick.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/visits/opendays/>.

We're always keen to talk, so if you have any questions, please do email us on [classics@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:classics@warwick.ac.uk).

*Zahra*

Prof. Zahra Newby, Head of Department

# Director's Note

## Maximilian Stapleton



My first duty as director was to choose the play, and I hoped to create a unique performance that would engage modern audiences. The ideal play would be dynamic and fast-paced, filled with complex characters whose journeys would offer a message relevant to our current culture. It was for these reasons that I was drawn to Sophocles' **Oedipus Rex**, a play both action- and character-driven that reflects on, and warns of, the certainties that each one of us has in their lives and the dangers of human arrogance.

Greek tragedies are often portrayed as bleak and miserable, with dark and brooding tones. We endeavoured to break this trend, transforming the choral songs into powerful, original musical numbers, drawing from a range of modern genres, such as jazz and rock. Setting the show in the 1920s allowed us to emphasise both the prosperity and the suffering of Thebes. The chorus brought the city to life, together forming the citizenry of an ill and divided, yet lively metropolis.

Our production focuses less so on the suffering induced by plague and more so on the theme of a city in political turmoil, split by civic conflict regarding Oedipus' regime. Oedipus is a talented ruler who gained power by solving Thebes' crisis with the Sphinx; dealing with Thebes' epidemic by finding Laius' murderer represents another challenge for him to prove himself as a hero.

During the play, Oedipus tragically and inexorably loses the control he had previously; he turns out to be the greatest threat Thebes has ever faced and his continued leadership only further harms the city. By the end of the show, every Theban recognises that Oedipus is more a problem than a solution. Executing these ideas proved easier than I thought. We changed the traditional 'Chorus Leader' role into that of a government advisor, played by Alex Clarke, whose main priority is preventing Thebes from falling into chaos. Alex has done a fantastic job fleshing out this character. The rest of the chorus became individual citizens, each with a particular perspective on Oedipus.

My first initiative, after choosing the play's period, was to design the set. I wanted to create a versatile and atmospheric setting that captured the themes of the show. I decided on a grey-scale, stylistically art-deco cityscape that could accommodate a film-noir tone. The colourlessness of the city contrasts with the colourful sky backcloth, emphasising the 'darkness' of humanity's sight compared to that of the gods. The set, when in its exterior setting, alludes to the image of three

roads meeting, a consistent theme in the original play which, to me, represents the inevitability of fate.

The character of Oedipus, masterfully brought to life by Matthew Jenkins, is a tragic, but also deeply flawed, human being. His flaws reside in his desperation for control, violent tendencies, childlike insecurities and naive dismissal of fate. However, one cannot help but feel sorry for him as his entire world comes crashing down. Our version of Oedipus has a bit of a drinking problem, that's his coping mechanism for dealing with a gradual loss of control over events and those around him. Also symptomatic of this is his tendency to lash out at those who fail to tell him what he wants to hear. I'm massively impressed by Matthew's ability to convey all this. He makes Oedipus' fate seem like an inevitable, yet desperately tragic downfall caused by his own flaws, simultaneously maintaining a degree of sympathy for the character throughout.

Our cast and crew, pooling together a range of talents, have created a production of notable ambition. From the music to the make-up, our team proved their aptitude and artistry. Cast members effectively and impressively grew their characters, and their flow of ideas demonstrated a wonderful enthusiasm which perpetually added to the show. A theatrical production can really bring out one's potential. It also combines a number of awesome individuals into one team, enabling them to bind together their contributions into a larger piece that each member can be proud of. Everyone has really helped bring my intentions to fruition and I can't thank them enough.

## Topography and the representation of memory in *Oedipus Tyrannos*: the mountain, the road and the house.

Amy Rutherford

*Oedipus Tyrannos* centres upon a series of revelations, as Oedipus seeks to heal the land of Thebes from the plague and barrenness that ravages it. By attempting to discover who murdered Laius, the previous ruler of Thebes, Oedipus uncovers his own identity and the truth about his incestuous relationship with his mother. This discovery is played out as a series of journeys encompassing Corinth, Delphi, Thebes, and Mount Cithaeron. It is in the landscape of these places that, gradually, fragments of Oedipus' memory are revealed to have been embedded.

