

# CREONTE

DRAMMA PER MUSICA

*DA RAPPRESENTARSI*

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NELL' AUTUNNO

DELL' ANNO 1776.



**Dmytro Bortniansky**  
**CREONTE**  
**Opera Seria in Two Acts**  
Libretto by Marco Coltellini  
Venice, 1776

# DMYTRO BORTNIANSKY AND HIS LONG-LOST OPERA *CREONTE*

by Lyubov Kyyanovska

Dmytro Bortniansky is one of the most celebrated of Ukrainian composers, a representative of the ‘golden age’ of national musical culture who also made a significant contribution to the development of Russian music. His emergence into the musical life of the eighteenth century coincided with the brutal and systematic suppression by Imperial Russia of Ukraine that culminated in the destruction of the Zaporozhian Sich<sup>1</sup> in 1775. In view of that long-standing enmity, there is considerable irony in the fact that the three men considered to be the founding fathers of Russian music were all Ukrainian: Maxim Berezovsky (c. 1745–77), Dmytro Bortniansky (1751–1825) and Artemy Vedel (1767–1808). All three wrote the choral concertos which were a staple of the Russian musical diet, but in the early stages of their careers, both Berezovsky and Bortniansky developed primarily as secular composers: they performed as singers in the operas favoured at the Imperial Court, subsequently studied in Italy and there devoted themselves largely to secular genres. Both composed the first Ukrainian – indeed Russian – operas. Berezovsky’s *Demofonte*, to a libretto to Metastasio, was composed in 1773 and was thus the first opera by any Ukrainian or Russian composer – but all that survives of the score is its opening *Sinfonia* and four arias, and the honours therefore pass to Bortniansky’s *Creonte* of 1776. There, too, though, the music was missing for most of the last two-and-a-half centuries; it was rediscovered only in 2024.

<sup>1</sup> The Zaporozhian Sich, established in 1552, was a unique Cossack republic situated beyond the Dnieper rapids, which emerged as a vital centre of Ukrainian statehood, military prowess and democratic tradition. It maintained its own government, judiciary, territory (divided into administrative districts known as *palanky*) and armed forces, exerting control over the steppe lands until its ultimate abolition by the Russian Empire in 1775.

That Bortniansky's first opera should re-emerge at the very moment when Ukrainian nationhood is under again threat from the same oppressive neighbour transforms a purely artistic occasion into an event of national, even international, political and cultural significance. Research into the history of *Creonte*, indeed, reveals that similar political tensions were at play in the history of the opera itself.

### **Bortniansky's Life and Career**

Dmytro Bortniansky was born on 26 (or 28) October 1751 in Hlukhiv, then the capital of the Cossack Hetmanate of Ukraine, which preserved the traditions of the Zaporozhian Sich. His father, Stefan Shkurat, had relocated there from the village of Bortne in the Lemko region (in present-day Poland and Slovakia, where they abut western Ukraine) and changed his surname to the more 'noble' Bortniansky after his native village. In Hlukhiv, he married a Cossack widow, Motrona Tolsta, who became the future composer's mother. There were four children in the family: Ivan Tolstoy, Motrona's son from her first marriage; Tymofiy, who died in childhood; her daughter Melaniya; and Dmytro.<sup>2</sup> Dmytro began his musical studies at the renowned Hlukhiv Singing School, which trained singers for the Imperial Court Chapel in St Petersburg. Thanks to his wonderful voice and exceptional musical talent, the seven-year-old Bortniansky was taken to St Petersburg, where he became a chorister in the Imperial Chapel. Like most of its talented young singers, alongside singing in church services, he performed solo roles in Italian and German operas – initially, female roles at the age of eleven or twelve, and later male ones. At the age of thirteen, he sang the principal role in the opera *Alceste* by the German composer Hermann Raupach.<sup>3</sup> At the Court Chapel, the young Bortniansky was able to continue his musical education under its director, the Ukrainian Marko

<sup>2</sup> V. Ivanov, *Dmytro Bortniansky*, Musical Ukraine, Kyiv, 1980, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Raupach (1728–78) took up a post as harpsichordist in the Russian Imperial Court in 1755 and was appointed a Kapellmeister and court composer three years later. *Alceste* was one of four operas he wrote in St Petersburg.

Poltoratsky,<sup>4</sup> as well as with Raupach, an Austrian composer by the name of Josef Starzer<sup>5</sup> and the renowned Italian composer of operas and sacred music, Baldassare Galuppi.<sup>6</sup>

The last-named played a decisive role in Bortniansky's subsequent career. Upon Galuppi's recommendation, he was granted a stipend to refine his compositional skills in Italy, and when Galuppi returned home in 1768, the seventeen-year-old Bortniansky set out on the lengthy journey with him. He continued studying under his mentor in Venice and undertook study trips to Naples, Rome and Bologna, where he consulted Padre Martini<sup>7</sup> and participated in the activities of the Accademia Filarmonica di Bologna. As it happens, at almost the same time as Bortniansky – 1769 – the thirteen-year-old Mozart also made his first journey to Italy with his father, visiting Padre Martini in Bologna in 1770.

Bortniansky's 'Italian period' lasted more than a decade, from 1769 to 1779, and proved to be highly productive. He composed three operas on mythological and historical subjects (*Creonte*, 1776; *Alcide*, 1778; *Quinto Fabio*, 1779), which were staged with marked success in Venice and Modena. He also composed several sacred and secular instrumental works while he was there.

In 1779 Bortniansky received a letter from Russia demanding his immediate return to St Petersburg. En route, he stayed in Vienna, where he became acquainted with Count Andriy Rozumovsky<sup>8</sup> and Antonio Salieri, court composer to Empress Maria Theresa.

<sup>4</sup> Poltoratsky (1729–95) had become a member of the Court choir in 1746; from 1753 he was its conductor and from 1763 its director.

<sup>5</sup> A violinist in the Burgtheater in Vienna, Starzer (1726–87) moved to St Petersburg c. 1760, becoming concert-master and court composer and returning to Vienna after eight years in Russia. He was best known as a composer of ballets, writing over thirty of them.

<sup>6</sup> The Venetian Galuppi (1706–85) had a career that took him around Europe, although he always retained a base in his native city. His success as an operatic and religious composer attracted the attention of Catherine the Great, who brought him to St Petersburg in 1765; he remained there for three years before returning to Venice.

<sup>7</sup> The Bolognese Giovanni Battista Martini (1706–84), known as Padre Martini after he took holy orders, established a school of composition in his home city and acquired an international reputation as a scholar and teacher. His students included Johann Christian Bach, Grétry, Mysliveček and Bortniansky's fellow Ukrainian, Maksym Berezovsky, who began a four-year apprenticeship in Bologna in 1769.

<sup>8</sup> Andriy Rozumovsky is the Ukrainian form of a name better known in its Russian version, Andrey Razumovsky (1752–1836), he of Beethoven's three 'Razumovsky' Quartets, Op. 59, which he commissioned in 1806.

Back in Russia, Bortniansky was appointed as a court *Kapellmeister* at the Imperial Court Chapel. In 1784, following Giovanni Paisiello's departure for Italy,<sup>9</sup> he became the *Kapellmeister* of the 'Little Court' in Pavlovsk (30 kilometres south of St Petersburg), serving the heir to the throne, Grand Duke (and future Tsar) Paul. Paul's wife, Maria Feodorovna (*née* Princess Sophie Dorothea of Württemberg), possessed refined artistic taste, was highly musical, loved opera and vocal music, and was an accomplished pianist. Commissioned by her, Bortniansky composed three operas in the 'French style' – *La Fête du seigneur* (1786), *Le Faucon* (1786), and *Le Fils-Rival* (1787) – as well as a collection of romances and songs to French poetry, eight keyboard sonatas, various instrumental chamber works and a *Sinfonia Concertante* for seven instruments, the first work of its kind by a Ukrainian composer.

In 1796, following the death of Catherine II, Tsar Paul I ascended the throne. Thanks to the patronage of the Tsarina, Maria Feodorovna, Bortniansky was appointed Director of the Imperial Court Chapel, a position he held for the rest of his life. During this period, he composed his finest sacred choral concertos – a total of 35 single-choir and ten double-choir concertos. The majority are set to texts from the Book of Psalms. They are characterised by joyful, exalted moods, states of solemn glorification, or serene and focused contemplation, reflecting the aesthetic ideals of Classicism. It was only towards the end of his life that he infused them with dramatic and tragic dimensions, most notably in the best-known of them, Concerto No. 32, *Lord, Make Me to Know Mine End*. Bortniansky worked in additional sacred genres, too, producing Communion hymns, Cherubic hymns and other liturgical chants. The most famous among them are the *Cherubic Hymn* No. 7 and the sacred hymn *How Glorious is Our Lord in Zion*. The latter became the anthem of the Russian Freemasons (Bortniansky himself was a Mason), and in its German version, set to Gerhard Tersteegen's text 'Ich bete an die Macht der Liebe', it was performed in the Prussian Imperial Army during the evening roll-call.

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<sup>9</sup> Paisiello (1740–1816) was one of the most successful operatic composers of the later eighteenth century, to the extent that he was invited to St Petersburg by Catherine the Great in 1776, remaining for eight years. During this time he wrote the most successful of his 94 operas, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*.



*A lithograph portrait of Bortniansky said to date from around 1810, although it was first published in the journal Niva (meaning 'field' or 'pasture') in 1901*

Bortniansky died in St Petersburg in 1825. After his death, Fedir Lvov, the newly appointed director of the Imperial Court Chapel, formulated a new conceptual direction for the ensemble in his 1826 memorandum 'On the Formation of Ancient Church Singing.' This approach, rooted in native Russian choral traditions, received the full backing of both the Imperial Court and the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>10</sup> As a result, Bortniansky's concertos virtually disappeared from ecclesiastical practice in Russia, surviving exclusively within the concert repertoire. In Ukraine, by contrast, from the 1830s onwards, his sacred music achieved immense popularity within the Divine Liturgies of the Greek Catholic and Orthodox churches, particularly in Galicia and Bukovina, where it continues to be performed during church services to this day.

Bortniansky's compositional style was shaped primarily by Classical aesthetics and the philosophy of the Enlightenment. This influence is evident in the structural logic and the use of characteristic Classical genres across his sacred concertos, operas and secular vocal and instrumental works. Some musicologists draw parallels between Bortniansky and the First Viennese School, particularly early Mozart. The Lviv-based composer Stanyslav Liudkevych (1879–1979) famously referred to him as the 'Ukrainian Mozart',<sup>11</sup> emphasising the profound impact of Bortniansky's legacy on the subsequent development of Ukrainian professional music. At the same time, his masterful polyphonic technique, the elaborate choral fugues in the finales of his sacred concertos and his reliance on a system of rhetorical figures demonstrate his assimilation of the grand Baroque *concertato* style. Furthermore, some works – especially his 'French' operas – exhibit the sensitive manner of sentimentalism and the refined elegance of the *style galant*.

Bortniansky's six operas were composed during his early creative period, in the 1770s and 1780s. The three Italian *opere serie* – *Creonte*, *Alcide* and *Quinto Fabio* – were based on subjects from antiquity and written in Venice, where two of them also received their premieres (*Quinto Fabio* was first staged in Modena). These works reveal

<sup>10</sup> V. P. Pavlinova, 'Fyodor Petrovich Lvov', The Orthodox Encyclopedia: <https://www.pravenc.ru/text/2110957.html>.

<sup>11</sup> 'Dmytro Bortniansky and Contemporary Ukrainian Music', in S. *Lyudkevych. Studies. Articles. Reviews. Speeches*, ed. Z. Shtunder, Musical Ukraine, Kyiv, 1973. pp. 220–25.

Bortniansky's expert craftsmanship and exceptional talent in mastering the techniques of the Italian operatic school. They inventively combine the brilliant, virtuosic *bel canto* style of singing established in Baroque *opera seria* with the noble restraint characteristic of Classicism. Bortniansky's operatic characters are conceived in accordance with Classical ideals, exalting the virtues of duty, sacrifice and nobility. Conversely, his French operas – *Le Faucon*, *Le Fils-Rival* and *La Fête du seigneur* – were composed for amateur performances by the entourage of the 'Little Court' in Pavlovsk and Gatchina, slightly further south of St Petersburg, where the imperial family had a huge summer palace. They closely align with the style of French *opéra comique*, demonstrating Bortniansky's assimilation of diverse contemporary genre and stylistic models.

