

Time to Act

Music by Laura Kaminsky
Libretto by Crystal Manich

Study Guide to the Opera

What can we do?

Gun violence in America is a charged topic. What long-term emotional impact does this violence have on our youth? Can the arts help young people navigate school violence? *Time to Act*, by composer Laura Kaminsky and librettist Crystal Manich, addresses these questions in a gripping new opera that prompts everyone to shape the world we want to see.

OPERA PREMISE A group of high school students is preparing a production of Sophocles' *Antigone*. A new student holds a dark secret that unifies the group and inspires a rewrite of the play, using their voices to address mental health and the impact of gun violence in American schools. As rehearsals unfold, the students confront questions of grief, responsibility, activism, and moral courage—discovering how art can become a catalyst for action in a fractured world. Their final sung words sum up a hopeful outlook:

*Out of the darkness
Into the light
The future is ours
To live
It is time
Build the world we want to see
It is time to act*

PATH OF A WORLD PREMIERE Kaminsky and Manich were awarded commissions from multiple opera companies and funders for *Time to Act* and developed the opera over multiple years. Recent stories in *Broadway World*, *Pittsburgh TABLE Magazine*, and *Classical Voice North America* have exuded excitement about a new opera based on issues of today. A planned National Sawdust semi-staged live recording by Boston Conservatory at Berklee lends credibility. Just like a Puccini opera, premieres are highly anticipated, dramatic events.

THEMES IN ANTIGONE

Sophocles' Greek tragedy centers on the title character's act of civil disobedience as she processes the conflict between her conscience and state authority. Should human laws be obeyed when they contradict the unwritten laws of the gods? Centuries later, Thoreau, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King argued that individuals have a moral duty to disobey unjust laws.

REALITIES IN TIME TO ACT

When 78% of United States homicides are gun-related and school shootings are known as unimaginable tragedies, what can teens do to keep history from repeating itself? Active shooter drills are as common as fire drills of the past. What happens after school lockdowns? What can adults do to change society? Sandy Hook Promise (<https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/>) lists facts about school shootings and identifies warning signs. This new opera speaks directly to the world we live in—and the future we must shape. Teens can help shape that future and adults can accept the Antigones among them as sympathetic characters rather than rebellious children.



Erik Nordstrom as Tyson and Shannon Crowley as Bailey in the Pittsburgh Opera world premiere of *Time to Act*
(Photo credit: David Bachman)

Time to Act Summary

Present day. A high school in Anywhere, USA.
A high school drama club prepares a production of
Sophocles' *Antigone*.

As the students grapple with the ancient story of love, loyalty, and loss, a new student, Alona, joins the group. Alona carries a disturbing secret, and her arrival sparks discomfort and discord.

As the students collaborate, they uncover revelations about the play, each other, and themselves. A safety drill triggers a shocking revelation about gun violence at a nearby school, and the divided group strives to come together. Inspired by their discoveries as Alona's secret is revealed, the students decide to perform the ancient play using their own words, as a rite of healing and change in the aftermath of gun violence at another school.

Finding inspiration in *Antigone* that parallels their own lives, they take action to spur change for the promise of a better future.



Antigone Condemned to Death by Creon, Giuseppe Diotti, 1845

Characters

Alona *mezzo-soprano*

The new girl

In the drama, she plays the role of Antigone (an-TI-goh-nee), the older daughter of Oedipus, the exiled King of Thebes and Queen Jocasta. Antigone's brothers, Eteocles and Polynices, both died while fighting each other in a civil war for the Theban throne. Antigone attempts to bury the body of Polynices, going against the decision of her uncle, King Creon, and placing her relationship with her brother above human laws.

Tyson *baritone*

An injured football player

In the drama, he plays the role of Creon (KREE-on), Antigone's uncle and the new Theban ruler who orders the public honoring of Eteocles and public shaming of Polynices.

Bailey *soprano*

A responsible and sweet spirit

In the drama, she plays the role of Antigone's sister Ismene (iz-MEH-nee), a submissive figure who initially refuses to help Antigone bury Polynices.

José *tenor*

An actor and Alona's defender

In the drama, he plays the role of Haemon (HAY-men), Creon's son and Antigone's fiancé. He acts as a voice of reason and emotional balance against his father's stubborn tyranny.

Robin Grace *mezzo-soprano or baritone* **The drama teacher**

Chorus

The other Playmakers

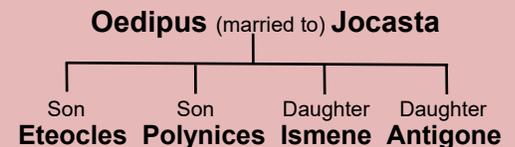
2 sopranos 2 mezzo-sopranos 2 tenors 2 baritones

In Sophocles' tragedies, the Greek chorus was a group of citizens who functioned as a collective character, offering commentary and background.

Character mentioned from Shakespeare: Rosalind (ROH-za-lind)

Heroine and protagonist of *As You Like It*

Family Tree for Sophocles' *Antigone*



Instrumentation

Clarinet in Bb/
Alto saxophone

Percussion
Drum set
(Pedal Bass Drum,
Floor Tom-tom,
Snare Drum,
Small Tom-tom,
Hi-hat)

Vibraphone

Congas

Bongos

Tam-tam

Gongs

Bass Drum

Piano

Violin

Cello

Bass

Meet the Eclectic Composer

American composer, producer, and educator Laura Kaminsky was born in New York City. She graduated from the High School of Music and Art and studied with Joseph Wood at Oberlin College and Mario Davidovsky at City College/CUNY, graduating with a Master of Arts (composition).



