

Thebans

Opera in Three Acts

Libretto by
FRANK McGUINNESS

after Sophocles

Set to music by
JULIAN ANDERSON

LIBRETTO

FABER *ff* MUSIC

Oedipus © 2008, 2014 by Frank McGuinness
Oedipus at Colonus © 2014 by Frank McGuinness
Antigone © 2014 by Frank McGuinness
Literal translations prepared by Dr Kieran McGroarty (*Oedipus Rex*)
and Fionnuala Murphy (*Antigone* and *Oedipus at Colonus*)

Libretto © 2014 Frank McGuinness
All rights administered worldwide by Faber Music Ltd
First published in 2014 by Faber Music Ltd
Bloomsbury House, 74–77 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DA
Typeset by Agnesi Text
Printed in England by Caligraving Ltd
All rights reserved

ISBN 10: 0-571-53710-3
EAN 13: 978-0-571-53710-5

All rights of theatrical, radio and television performance,
mechanical electrical and electronic reproduction in any form (including film),
graphic reproduction of the complete opera or part thereof, and translation
of the text are strictly reserved.

The purchase, loan or hire of this text does not convey the right
to perform the opera, permission for which must be obtained
from the publishers or their authorised agents.

All enquiries relating to *Thebans* should be addressed to
The Performance Department, Faber Music Ltd,
Bloomsbury House, 74–77 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DA
Tel: +44 (0)20 7908 5311 promotion@fabermusic.com

Vocal score, full score and orchestral parts available on hire from the publishers

Durations
Act One – 48 minutes
Act Two – 21 minutes
Act Three – 30 minutes

To buy Faber Music publications or to find out about the full range of titles available
please contact your local music retailer or Faber Music sales enquiries:

Faber Music Limited, Burnt Mill, Elizabeth Way, Harlow, Essex, CM20 2HX, England
Tel: +44 (0)1279 82 89 82 Fax: +44 (0)1279 82 89 83
sales@fabermusic.com fabermusicstore.com

Thebans was commissioned by English National Opera with support from The Boltini Trust, PRS for Music Foundation and ENO's Contemporary Opera Group.

The first performance was given by English National Opera, conducted by Edward Gardner, in a production by Pierre Audi, at the London Coliseum, London, on 3 May 2014.

The composer would like to thank Frank McGuinness for his cooperation in adapting the text to the requirements of the opera.

Stage directions added by the composer appear in square brackets.

Characters

Antigone (daughter of Oedipus)
soprano

Jocasta (mother/wife of Oedipus)
mezzo soprano

Oedipus (initially the King)
heroic baritone

Creon (brother of Jocasta)
tenor

Polynices (son of Oedipus)
baritone

Tiresias (a blind prophet)
bass

Messenger (Acts One and Two)
King Theseus (Act Three)
countertenor

Stranger from Corinth (Act One)

Haemon (Creon's son – Act Two)

Stranger (Act Three)
high light tenor

Shepherd
baritone

Chorus of Citizens of Thebes (Acts One and Two)
and various other roles in Act Three

ACT ONE

OEDIPUS THE KING

(PAST)

Thebes.

CHORUS Oedipus, you rule our land.
Young and old, we gather before you.
Women give birth to buckets of blood.
Meat turns to manure in our hands.
God is on fire – his fever is the plague.
Now, Oedipus, great, good Oedipus,
We beg you, hear us, help us –
You must know some secret –
Some oracle to tell us what to do.
Oedipus, you've saved us before.
Save us now.

OEDIPUS Each of you, I know what you want.
I suffer with you – I suffer more.
Creon, my wife's brother,
I have sent him straight to Delphi.
He should be home soon from his journey.
When he gets back from his journey, I'll do
 what needs doing –
Apollo, listen to me – bring us luck, Lord.

CREON enters.

Creon, what was the divine word?

CREON There is poison in this land –
Apollo demands we drain it out.
Blood will have blood –

Blood will drench this city –
We must drive this man out.

OEDIPUS Which man?

CREON Before your time we had a leader –
Laius, he ruled this land well.
He was killed –
Apollo demands we punish his killers.

OEDIPUS Where was Laius murdered?

CREON On the way to Delphi –

OEDIPUS Was there no witness?

CREON All dead – save one.
He said robbers chanced on them –
It was a gang.

OEDIPUS The dead man deserves justice.
People of Thebes, I'll do what's to be done.
We either stand with God or sink.
If any of you know how this man,
This Laius, met his mysterious end –
I order you tell me all that you know.
If a foreigner did this –
Haul him out of your house.
He is the poison – he is the plague.
Laius was noble –
I took the bride that he once wedded.
I will fight to the death for him,
As if he were my flesh and blood.
May his killers know neither harvest nor home,
May hatred waste their women and children.