In the beginning of the play, Oedipus focuses single-mindedly on *where* events happened, as he attempts to retrace a 'track'. It is as if he imagines the land to be able to 'remember' Laius' murder, perhaps unconsciously suggesting that the land 'responds' to the actions of humans. However, as the 'track' is 'hard to make out', it can also be linked to Oedipus' own psyche. The 'track' that Oedipus wishes to make out in fact encompasses the memories of *his own past*.

Ancient Greek theatre, like most mythical narratives, often casts time onto physical space. The most poignant image of Oedipus' past which is reflected in the topography of this play is Mount Cithaeron. The physical symbol of a mountain, which was understood to have been formed in the beginnings of the cosmos, is the perfect metaphor for the past. Due to its height and presence, Mount Cithaeron towers over the city, just like Oedipus has (unknowingly) crushed Thebes through his actions.



Throughout the play, there are continuous references to the 'three roads', a highly significant meeting-point of places from Oedipus' past. Each 'road' represents a decision that Oedipus made at some point in his past, which was a turning point in his life. The first road evokes Oedipus' banishment as a baby from the house of Laius and the 'civilised' world of Thebes. The second road signifies Oedipus' upbringing in Corinth, once he was taken there from Mount Cithaeron as a foundling and was adopted by king Polybus and his wife Merope. The final road symbolises the oracular prophecies that were produced at the Delphic oracle. It was these that foretold Oedipus' destiny, thus forcing him to leave Corinth and finally return to Thebes. The 'three roads' could be construed as an allusion to the 'track' which Oedipus was first trying to pinpoint.

In Greek mythic imagination, mountains were imagined as wild and uncultivated, often embodying the polar antithesis of the *polis*. There, the normal societal rules no longer applied. Mountains accepted the unwanted subjects of the *polis*, including undesirable children. Oedipus' name, which literally means 'swell-foot', is a reference to his own rejection as an infant upon his birth on account of the oracle by Apollo. It is a constant reminder for the audience of how Laius 'fastened his ankles' as if Oedipus were an animal. The wound might have even caused the character to limp and therefore, could have been a physical representation of his flawed existence. Shockingly, in her description of Oedipus' abandonment as a baby, Jocasta does not show any maternal feelings toward her infant son. Instead, she emphasises the briefness of the time Oedipus spent within the house: he was only kept there for 'three days'. Oedipus was not nurtured within the civilised space of the house, but **threw** away on the mountain; the primal forces that inhabit the mountain are thus inherent in Oedipus from his earliest days. Later in the play, Mount Cithaeron is referred to as Oedipus' 'mother' and is implied therefore to be the substitute for Jocasta. This may suggest that Oedipus has inherited the wild nature of the mountain which so early on in his life became his surrogate 'mother'.

The life-turning event which occurred on the 'three roads' was the death of Laius. In the long monologue where Oedipus explains to Jocasta his memories from that fatal encounter, the hero is shown to finally remember his past. Once again, topography plays a major role here: the 'hidden glade', to which Oedipus refers at the end of the play, is a representation of how his past was both hidden and in plain sight, like the open path hidden by the trees. It thus demonstrates how the memory of the killing was suppressed within the recesses of the hero's mind.



*O three roads, hidden glade,  
coppice and narrow path where three ways meet,  
ways that drank my own, my father's blood shed by my  
hands,  
do you still remember what deeds you saw me do  
and what deeds I did when I came here? (OT 1398-  
1403, trans. Lloyd-Jones)*

Furthermore, Oedipus' narration has a supernatural element as the earth is portrayed as a monster who 'drank' the blood of his father. The common image of the earth being nourished by life-giving water has been subverted, as the ground has instead become defiled by blood which caused the earth to respond violently. The description of the murder of Laius causes the audience to realise that the plague and barren landscape of Thebes are indeed associated with the earth's response to Oedipus' violation of the natural order.

