



Taffety Punk Theatre Company

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Greek women set the story straight in endless battle against decay and loss

"Not afraid to be weird", Taffety Punk presents a double feature of Greek hits!

Antigonick

translated by **Anne Carson**
from *Antigone* by **Sophokles**
Directed by Kelsey Mesa
Choreography by Kelly King

The Fragments of Sappho

translated by **Anne Carson**
Directed by Marcus Kyd
Choreography by Katie C. Sopoci Drake

Where: Capitol Hill Arts Workshop (545 7th Street SE, Washington, DC 20003)
When: May 23 - June 8, 2019
Price: \$15. Tickets available at www.taffetypunk.com.

Taffety Punk is wild about ancient Greeks. "The Greeks strike hardest," says artistic director Marcus Kyd. "They hit us with the hardest questions and the deepest feelings."

The company, now in its 15th year, presents an evening of two powerhouse shows through the Punks' unique fusion of dance, theatre, and music. In **Anne Carson's** supercharged translations, they have found the perfect muse. This double feature begins with a dance concert based on the surviving fragments of Sappho's poetry, featuring the choreography of Spacetime Dance director **Katie C. Sopoci Drake**; it culminates with Carson's *Antigonick* — from Sophokles' *Antigone* — directed by Taffety Punk company member **Kelsey Mesa**.

In *Antigonick*, Mesa says, "Anne Carson takes the story of Antigone, strips it down to its core, and insists that we examine our ancient heroine again." She adds, "The language is lean and poetic. It makes you laugh and then twists your insides into a knot."

Antigone, the original hero of silenced women, stands ever against tyranny and injustice through her words and deeds. In the city of Thebes, war has finally come to an end. Antigone and her sister Ismene have lost their two brothers, who fought on opposite sides of the war. The brother who attacked Thebes is not to be buried with customary honors but left to rot in the wasting sun. Antigone defies this edict, issued by the new King, Antigone's uncle, Kreon. Willing to defend her principles, even if it means her own death, she ignites a new personal war between the rule of law and the spirit of justice.

Actor Lilian Oben, who plays Antigone, calls the rehearsal process "an ongoing excavation on many levels and in many directions." In the script she finds many resonances to the contemporary. For example, as the play focuses on "dissent and the act of protest—non-violent or otherwise," it prompts Oben to ask "who has the power to do so and at what risk?"

Carson provides a script wherein Antigone is also aware of that there have been many tellings of her story, and that this is an attempt to find the Antigone of Now. Mesa Says: "Anne Carson is not afraid to be weird. The play is super weird. *Antigonick* leaves a lot of space for us to discover the world while also forcing us to confront this story we know from new perspectives." Collaborating with choreographer Kelly King of Contradiction Dance, the cast employs an element of physical storytelling to bolster the text.

Opening each evening *The Fragments of Sappho*, a text-driven dance concert based on Carson's *If Not, Winter*, emerged from the Taffety Punks' **Generator** program — an in-house artistic incubator. Two years ago, Artistic Director **Marcus Kyd** teamed up with Spacetime Dance director Katie C. Sopoci Drake to start exploring the potential in these haunting remnants of poetry.

Kyd explains, "We started with the inherent tension of loss, of signal decay. It's like losing a radio station when crossing a border, or losing sections of a cherished letter that gets rained on. Then we ask, what remains? What do we do with those remains? Can we discover what is lost through what has been found?"

Sopoci Drake says, "The experience of these fragments is inherently mysterious and exciting because there are so many parts we are not privy to. Your mind automatically rushes in to fill gaps between words because what bits and pieces there are left work to draw you in so intimately." Dance was vital for both her and Kyd as they sought solutions to staging material that is emotionally provocative, yet incomplete. She explains, "Movement carries these gaps so beautifully without obliterating the many possibilities our minds will create within those spaces."

This new work features original music by the Punks and text delivered by company member Esther Williamson, and guest artist Teresa Spencer — who also perform in *Antigonick* as Chorus Leader and Ismene, respectively. On the language, Spencer extols Anne Carson's writing as "impossibly spare for how much it contains." She adds, "To me there's magic in that, that a handful of syllables can evoke millennia."

Antigonick and *The Fragments of Sappho* open at the **Capitol Hill Arts Workshop** on Saturday, May 25 and runs through Saturday, June 8 on Wednesday—Saturday nights at 8pm, (except for May 29, no show that night). There is one matinee on Saturday, June 1 at 2:30pm. There is one additional Industry Night performance on Monday, June 3 at 8pm. There will be two pay-what-you-can preview performances on Thursday, May 23 and Friday, May 24 at 8:00 PM.

This double-feature is estimated to occupy 90 minutes of show time. Give or take.

Featuring Lillian Oben as Antigone with company members Esther Williamson (Chorus Leader) and Dan Crane (Kreon), with guest artists Danny Puente Cackley, Louis E. Davis, Rachel Felstein, Safi Harriott, Marcus Kyd, Katie Murphy, Teresa Spencer, and Erin White. *Antigonick* is directed by Kelsey Mesa with choreography by Kelly King. *The Fragments of Sappho* is directed by Marcus Kyd and choreographed by Katie C. Sopoci Drake. Costume design by Jen Gillette. Lighting design by Chris Curtis. Music composed by Taffety Punk.

Taffety Punk Theatre Company is the resident company at Capitol Hill Arts Workshop (545 7th Street SE, Washington, DC 20003 – two blocks from Metro's Orange/Blue Line stop at Eastern Market.

