

Hybrid 'Antigone' took 'pretending' to new level

Amanda Sieradzki
Council on Culture & Arts

"Everything is heightened, everything is intense, everything is life or death in these moments," states Beth Slade, a graduating senior and BFA major in Florida State's School of Theatre. "Especially for these characters," she adds.



Beth Slade Slade will step into the title role of "Antigone" as part of FSU's pivot to a virtual season on March 11-14. The story of "Antigone" follows Oedipus' daughter who learns that her brothers have died on opposite sides

of a civil war. Creon, King of Thebes, only allows one brother to be buried with honors, which sparks debate among young and old citizens who must decide how their country will proceed into the future.

Slade believes the Greeks to be the most passionate in all of theater based on the wide range of emotions she and her cast exhibit during the course of the show. She says that getting into Antigone's mindset was no easy feat, especially during a shortened rehearsal process that took place over six weeks on Zoom.

The production will be a hybrid of theater and filmmaking. Students

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The FSU School of Theatre's production of "Antigone," is a hybrid of theater and filmmaking. TALLAHASSEE

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picked up their costumes, props and green screens at staggered times from the theater and filmed their parts separately.

"Normally, you walk in the theater and suddenly there's a set and things start to feel more real," describes Slade. "But this time it's more about pretending, which we're always doing, but the world is a little less put together than we're all used to. Sometimes you're talking to people who aren't actually there, but when it's all edited together, there will be someone to the left of you. We're excited to see the final product."

As a child, Slade created make-believe worlds with her stuffed animals and dolls. She would pull plotlines from movies and books to create hodgepodge productions of her own design. This interest in performance introduced her to choir, before a high school teacher encouraged her to audition for college theater programs.

Once at FSU, she found a significant mentor in Dr. Kris Salata, chair of the School of Theatre. Slade took a graduate level course in devised theater her sophomore year which opened up entirely new worlds. That same year she participated in the New Horizons Festival where she performed a work based on Gertrude Stein's play "A List." The collaborative experience of devised theater captured Slade's imagination.

"It taught me a lot about dynamics in a rehearsal space between a director and an ensemble," says Slade. "It's about making sure all the voices are heard and everyone feels respected in that space. There's a really liberating feeling being able to create your own work. It empowers you as an actor."

Slade says she will try anything once when it comes to theater. She is always up for telling a difficult story or relating to a character that is nothing like her own personality.

In one studio class she ended up wrapping herself in a weighted blanket while an audio recording of a monologue played in the background.

"I learned something through that process," says Slade. "I like that element



FSU Theatre's "Antigone" cast rehearses via Zoom. TALLAHASSEE

of play with things I can mess around with and explore. I love to get my hands dirty."

In preparing for a typical production, she would listen to music as she walked to the fine arts building. She would then feed off the energy everyone brought into the rehearsal room. On Zoom, rehearsals have looked different, but she still loves that same energy of a group warm-up to get everyone on the same page.

Slade dives into research to answer questions about her character outside of what might be known in the play's script alone. The more she reads, the easier she finds it is to slip inside their skin. With "Antigone," the language of the modern translation has proven to be the most difficult part of the process. Certain names trip up the tongue, as well as the poetics of the words themselves.

"Antigone comes in and challenges Creon's idea of power and law," says Slade. "It's a story about grieving and honoring the ones you love that you lost. Pandemic aside, it's something people

can relate to, but especially the last year being surrounded by so much loss, I think it's very topical for audiences."

The amount of Zoom theater Slade has consumed in the past year, even in the midst of the pandemic, has given her hope for the future. She's trying not to put too much pressure on herself as she applies to graduate schools and ponders where her career will take her next post-graduation.

"Theater continues to evolve and change based on what the world is experiencing," says Slade. "It came from community rituals of people telling stories. In the past it was dealing with death and life, and these very large, basic human feelings and experiences. I think we've boiled theater back to that. We're surrounded by so much death, and we're trying to hang on to those beautiful moments."

Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).

If you go

What: Antigone

When: 8 p.m. on March 11, 12, 13 and 2pm on March 14

Where: Online

Contact: For more information, please visit <https://tickets.fsu.edu/>.

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