The fertile properties of the earth have subsequently changed to reflect the violence that Oedipus has committed: by sowing the blood of his father in the earth and by sleeping with his mother, Oedipus has brought about death. By recreating the journey that he made in the past, Oedipus is able to connect his own abandonment to the death of his father, as the 'three roads' and the locations that these roads join together constitute the backdrop for both events. The 'track' that Oedipus was initially seeking has now been displayed as 'three roads', all of which lead back to him. The audience can understand that the earth *does indeed 'remember' the deeds of the past.*

Nevertheless, the journey does not end at the 'three roads'. In order to completely retrace the voyage, one must return to the house. It is the house which harbours the worst crime Oedipus has committed, the sexual relationship with his mother. The connection between mountain and house is first made by Tiresias, when he is forced to prophecy the downfall of Oedipus. Tiresias merges the past and the future together in his description of Mount Cithaeron. In a famous, heart-

wrenching passage, Teiresias' language emphasises the 'hollows' and cavities on the mountainside, which connote images of the female body and Jocasta's womb:



PLATEA OF PLATEA,  
FROM MOUNT CITHAERON.

*There is no anchorage,  
no hollow of Cithaeron's mountainside,  
that shall not resonate in echo to your cry,  
once you have learned about your marriage-  
song,  
and what a treacherous harbour-home  
you entered in full sail, thinking your voyage fair.*  
(OT 420-5, trans. Taplin)

Jocasta's womb is pivotal to the storyline, as it is what brought Oedipus into the world and what subsequently was defiled by Oedipus, leading to his downfall. The feminine images along with the 'cry' that Oedipus is said to give out evoke his despair at the end of the play, when, upon realising that he has slept with his mother, he demands to be exiled to the mountain. The 'marriage-song' that Teiresias spoke about was, after all, a song of lamentation, and a reflection of their unnatural marriage. This image of the wild mountain culminates in the major crime of Oedipus as he has found himself to have gone, unknowingly, horrifically against nature.

The crime of incest is also described in the agricultural images of the play, with his children referred to as 'misbegotten crops' and 'double crops'. The images of infected nature and flawed growth highlight how Oedipus' incestuous relationship has caused the earth to react violently. Oedipus, after the revelation that he killed his father and had incestuous relations with his mother, can at the end of the play remember and recognise that his actions have indeed caused the earth to respond violently. However, with this discovery, devastating as it is, Thebes has the potential to heal. As the play draws to a close, Oedipus expresses his wish to retreat to Mount Cithaeron, the only space that he feels is appropriate for his unspeakable deeds.

In conclusion, understanding the topography of *Oedipus Tyrannus* is highly significant for appreciating this play. Oedipus' past, engraved on the landscape, has always been there waiting for him to remember it. Sophocles represents the land as having been indelibly marked by the past. It is only once Oedipus retraces and reconnects these significant places with one another, that he can learn of his past and his identity.

*\* Amy Rutherford is a Classical Civilisation Finalist. She wrote this piece as part of her coursework for the 'Space and Place in Ancient Greek literature and thought' honours module.*

# Cast List

Oedipus - Matthew Jenkins  
Creon - Angus Watson  
Jocasta - Annie O’Gorman  
The Secretary - Alex Clarke  
Tiresias - Luca Catena  
Messenger - Wilkie Dickinson-Sparkes  
Shepherd - Morgan Swapp  
Priest - Ania Witka  
Healer - Emily Donoghue  
Poet - Jaz Phillips  
Busker - James Haigh  
Newspaper Vender – Leo Crozier  
Grocer - Callum Doherty  
Merchant - Marco Flippin  
Officer - Edward Summers  
Officer - Paul Maximilian Gelbhaar  
Thief - Serena Gupta  
Beggar / Spirit - Jess Johnson  
Beggar / Spirit - Rebecca Norris  
Beggar / Spirit - Isabela Klvanova  
Beggar / Spirit - Zuzu Walker  
Beggar / Spirit - Jess Taylor  
Citizen - Gray Holland  
Citizen - Katharine Broderick  
Citizen - Sueda Oktay  
Antigone – Sophia Zeydabadi-Nejad  
Ismene – Parissa Zeydabadi-Nejad