His stage works entered Ukrainian concert practice only during the final two decades of the twentieth century. The first modern concert performance of *Alcide* took place in Kyiv in 1984 under the baton of Anton Sharoev. In 1995, Natalia Svyrydenko mounted a production of *Le Faucon*, using a Ukrainian translation of the libretto by Maksym Strikha. The presentation of those two operas on a single evening first took place on 11 and 12 September 2021 at the Solomiya Krushelnytska Lviv National Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre.

### **Bortniansky's First Opera, *Creonte***

*Creonte*, set to a libretto by Marco Coltellini based on Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone*, was Bortniansky's first stage work. Having studied in Italy for seven years by that time, he had thoroughly mastered the principles of the desired operatic style, despite his youth. The premiere of *Creonte* took place on 26 November 1776 in Venice, at the intimate Teatro San Benedetto, built by the aristocratic Grimani family. It appears the premiere was highly successful, since *Creonte* continued to be staged throughout the 1776–77 season.

A few words should be dedicated to the librettist Marco Coltellini, since his biography may shed light on why, upon his return to Russia, Bortniansky chose not to present a work that had successfully held the stage in Italy. Coltellini (1719–77) was a multifaceted figure: tenor, librettist and printer. He was ordained as a priest but left the church and



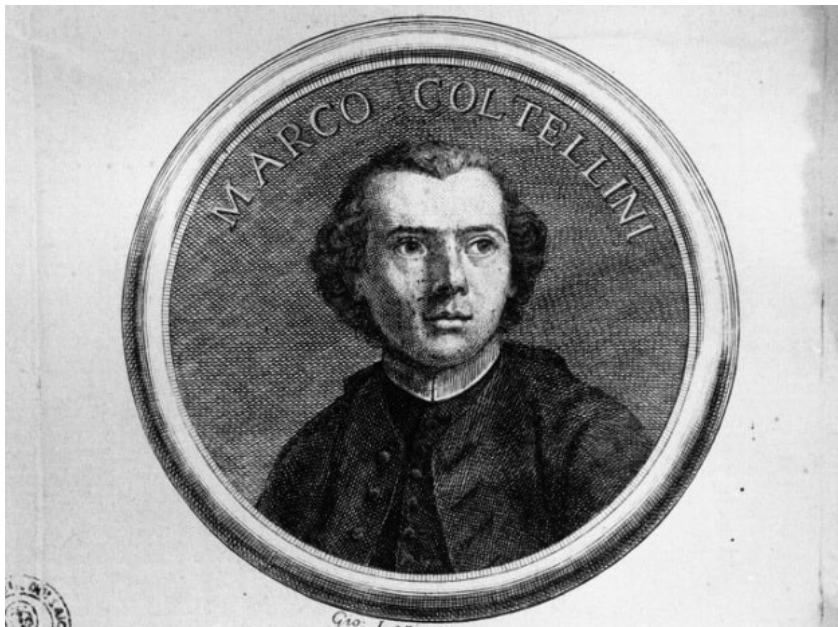
*An aristocratic ball in the Teatro San Benedetto in 1782, six years after Bortniansky's Creonte was produced there – painting by Francesco Guardi (1712–93), the main painter of scenes of Venetian life after Canaletto*

married, fathering four daughters (two of whom became singers and two painters), after which he set up a printing press in his home town of Livorno which specialised in opera librettos and theatrical works, later embracing maps and natural history, including the pioneering *Il Gazzettiere Americano* (1763). The reformist nature of his catalogue in the

teeth of censorship by state and church gave an early indication of his radical opinions. He wrote his first libretto in 1761: a text for *Almeria*, composed by Gian Francesco de Majo<sup>12</sup> and premiered in Livorno. His text for *Ifigenia in Tauride*, set by Tommaso Traetta,<sup>13</sup> was premiered in Vienna in 1763, leading to his appointment as Imperial Poet at the Habsburg court in Vienna, and he later went on to supply libretti to composers of the standing of Gassmann, Gluck, Hasse, Haydn, the twelve-year-old Mozart (*La finta semplice*) and Salieri, the dramatic fluidity of his texts doing much to modernise the operatic conventions of the day. In Vienna, though, thanks to his freethinking views (one of his satires angered the empress, Maria Theresia), he lost his position and moved to Russia in 1772, where he became a librettist for the Imperial Theatre in St Petersburg. There, he wrote an *Antigone* libretto intended for his compatriots Giovanni Paisiello and Tommaso Traetta, which Traetta ultimately used; his opera *Antigona* was staged in the Russian capital in November 1772. It, too, was embroiled in a political scandal. When Empress Catherine insisted upon a happy ending for *Antigona*, the indignant Traetta used the chaconne that concluded the opera to allude to Polish independence. The First Partition of Poland had taken place merely months earlier, in August 1772, and so Traetta's covert protest was voiced at a time when the issue was evidently fraught with political sensitivity. Coltellini's libretto itself altered Sophocles' tragedy, in which Antigone perishes in a cave, by interpolating a scene where Creonte pardons the heroine. Rumour had it that various indiscretions on Coltellini's part incurred the wrath of the Russian Imperial Court, to the extent that his sudden death in November 1777 was followed by speculation that he was poisoned by the Empress – though there is no documentary evidence of a fall from grace or a precipitous end: he may simply have fallen ill.

<sup>12</sup> The Neapolitan de Majo (1732–70) was active in the royal chapel in his home city, writing both operas and sacred music. After periods of employment in Vienna, Mannheim and Madrid, he returned to Naples in 1765. His operas, successful in their days, are over twenty in number.

<sup>13</sup> Traetta (1727–79) was a prominent representative of the second generation of the Neapolitan operatic school. He composed over 40 stage works, encompassing 25 *opere serie*, four *opere buffe* and various other theatrical pieces. His significance as a pioneer of new trends in mid-eighteenth-century opera remains largely under-appreciated today. Such was his prestige that he was invited to Russia by Catherine the Great, serving as her musical director from 1768 to 1775.



*Engraving of Marco Coltellini, held in the Collezione Bartolini  
in Palazzo Fraternità dei Laici, Arezzo*

In the finale of his own opera, Bortniansky takes the liberty of altering both Sophocles' tragedy and Coltellini's libretto, placing justice into the hands of the people: it is the populace who place the tyrant Creonte in chains and take it upon themselves to overthrow the regime.

In light of the extraordinary historical fate of *Creonte*, several questions arise. First: how did a libretto from St Petersburg reach Bortniansky in Venice? Evidently, as a stipendiary of the Imperial Court, he maintained contacts with the Russian capital and could have obtained a text initially intended for Italian composers working there. A successful production in the more liberal atmosphere of 1770s Venice would hardly have erased imperial memories in St Petersburg; thus, it is highly probable that, aware of the adverse reaction of the Russian court and subsequently hearing the rumours of Coltellini's fate only a year after the premiere of his own version of *Creonte*, Bortniansky was wary of bringing the manuscript of such a controversial opera back with him.

There is no confirmed documentary evidence to confirm a theory supported by the conductor Herman Makarenko, the man behind this revival: that after the fall of the Venetian Republic in 1797 and the capture of the city by Napoleonic forces, the manuscript could have been taken to Portugal. Since Portugal was not aligned with Napoleon, it offered a safe haven for such documents. Furthermore, as Queen Maria I had decreed the founding of the 'Public Library of the Royal Court' in Lisbon in 1796, it is entirely plausible that the manuscript found its way there – and there it sat for over two centuries, part of a huge collection of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century operatic scores.

In 2023, Dr Olha Shumilina, a musicologist and professor at the Mykola Lysenko Lviv National Music Academy, stumbled upon the score of *Creonte* in the National Library of Portugal (of which the Ajuda Library forms a part) in Lisbon while searching the catalogues for Maksym Berezovsky's missing opera *Demofonte* – but instead of rediscovering the first opera composed by a Ukrainian, she found the second. She brought a copy of the manuscript back to Ukraine, initiating the painstaking work of an entire team of specialists dedicated to researching and digitising this masterpiece.

*Creonte* is in two acts and consists of 60 numbers, comprising arias, duets, choruses, recitatives, dialogues and orchestral numbers. The orchestra is relatively modest: a string section, oboes, horns, trumpets, timpani, harpsichord and a *basso continuo* group. Stylistically, the work perfectly reflects the aesthetic of Classicism characteristic of Italian opera in the second half of the eighteenth century, as is evidenced by the

elaborate *accompaniato* recitatives, the elevated role of the choruses and orchestral episodes, notably the overture, and the subordination of vocal virtuosity to dramatic expression in the arias and ensembles.

*Creonte* was reborn on 11 November 2024, when a concert version was performed in Kyiv with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, hosted at the Hennadii Udoenko Diplomatic Academy of Ukraine. The patronage of international cultural institutions – UNESCO, Europa Nostra (a pan-European federation for cultural heritage) and the National Commission of Ukraine for UNESCO – underlined the significance of this event for European culture in general. In view of the threat to Ukraine's very existence, the revival of *Creonte* and its new staging became a landmark event in the cultural life of the country, bringing together a wide circle of Ukrainian and international cultural figures, politicians and diplomats. The occasion received extensive coverage from domestic and international media, as well as the official platforms of global organisations.

The conductor and music director of the modern premiere and the driving force behind the revival and this recording was Herman Makarenko, a People's Artist of Ukraine and UNESCO Artist for Peace, at the helm of the National Presidential Orchestra and the National Chorus of Ukraine 'Dumka.' The leading roles were performed by Serhiy Bortnyk (*Creonte*), Olha Fomichova (*Antigona*), Danylo Kotok (*Emone*), Stanislav Pashchuk (*Adrasto*), and Margharyta Bilokiz (*Ismena*). The harpsichord continuo was performed by Olha Shadrina-Lychak, Head of the Early Music Department at the National Music Academy of Ukraine. On 3 October 2025, the majority of the musicians who participated in the concert revival began the studio recording of the opera you are currently listening to; the producer was the nationally recognised Andriy Mokrytsky.

*Lyubov Kyyanovska, Professor of the Department of Music History of the M. V. Lysenko Lviv National Academy of Music, is also a Member of Academia Europaea, a Corresponding Member of the National Academy of Arts of Ukraine and a Doctor of Art History.*

**Serhiy Bortnyk** was born in 1978 in Vinnytsia into a theatrical family. Following early studies in piano and choral conducting, he entered the vocal faculty of the National Music Academy of Ukraine, studying under Kostiantyn Ognevyyi. He made his operatic debut at the Opera Studio of the Academy as Triquet in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*. Between 2003 and 2006, he served as a soloist at the Kyiv Municipal Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre for Children and Youth.



Since 2007, Serhiy Bortnyk has been a resident soloist at the National Philharmonic of Ukraine. His repertoire encompasses leading lyric tenor roles, including Alfredo (*La traviata*), Lensky (*Eugene Onegin*), Vaudémont (*Lolanta*), and Nemorino (*L'elisir d'amore*). He also participated in the Oper Oder-Spree festival in Germany, performing the role of Vaudémont in German. He is a laureate of several important competitions, securing the Grand Prix at the 'XXI Century Art' international competition alongside honours from the Borys Gmyria International Vocal Competition.

A milestone in his career was his interpretation of the title role in Dmytro Bortniansky's opera *Creonte*, which he performed at both the 2024 world-premiere concert performance and the 2025 staged theatrical premiere. This historic revival took place under the patronage of UNESCO and Europa Nostra, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

**Olha Fomichova** (born in 1976) is a distinguished Ukrainian operatic soprano. Having initially trained as a choral conductor in Kryvyi Rih, she subsequently graduated from the Ukrainian National Tchaikovsky Academy of Music in 2003. She further refined her vocal technique in Italy through master-classes with Alfonso Antoniozzi and Roberto de Candia. Since 2004, she has been a soloist at the Kyiv Municipal Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre for Children and Youth, and in 2005, she joined the National Opera of Ukraine as a resident soloist.



A laureate of numerous vocal competitions, Olha Fomichova secured the Grand Prix at the 'XXI Century Art'

international competition, alongside prestigious awards in Slovenia and Italy. Her versatile stage repertoire encompasses leading roles of the classical canon, including Violetta (*La traviata*), Gilda (*Rigoletto*), Rosina (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), the Queen of the Night (*Die Zauberflöte*), and Marzelline (*Fidelio*). On the concert platform, her repertoire includes Mozart's Requiem and Orff's *Carmina Burana*.

Olha Fomichova maintains an active international career, touring and performing at venues across Spain, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands and Japan. A notable highlight of her artistic journey is her participation in the revival of Bortniansky's *Creonte*, singing the role of Antigona in 2024–25.