For hi-res photos, go to: <http://www.taffetypunk.com/press/>

Taffety Punk Theatre Company won the John Aniello Award for Outstanding Emerging Theatre Company at the 2008 Helen Hayes Awards. More recently, the company received two Helen Hayes nominations for original choreography in both *Phaeton* and *An Iliad*. The company was also a 2010 finalist for the D.C. Mayor's Arts Award for Innovation in the Arts. Taffety Punk's mission is to maintain a dynamic ensemble of actors, dancers and musicians who ignite a public passion for theatre by making the classical and the contemporary exciting, meaningful, and affordable.

Anne Carson (Translator, Playwright) Anne Carson is a poet, essayist, professor of Classics, and translator. Carson has gained both critical accolades and a wide readership over the course of her career. In addition to her many highly-regarded translations of classical writers such as Sappho and Euripides, and her triptych rendering of *An Oresteia* (2009), she has published poems, essays, libretti, prose criticism, and verse novels that often cross genres. Her recent collections include *Nox* (2010), *Red Doc* (2013), and *Float* (2016). Her honors and awards are many, including fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, and the American Academy in Berlin. She has

also received the Lannan Literary Award, the Pushcart Prize, and the Griffin Poetry Prize. Carson was born in Toronto, Ontario in 1950. A high-school encounter with a Latin instructor, who agreed to teach her ancient Greek over the lunch hour, led to her passionate embrace of classical and Hellenic literature, influences which mark her work still. Carson attended the University of Toronto, though she dropped out twice before earning her BA, MA and PhD in Classics. Carson has taught at many universities in both the US and Canada, including McGill and the University of Michigan. Her publishing career began with *Eros the Bittersweet: An Essay* (1986), which also established Carson's style of patterning her writings after classical Greek literature. Such works as *Glass, Irony, and God* (1992), *Plainwater: Essays and Poetry* (1995) and *Men in the Off Hours* (2001) have helped seal the author's reputation as unique among contemporary poets. But perhaps the most widely received examples of her particular specialty are Carson's verse novels, *Autobiography of Red: A Novel in Verse* (1998) and *The Beauty of the Husband: A Fictional Essay in 29 Tangos* (2001).

Kelsey Mesa (Director, *Antigonick*): Directing credits include *She Rode Horses Like the Stock Exchange* by Amelia Roper, *The Trojan Women*, by Euripides, *Charm* by Kathleen Cahill, *dREAMtRIPPIN'* by Thomas Campbell, and the staged reading of *First Citizen* by Anna Lathrop and Katherine Clair, all at Taffety Punk Theatre Company; as well as *The Pavilion*, *The Magi* and *Wish List* at the Hub Theatre, where she also serves as Associate Artistic Director. She has directed for The Inkwell, The Source Festival, Young Playwrights' Theatre, the American College Theatre Festival, and Theater Alliance's Hothouse New Play Development Series. She is the Manager of KCACTF and Theater Education at the Kennedy Center. Kelsey is a native of Miami, FL and a graduate of Northwestern University.

Katie C. Sopoci Drake (Choreographer, *The Fragments of Sappho*): Ms. Sopoci Drake is the Artistic Director of Spacetime Dance, a Core Collaborator for the Mountain Empire Performance Collective, a teacher and researcher specializing in Laban-based contemporary dance theory and technique. Her choreography, is described as "a beautiful marriage between choreography, music and poetry" (On Milwaukee, 12/06) and "sinuous, sensual beauty" (Journal Sentinel, 11/07). Her work arises from explorations in Laban Movement Analysis, a fascination with the idiosyncrasies of daily life, and flights of fancy that arise from ordinary inspirations. Sopoci Drake's work has been performed by Momentum Dance Company, Wild Space Dance Company, The Florentine Opera, Lawrence University Opera, Miami Dade College and many more companies and schools. Independent productions have been presented on the Millennium Stage at the Kennedy Center, the National Portrait Gallery, The Southern Theater, Patrick's Cabaret, Danceworks Performance Studio and The Milwaukee Art Museum. Sopoci Drake's creative work has been supported by a 2016 Dance Metro DC Presentation Grant, and a 2019 DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities Fellowship Grant. Holding an MFA in Dance from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, a Graduate Laban Certification in Movement Analysis from Columbia College - Chicago, and a BA in Theater/Dance with a minor in Vocal Performance from Luther College, Sopoci Drake continues to study various somatic practices to inform her work and life as a curious mover.

Marcus Kyd (Director, *The Fragments of Sappho*): Artistic Director of Taffety Punk, Marcus is also a founding company member. He has directed several of T-Punk's dance-theatre-concerts including *suicide.chat.room*, an adaptation of Shakespeare's epic poem *The Rape of Lucrece*, and *Enter Ophelia, distracted* featuring fellow company member Kimberly Gilbert. He has also directed the recent set of Bootleg Shakespeare plays, focusing on the Wars of the Roses cycle, which culminates this year with *Richard III*, and Richard Byrne's *Burn Your Bookes*, and Michael Milligan's *Phaeton*. As an actor Marcus has appeared on the stages of Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Lincoln Center (NY), Kennedy Center, The Folger Theatre, Round House Theatre, Arena Stage, Center Stage, Olney Theatre Center, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, The Baltimore Symphony, Happenstance Theater, Anti-Social Music/WPAS, Nebraska Shakespeare Festival, Theater J and many others. He is also a musician, and the work of his former band, The Most Secret Method, can be found on most electronic distribution media.

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