# Production Team

Director - Maximilian Stapleton  
Producer - Jasmine Thiarai  
Stage Manager - Richa Snell  
DSM -  Alha Patel  
Academic Director and Executive Producer  
Impact Officers - Sarah Acton, Megan Craddock  
Set Designer – Maximilian Stapleton  
Head of Set Construction - Andrea Baldini  
CSM - Maya Russell-Smith  
Sound Designer and Composer - Kirk Hastings  
Sound Assistants - Maya Russel-Smith, Holly Raidl  
Lighting Design - Clare O’Donoghue  
Head of Costumes - George Fletcher  
Assistant Stage Manager (Costumes) - Georgia-May Brown  
Head of Props - Matthew Diemer  
Assistant Stage Manager (Props) - Alice Piper  
Hair and Makeup - Becca Ashworth, Niamh Finlay, Kelsi Russell, Georgia-May Brown  
Photographers - Zakir Siddique, Khoi Nguyen

# Principal Cast

## Oedipus – Matthew Jenkins



Oedipus is a fascinating and perplexing individual. Undoubtedly, he is a hero. He single-handedly saved Thebes from the Sphinx. But tragically and unbeknownst to him, he is powerless to stop terrible events from his past overwhelming him. It is hard not to feel sympathy for the King of Thebes. Sure, he is proud, boastful, and does little to endear himself to those watching his pre-ordained decline. But in many respects his fate seems unjust, unlike the fate of Macbeth, a role I played a few years ago. Macbeth succumbed to his greed, and it proved to be his undoing. He may have been encouraged by the ambitions of his wife, but there is no escaping the fact that he plunged the knife into the rightful King of Scotland. Oedipus, on the other hand, was an innocent victim of fate, which makes this easily the most challenging role I have played. I am a first year

Classical Civilisation student, and I've always enjoyed performing on stage, either as an actor or a singer in a rock band.

## Jocasta – Annie O'Gorman

Having seen the Classics Play twice while I was at school, I am extremely excited to now be a part of it in my first year at Warwick. The plays have grown and grown each year and to have been involved in the process this year has been an amazing experience. Playing Jocasta is a wonderful privilege and I am very lucky to have been given this chance. Throughout rehearsals the cast and crew have grown close and have created something very special together, I am honoured to be sharing the stage with such a wonderful group of people!



## Tiresias ~ Luca Catena



As someone who didn't have much experience in theatre before coming to university, one of my main goals in Warwick was to do as many shows as I could, and Oedipus has been one of the most interesting ones for many reasons. I had read it back in high school, but this production has really done something unexpected and interesting with it. From the set to the costumes to the wonderful songs, the team has done a fantastic job and I'm really glad to have had the opportunity to be part of it. Tiresias is honestly a super cool character and I can only hope to have done the part justice.

## The Secretary ~ Alex Clarke

I am a third-year student studying History and Philosophy. In my time at Warwick I have acted in a few performances, including 'The Tamer Tamed' and 'Duchess of Malfi' for Shakesoc, 'Love's Labour's Won' for IATL and 'The Recruiting Officer' for WUDS. Performing in Oedipus has been an excellent experience, the cast and crew have all been really enthusiastic and I've enjoyed every moment of it. The character of the Secretary is a bit different to what I'm used to playing but taking on the role of an anxious government official under Oedipus has been really fun. It's given a lot of great opportunities to give the part some real character.