The mezzo-soprano **Margharyta Bilokiz** was born in 1989 in the Poltava region of Ukraine. She studied at the Lysenko Poltava Music College and the National Music Academy of Ukraine in Kyiv, later completing an assistant-internship at the Academy under the guidance of Valentina Kochur (2015–19). She made her operatic debut in 2019 at the Opera Studio of the Academy in the role of Odarka in Semen Hulak-Artemovsky's *Zaporozhets beyond the Danube* (1863), one of the best-known Ukrainian comic operas.

She was awarded first prize at the Prof. Dichler International Competition in Vienna (2022) and received a Special Jury Prize at the Maria Cebotari International Opera Competition in Chişinău (2023). An active concert performer, she appeared as the alto soloist in Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 at the Lemans Bouquet Festival in France and Gala d'Opera in Switzerland in 2023. Her wider activities include solo programmes dedicated to twentieth and 21st-century Ukrainian classical music and numerous charitable initiatives.

She became the first singer to perform the role of Ismena in Bortniansky's *Creonte* after the 250-year disappearance of the work, appearing in both the 2024 concert premiere in Kyiv and the 2025 staged production conducted by Herman Makarenko.

The lyric tenor **Danylo Kotok** was born in 2000 in Kyiv. He pursued his professional vocal studies at the National Academy of Culture and Arts Management of Ukraine, earning a Master's degree in solo singing in 2022. In February 2023, he was appointed as a resident soloist at the Kyiv Municipal Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre (Kyiv Opera). Later that year, in October,



he additionally joined the Opera Studio of the National Music Academy of Ukraine as a soloist. His expanding stage repertoire embraces a variety of roles across the classical and *bel canto* traditions, including Ernesto (*Don Pasquale*), Edoardo Milfort (Rossini's *La cambiale di matrimonio*), Guglielmo Antolstoinoff (Donizetti's *Le convenienze ed inconvenienze teatrali*), and Basilio (*Le nozze di Figaro*). On the concert platform, his achievements include the tenor solo of the Swan in Orff's *Carmina Burana*.

Beyond his primary operatic roles, his broad musical repertoire encompasses celebrated arias by Puccini, Verdi, Bellini and Richard Strauss, alongside traditional Ukrainian songs, romances and Neapolitan songs. His performance as Emone in the 2024 presentation of Bortniansky's *Creonte*, was, for him, too, an important milestone.

The tenor **Stanislav Pashchuk**, born in 1996, received his professional vocal training at the Glière Kyiv Institute of Music and subsequently at the National Music Academy of Ukraine, where he earned a Master's degree in opera singing in 2024. He is a laureate of the 'XXI Century Art' international vocal competition, where he was awarded second prize.

In February 2023, he joined the Kyiv Municipal Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre (Kyiv Opera) as a resident soloist. His stage repertoire combines lyric and character roles from the European classical canon, including Alfredo (*La traviata*), Fenton (*Falstaff*), Nemorino (*L'elisire d'amore*), Paolino (*Il matrimonio segreto*), Giocondo (Rossini's *La pietra del paragone*) and Monostatos (*Die Zauberflöte*).

Although his portrayal of Adrasto in the revival of *Creonte* garnered considerable acclaim, he is nonetheless committed to his civic duty and has served in the Armed Forces of Ukraine since 2025.



**Olha Shadrina-Lychak**, born in 1973, is a leading Ukrainian harpsichordist, pianist and early-music scholar. A PhD and Associate Professor, she serves as Head of the Early Music Department at the National Music Academy of Ukraine. Following her initial studies at the Academy, she refined her artistry at the Strasbourg Conservatory under Aline Zylberajch and undertook a research internship in Toulouse with Jan Willem Jansen.

A laureate of the prestigious International J. S. Bach Competition in Leipzig, she was awarded the special Bärenreiter-Urtext Preis. As a soloist with the Kyiv Soloists and Kyiv Camerata, she maintains an extensive concert schedule, performing solo and chamber programmes in Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Poland. Her career has been marked by collaborations with the London Baroque Orchestra and distinguished musicians such as Andreas Scholl, Emma Kirkby and Maurice Steger.



**Herman Makarenko**, born in 1961, is a distinguished Ukrainian conductor, professor, Ambassador of Ukrainian Culture and the first artist from Ukraine to be awarded the honorary title of ‘UNESCO Artist for Peace’. He is widely regarded as a pivotal figure in contemporary musical diplomacy.

For many years, he has served as a conductor at the National Opera of Ukraine, where his extensive repertoire includes dozens of operatic and ballet productions, among them Verdi’s *La traviata*, Gounod’s *Faust*, Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly*, Adam’s *Giselle* and *Le Corsaire*, and Minkus’ *Don Quixote* and *La Bayadère*. He is the founder and Artistic Director of the Kyiv Classic Orchestra, an ensemble with which he has realised numerous large-scale international projects aimed at promoting the Ukrainian and European musical heritage. Under his leadership, the Orchestra has performed to acclaim across Europe, Asia and the Americas, including a landmark appearance at UNESCO headquarters in Paris. His career



has seen him perform in over twenty countries, among them France, Italy, the United States, Canada, China, Egypt and Kuwait.

Herman Makarenko is the progenitor of the project 'Returning to the World of Dmytro Bortniansky's First Opera *Creonte*'. Under his baton, *Creonte* received its modern world premiere and its first-ever recording – a significant achievement at the intersection of musicology and cultural diplomacy.

The history of the **National Presidential Orchestra of Ukraine** dates back to the restoration of Ukrainian independence in 1991. From its earliest days, the Orchestra has consistently fulfilled its mission to preserve and develop Ukrainian musical traditions, promote an international cultural heritage, and uphold the heroic and patriotic ideals of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Today, the National Presidential Orchestra of Ukraine is an integral part of the cultural and diplomatic life of the state. The orchestra performs extensively at leading concert venues in Ukraine and abroad, representing the Ukrainian musical tradition on the world stage. The National Presidential Orchestra is the sound of independent Ukraine, reflecting its cultural dignity and unwavering commitment to the highest artistic standards.



Maksym Husak serves as the Director and Conductor of the National Presidential Orchestra. He is a prominent figure shaping the contemporary musical landscape of Ukraine. His career in the arts, spanning over twenty years, is a record of bold ideas, large-scale projects and premieres that unveil Ukrainian culture to the world. His musical dialogues with leading international artists, alongside collaborations with stars of the Ukrainian entertainment industry, foster a vibrant international context. Under his direction, the Orchestra functions not only as a symbol of statehood but as a dynamic space for cultural dialogue, experimentation, and inspiration.

The participation of the National Presidential Orchestra in the historic revival of *Creonte* stands as a testament to its high professional standards and dedication to preserving the national cultural code.

The **National Choir of Ukraine 'Dumka'** – or, to give it its full, formal, title, the National Honoured Academic Choral Cappella of Ukraine 'Dumka' – is one of the country's pre-eminent musical institutions, serving as a benchmark for choral excellence and a custodian of national musical traditions for over a century. Established in 1919 as the State Travelling Cappella – the



Ukrainian acronym of which (ДУМКА: Derzhavna Ukrainaska Mandrivna Kapela) formed its name – the ensemble has evolved from a modest group into a world-class choir. Since 1984, it has been led by the distinguished choirmaster Yevhen Savchuk as its Artistic Director and Chief Conductor.

The artistic profile of the ensemble is defined by its versatility, with a repertoire spanning authentic Ukrainian folklore and sacred music to the most complex vocal-symphonic masterpieces of the western canon and contemporary works. Over the years Dumka has worked with such fabled figures as Yehudi Menuhin, Mstislav Rostropovich and Krzysztof Penderecki. Performing on the world's most prestigious stages, the Cappella remains a vital ambassador for Ukraine's rich choral heritage.

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# DMYTRO BORTNIANSKY *Creonte: Opera Seria in Two Acts*

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## *Dramatis personae*

Creonte, King of Thebes  
Antigone, daughter of Oedipus, niece of Creonte  
Ismene, sister of Antigone  
Haemon, son of Creonte, fiancé of Antigone  
Adrastus, an important citizen of Thebes  
National Chorus of Ukraine 'Dumka'  
National Presidential Orchestra  
Olha Shadrina-Lychak, continuo  
Herman Makarenko, conductor

Serhiy Bortnyk, tenor  
Olha Fomichova, soprano  
Margharyta Bilokiz, mezzo-soprano  
Danylo Kotok, tenor  
Stanislav Pashchuk, tenor

## Synopsis

The action takes place in ancient Greece, in and around the city of Thebes. The plot is based on the fate of the children of the legendary King Oedipus: Eteocles, Polynices, Antigone and Ismene.

### Act I

Following the death of Oedipus, a power struggle erupts in Thebes between his two sons – Eteocles, who serves as acting king, and Polynices, who arrives with an army to seize power. In a duel, the brothers kill each other, and the crown passes to Creonte, Oedipus' brother-in-law. His first decree is to honour Eteocles with a proper burial, while denying funeral rites to Polynices. Defying the king's will, Antigone, unafraid of the mortal danger, resolves to bury Polynices secretly. Frightened, Ismene hopes that Creonte's son Haemon, who loves Antigone, might persuade his father to rescind the cruel order.

At night, Antigone conducts the burial rites, burning Polynices' body on a funeral pyre and gathering his ashes in an urn. Suddenly, Haemon appears at the burial site. He chooses to help Antigone and takes the urn to place it in the family tomb, hoping to bear the blame himself. Adrastus, a wealthy and influential Theban citizen, catches Haemon holding the urn. For violating the royal decree, Creonte condemns his own son to death. Yet Antigone confesses that she alone burned Polynices' body. Creonte orders that she be sealed alive in a cave.

### Act II

Antigone walks to her place of execution and is walled up inside the cave. Adrastus reports to Creonte that Haemon has killed the guards and escaped. Unmoved, Creonte refuses to revoke his brutal sentence.

Against all odds, Haemon makes his way into the cave to join Antigone. Resolving to die alongside his beloved, he bids farewell to life with her. At that moment, Adrastus and Ismene burst into the cave with a crowd bearing torches. They announce that the people of Thebes have risen against Creonte's cruelty and wish to see Antigone on the throne. Haemon fears for his father's fate, but Antigone assures him she will not seek vengeance. She promises to restore peace and joy to Thebes.

<b>CD1</b>	<b>69:26</b>
<b>Atto I</b>	
1 Sinfonia	4:23
Introduzione	
2 Coro primo: 'Giusti Numi, ah voi rendete'	1:39
3 Introduzione al Combattimento	0:31
4 Coro secondo: 'Versa il Tiranno sangue'	1:30
<b>SCENE 1</b>	
5 Recitativo: 'Popoli, amici, ai nostri voti' (Creonte, Adrasto)	2:23
6 Coro terzo: 'Regna lunghi anni felici'	1:27
7 Recitativo: 'Cedo al pubblico voto' (Creonte)	1:41
8 Coro: 'Così finiscano così periscano'	1:32
<b>SCENE 2</b>	
9 Recitativo: 'Fermatevi, crudeli' (Antigona, Ismena, Creonte)	4:22
10 Aria di Creonte: 'Compiango il vostro affanno'	5:01
<b>SCENE 3</b>	
11 Recitativo: 'Misero Polinice!' (Ismena, Antigona)	2:18
12 Aria d'Antigona: 'D'una misera famiglia'	4:25
<b>SCENE 4</b>	
13 Recitativo: 'Pur ti ritrovo Ismene' (Emone, Ismena)	2:29
14 Aria d'Ismena: 'Sperai la pace in seno'	2:46
<b>SCENE 5</b>	
15 Recitativo: 'I timori d'Ismene passano nel mio cor' (Emone)	1:03
16 Aria d'Emone: 'Ah vorrei sperar, ma tremo'	5:34

## SCENE 6

17	Coro: 'Ascolta il nostro pianto'	2:15
18	Coro: 'O voi dell'Erebo' –	1:31
19	Recitativo: 'Ah Polinice!' (Antigona)	2:31
20	Aria d'Antigona: 'Io resto sempre a piangere'	2:08
21	Ballo	1:22
22	Coro: 'Oh folle orgoglio umano!'	0:56
23	Recitativo: 'O reliquie funeste' (Antigona)	1:46

## SCENE 7

24	Recitativo: 'Antigona, mia vita, ah che facesti?' (Emone, Antigona)	1:05
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## SCENE 8

25	Recitativo: 'Non v'è dubbio, Amici' (Adrasto)	0:43
26	Aria d'Adrasto: 'Chi puo dir sono innocente'	5:03
27	Coro: 'Se più non s'acconde'	2:10

## SCENE 9

28	Recitativo: 'Sommo provido Nume' (Creonte)	2:29
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## SCENE 10

29	Recitativo: 'Signor, t'arresta' (Adrasto, Creonte)	0:47
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## SCENE 11

