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978-0-521-49782-4 - Sophocles: Oedipus Tyrannus

Fiona Macintosh

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### Sophocles: Oedipus Tyrannus

Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* (or *Oedipus Rex*) has exerted more influence than any other drama, ancient or modern, on the history of theatre, and this influence has extended far beyond the boundaries of the Western theatrical tradition to include African and Oriental theatre histories as well. This volume traces Sophocles' paradigmatic ancient tragedy from its first appearance on the stage in the fifth century BC to present-day productions. The afterlife of *Oedipus* has played a key role in the history of ideas, and this volume examines its centrality to the history of stage censorship and political and cultural upheaval across the centuries. More recently, the protagonist has come under close scrutiny in his association with the Oedipus of psychoanalytical theory. Macintosh demonstrates how, by following the fortunes of Sophocles' *Oedipus* on the world stage, one witnesses its intersection with and impact upon the history of theatre and the history of ideas.

FIONA MACINTOSH is Reader in Greek and Roman Drama at the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama, University of Oxford.

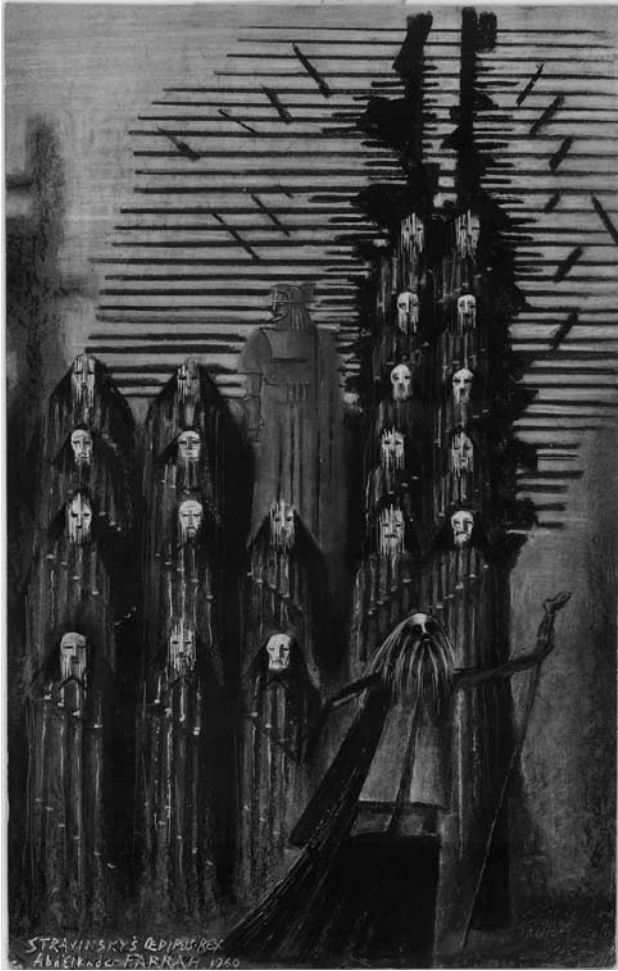
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Frontispiece – design for British première of Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* (1961), Sadler's Wells, London, by Abd'Elkader Farrah

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## PLAYS IN PRODUCTION

*Series editor:* Michael Robinson

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SOPHOCLES  
*Oedipus Tyrannus*

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FIONA MACINTOSH  
*University of Oxford*



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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press  
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521497824](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521497824)

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First published 2009

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

Macintosh, Fiona, 1959–

Sophocles : Oedipus tyrannus / Fiona Macintosh.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-49711-4

1. Sophocles. Oedipus Rex. 2. Oedipus (Greek mythology) in literature.

3. Heroes in literature. I. Title.

PA4413.O7M23 2009

882'.01–dc22

2009005859

ISBN 978-0-521-49711-4 hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-49782-4 paperback