## Creon ~ Angus Watson



Playing Creon has been a brilliant experience for me. Normally I play comic characters, so to step outside the box and play someone as strait-laced as Creon has been a new and challenging style of portrayal, and well worth the voice loss from attempting to speak an octave below my normal range. It has been great to work alongside such talented counterparts, and in particular the conflict between Creon and Oedipus, played excellently by Matthew Jenkins, has been particularly fun to rehearse and play out. Overall the play has been a thoroughly rewarding experience, and I look forward to performing it live!

## Shepherd – Morgan Swapp

Being a first year and having a passion for the creative arts, I knew that I wanted to take part in a show at university. I feel lucky enough to have cast in **Oedipus** because not only is it a great take on the story, they are all also great people I've had an immense pleasure with. By far one of the best shows I've been part of. I have had so much fun playing the Shepherd. Working with Matthew specifically in our encounters in the scenes I am in I had the most fun with since my character was in such an awkward situation and he knew no matter what he would say would be pleasant for either himself or Oedipus. An interesting dynamic with a lot to work with.



## Messenger – Wilkie Dickinson- Sparkes

I've loved getting my hat trick of Classics plays in **Oedipus Rex**. The play has always been a large part of my university career and I'm excited that I get to go out on a bang. The Messenger, or the Old Man from Corinth, seems like a small character on the surface, but I couldn't be happier to be playing him.



## Priestess – Ania Witker

This is my fourth year studying at Warwick but my first production with the Classics Department. It has been great as an introduction to a completely different subject area than I am used to being a law student as well as experiencing a genre of performance I haven't yet been involved in. I play the role of the Priestess who maintains a calm authority throughout the rather dramatic events of the play. She has been extremely fun to portray, a contrast to my own, rather more enthusiastic and impulsive personality. As a music theatre performer, I have particularly enjoyed the singing aspect and the chance to work with our fantastic composer, Kirk.

# Our Special Thanks



Any undertaking of this scale cannot come together without the support of a great many people, and we would like to thank everyone who has been involved in getting this project up and running. We cannot name you all, but you know who you are, and we appreciate everything that you have done for us. Special thanks, however, must go to the following groups and people, without whom the Warwick Ancient Drama Festival could not exist.

First and foremost, we would like to extend our thanks to the generous support of **The British Academy**.

In addition, we would like to thank **Warwick Arts Centre** for allowing us to stage our production here, and for their continuous support.

Creatively, we are indebted to **Ian Johnston** for allowing us to use his amazing translation of *Oedipus Tyrannos* for our production. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to **Kirk Hastings** for his fabulous, atmospheric music which has truly brought our production to life. Thanks also to **Becca Ashworth** for makeup and the prosthetics she has made, and to **Clare O'Donoghue** for Lighting Design.

Finally, we would like to thank the **Department of Classics and Ancient History** for their continued support of the Warwick Classics Society's yearly production. We are especially indebted to **Dr Emmanuela Bakola** – as ever – for her continued championing of the Warwick Ancient Drama Festival, her mentoring of the director and cast, and her constant enthusiasm. We would also like to thank **Susan Doughty** and **Kymberley O'Hagan** in the Departmental Office for their tireless work, **Dr Paul Grigsby** for putting together the Programme, and **Prof Zahra Newby**, our Head of Department, for supporting our endeavours.

# Warwick Classics Network



The **Warwick Classics Network** is a thriving community of teachers and academics dedicated to the promotion and support of Classics and Classics teaching in Coventry, Warwickshire and beyond. Spearheaded by Prof. Michael Scott and Dr Paul Grigsby, and supported by the **A. G. Leventis Foundation** and the charity **Classics for All**. The WCN has three key objectives:

- **To provide teachers of classical subjects with resources, advice, and an active support network.** Our WCN website with its teaching resource section STOA is an integral part of this support.
- **To promote the teaching of Classics in schools not currently offering Classical subjects on their curriculum.** Working alongside Classics for All, we provide information on training and funding available for introducing Classics to schools. The WCN are currently helping to introduce Classics to schools in Coventry, Rugby and Nuneaton.
- **To promote the research undertaken by Warwick academics to a wider audience.** Through public events such as our July Teachers Day and our November Ancient Worlds Study Day, and through the creation of specialised online resources (such as our #AskAnAcademic videos), the WCN are dedicated to bringing the work of Warwick Classics to the wider world.