30	Recitativo: 'Quell'urna?' (Creonte, Adrasto, Ismena, Emone)	1:35
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<b>CD2</b>	<b>69:46</b>
SCENE 12	
① Recitativo: 'La rea son io' (Antigona, Ismena, Emone, Creonte)	2:03
② Recitativo: 'E invan tu sperì' (Emone)	0:30
③ Aria d'Emone: 'A fronte d'un Tiranno'	2:58
SCENE 13	
④ Recitativo: 'Prence, che dici mai?' (Antigona, Creonte, Emone)	0:49
⑤ Aria di Creonte: 'Non lusingarti, ingrato'	3:23
SCENE 14	
⑥ Recitativo: 'Prence, Germana, ah non piangete' (Antigona, Ismena)	0:45
SCENE 15	
⑦ Recitativo: 'Tu pur mio dolce Sposo' (Antigona, Emone)	2:48
⑧ Duetto: 'Mio ben, fedel t'amai' (Antigona, Emone)	4:34
<b>Atto II</b>	
⑨ Coro: 'Oh come presto, o misera'	2:08
SCENE 1	
⑩ Recitativo: 'O Tebe, o Cittadini' (Antigona)	1:49
SCENE 2	
⑪ Recitativo: 'Ah ferma aspetta' (Ismena, Antigona, Creonte)	2:02
⑫ Aria d'Ismena: 'Ah lasciami morir, misera!'	1:31
⑬ Recitativo: 'O Germana! O tebani' (Antigona)	1:28
⑭ Arioso d'Antigona: 'O tu dell'ombre pietoso'	2:54
⑮ Aria d'Antigona: 'Non piangete i casi miei'	3:32
⑯ Recitativo: 'Tebani, il vostro pianto' (Creonte) –	0:42
⑰ Recitativo: 'Ah t'affretta, Signor' (Adrasto, Creonte)	2:12

SCENE 3

18 Aria di Creonte: 'Amor più non ascolto' 3:47

SCENE 4

19 Recitativo: 'Infelice, ecco il frutto' (Adrasto) 0:30

20 Aria d'Adrasto: 'D'unanima tiranna questo e lo stile' 4:58

SCENE 5

21 Recitativo: 'Adrasto! Oh Dei! Che miro?' (Emone, Adrasto) 1:42

22 Aria d'Emone: 'Ah se lo vedi a piangere' 4:28

SCENE 6

23 Recitativo: 'Misera, ove m'inoltro?' (Antigona) – 4:55

SCENE 7

24 Recitativo: 'Antigona, ove sei?' (Emone, Antigona) 0:09

25 Duetto: 'Duetto: Mio ben, fedel t'amai' (Antigona, Emone) 4:25

26 Recitativo: 'Che dissi? Oh me infelice!' (Antigona, Emone) 2:40

27 Duetto: 'Ah si, mio ben, si mora' (Antigona, Emone) 1:46

28 Recitativo: 'Ma quai colpi improvvisi' (Emone, Antigona) 0:27

SCENE 8

29 Recitativo: 'Viva la mia Regina' (Ismena, Antigona, Adrasto, Emone) 2:09

30 Coro: 'Doppo crudel Tempesta' 1:40

## CD1

### Atto I

#### 1 Sinfonia

#### Introduzione

##### 2 Coro primo

Giusti numi, ah voi rendete la corona al vero erede.

Dei di Tebe, ah proteggete della Patria il difensor.

Voi del Trono arbitri siete, e difesa in voi non hanno.

Un tiranno. Un traditor.

##### 3 Introduzione al Combattimento

##### 4 Coro secondo

##### *Coro dal Campo*

Versa il tiranno sangue.

##### *Coro dalla Citta*

Cade il ribelle estinto.

##### *Coro dal Campo*

Ah Polinice ha vinto.

##### *Coro dalla Citta*

Eteocle è vincitor.

##### *Creonte, Adrasto*

No, d'ambi il corpo esangue copre l'infame arena.

##### First Chorus

*Just gods, place the royal crown in righteous hands.*

*Gods of Thebes protect the one, who protects the Homeland.*

*You are the judges of the Throne, and there is no protection from you neither the tyrant nor the thief.*

##### Second Chorus

##### Choir from the field

*Let the tyrant's blood be spilled!*

##### Choir from the city

*To the dust let the rebel fall!*

##### Choir from the field

*Ah, Polynices has won!*

##### Choir from the city

*Eteocles has defeated him!*

##### Creonte, Adrastus

*No, the lifeless bodies of both lie in the inglorious arena.*

### **Tutto il Coro**

O trista, infausta scena  
di lacrime e d'orror.

#### **SCENE 1**

##### **5 Recitativo**

##### **Creonte**

Popoli, amici, ai nostri voti il Cielo la  
lungamente sospirata pace accorda alfin, ma  
costa prezzo di sangue e di delitti; estinti con  
parricidio atroce i tristi avanzi della stirpe real,  
è vuoto il Trono, e troppo caro a questo prezzo  
il dono. Voi giusta a sacri patti, che giuraste  
agli Dei, volgete altrove Guerrieri eroi, l'armi  
nemiche, e voi fedeli a' vostri giuramenti, al  
sangue de' vostri Re, grati agli Dei, scegliete,  
Tebani, a riempir l'antica Sede, e di Laio, e di  
Cadmo un degno erede.

##### **Adrasto**

E chi di te più degno, chi più grande è di te? Tu  
germe illustre della stirpe real. Tu della Patria  
il più fido sostegno, l'ornamento maggior.  
Del comun voto interprete fedel, sulla tua  
fronte depongo il regal serto. Il pegno ei sia  
del pubblico riposo, della pubblica speme. Al  
tuo gran figlio stringa Antigona bella il fausto  
nodo che l'amor già dispose, e si rinnovi con  
più felici auguri de' nostri di la prole ai di  
futuri.

### **All the Chorus**

*A sorrowful, dreadful sight, mortal terror lies  
everywhere.*

##### **Recitative**

##### **Creonte**

*Friends, Thebans, Heaven has heard our  
prayers: at last, it sends us the long-awaited  
peace. Yet everywhere are the traces of crime  
and blood, fratricide has destroyed the final  
remnants of the noble royal line. Their throne  
stands empty. We have paid far too high a  
price. You, warrior heroes, who have sworn  
sacred oaths to the Gods, turn away the enemy's  
weapons; you, Thebans, who are faithful to your  
oaths, to the blood of your kings, grateful to the  
gods, choose a worthy heir who will occupy the  
ancient throne of Laius and Cadmus.*

##### **Adrastus**

*And who is more worthy here, who stands  
greater than you? You are the noble offspring of  
a royal lineage. You are the truest pillar of our  
homeland, its greatest decoration. I crown you  
with the wreath of the Theban kings. For us,  
this shall be a steadfast guarantee of peace and  
prosperity. Let Antigone unite her fate with your  
son, may love dwell with them forever. And may  
the unforgettable valour of the Thebans pass on  
to their children in the years to come.*

### 6 Coro terzo

Regna lunghi anni felici  
Stringi il nodo fortunato,  
chè la brama d'ogni cor.  
Tu sarai nel nuovo stato  
il terror de' tuoi nemici  
e de' sudditi l'amor.

### 7 Recitativo

#### Creonte

Cedo al pubblico voto e ascendo un Trono che ancor gronda di sangue. Almen s'estingua in quel sangue infelice la vendetta de' numi, ed abbian fine le sciagure, e i delitti della prole di Laio. Ad un solenne sacrificio festivo al nuovo giorno s'aduni il Popol folto, e al lieto suono, di Sacri inni devoti per la pace agli Dei sciogansi voti. Dopo i funebri onor, la tomba accolga venerata degli Avi il cener Sacro d'Eteocle, ei che fedele per la Patria pugnò; l'altro che mosse l'ingiusta guerra incontro a lei rimanga, inonorato al campo, e ogn'un lo vede detestato, insepolto a corvi in preda.

### 8 Coro

Così finiscono  
così periscono  
per sempre i perfidi  
i traditor.  
E l'ombre pallide  
nude insepolte  
sul nero margine

### Third Chorus

*Rule for many happy years in justice;  
May fortune always  
Hold you beneath its veil.  
Having taken up royal power,  
Strike your enemies with terror,  
And grant your people love.*

### Recitative

#### Creonte

*Obedient to the will of the city, I ascend the throne still stained with blood. Let this unhappy blood extinguish the vengeance sent by Heaven. Let there be an end to all misfortunes and crimes of the noble house of Laius. Now the people gather for a solemn and generous offering, to greet the new day with hymns of praise that glorify the gods; they all vow to uphold peace. So let a funeral hymn accompany Eteocles to the grave where his ashes shall lie. He always defended his native land with loyalty. But the one who, instead, wickedly started war shall remain unburied in the field, as a warning to all; let the crows devour his hated corpse.*

### Chorus

*He must perish,  
be swallowed by darkness,  
who has struck with treason  
the hearts of men.  
An unburied shadow  
lingers in the gloom,  
on the blackened shore.*

di Lete accolte  
copra di tenebre  
l'eterno orror.

## SCENE 2

### ☐ Recitativo

#### **Antigona**

Fermatevi, crudeli. Almen lasciate che  
i cadaveri esangui lavi col pianto mio.

#### **Ismena**

Lasciate almeno, ch'abbian l'ultimi amplessi  
i germani da noi.

#### **Antigona**

Prole infelice d'una infausta famiglia, ecco  
adempiuto d'Edipo disperato l'Oracolo crudele.

#### **Creonte**

Si compia il senno mio.

#### **Antigona**

Barbaro, aspetta. Che manca al tuo desio?  
L'orrida guerra opra è dell'arti tue. Tu  
fomentasti le fraterne contese; è tuo progetto  
la scellerata pugna; il vero erede per te non ha  
più il trono, più germani io non ho. Tu regni  
alfine, non hai più che bramar. Ma i corpi  
esangui degli estinti germani almen permetti  
ch'abbian il comun tributo nel pubblico  
dolor, poi si racchiudan nella tomba degli Avi.  
Agl'infelici questi almen son dovuti ultimi  
uffici.

*It shall be shrouded,  
at the edge of dark Lethe –  
endless dread.*

### **Recitative**

#### **Antigone**

*Cruel ones, stop! Give me time at least to wash  
their bodies with a stream of tears.*

#### **Ismene**

*I beg you, let me embrace our dead brothers one  
last time.*

#### **Antigone**

*Oh cursed fate of our hapless lineage. And so  
the cruel prophecy has been fulfilled through a  
madman Oedipus.*

#### **Creonte**

*May my will be done.*

#### **Antigone**

*Fierce one, wait! What does your will still  
want? You brought about this war. You stoked  
the hatred between brothers. You planned this  
massacre. Because of you, the heir lost the  
throne, and I have no brothers. Rule over us,  
you've won it all. But let us honour our dead  
brothers, as is right, with a sister's mourning cry,  
so all may witness it before we lay them in the  
family tomb. The wretched at least deserve this  
final dignity.*

**Creonte**

Ed Eteocle gli avrà. Ma invano sperì, se per altro li chiedi. In Polinice odio un figlio ribelle alla Patria comune, odio il nemico del pubblico riposo; e se lo privo dell'onor del sepolcro, e lascio al Mondo questo del mio rigor funesto esempio. Di Re, di cittadin le parti adempio.

**Ismena**

Crudel! Vorrai, che passi oltre la tomba il rigor della pena? Ah, l'infelice dallo sdegno de' Numi è punito abbastanza.

**Creonte**

È poca pena la morte a un traditor, se non sgomenta dall'esempio de' falli il supplizio dei rei.

**Antigona**

Reo, chi difende i suoi diritti al Trono?

**Creonte**

È reo chi muove l'armi contro la Patria, e porta accese le scellerate faci in man degl'empì a struggerne le mura, arderne i tempi.

**Antigona**

Nell'oppressione ingiusta era la guerra dura necessità.

**Creonte**

Non più; deciso è già della sua sorte. Fisso è il decreto, e il trasgredir lo è morte.

**Creonte**

*You may honour Eteocles, but don't hope to sway my mind. For Polynices and his rebellion I hold nothing but hatred. He is a danger to the peace of the people. I'll deny him an honourable burial and I will leave the whole world an example of a formidable ruler! As king, as citizen, as son of the land.*

**Ismene**

*Cruel! Must he truly be punished beyond the grave? Ah, the gods have already punished the poor man enough in this life.*

**Creonte**

*A traitor deserves more than death, if punishment fails to scare others from treacherous thoughts.*

**Antigone**

*Treason – for fighting for his own right?*

**Creonte**

*Treason is raising arms against the homeland, grasping torches of destruction to burn our homes and sacred temples.*

**Antigone**

*If oppression reigns with lies, then war is just!*

**Creonte**

*Enough! his fate is already decided. There is an order, and for violating it, death.*

**Ismena**

Ah per pietà...

