**Rhiannon Randel: *Entombed***

ENTOMBED is a snapshot of Antigone’s famous monologue from Sophocles’ Theban play of the same name. King Creon forbids Antigone from giving her traitorous brother the customary burial rites after his death. Antigone’s defiance of the king’s ruling earns her a dishonourable death of her own – by being buried alive. But even she is led to her death, Antigone is once again defiant: she sings herself a dirge, knowing that no one else will grant her this honour.

One of the most interesting parts of Antigone’s monologue is a set of three rhetorical questions, questioning the justice of her fate with a raw, wretched despair and defiance. The question that I have included last in my setting is arguably the most striking: *“Why should I look to the Gods anymore?”* goes far beyond being a statement of existentialist atheism: in the context of Ancient Thebes and the baggage of her own family’s fated misfortunes, this level of blasphemy – not just against the gods, but against the very particular Ancient Greek concept of the stark inevitability of Fate – is truly exceptional, and it’s with the power of this statement that Antigone defies all that has been given to her in this life. On the one hand, Antigone is a victim of the rules made by gods and man alike, and it is through standing up for her beliefs that has earned her an untimely death. And yet, she goes to the grave with anything but a victim’s mentality: she dies with her head held high, with the same defiance with which she lived. This sense of defiance is a crucial aspect of how I wished to portray her in this setting.

Sophocles’ Antigone has been a character of longstanding interest for me; combined with my love of Ancient Greek literature and language, I was waiting for an opportunity to give her a voice. It was through conversations with my *Theorbo Today* collaborators, Janet and Toby, that I came up with the concept of setting a song for soprano and theorbo in Ancient Greek specifically: the theorbo could be seen as a kind of descendant of the *cithara* in its usage with storytelling that came full circle with the *seconda prattica* movement, drawing on ancient bardic traditions the likes of which Sophocles’ audiences would have been familiar with. Both tradition and tragedy are timeless, and what with our contemporary contexts of pandemic, lockdowns and humanitarian crises urging us to speak up defiantly against injustices, perhaps the voice of Antigone will continue to inspire well into the future. **R.R.**