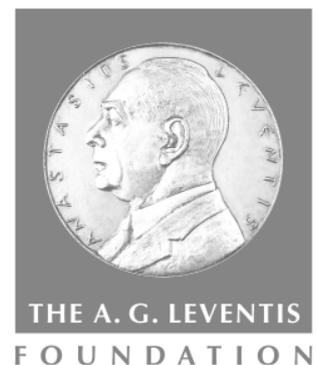
Visit us online at [www.warwick.ac.uk/wcn](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/wcn) to find out more and download our WCN Resources prospectus

## Contacts

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CLASSICS FOR ALL  
Championing Classics in Schools



# Come and study with us at Warwick

If you are interested in the ancient world, and want to explore how the Ancient Greek and Roman worlds have shaped modern cultures and societies, then why not come and study with us here at Warwick?

At Warwick, we'll help you experience why the ancient world has had such a wide-ranging influence on arts, philosophy, architecture, and much more besides. In addition, our innovative programme of modules - inspired by the most recent research and which go beyond what's often found in higher education - will challenge your preconceptions and, above all, capture your imagination.

## Why study Classics and Ancient History at Warwick?

- We are **ranked 6th** in the UK's Classics and Ancient History departments in *The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2018* and 7th in the *Complete University Guide 2019*. Warwick University is ranked 9th in the UK in *The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2018* and the *Complete University Guide 2019*.
- We have a **high staff to student ratio** (1:12.6) with many opportunities for one-to-one staff-student interaction, while the close campus university experience means people get to know each other well.



- Our **flexible degrees** offer a wide choice of modules across Greek and Roman culture and language. You will have the chance to explore connections between the classical world and the civilisations of Europe, the Americas, and the Middle East.
- We were **ranked 8th** in the UK's Classics departments in the most recent **Research Excellence Framework**. 80% of our research was rated 4\* (world-leading) or 3\*

(internationally excellent). This means you will be taught by recognised experts at the forefront of their fields.

- We have a **vibrant community** of postgraduate students studying for MA, MPhil and PhD research degrees or taking taught Master's courses.
- Our dept. boasts a **diverse research culture**. You can work with our internationally-diverse staff on joint projects and get involved with research at all levels from undergraduate to PhD.
- Our **research specialisms** include ancient literature and thought, Greek and Roman history, material culture, Greco-Arabic studies, the history of medicine, numismatics (coinage and money), epigraphy (inscriptions), ancient space, global history and the reception of Classical cultures in the Renaissance.
- Our **innovative and flexible teaching** uses the latest techniques and technologies. Our hands-on learning includes regular trips to museums and classical sites.



- Those on a **Study in Europe** degree have the opportunity to spend a year abroad in Italy. There are also opportunities to study for a year at Monash University (Melbourne, **Australia**), to conduct your own research project abroad over the summer, or to participate in a summer school in **Greece** or **Italy**.
- Warwick is the **third most targeted university by the UK's top 100 graduate employers** (*The Graduate Market in 2018*, High Fliers Research Ltd.) Our Classics students go to jobs in accountancy, consultancy, asset management, high-street fashion, computer games and media as well as continue with further study and research.

Feel inspired? Visit our website <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/classics>, feel free to get in touch with us, come along to one of our open days, and open yourself up to the opportunities and excitement of studying the ancient world here at Warwick.

# Warwick Open Days

**The 2020 Open Days here at Warwick  
will be held on the following dates:**

**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2020  
Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2020  
Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2020  
Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

**For more information, visit our website  
<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/classics>**

**We look forward to welcoming you here!**