**Creonte**

Non si rinvoca il primo sacro cenno d'un Re.

**Antigona**

Cenno inumano!

**Ismena**

Donalo al nostro pianto.

**Creonte**

Il pianto è vano.

**10 Aria di Creonte**

Compiango il vostro affanno, all'ire tue  
perdono,  
ceder vorrei, ma sono pria cittadin che Re.  
Con voi non son Tiranno, terger vorrei quel  
pianto;  
ma degno poi di tanto un traditor non è.

**SCENE 3**

**11 Recitativo**

**Ismena**

Misero Polinice! Ecco il tuo regno, il tuo  
retaggio, un nudo campo, e un solo fra tanti  
non avrai, ch'osi raccorre le tue ceneri almen,  
che almen ricopra di poca polve il corpo  
estinto.

**Ismene**

*Oh, have mercy...*

**Creonte**

*His first sacred decree a ruler cannot repeal.*

**Antigone**

*The dreadful decree!*

**Ismene**

*Let us weep for him!*

**Creonte**

*Your tears are in vain.*

**Aria of Creonte**

*I grieve with you in sorrow, I forgive your rage,  
And I wish I could give way – but I am a citizen  
before I am a king.  
With you, I am no tyrant, I'd rather wipe away  
those tears,  
For no traitor is worthy of them.*

**Recitative**

**Ismene**

*Poor Polynices, behold your kingdom, your  
inheritance: but barren field... And among the  
many – not one who dared to gather even your  
ashes, who would cover your lifeless body even  
with a handful of dust.*

**Antigona**

Ah pria tutti i fulmini di Giove piombin sovra il mio capo. Andiamo.

**Ismena**

E dove?

**Antigona**

A tentarlo, e perir. L'ombre, e il silenzio della vicina notte agevolan l'impresa, e il rischio aggiunge merito alla pietà. Quando si compie a un sì sacro dover, non ci sgomenti il timor d'un Tiranno.

**Ismena**

Oh Dio! Che tenti? Pensa che trasgredito il decreto crudele, e fatto segno d'un Re Tiranno alla fatal vendetta un più atroce destin forse ci aspetta. Ah quando avran mai fine le tragedie funeste del nostro sangue? Ancor secondo, oh Dio! Render lo vuoi di nuovi orrori?

**Antigona**

Addio.

**Ismena**

Tu mi lasci e non parli?

**Antigona**

Io ti stimai, più pietosa, e men saggia; e m'ingannai.

**Antigone**

*Let all the thunderbolts of Zeus fall down upon me now! Let's go.*

**Ismene**

*But where?*

**Antigone**

*We'll do it and die. Darkness will fall, and silence – the night will cloak the land, and that will help us. Yes, danger will give our mercy more worth. We must fulfil our sacred duty. Let not the tyrant's threats stand in our way!*

**Ismene**

*O gods! What do you want to do? But what if we defy the cruel decree. And become the target of the tyrant king's fatal revenge? What if an even more dreadful fate awaits us? Ah, when will these cursed tragedies. That haunt the blood of our line finally end? Oh gods, is it happening again? Will you make us suffer new horrors once more?*

**Antigone**

*Then farewell!*

**Ismene**

*Are you leaving me?*

**Antigone**

*I thought you had more heart – and less caution. I was wrong.*

## **12** Aria d'Antigona

D'una misera famiglia tutta sai l'istoria amara,  
e la vita t'è sì cara: e paventi di morir?

Ah qual' sorte, o ingrata figlia, puoi sperar fra  
tanti orrori,

che a germani, a genitori di poterti riunir?

Ombre care, ombre dolenti, io sarò contenta  
appieno,

se con voi mè dato almeno di confondere i  
lamentì,

di dividere i sospir.

## SCENE 4

### **13** Recitativo

#### *Emone*

Pur ti ritrovo Ismena, Antigona dov'è?

#### *Ismena*

Corre a morir.

#### *Emone*

Misero me, che ascolto! Ah tu gelar mi fai.  
Scoprìmi almeno questa scena d'orror. Parla.

#### *Ismena*

T'è noto il decreto fatal che a Polinice, vieta  
il sepolcro, e d'una morte atroce minaccia il  
trasgressor. Di questa ad onta barbara legge,  
ella a prestar s'affretta questi al germano  
estinto pietosi uffizi, e impavida, e sicura sfida  
il Tiranno, ed il morir non cura.

## *Aria of Antigone*

*You know this sorrow story of the unfortunate  
family*

*Why, then, do you cling to life, do you still fear  
death?*

*Ah, to what fate. ungrateful daughter, do you  
dare cling amid such horrors,  
hoping to be reunited with your brother, with  
your parents?*

*Gentle shadows, suffering shadows, I shall be  
wholly content  
if I'm granted at least to share in your sufferings,  
to share your sighs.*

## *Recitative*

### *Haemon*

*I finally found you, Ismene! But Antigone, where  
is she?*

### *Ismene*

*She runs to meet her death.*

### *Haemon*

*How bitter are your words! You fill me with  
dread! I must see this horror for myself. Tell me!*

### *Ismene*

*You've heard the cruel command, no one may  
bury Polynices. All who defy it – condemned to  
die. Yet she defies the tyrant's decree, to give her  
brother's body – a sacred, human farewell. Her  
will is steel, unshaken. Though she knows well  
what dreadful fate awaits her.*

### **Emone**

O sommi Dei, respiro.

### **Ismena**

E se sul fatto la colgono i custodi!..

### **Emone**

Invan ne temi. Sai che le nostre nozze chiede il pubblico voto, e vuol sul Trono il sangue de' suoi Re. Non è Tiranno Creonte alfin. Può rinvocar la legge, alle preci d'un figlio donar il delinquente; e quando ancora s'ostinasse al rigor, quanti ha d'intorno pietosi all'amor mio parlerebber per lei.

### **Ismena**

T'inganni, o Dio! La più intatta virtù non ha difesa contro il voto d'un Re. Se vedi oppresso si spesso il mondo da Tiranni, è solo perché d'adulatori ognor funesta turba vile, insidiosa il Trono infesta.

### **14 Aria d'Ismena**

Sperai la pace in seno dopo crudel cimento, ma torna il rio tormento a lacerarmi il cor. Crescon gli affanni miei tutta gelar mi sento cara per te, che sei il mio più dolce amor.

### **Haemon**

*Thank the gods! I can breathe.*

### **Ismene**

*But what if the guards seize her?*

### **Haemon**

*Your fears are in vain. You know that the will of the people is united behind our marriage: they want a true bloodline to rule. And Creonte is not so fierce, may yet show mercy, if his own son pleads for grace. Even if he stays severe, so many will rise to speak and beg for her release!*

### **Ismene**

*You are mistaken, o, gods! Even innocence is helpless against a tyrant's will. You see how often the world is oppressed by tyrants – and it is only because the throne is always poisoned by a cunning and vile pack of flatterers.*

### **Aria of Ismene**

*I was hoping for peace, through torment I had wandered,  
But fierce trembling now flames within my heart.  
My worries are growing, and I freeze in place,  
Thinking of you, my dear, my sweetest love.*

## SCENE 5

### 15 Recitativo

#### Emone

I timori d'Ismena passano nel mio cor. Il padre irato il suo genio crudel, e il giuramento aggiungono spaventi al mio spavento. Ma chi sa... Forse il padre. Ardir mio cuore, si salvi l'innocenza a fronte d'una morte. O Padre! o cara Sposa! o giorno! o sorte!

### 16 Aria d'Emone

Ah vorrei sperar, ma tremo.  
Troppo avvezzo è questo core  
alle stragi ed all'orrore per sognar felicità.  
Forse vano è il mio terrore, e quest'alma invan  
s'affanna,  
ma di rado il cor s'inganna nel temer calamità.

## SCENE 6

### 17 Coro

Ascolta il nostro pianto,  
i gemiti, i sospiri,  
ombra, che qui t'aggiri  
al mesto rogo accanto,  
e passa poi felice  
d'eterna pace in sen.

#### Antigona

Misero Polinice!

### 18 Coro

O voi dell'Erebo pietosi numi,

### Recitative

#### Haemon

*Ismene's fears now burn within my heart! The father's anger is fierce and his soul is cruel, his solemn vow – together in my chest extinguish the flame of courage. And yet... who knows... Perhaps my father... With daring heart, I still may save the innocent from death's relentless grasp. O father! O wife! O times! O fate!*

### Aria of Haemon

*Ah, I wish I could hope – but I tremble. The heart has grown too used to torment and terror to dream of happiness. Perhaps my fears are vain, and my soul suffers in vain, but the heart is rarely mistaken when it senses misfortune.*

### Chorus

*Hear the weeping from afar,  
Echoes of sorrow eternal!  
Shadow, in lands of darkness,  
Gaze upon the sorrowful flames.  
May it fall forever  
Peaceful sleep to you.*

#### Antigone

*My poor Polynices!*

### Chorus

*O you, merciful gods of Erebus,  
If neither offerings nor incense can soothe your*

se non vi placano doni, e profumi,  
le nostre lacrime per l'infelice  
placanvi almen.

**19 Recitativo**

**Antigona**

Ah Polinice! Ombra cara, amorosa, ah perché  
mai tu corri al tuo riposo, ed io qui resto? Tu  
tranquilla godrai nelle sedi beate, ove non  
giunge né sdegno, né dolor; dove ricopre  
ogni cura mortale eterno obbligo; né più  
rammenterai fra gl'amplessi paterni il pianto  
mio, né questo di dolor soggiorno infesto;  
ombra cara, amorosa, ah perché mai tu corri al  
tuo riposo, ed io qui resto?

**20 Aria d'Antigona**

Io resto sempre a piangere, dove mi guida  
ognor,  
d'uno in un altro orror, la cruda sorte.  
E a terminar le lacrime pietosa al mio dolor.  
Ahi che non giunge ancor per me la morte.

**21 Ballo**

**Coro**

Oh folle orgoglio umano!  
dura necessità!  
ogni cosa quaggiù... strugge, e dissolve.  
Di tanto fasto in sano, di tanta vanità,  
altro non resta più... che poca polve.

*wrath,*  
*Then let at least our tears for the wretched*  
*Bring you peace.*

**Recitative**

**Antigone**

*Oh, Polynices, dearest and beloved shadow,*  
*why must you leave this world behind, while*  
*I remain? You'll find your rest in the blessed*  
*realms above, where sorrow, grief, and pain shall*  
*never reach your soul. There, the stream of Lethe*  
*will gently wash away all trace of earthly toil.*  
*You'll not recall, embraced by Father's arms, the*  
*aching of your sister's pain, nor lands of horror,*  
*suffering, and dread. Dearest, beloved shadow,*  
*why must you leave this world behind, while*  
*I remain?*

**Aria of Antigone**

*All that is left – eternal weeping. From one*  
*misfortune*  
*To the next I've been led by cruel fate.*  
*With tears and aching sorrow my heart is*  
*overflowed,*  
*Yet death still holds me back, and grants no*  
*freedom.*

**Chorus**

*Foolish human pride!*  
*Harsh necessity!*  
*Here, below... all crumbles and dissolves.*  
*From good health,*  
*From all this vanity*  
*remains only... a speck of dust.*

**23 Recitativo****Antigona**

O reliquie funeste, preziose al mio dolor,  
 Ceneri amate, che dell'ira celeste la memoria  
 dolente a me serbate, lasciate, o Dio! lasciate,  
 ch'io vi sparga di pianto, e se non posso nella  
 tomba reale, vi chiuda almeno, care ceneri  
 amate, entro il mio seno. Tutto è compito,  
 amiche: rendiamo grazie agli Dei. Rechinsi  
 altrove i sacri vasi, e l'ara, e del pietoso dolente  
 sacrificio orma non resti.

**SCENE 7****24 Recitativo****Emone**

Antigona, mia vita, ah che facesti? Come io  
 tremo per te! Fuggi, l'invola salvati per pietà.

**Antigona**

Da chi?

**Emone**

Dall'ira d'un implacabil Re.

**Antigona**

Frema, minacci, non curo il suo rigore temo gli  
 Dei, ne sento altro timore.

**Emone**

Misera! e se la legge ti condanna a morir? A  
 me quell'urna fidala a me, la deporrorò, lo giuro,  
 nella Tomba degl'Avi.

