

OEDIPUS Rex

By Sophocles

Play no. 82

Opening show: 09/02/1947

Hebrew by: Shaul Chernikhovsky

Staged by : Tyrone Guthrie

Setting by: Sebba

The Cast

Oedipus, King of Thebes: Shimon Finkel

Jocasta, his wife: Hanna Rovina

Kreon, the brother of Jocasta: Aaron Meskin

Tiresias, a blind prophet: Haim Amital

Priest of Zeus: Menachem Benyamini

A Man from Corinth: Nachum Buchman

A old shepherd: Joshua Bertonov

A messenger (servant in the house of Oedipus): Ari Kutai

Leader of the Chorus: David Vardi

Chorus of elders of Thebes:

Old Man I: Jehuda Rubinstein

Old Man II: Itzhak Shulman

Old Man III: Shlomo Bruk

Old Man IV: Zvi Ben-Haim

Old Man V: Raphael Klatzkin

Old Man VI: Nachum Buchman

Old Man VII: Benjamin Kadari

Ismene Antigone: Shoshana Duer / Debora Bertonoff

Thebes is stricken by pestilence. The people come to invoke the aid of Oedipus, their king. Oedipus has already sent Kreon, the brother of his Queen Jocasta, to inquire of the Oracle at Delphi how he may save the city. Kreon returns with the word that the city is defied by an unclean thing and until this is cast out here can be no relief. The defilement is revealed as the result of the murder of Laius, the predecessor of Oedipus as King of Thebes and former husband of Queen Jocasta.

The Chorus of Theban Elders invokes the help of the Gods.

Oedipus proclaims a solemn curse upon the murderer of Laius. Tiresias, a blind prophet of Apollo, summoned to assist in finding the murderer, declares that it is Oedipus himself. Oedipus is frightened by the primitive superstitions aroused by Tiresias, but tries to persuade himself that the accusation is a political intrigue of Kreon, who stands next in succession to the throne of Thebes.

The Chorus, like the King, alarmed by the strange accusation, none the less is strong in its belief in the innocence of Oedipus.

Oedipus accuses Kreon of intrigue with the Prophet. A violent quarrel is checked by the entrance of Jocasta.

In answer to Jocasta's questions, Oedipus repeats the Prophet's accusation that he is the murderer of Laius. To calm his superstitious fear, Jocasta tells him that if she bore him a son, this boy would be his father's murderer.

Accordingly their son was cast out upon Mount Kithairon with a bar of iron drive through his feet. She tells how, years later, contrary to the word of the Oracle, Laius was killed by robbers at the place where three ways met.

Instead of bringing comfort, this story leaves Oedipus more than ever disturbed. In turn he recalls events from the past: when still a very young man he was troubled by a rumor that he was not as he had supposed, the son of Polybus, the Ruler of Corinth, and Merope, his wife.

He remembers, too, that he had gone to consult the Oracle at Delphi, and had been told – not of his origin but of his destiny – that he would slay his father and hold incestuous relations with his mother. Horrified, he had resolved never again to see either his father, mother or Corinth.

Leaving the Oracle, he had come at length to a place where three roads met. There, at just such time as Laius had been murdered, he encountered a man similar to Laius in appearance and age. Now, as in a dream, he remembers that there was a quarrel and he slew this man and his servants. Whether in fact this was Laius or not depends upon the evidence of Shepherd, the only survivor of the servants of Laius who brought the original tidings of Thebes of the murder of Laius by robbers. If he is constant to his evidence that not one but many slew him, then Oedipus will be cleared of guilt. Jocasta and Oedipus resolves to send for this Shepherd.

The Chorus, more than ever uneasy and apprehensive, expresses the danger of power and pride, expresses grief at the apparent injustice of the Gods, at the difficulty and uncertainty of communications between Gods and men, and at the lack of faith that this begets.

At this moment of unbelief, Jocasta, who has hitherto trusted to her reason, suddenly