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book has been embarrassingly long in gestation and for this reason I have accumulated debts in very wide circles. From my time at Goldsmiths' College, University of London, I have to thank Chris Baldick, Helen Carr, David Margolies, Bill McCormack and Jerry Sokol for various kinds of encouragement. I remain indebted to many others who have patiently waited for this book and who have provided material and helpful criticism on numerous sub-chapters which have appeared elsewhere: Sarah Annes Brown, Felix Budelmann, Zachary Dunbar, Cécile Dudouyt, Pat Easterling, Barbara Goff, Simon Goldhill, Helene Foley, Isobel Hurst, Lorna Hardwick, Karelisa Hartigan, Eleftheria Ioannidou, Miriam Leonard, Michael Lurje, Marianne McDonald, Martha Oakes, Michelle Paul, Kathleen Riley, Catherine Silverstone, Michael Silk, Michael Simpson, Chris Stray, Michael Walton, David Wiles and Peter Wilson. My students in London and Oxford have contributed in countless challenging and exacting ways – I remain profoundly grateful to them. Martin Revermann very kindly read through the text at the eleventh hour. At Cambridge University Press, I have to thank Vicki Cooper and Becky Jones for their forbearance, and Tom O'Reilly and John Gaunt for their efficiency.

My greatest debt, though, is to my colleagues at the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama at the University of Oxford: to Amanda Wrigley for the research and technical support she has provided, way beyond the call of duty; to Chris Weaver, Helen Damon and Stephe Harrop for help with pictures; to Peter Brown for indispensable guidance and discussion on opera; and especially to Pantelis Michelakis and Oliver Taplin, for their much-valued

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intellectual and moral support over a number of years. Edith Hall, who as co-author of another book and close friend of long standing, has heard rather too much of this material over a number of years. My deepest gratitude and debt must go to her for much good humour, incalculable insights and acumen. Finally, I have to thank my family – my husband, Jonathan Marcus and our two sons, Josh and Sam, all of whom have heard far too much about Oedipus.

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#### NOTE ON EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS

Sophocles' tragedy is referred to throughout the text as *Oedipus Tyrannus*, as opposed to the rather nineteenth-century, honorific title, *Oedipus the King*. Indeed, many of the twentieth- and twenty-first-century versions under discussion in this volume drop the epithet 'King'/'Rex' altogether as they fashion a post-Freudian/Arthur Milleresque, Everyman/Ordinary Man, Oedipus. The ancient Greek term *tyrannos* – meaning the non-hereditary ruler who has come to the throne by force and not by birthright – carries with it on occasions the modern connotations of the word 'tyrant'. The ambiguity in the Sophoclean title is also an important factor in various adaptations; and for this reason, it has been maintained here, even if the other titles – *Oedipus the King* or *Oedipus Rex* – are more familiar to many readers.

All translations are my own unless otherwise stated, and all abbreviations of ancient sources are taken from the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (3rd edition, Oxford 1996).

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## PRODUCTIONS

The productions listed here are those discussed in this volume, and with their première dates only (revivals have not been listed). For a comprehensive listing, go to the online database of the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama, University of Oxford ([www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk](http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk), edited and maintained by Amanda Wrigley).

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| 467 BC     | Aeschylus, <i>Oedipus</i> (wins first prize with <i>Laius, Seven against Thebes, Sphinx</i> [satyr play]) at the Festival of Dionysus in Athens                   |
| 430–425?   | Sophocles, <i>Oedipus Tyrannus</i> at the Festival of Dionysus in Athens  |
| 409–407    | Euripides, <i>Phonoecian Women</i> at the Festival of Dionysus in Athens  |
| 408–401    | Euripides, <i>Oedipus</i> at the Festival of Dionysus in Athens   |
| 401        | Sophocles, <i>Oedipus at Colonus</i> posthumously produced by Sophocles' grandson, also called Sophocles, at the Festival of Dionysus in Athens                   |
| c. AD 41–9 | Seneca's <i>Oedipus</i>   |
| 64–8       | Emperor Nero regularly performs the role of Oedipus   |
| 1559–60    | Seneca's <i>Oedipus</i> , in a translation by Alexander Neville, performed at Trinity College, Cambridge  |
| 1585       | <i>Edipo Tiranno</i> , directed by Angelo Ingegneri in a translation by Orsatto Giustiniani, with music by Andrea Gabrieli, performed at Teatro Olimpico, Vicenza |