**Recitative****Antigone**

*Dear, sorrowed remains – how precious you are  
 to me. Beloved ashes, your silent cry awakens  
 the bitter memory of heaven's wrath. Let me,  
 oh let me, gods above, weep for you here – since  
 I cannot lay you to rest in the tombs of kings.  
 Grant that I may carry your ashes within my  
 heart. All I have done, it was right – praise be to  
 the gods! The altar now must be taken and the  
 sacred cup removed, so that no trace shall linger  
 of this sorrowful offering.*

**Recitative****Haemon**

*Antigone – what have you done? My heart  
 trembles for you! Hide yourself now, I beg you –  
 flee!*

**Antigone**

*Flee from whom?*

**Haemon**

*From the wrath of an unyielding king.*

**Antigone**

*Let him rage – I do not fear his anger. It is only  
 the wrath of gods that I fear.*

**Haemon**

*Poor you! What if the ruler condemns you to  
 death? Give me the urn – entrust me with his  
 ashes. I'll lay them to rest among the tombs of  
 his fathers.*

### **Antigona**

Ohimé! stuolo d'armati frettoloso s'avvanza.

### **Emone**

Fuggiamo, idolo mio, seguimi, non temer.

### **Antigona**

Che pena! Oh Dio!

## **SCENE 8**

### **25 Recitativo**

#### **Adrasto**

Non v'è dubbio, Amici. Ecco gli avanzi dell'arto rogo. È trasgredito il pubblico divieto, e il Re schernito, ancor ci resta a piangere sovra il sangue de' Re. Persegue il cielo fin negli ultimi germi i delitti d'Edipo, e chiedono tutta dall'ultima radice questa strugger gli Dei pianta infelice.

### **26 Aria d'Adrasto**

Chi può dir sono innocente, chi può dir sarò felice?  
Se del padre delinquente va né figli l'ira ultrice a punir la reità.  
Se d'un fato inesorabile a serbar l'ordin prescritto,  
la pietà divien delitto, e il fallir necessità.

### **27 Coro**

Se più non s'accende  
di guerra la face,

### **Antigone**

*Alas! The guards with swords are nearing fast.*

### **Haemon**

*We must flee, my love! Follow me, do not fear!*

### **Antigone**

*Oh, I suffer! Oh, gods!*

### **Recitative**

#### **Adrastus**

*Here is no doubt, my friends. Here lie the remnants of the extinguished fire. The public decree has been broken, the ruler defied and dishonoured. All that remains is to mourn the blood of the king. For the crimes of Oedipus, the heavens pursue his line to the very end. The gods demand that this cursed house be destroyed – down to its roots.*

### **Aria of Adrastus**

*Can one be innocent? Can one be happy?  
When the wrath of a sinful father punishes the children for guilt not their own.  
When, by unyielding fate, to preserve the order of the world,  
Mercy becomes a crime, and error – a necessity.*

### **Chorus**

*When the fire of war  
No longer is blazing,*

se un giorno sereno  
risplenda di pace,  
è don di tua mano,  
gran nume di Re.  
Tu siedì sul Trono  
tra il folgore, e il tuono,  
e giace legato  
il fato al tuo piè.

#### SCENE 9

##### Recitativo

##### *Creonte*

Sommo provido Nume, Arbitro eterno della Terra e del Ciel, tu che dilegui il fosco nembo, onde fu Tebe involta, serba i tuoi doni, e i nostri voti ascolta. A te festivo, e sacro questo solenne di viva fra noi; de' benefici tuoi, del nostro pianto la memoria rinnova, e all'empio autore della guerra crudel l'odio, e l'orrore. Resti il nome abborrito, eterno oggetto d'execrazione e d'ira; e sull'infame insepolto cadavere si sfoghi tutta l'ira de' numi: che se giammai di Tebe un figlio al nome odiato osasse, o alle infauste reliquie un'ombra, un segno mostrar d'onore, e di pietà; la morte, ma la più ignominiosa, e più funesta giuro sull'are tue...

#### SCENE 10

##### Recitativo

##### *Adrasto*

Signor, t'arresta.

*And the light of peace  
Above us is shining,  
It is by your mercy,  
O ruler of kings.  
From your shining palace,  
Between thunder and lightning,  
You have taught proud fortune  
To bow and to yield.*

##### *Recitativo*

##### *Creonte*

*O Thunderer almighty, Eternal Lord of earth and sky above, disperse the storm that looms above proud Thebes, receive our gifts, and drive the doom away! To honour you we hold this sacred feast be always among us. Recall, we pray, the days of your great mercy, and hear our tears and pleas anew. We curse the one who brought us hate and horror. Let his vile name be cursed forevermore. And may the wrath of Heaven strike down his unburied body of the criminal. If any soul of Thebes dares speak his name with pity or with praise, or dares to lay a flower on that corpse - then death, the cruellest and most shameful, shall be his fate. This I swear.*

##### *Recitativo*

##### *Adrastus*

*Hold, mighty king!*

**Creonte**

Perché?

**Adrasto**

Tra l'ombra nella passata notte, arder sul rogo vi fu chi osò di Polinice estinto il cadavere esposto, indi riporre il cenere raccolto nella Tomba real.

**Creonte**

Numi! che ascolto? e il delinquente?

**Adrasto**

Oh Dio! Non curar di saperlo.

**Creonte**

Ei cada oppresso, s'anche fosse il mio figlio.

**Adrasto**

Appunto è desso.

**Ismena**

(Misero Prencel!)

**Adrasto**

Il fallo dissimular non giova, ecco il reo fra' custodi, ecco la prova.

SCENE 11

 **Recitativo**

**Creonte**

Quell'urna?

**Creonte**

*But why?*

**Adrastus**

*In the darkness of the past night, someone dared to burn the body of Polynices on a pyre, then gathered the ashes and placed them in the royal tomb.*

**Creonte**

*Gods! What do I hear? And the criminal?*

**Adrastus**

*Gods! You'd be better not to know this.*

**Creonte**

*Whoever it was shall pay the price even if it is my own son!*

**Adrastus**

*And that is what I mean.*

**Ismene**

*(O wretched prince!)*

**Adrastus**

*He cannot hide this crime: here he stands, beside the guards, and with him stands the proof.*

**Recitative**

**Creonte**

*This urn?*

**Adrasto**

Era in sua mano. Entro la tomba di Lajo ei la chiudea, quando arrestato si trovò da' custodi.

**Creonte**

O Figlio ingrato!

**Ismena**

(Difendetelo, o Dei)

**Creonte**

Chi ti sedusse? Qual fin ti lusingò? Parla, favella, scusa almen la tua colpa.

**Emone**

È troppo bella. Offendo è ver la legge, ma una legge crudel...

**Creonte**

E chi ti rende, il Giudice de' Re?

**Emone**

Quel lume eterno, che per norma ai mortali lasciarono gli Dei. Per questo il sai la pietà ver gli estinti e il più sacro dover.

**Creonte**

Colpa diviene se la legge lo vieta.

**Adrastus**

*It was in his hands. In the tomb. He was just entering to the tomb of Laius, when the guards arrested him.*

**Creonte**

*Ungrateful son!*

**Ismene**

*(O gods, have mercy on him!)*

**Creonte**

*Who tempted you? For what purpose did you choose this path? Speak! Say something – at least try to justify yourself.*

**Haemon**

*She's so beautiful... Yes, I broke your law, but the law was unjust.*

**Creonte**

*And who gave you the right to judge the king?*

**Haemon**

*That right was lit by the eternal flame bestowed on mortals by the gods. You know yourself: honour to the dead is sacred.*

**Creonte**

*Crime is what the law forbids – no less!*

**Emone**

Ah per tal fallo, se punir mi vorrai, mi fia cara la morte.

**Creonte**

E morte avrai in van speri pietà. No, non cominci da una tal debolezza il regno mio. Muora il figlio, s'è reo.

**CD2**

**SCENE 12**

**□ Recitativo**

**Antigona**

La rea son io.

**Ismena**

Ah germana!

**Emone**

Ah, mia vita, a che vieni?

**Antigona**

A sottrarti a un ingiusto supplizio, e a raccorre tutto di mia pietà, di mia virtude il frutto.

**Ismena**

(Incauta)

**Emone**

Ah non udirla, non crederle Signor...

**Haemon**

*Ah, if you wish to punish me for such a deed, then death itself shall be dearest to me.*

**Creonte**

*And you shall die. Do not expect my mercy. Not in weakness will my reign begin. A guilty son must die as well!*

**Recitative**

**Antigone**

*The guilt is mine.*

**Ismene**

*Oh, sister!*

**Haemon**

*Beloved, why have you come?*

**Antigone**

*To spare you from a wrongful fate, to take the punishment that's owed for my mercy.*

**Ismene**

*(She's mad!)*

**Haemon**

*O do not listen, do not believe her, king of mine!*

### **Antigona**

Taci; anche lieve la menzogna, è delitto, e non si compra a tal prezzo l'onor. T'inganna il figlio signor, se reo lo credi. Io fui che resi a Polinice estinto gl'ultimi onor funebri, io sola osai trasgredir la tua legge; ei per salvarmi quell'urna m'involò, che del germano le ceneri chiudea. In me cada la pena: io son la rea.

### **Creonte**

E in te cadrà. Nella spelonca infausta tomba de' rei, viva costei si chiuda.

### **Emone**

Ah piuttosto confondi la sua colpa e la mia. Chiudici entrambi nell'infausta caverna, e il fiato estremo fa ch'io spiri, inumano, almen su' labbri suoi.

### **Creonte**

Lo spero invano.

### **Ismena**

(L'infelice si perde).

### **☐ Recitativo**

#### **Emone**

E invan tu spero ch'io la vegga morir. Ah non lagnarti se a una giusta difesa non risparmiò delitti, e se divide nell'ultimo periglio una guerra crudel il padre e il figlio.

### **Antigone**

*Enough! Even a slight lie is a crime, and honour cannot be bought at such a price. Your son spoke falsely, and you believed him. It was I alone who gave my brother Polynices sacred rites, it was I alone who defied the law. To save me the urn with the ashes of my unfortunate brother he took with him. The guilt is mine. Let all the blame be mine!*

### **Creonte**

*You'll have it! Take her, alive, to the death-cave of the damned.*

### **Haemon**

*Ah, better to punish us together. Seal us both inside that cursed cave – let my final breath be upon her lips.*

### **Creonte**

*Your plea is vain.*

### **Ismene**

*(The unfortunate woman is lost.)*

### **Recitativo**

#### **Haemon**

*In vain you hope that I will stand with folded hands. Blame me not, when I rise in righteous battle against your cruel decree. And if relentless fate shall drive a ruthless war to pit the son against the father.*

**3 Aria d'Emone**

A fronte d'un Tiranno, e di furore armato,  
comatterò col Fato, conterà col Ciel.  
E tu, mia cara sposa, scaccia dal sen l'affanno,  
sul mio valor riposa, sull'amor mio fedel.

**SCENE 13**

**4 Recitativo**

**Antigona**

Prince, che dici mai?

**Creonte**

Ringrazia audace quel sacro e dolce nome che  
disarma il mio braccio...

**Emone**

A che mi giova? Questa misera vita?

**Creonte**

Olà, si stringa l'insolente fra lacci, ed al suo  
fato Antigona si tragga.

**Emone**

Ah Padre!

**Creonte**

Ingrato!

**Emone**

Trattieni almen sospendi il supplizio crudel.

**Aria of Haemon**

*I rise against the tyrant, armed with fury.  
To Fate, I cast my challenge, to Heaven, I cry  
for war!  
And you, my dearest love, let not your sorrow  
break you.  
My heart shall fight with valour, for love has  
given the call.*

**Recitative**

**Antigone**

Prince, what are you saying?

**Creonte**

*Thank the sacred name of kings that holds my  
hand!*

**Haemon**

*Is it joy to live a life of endless sorrow?*

**Creonte**

*Hey, you! Bind this defiant girl, let Antigone to  
face her fate.*

**Haemon**

*Ah, father!*

**Creonte**

*Ungrateful!*

**Haemon**

*Stop, stop this cruel punishment.*

### **Creonte**

Pria tratterresti gli accesi, a Giove in man,  
folgori infesti.

### 5 **Aria di Creonte**

Non lusingarti, ingrato, d'impunità e perdono,  
or Padre a te non sono, son Giudice, son Re.  
Il leso onor del Trono chiede de' rei lo scempio,  
e trema che l'esempio non cada ancora in te.

### SCENE 14

#### 6 **Recitativo**

##### **Antigona**

Prence, germana, ah non piangete...

##### **Ismena**

O cara, sola tu non morrai. D'un Re spietato la  
crudeltà toglier ti può la vita; ma che un ferro,  
un veleno non termini il mio affanno, questo  
solo poter non ha il Tiranno..