Laura Kaminsky (b. 1956)
laurakaminsky.com

The New York Times claimed that she has an “ear for the new and interesting.” Her work often addresses critical social and political issues, with a distinct musical language that is “full of fire as well as ice, contrasting dissonance and violence with tonal beauty and meditative reflection. It is strong stuff” (*American Record Guide*). Her first opera, *As One*, is among the most-produced contemporary operas, with productions across the United States, Europe, Canada, South America, and Australia.

She has received commissions from Houston Grand Opera and Opera Parallèle/American Opera Projects. She has also written works for string quartet, orchestra, piano, chamber music, and songs. Having lived and worked in West Africa (Ghana, 1992–1993) and Eastern Europe (Poland, 1996–1997), her musical language draws from many sources of inspiration and deep study. Her music has been influenced by Shostakovich, Meredith Monk, Stephen Sondheim, and Brazilian pop.

Kaminsky operas:

2014 *As One*
Librettists Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed
Pittsburgh Opera 2017 production

2016 *Some Light Emerges*
Librettists Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed

2018 *Today It Rains*
Librettists Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed

2021 *Hometown to the World*
Librettist Kimberly Reed

2021 *Finding Wright*
Librettist Andrea Fellows Fineberg

2024 *February*
Librettists Laura Kaminsky and Lisa Moore

2024 *Lucidity*
Librettist David Cote

Meet the Versatile Librettist

Crystal Manich is an Emmy Award nominated, versatile Latiné international creative director and writer whose works for stage, film, and circus have been seen across the United States, Europe, Argentina, and Australia. She has held Artistic Director positions and served as adjunct faculty at UCLA and Rider University. She holds undergraduate and graduate degrees in directing and Arts Management from Carnegie Mellon University, and a Business and Management of Entertainment certificate from UCLA Extension.



Crystal Manich (b. 1982)
www.crystalmanich.com

Manich is the stage director for the world premiere of *Time to Act* and is well known for her past work at Pittsburgh Opera. She stage directed Handel's *Ariodante* (2023), Mozart's *Così fan tutte* (2020), Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* (2018), Handel's *Riccardo Primo* (2017), Adamo's *Little Women* (2016), Handel's *Rodelinda* (2015), Verdi's *Aida* (2013), Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* (2013), Verdi's *La traviata* (2011), Handel's *Rinaldo* (2011), Puccini's *La bohème* (2009), and Gordon's *Orpheus and Eurydice* (2008).

Because she is fluent in English, Spanish, and Italian—and has working knowledge of German, French, and Portuguese—she has worked in North and South America, Europe, and Australia. As Artistic Director for Cirque du Soleil, she managed dozens of artists and supporting employees from around the world. In 2024, at the first-ever art biennale in Luxembourg, she wrote and directed the opening event, featuring acrobatic performances. For *The Copper Queen*, she won an award at the 2021 Toronto International Women Film Festival.

Manich creative work:

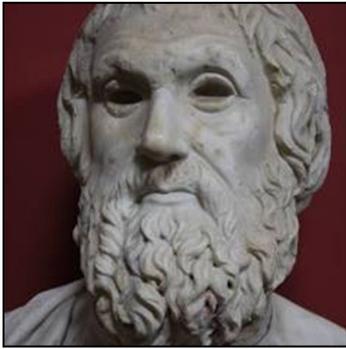
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Time to Act
Triângulo

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90+ Stage Productions

Film
The Copper Queen
Music videos

Circus
Reesch E'vol for
Biennale in Luxembourg
Quidam for Cirque du Soleil
Crystal for Cirque du Soleil

Old Tragic Story Still Resonates Today



Sophocles, the playwright
(c. 496–406 BCE)



Antigone in Greek mythology



Wisdom is the chief part of happiness, and our dealings with the gods must be in no way unholy. The great words of arrogant men have to make repayment with great blows, and in old age teach wisdom.

Closing words of *Antigone*

Sophocles, the playwright

Renowned for masterpieces like *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone*, Sophocles was one of three great ancient Greek tragedians, including Aeschylus and Euripides. Sophocles wrote more than 120 plays and won 24 theatrical competitions. His dramatic innovations included the third actor (which allowed him to introduce more complex interpersonal conflict), expanded chorus, and painted scenery. His plays often explored the tension between fate, human action, and divine law. Sophocles was a respected Athenian citizen and member of a wealthy family.

Antigone the character

In Greek mythology, Antigone was a Theban princess, daughter of Oedipus, King of Thebes. The character of Antigone appears in three 5th century BCE Sophocles plays, but her long-lasting legacy is the result of the eponymous tragedy *Antigone*. She is often invoked as a heroic symbol.

Antigone the play

The story has been the subject and adapted into other plays, paintings, operas, incidental music, songs, ballets, short stories, poetry, films, and novels. There are many translations available online, with more than 70 versions of the play in book form available at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. The play explores the conflict between divine law and human law when Antigone defies King Creon's decree. Her acts of civil disobedience continue to touch readers with their exploration of grief, power, and wise words.

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