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- 1659 Pierre Corneille's *Oedipe*, Hôtel de Bourgogne, Paris
- 1678 Dryden and Lee's *Oedipus*, performed by the Duke's Company at the Dorset Garden Theatre, London
- 1718 Voltaire's *Oedipe*, Comédie Française, Paris
- 1858 Jules Lacroix's *Oedipe-Roi*, Comédie Française, Paris, with Edmond Geffroy in title role
- 1881 Jean Mounet-Sully takes the part of Oedipe in Lacroix's *Oedipe-Roi* at the Comédie Française, Paris
- 1887 *Oedipus Tyrannus* in ancient Greek, with music composed by Charles Villers Stanford, at St Andrew's Hall, Cambridge, performed by students of the University of Cambridge
- 1910 *Oedipus Rex*, in a version by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, directed by Max Reinhardt at the Musikfesthalle, Munich, and then at Zirkus Schumann, Berlin, with Alexander Moissi as Oedipus
- 1912 *Oedipus Rex*, in Gilbert Murray's translation of Hofmannsthal's version, directed by Max Reinhardt at Covent Garden, London, with John Martin-Harvey as Oedipus and Lillah McCarthy as Jocasta
- 1919 *Oedipe, roi de Thèbes* by Saint-Georges de Bouhélier, dir. Firmin Gémier at Cirque d'Hiver, Paris
- 1926 W.B. Yeats's *Oedipus the King*, Abbey Theatre, Dublin
- 1927 *Oedipus Rex* by Igor Stravinsky/Jean Cocteau, Ballets Russes, Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt, Paris
- 1932 *Oedipe* by André Gide, dir. Georges Pitoëff, Théâtre des Arts, Paris
- 1934 *La Machine infernale* by Jean Cocteau, dir. Louis Jouvet, Comédie des Champs-Élysées, Paris
- 1937 *Oedipe-Roi* by Jean Cocteau, dir. Jean Cocteau, Théâtre Antoine, Paris, with Jean Marais as Oedipus

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- 1945 *Oedipus Rex*, directed Michel Saint-Denis, with Laurence Olivier as Oedipus, Old Vic Company at The New Theatre, London
- 1947 Martha Graham's *Night Journey*, dance version, with music by William Schuman, Harvard Music Department, Cambridge, MA
- 1947 *Oedipe-Roi*, dir. Pierre Blanchar, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris, designs by Pablo Picasso
- 1954 *Oedipus Rex*, dir. Tyrone Guthrie, Stratford, Ontario, with James Mason as Oedipus
- 1956 Film of *Oedipus Rex*, dir. Tyrone Guthrie, Stratford, Ontario, with Douglas Campbell as Oedipus
- 1967 Pier Paolo Pasolini's film *Edipo Re*
- 1968 Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, directed by Ola Rotimi (who also played Narrator), Ori Olokun Players, University of Ife, Nigeria, with Femi Robinson as Odewale (Oedipus)
- 1978 André Boucourechliev's opera, *Le Nom d'Oedipe*, with a libretto by Hélène Cixous, in the Cour du Palais des Papes, at the Festival d'Avignon, under the direction of Claude Régy, conductor Claude Prin
- 1980 Steven Berkoff's *Greek*, Half Moon Theatre, London
- 1983 Lee Breuer's *Gospel at Colonus*, music composed by Bob Telson, Carey Playhouse, Brooklyn, and Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York
- 1986 *Oedipus Rex*, directed by Yukio Ninagawa, adapted by Mutsuo Takahashi, Honganji Temple in Tsukiji, Tokyo (an earlier version dates from 1976 and a later version was staged in 2002)
- 1992 *The Thebans*, translated by Timberlake Wertenbaker, dir. Adrian Noble, Royal Shakespeare Company, Stratford-upon-Avon

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- 1996 Rita Dove's *Darker Face of the Earth*, dir. Ricardo Kahm at Angus Bowmer Theatre, Ashland, Oregon
- 1997 *The Oedipus Plays (Oedipus the King and Oedipus at Colonus)*, in a translation by Ranjit Bolt, directed by Peter Hall, Royal National Theatre, London
- 2000 Giuseppe Manfredi's *Cuckoos* (in a version by Colin Teevan), Gate Theatre, dir. Peter Hall
- 2000 *Oedipus Rex*, dir. Tadashi Suzuki, Japan
- 2001 *Oedipus*, in a version by Blake Morrison, dir. Barrie Rutter, Northern Broadsides, The Viaduct Theatre, Dean Clough, Halifax
- 2006 *Oedipus Loves You*, by Simon Doyle and Gavin Quinn, Smock Alley Theatre, Dublin
- 2008 *Oedipus*, in a version by Frank McGuinness, dir. Jonathan Kent, Royal National Theatre, London