### SCENE 15

#### 7 **Recitativo**

##### **Antigona**

Tu pur mio dolce sposo, cessa di sospirar. Non  
può la morte che togliermi al dolor. Colma  
d'affanni fu sinor la mia vita; e se m'accorda  
di trovar fra gl'estinti il mio riposo, il Ciel  
ch'ognor m'opprime, ora è pietoso.

### **Creonte**

*Rather stop the burning lightning, released  
by the hand of Jupiter.*

### **Aria of Creonte**

*No, do not hope, you criminal will not escape  
from destruction,  
To you, I am no loving father, here, I am Judge  
and King!  
The Throne was gravely wronged, it cries out  
for justice!  
Be glad the wrath I send falls not on you.*

#### **Recitative**

##### **Antigone**

*My prince, sweet sister, no tears.*

##### **Ismene**

*Beloved, you shall not die alone. Though the  
cruel king may steal your gentle breath, he  
cannot prevent a sword or poison from ending  
my pain.*

#### **Recitative**

##### **Antigone**

*Oh, my beloved, dearest fiancé, no more your  
heavy sighs. Let death come – it frees me from  
this cruel, aching life. A life of sorrow I have  
known. If now the gods will grant me rest  
among the silent dead, it is their mercy – late,  
but true.*

**Emone**

Ah mi si spezza il cor!

**Antigona**

All'ombre amate dei genitor, degl'avi a riunirmi andrò. L'ira de' Numi estinguerà il mio sangue; e fia che un giorno da' cittadini ingrati esiga almeno qualche stilla di pianto il caso mio.

**Emone**

Ferma...

**Antigona**

Non più, mio caro sposo, addio.

▣ **Duetto**

**Antigona**

Mio ben, fedel t'amai,  
godì una lieta sorte,  
non ti scordar di me.

**Emone**

Mio ben, che dici mai?  
Ah se tu corri a morte,  
io morirò con te.

**Antigona**

Ah, tu languir mi fai.

**Emone**

Dolce mia sposa, addio!

**Haemon**

*You tear my heart apart!*

**Antigone**

*I am leaving to reunite with the beloved shadows of my parents and ancestors. The wrath of the gods will quench my blood; and may ungrateful men one day shed at least a few tears over my fate.*

**Haemon**

*Stop...*

**Antigone**

*I can no longer, my dear, farewell.*

**Duet of Antigone and Haemon**

**Antigone**

*My dearest, faithful love,  
Go on – live on in peace,  
But do not forget your love!*

**Haemon**

*My love, what are you saying?  
If you perish in this darkness,  
Then my life ends as well.*

**Antigone**

*You make me suffer.*

**Haemon**

*My sweet bride, farewell!*

## **Insieme**

Innorridir mi sento,  
più non resisto,  
oh Dio!  
Ah mi tradisti amor!  
Stelle! che affanno è il mio!  
che barbaro momento  
di smania, e di dolor!

## **Atto II**

### **Coro**

Oh come presto, o misera,  
nel fior di verde età... morte t'invola!  
Ahi, che di tante lacrime  
l' inutile pietà. No, no, non ti consola.

## **SCENE 1**

### **Recitativo**

#### **Antigona**

O Tebe, o Cittadini, eccomi alfine del mio corso mortal. La notte eterna m'invola, e il sol ch'io miro, agl'occhi miei non splenderà mai più. Questo, o Tebani, è il talamo nuziale, che il vostro amore oggi mi destino? Qual sangue, oh Dio! Mi die la vita, e a qual atroce sorte mi serbava il destino? Oh Madre! O nozze incestuose, orrende! O spettatrici del funesto Imeneo furie d'Averno. Chi per pietà m'invola agl'occhi de' viventi, alla vendetta del Ciel che mi persegue?

## **Together**

Horror grips me,  
I can no longer resist him,  
Oh gods!  
Ye stars, my betrayed love!  
Oh fate! How painful!  
What barbarity,  
What anguish and pain!

## **Act II**

### **Chorus**

How early, o unfortunate one,  
Your youthful bloom is cut by ruthless death!  
Oh, how many tears, pity is useless.  
No, no, that will not console you.

## **Recitative**

#### **Antigone**

O Thebes, o citizens, my earthly path draws near its end. Eternal night will take me in, the radiant sun will vanish from my eyes – no more return. Was this the wedding hall your love had destined for me today, O Thebans? O gods, what blood gave me life, and what terrible fate was destined for me? O mother! O her incestuous bond with father! O witnesses of the pernicious Hymenaeus, the Furies of Avernus! Who will be merciful and save me from the eyes of the living, from the vengeance of Heaven that pursues me?

## SCENE 2

### ▣ Recitativo

#### *Ismena*

Ah ferma aspetta. In quell'antro funesto non vedrai senza me. La notte eterna teco m'accoglierà, teco vogl'io riunirmi per sempre col sangue mio.

#### *Antigona*

Ah germana...

#### *Ismena*

Signor da te non vengo a dimandar pietà. Chiedo una morte, chiedo l'istessa pena. Di divider con lei.

#### *Antigona*

Ma di qual fallo ti punirà il Tiran?

#### *Creonte*

Non è permesso. Non confonde la legge i Rei con gl'infelici. Arbitri adoro del destin de' mortali i sommi Dei, ma sol la colpa sua punisco in lei.

#### *Ismena*

Crudel, neghi una morte, perché il darla è pietà. Ma spero invano dividermi da lei. Fra queste braccia così la stringerò; vedrò chi ardisce strapparmela dal sen.

#### *Creonte*

Custodi, a forza quindi si tragga, e l'importuno affanno vada a sfogare altrove.

### *Recitative*

#### *Ismene*

*Oh, wait, stop! In that dread cave you shall not be alone. There, endless night shall fall on both of us. I long to join my blood with yours within that darkness evermore.*

#### *Antigone*

*Oh, my sister...*

#### *Ismene*

*I shall not beg the king for pity or for grace. I ask for death, the very same harsh sentence that he gave to you.*

#### *Antigone*

*What crime, then, can the tyrant find in you?*

#### *Creonte*

*That cannot be. The law must draw the line between guilty souls and those who grieve. I serve the will of gods, stern for mortals, guiding still, yet I strike only those who sin.*

#### *Ismene*

*Cruel man! You deny me death, for to grant it is mercy. But you vainly hope to part me from her. I will hold her fast in my arms, and we will see who dares to tear her from my breast.*

#### *Creonte*

*Guards! Take her hence, be quick, let her lament somewhere far from here.*

## **Ismena**

Empi... Tiranno!

### **12 Aria d'Ismena**

Ah lasciami morir, misera! che farò?

Che più soffrir non ho,

né più mi può rapir

l'avversa sorte.

Germana, ah non partir,

ah non lasciarmi, no.

Che parlo, oh Dio, che fo?

almeno il mio martir mi dia la morte.

### **13 Recitativo**

#### **Antigona**

O germana! O Tebani. Almen s'affretti il fin di mie sciagure. Ogni momento accresce il mio supplizio, e indebolisce la mia costanza. Addio. Moro innocente, senza colpa, o rimorso, ah mai non chiedo da voi ragione il Cielo dell'ingiusta mia morte.

### **14 Arioso d'Antigona**

O tu dell'ombre pietoso condottier, guida i miei passi nel sentier tenebroso, amico nume, e assisti, allorché sia sciolta dal frate impaccio, all'ombra mia. E tu speco funesto, sepolcro de' viventi, unico asilo contro l'ira de' Numi, or tu sarai la mia dimora eterna. Ah tu m'accogli nel pietoso tuo seno, in te ritrovi il fin di tanti mali. La mia vita infelice, e in te riposi, freddo avanzo di morte, il cener mio. O Patria! O Tebe! O Cittadini! Addio.

## **Ismene**

Murderer! Tyrant!

### **Aria of Ismene**

*Let me die alone! What should I do?*

*Let me suffer no longer;*

*All has been torn away*

*By ruthless fate.*

*My sister, do not go,*

*Do not leave me.*

*What am I saying? O gods, what shall I do?*

*Let bitter pain lull me to death.*

### **Recitative**

#### **Antigone**

*O my sister, o Thebans! The end of all my suffering draws near. Each passing moment deepens pain and drains the strength within my soul. Farewell! I go to death with neither wrath nor guilt – unshaken still. May the just gods not punish you for my unjust demise.*

### **Arioso of Antigone**

*O gentle guide of souls, lead the forsaken one along the path of shadow. Kind-hearted god, walk with me through the dark when this life of earth comes to its close. And you, grim rock - tomb for the living, my only shelter from the wrath divine, you shall become my dwelling evermore. Receive me in your merciful embrace; within your depths, this tormented life shall fade, its pain at last made still. There shall I rest, my mortal shell grown cold in final sleep. O homeland! O Thebes! O citizens! Farewell!*

**15** **Aria d'Antigona**

Non piangete i casi miei, non v'affanni il mio tormento,  
questo è l'unico momento della mia felicità.  
Fur sì barbari gli Dei, fur sì avversa la mia sorte,  
che riguardo la mia morte come un segno di pietà.

**16** **Recitativo**

**Creonte**

Tebani, il vostro pianto risveglia il mio: di giudice severo dura necessità crudel mi rende, contro il voto del cor. Ma delle leggi son custodi i Monarchi, e son le pene delle leggi il sostegno; e il Trono offeso non perdona giammai senza periglio.

**17** **Recitativo**

**Adrasto**

Ah t'affretta, Signor; perduto è il figlio.

**Creonte**

Santi Numi del Ciel! che dici?

**Adrasto**

O giorno di lacrime, d'orror!

**Creonte**

Parla.

**Aria of Antigone**

*Weep not my fate, and mourn me not with sorrow.*

*This is the only time I have been happy.  
The gods have been so cruel to me, my fate so unjust,  
that I accept death as a sign of mercy.*

**Recitative**

**Creonte**

*O Thebans, your tears awaken mine. For only stern necessity has made me cruel against my soul's own will. Yet kings must stand as guardians of the law, and punishment – the pillar of all order. If insult to the throne is left unjudged, there will be trouble.*

**Recitative**

**Adrastus**

*My king, make haste! Your son ran away!*

**Creonte**

*Just gods above! What do you say?*

**Adrastus**

*This is a day of wailing and dread!*

**Creonte**

*Tell me!*

### **Adrasto**

Nel loco, ove da' tuoi custodi si tenea prigionier, torbido e muto lungo tempo ei restò, con tutti in volto i caratteri espressi d'un dolor disperato. Ecco annunziando d'Antigona il supplizio, in mezzo a' tuoi, pallida, semiviva, con dolorose strida, Ismena arriva. Immagina, Signor, folgor che scoppi della squarciata nube, o fra gli opposti atterrati ripari rovinoso torrente. Alzarsi, un ferro strappar ad un de' tuoi, due de più arditì stender con esti al suolo, ed avventarsi a noi fu un colpo solo, fuggi allora qual lampo, e fuggendo dicea: Padre spietato, il tuo furore ho vinto, se mi unisco alla sposa o vivo o estinto.

### **Creonte**

Guardie, presto accorrete, Antigona svenate, e il di lei cuor a quel rebel recate. Noi pur corriamo, amici, a trattener le furie d'un empio cittadin, d'un figlio ingrato: e sieno estinti poi sotto l'infame scure i giorni suoi.

### **SCENE 3**

#### **🗣️ Aria di Creonte**

Amor più non ascolto, non ode onor consiglio.  
Pera l'ingrato figlio, indegno di pietà.  
Dal mio paterno amore son con mio danno oppresso;  
ed ho formata io stesso la mia calamità.

### **Adrastus**

*Where guards held your son by royal order, he stood for long, without a single word, but on his face, there burned the sharpest grief. And when the sentence on Antigone was heard, at once, pale, half-fainting, Ismene burst in with a cry of anguish. My king, imagine: like a lightning bolt that strikes from cloud to earth, or a mountain torrent breaking through a dam and raging free, he sprang, he seized a sword from one of the guards, and cut two of the strongest down on the spot, striking true at every turn, then vanished like a flash. And as he fled, he cried aloud: 'Father without mercy! I've defied your wrath! Alive or dead, I'll find my love again!'*

### **Creonte**

*Guards – waste no time. Kill Antigone at once, and bring her heart to that defiant son. We go as well, my friends, to quench the fury of one who shamed us, my own unworthy son. Let his life end beneath the blade, in deepest disgrace.*

#### **Aria of Creonte**

*No love remains to speak of, for his crime is unforgiven!  
Let the ungrateful perish, He is not worthy of pity!  
And yet a father's love still weighs upon my spirit;  
Oh, I myself have cursed, I have broken my own life.*

#### SCENE 4

##### 19 Recitativo

###### **Adrasto**

Infelice, ecco il frutto d'un rigor ostinato.  
Il caro figlio unica e dolce cura di tutti i suoi  
pensier, morte gl'involva. Conosce i suoi delitti,  
i perigli prevede, lo straziano i rimorsi, e ancor  
non cede.

