

A PRIME CUT PRODUCTIONS AND THE MAC CO-PRODUCTION PRESENTED BY THE ABBEY THEATRE



# X'NTIGONE

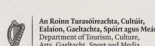
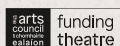
AFTER SOPHOCLES' ANTIGONE

ABBNEY THEATRE  
16 — 26 MARCH

*Written by* **Darren Murphy**  
*Directed by* **Emma Jordan**

**CAST:**  
ELOISE STEVENSON, MICHAEL JAMES FORD

ABBNEYTHEATRE.IE  
#XNTIGONE



Garfield Weston  
FOUNDATION



# WRITER'S NOTE

*Darren Murphy*

Finally, after two years, the plague is abating. Thebes emerges from its latest lockdown with the loss of another 100,000 lives. Creon must make a statement on national TV in an hour announcing the lifting of all restrictions, declaring today 'Freedom Day.' The people are weary. A party atmosphere crackles in the air—everyone senses it with a mixture of relief and joy—everyone except X'ntigone, that is. Before the announcement Creon must persuade her to renounce her brother Polyneices, the dead terrorist. I had the bare bones of the story.

If we can't do it in a theatre, I thought, kicking the idea around in May 2020, we'll strip it to the core and do it outside. A drive-in, maybe, cars circling the playing space, headlights providing lighting and each car's speaker system providing playback — like a live radio play. Or a flat-packed mini-amphitheatre, scalable and socially-distanced—an in-the-round performance space with separate booths allowing the audience to watch through plexiglass screens—like a cross between a panopticon and a peepshow. But it had to be something gladiatorial.

X'ntigone isn't about the pandemic, but what the pandemic reveals to us about our democratic institutions, a contest between two irreconcilable worldviews. In the 5th century BCE, Athens birthed democracy and theatre in the same cradle. The spaces where drama, political discourse, and judicial proceedings happened all had the same layout because theatre wasn't just as a democratic act, it interrogated the democratic process itself. The Athenians were road-testing it to find out its limits. Theatre wasn't separate to democracy, but its condensed simulacrum; civic, political, and religious. It laid bare the soul and the psyche of the city. Athenians acted out an idea of themselves to understand who they were, and Antigone is the play that most starkly attests to this self-interrogation of what it means to be a citizen. It has always spoken to moments of existential crisis in democracy because it pits individual liberty against state security. Athol Fugard used it as a lens through which apartheid could be examined. Seamus Heaney used it to illuminate the civil rights protests in Derry. Jean Anouilh used it as a rallying cry to the French Resistance in Vichy France.

My version pares back the action to its core conflict between Creon and his rebellious niece, X'ntigone. It's a thriller, of sorts. But it's also the story of a family. Of an uncle trying to control his niece; a powerful leader versus a girl without agency; a king who needs to maintain order in the pestilent city versus a young woman who needs to bury her brother—an act which threatens the public health of that city. It's about sedition, insurgency, and power. It's about how weaponizing a plague pits personal tragedy against the stringent civic demands of a corrupt and weak leadership. Once again, Antigone speaks to this moment with urgency. It is, as it always has been, a play for now.

**Darren Murphy**  
March 2022

*'Let your tongue be  
offended. I am not  
an old man's story  
anymore, Uncle.'*

# CREATIVES AND COMPANY

<b>Cast</b>	Eloise Stevenson Michael James Ford
<b>Writer</b>	Darren Murphy
<b>Director</b>	Emma Jordan
<b>Set &amp; Lighting Design</b>	Ciaran Bagnall
<b>Sound Design</b>	Garth McConaghie
<b>Costume Design</b>	Tracey Lindsay
<b>Movement Direction</b>	Dylan Quinn
<b>Assistant Director</b>	Gerard McCabe
<b>Stage Manager</b>	Emily Danby
<b>Production Manager</b>	Peter Molloy

## FOR PRIME CUT PRODUCTIONS

<b>Associate Producer</b>	Natalie Murphy
<b>Community Engagement Manager</b>	Bobbi Rai-Purdy
<b>Finance &amp; Administration Officer</b>	Lorraine McBrearty
<b>Executive Producer</b>	Una NicEoin
<b>Artistic Director</b>	Emma Jordan

## FOR THE MAC

<b>Technician</b>	Sandy McAllister
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<b>Marketing Executive</b>	Rae Watterson
<b>Marketing &amp; Communications Officer</b>	Melissa Henry
<b>Head of Marketing</b>	Maeve Hawkins
<b>Programme Officer</b>	Julie Stewart
<b>Creative Learning Manager</b>	Elaine Forde
<b>Head of Operations</b>	Lisa McGinley
<b>Creative Director</b>	Simon Magill
<b>Chief Executive</b>	Anne McReynolds

## FOR THE ABBEY THEATRE

<b>Producer</b>	Craig Flaherty
<b>Production Manager</b>	Cliff Barragry
<b>Producing Assistant</b>	Aoife McCollum
<b>Company Stage Manager</b>	Leona Nally
<b>Costume Assistant</b>	Yvonne Kelly
<b>Marketing and Press</b>	Heather Maher

## Graphic Design

ZOO.

## Co-Directors

Maeve Keane  
Caitríona McLaughlin  
Mark O'Brien

## Running Time

70 minutes

# PRIME CUT PRODUCTIONS

Established in Belfast in 1992 Prime Cut Productions is a company limited by guarantee a registered charity. Prime Cut is one of Northern Ireland's critically acclaimed arts organisations. Excellence is at the core of their practice and they are committed to producing artistically engaging experiences for audiences and artists.

## Prime Cut delivers under three main strands:

**CREATE:** The production of excellent performance and writing from Northern Ireland for an international audience.

**INNOVATE:** Driving the development of Northern Irish Performing Artists through the provision of the finest professionals training, mentorships and opportunities

**PARTICIPATE:** The provision of a creative resource promoting autonomy and artistic self-expression for communities across Northern Ireland with trust and collaboration at its heart.

Since 2014 Prime Cut has been the recipients of 6 Core Awards and 16 international awards, for their touring productions and co-productions.

# THE MAC

The MAC is one of the UK and Ireland's leading art institutions and since opening in 2012, has welcomed over 2.5m people to become culturally active through its programme of exhibitions, live events, and participatory and family activities. The MAC has become a vibrant shared social space in the centre of Belfast. Enjoyed by young and old alike, the venue is a place for artists, art aficionados and for many thousands of people for whom a visit to the MAC is their first to a contemporary arts centre.

Its mission is to make Northern Ireland a better place, through the creation and enjoyment of and participation in, outstanding art with a vision of Northern Ireland as a creative and confident society that celebrates diversity. The MAC supports artists working across Northern Ireland in almost all artforms and at all career stages. In 2019/20, 236,000 visits were recorded from people of all ages and backgrounds.

Imagination is the MAC's product but it's also its gift, shared generously with everyone who walks through its doors.

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