##### 20 Aria d'Adrasto

D'un anima tiranna questo è lo stile usato,  
scorger il Cielo irato ed infierire ancor.  
Al fulmine vibrato oppor la fronte altera,  
e nei perigli fiera resistere all' orror.

#### SCENE 5

##### 21 Recitativo

###### **Emone**

Adrasto!

###### **Adrasto**

Oh Dei! Che miro? Signor, tu qui... tu salvo?

###### **Emone**

Odi, pietoso in quel'antro funesto m'apre  
il Cielo una via. Così mi lasci tanto di vita  
ancor, ch'io possa almeno riveder l'idol mio,  
abbracciarlo e morir. De' nostri casi se una  
tarda pietà Tebe risveglia dal letargo fatal, che  
l'incatena al giogo d'un Tiranno! ah fa che  
accolga a quella del mio bene le mie ceneri  
unite un'urna istessa. Questo è l'unico dono,  
che dalla Patria imploro, e le perdono.

##### Recitativo

###### **Adrastus**

*Unfortunate man! Behold the fruits of stubborn  
pride. His only son, his dearly cherished child,  
now stands before a cruel and bitter death. He  
sees it all, he knows what lies ahead, remorse  
now gnaws his soul, yet still he will not bend.*

##### Aria of Adrastus

*It is the tyrant's nature  
To see the wrath of Heaven and still not yield.  
To face the lightning with a proud brow,  
to stand firm in danger, and bravely defy terror.*

##### Recitativo

###### **Haemon**

Adrastus!

###### **Adrastus**

*Ye gods, what do I see? Lord, are you here... are  
you saved?*

###### **Haemon**

*Listen, within that dark and shadowed cave,  
heaven showed a path to me. That is why  
I still draw breath, and why I may now reach  
my beloved, to die with her in one last, final  
embrace. If only our misfortune could stir some  
sorrow in the hearts of Theban men, who still  
bear meekly the yoke of tyranny! All I ask now,  
let our ashes rest together, hers and mine, within*

**Adrasto**

Signor, che dici?... Ah non sia ver...

**Emone**

T'arresta. Il mio morir affretta chi pensa di salvarmi, e in questo stato periglioso è l'opporci a un disperato.

**Adrasto**

Ma Tebe in pianto... il genitor...

**Emone**

Da lui ogni dover mi scioglie. Suo dono e questa vita, ei me la toglie.

**22 Aria d'Emone**

Ah se lo vedi a piangere sovra il mio corpo  
esangue,  
di che l'amare lacrime son poche a tanto  
sangue che il suo furor versò.  
Che infesta ombra seguace m'avrà sempre  
d'intorno,  
che nuova furia orribile con serpi e colla face  
i suoi riposi, e il giorno a funestar verrò.

*one urn forever. This is the only gift I beg from  
Thebes, and grant her my forgiveness.*

**Adrastus**

*My lord, what are you saying? Ah, even if it  
were not true...*

**Haemon**

*Stop. He who tries to save me only hastens my  
death; in such a state, it is dangerous to oppose  
one who has lost all hope.*

**Adrastus**

*All Thebes is weeping... And your father...*

**Haemon**

*With him we are now even. He gave me life, and  
now he takes it back.*

**Aria of Haemon**

*Ah, if you see him weep over my bloodless body,  
tell him his bitter tears  
are not enough for all the blood his rage has  
spilled.  
A sinister shadow from hell shall haunt him  
always –  
a new and dreadful fury, with serpents and  
a blazing torch.  
And the day of his ruin shall come.*

## SCENE 6

### 23 Recitativo

#### Antigona

Misera, ove m'inoltro? Il corpo stanco all'eterno riposo par che già s'abbandoni. Oh come presto nel sentier della morte si stanca il piè! L'aer nebbioso, e denso par che gl'occhi m'aggravi un freddo vento scuote l'ampia caverna, e al fioco, incerto, timido lume, che rischiarava appanna questa notte d'orror, quali di morte immagini funeste m'ostre l'orrenda tomba! O tristi avanzi dell'infelice umanità! Qual gelo m'inspirate nel cuor! Ben tosto anch'io tal diverrò, mista a poche ossa ignude, fredda, putrida polve. Ahimè! Ma quanti lunghi miseri istanti di stento, e di dolor precederanno la mia misera morte? Oh morte atroce!

## SCENE 7

### 24 Recitativo

#### Emone

Antigona, ove sei?

#### Antigona

Stelle! qual voce!

### 25 Duetto

#### Antigona

Mio ben, fedel t'amai,  
godi una lieta sorte,  
non ti scordar di me.

### Recitativo

#### Antigone

*Poor soul, where am I going? My body, worn and weary, is ready now to rest forever. Oh, how often on this path of death my steps have faltered! This icy, blinding mist steals sight from aching eyes, cold winds tear through the darkness of the cave, and in the dim, uncertain light, the faintest flicker that this night of anguish offers, what dreadful sights of dying does this tomb reveal before me! The mournful remnants of the once-living human shapes long perished! Your chill now fills my heart! Soon I shall become like you. A heap of rotting bones and dust entwined as one. O horror! How many bitter, aching moments of sorrow and torment must still come before the death I long for? O terrible death!*

### Recitativo

#### Haemon

Antigone, where are you?

#### Antigone

Stars! Whose voice is that?

### Duet of Antigone and Haemon

#### Antigone

*My love, I loved you faithfully.  
Enjoy your happy fate,  
and do not forget me.*

**Emone**

Mio ben, che dici mai?  
Ah se tu corri a morte,  
io morirò con te.

**Antigona**

Ah, tu languir mi fai.

**Emone**

Dolce mia sposa, addio!

**Insieme**

Innorridir mi sento,  
più non resisto,  
oh Dio!  
Ah mi tradisti amor!  
Stelle! che affanno è il mio!  
che barbaro momento  
di smania, e di dolor!

**26 Recitativo****Antigona**

Che dici? Oh me infelice! Tu vivi, oh Dio! Tu vieni a perderti per me?

**Emone**

Come potrei sopravviverti un dì? Due volte, o cara, cercai la morte, e per due volte il Cielo, pietoso a voti miei, serbomi in vita, per riunirmi a te.

**Antigona**

Ma chi t'aperse in quest'antro la via?

**Haemon**

*My love, what are you saying?  
If you perish in this darkness,  
Then my life ends as well.*

**Antigona**

*Ah, you make me suffer.*

**Haemon**

*My sweet bride, farewell!*

**Together**

*Horror overwhelms me,  
I can resist it no longer –  
oh, gods!  
Ah, my betrayed love!  
O fate! how it hurts!  
What cruelty,  
what sorrow and pain!*

**Recitativo****Antigona**

*What do you say? Oh, I am wretched! You are alive! Gods! You came to die for me?*

**Haemon**

*How could I bear to live without you? Twice, my dear, death has awaited me; yet twice the heavens, hearing my call, kept me alive so that we might be reunited.*

**Antigona**

*And who showed you the way to the cave?*

### **Emone**

Dal foro angusto, onde al fioco baglior, che ci rischiarà s'apre il varco sul monte, precipitar mi volla, ah non sperai così propizio il salto. I vepri, i sassi, che ingombrano il sentier, l'impeto forse tolsero alla caduta. Io sol restai pochi istanti sul suol di senso privo, mi sveglia il tuo dolor t'abbraccio e vivo.

### **Antigona**

Oh d'un tenero Amor prova funesta, che d'una Morte atroce mi raddoppia l'orror!

### **Emone**

Mio ben che dici? Vedi quai dono il Cielo mi conservo. Con questo il lungo strazio d'una morte crudel paventi invano. Mira, il fatal momento è in nostra mano.

### **27 Duetto**

#### **Antigona**

Ah sì, mio ben, si mora,  
l'immergi in questo seno  
finisci il mio dolor.

#### **Emone**

Ah pochi istanti ancora,  
cara concedi almeno  
a un infelice amor!

### **Haemon**

*There is a narrow passage where faint light barely lights the path up the hill. I meant to throw myself down there. Ah, I never thought I would jump so well. Perhaps my fall was broken by thorns and stones that block the way. For a few minutes I lay unconscious on the ground, but your pain awakened me; I hold you in my arms – and I live.*

### **Antigone**

*Oh, what a terrible ordeal; it makes the horror of fierce death even stronger!*

### **Haemon**

*What do you say, my love? See how the heavens have preserved me alive. Now we need not fear the dreadful wait for fierce death. Look: its fatal moment is in my hand.*

### **Duet of Antigone and Haemon**

#### **Antigone**

*Oh yes, let us die quickly!  
Pierce these breasts with your sword,  
So that the pain may pass forever.*

#### **Haemon**

*Ah, grant just a few more moments,  
my beloved,  
to our unhappy love.*

### **Insieme**

Che barbaro conforto,  
che misero contento!  
In sì crudel momento  
di lacrime, e di orror!

### **28 Recitativo**

#### **Emone**

Ma quei colpi improvvisi scuotono la caverna?  
Ah par, che crolli dalle radici il monte.

#### **Antigona**

Osserva, osserva i faci, e armate squadre alla  
bocca dell'antro. Ah non lasciarmi...

#### **Emone**

Io abbandonarti! ah così vil non sono.

### **SCENE 8**

### **29 Recitativo**

#### **Ismena**

Viva la mia Regina, e viva il Trono!

#### **Antigona**

Che avvenne?...

#### **Adrasto**

Il rio comando del tiranno crudel mosse le  
squadre a sollevarsi, ed a voler su'l soglio il  
sangue de' suoi Re. Furioso oppose le sue forze  
Creonte; ma dal popolo cinto, dove piegar; ed  
or tra ceppi è avvinto.

### **Antigone, Haemon**

*What cruel comfort,  
what pitiful joy!  
What a bitter moment  
of tears and terror!*

### **Recitativo**

#### **Haemon**

*Oh, what an earthquake has begun to shake the  
cave? It seems this mountain will soon collapse.*

#### **Antigone**

*Look, look, there are fires there, people with  
swords are rushing into our cave. Oh, do not  
leave me...*

#### **Haemon**

*I am beside you, I'm not a coward.*

### **Recitativo**

#### **Ismene**

*Glory, my Queen! Long live the Throne!*

#### **Antigone**

*What has happened?*

#### **Adrastus**

*By the orders of the cruel tyrant, all our people  
rose against oppression, he wished to keep the  
throne for the heirs of kings. Creonte fiercely  
opposed the will of the people, but forces were  
unequal, he yielded, and chains now bind him.*

**Antigona**

O giusti Dei, come si volgi in gioja il lutto più funesto! Emone vieni al talamo e a quel trono che dal tuo amor già mi fu offerto in dono.

**Emone**

Dell'infelice padre che mai sarà?

**Antigona**

Creonte, quando più no'l pavento, che a te diede la vita, io sol rammento.

**Ismena**

O generoso cor!

**Antigona**

Il fausto giorno coroni il nostro amor. Tebe risuoni di cantici festivi, e dopo tanti giorni di pianto, e lutto, un dì sereno! Di gioja, e di piacer faccia ritorno.

**Emone**

O cara sposa, o fortunato giorno!

**Coro**

Dopo crudel tempesta  
par più sereno il mare,  
il sol più bello appare  
dopo una notte infesta,  
quando riporta il dì.

**Antigone**

*Holy gods! How unbearable sorrow has turned to joy! Haemon, go to the marriage bed and to the throne your love once offered me as a gift.*

**Haemon**

*My unfortunate father, what will become of him?*

**Antigone**

*I fear Creonte no more, I only remember him as your father.*

**Ismene**

*Oh, noble heart!*

**Antigone**

*This happy day crowns our love. Let Thebes today be filled with songs and joy, let times of tears, grief, and sorrow forever be past; may cheerful happy days last forever!*

**Haemon**

*My beloved bride, what a joyful day!*

**Chorus**

*After a fierce storm,  
The sea seems calm,  
After a terrible night  
The sun shines brighter,  
And a new day dawns.*

—Translation: Tetiana Sushko



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Toccata Classics, 16 Dalkeith Court, Vincent Street, London SW1P 4HH, UK

Tel: +44/0 207 821 5020 E-mail: [info@toccataclassics.com](mailto:info@toccataclassics.com)