

The Rise & Fall of Oedipus T Rex & The Goat Song of Thebes - SYNOPSIS

By John J King

OEDIPUS T REX tells the story of the ancient Thebes, and the long-term problems and systemic ills that arise when crimes are committed by men in power, but responsibility is refused. The musical centers on the city during the reign of Oedipus, but incorporates elements of Theban mythology from its founding.

TYRA is an ageless witch who has advised the Tyrants of Thebes since its founding, seven generations ago. She has seen the failures and sins of Thebes many kings: Cadmus' killing of the war-god Ares' dragon; Pentheus' betrayal of Dionysus (and his murder at the hands and mouths of The Bacchae); and Laius' kidnapping and raping of a young boy, Chryssippus. Despite TYRA's prophecies and warnings, the Kings have ignored her, and the people of Thebes have suffered the consequences.

TYRA and her THUNDERTHIGHS (magical birds who know the future, and also great back-up singers) lament that Laius' sins have brought the SPHINX to the gates of Thebes. The Sphinx refuses to budge, and no food, people, or supplies can get in or out of the city. TYRA yearns to take leadership of the city-state, but the people of Thebes have never elected a woman, and TYRA does not appeal to them. (*BOETIAN RHAPSODY*).

TYRA pleads to Queen JOCASTA and her brother CREON: spread word that we will give the throne of Thebes to any hero who gets rid of the Sphinx. JOCASTA agrees. Before TYRA can confront the SPHINX, a new hero arrives: OEDIPUS. By defeating the SPHINX, OEDIPUS wins the crown of the city, the hearts of the people, and the hand of JOCASTA in marriage.

JOCASTA shows OEDIPUS the city. As TYRA alerts him to the problems of the people, OEDIPUS and JOCASTA flirt (*THEBAN PEOPLE*). JOCASTA and OEDIPUS return to the palace to consummate their marriage, shutting TYRA out (*SHEPHERD AND THE LAMB*). In their enthusiasm for the new king and the hopes of an heir, the people watch the silhouettes of the royal lovers from outside of the palace, as TYRA sings of OEDIPUS' using distractions to placate the people, despite their suffering from lack of food and water (*BREAD & CIRCUS*).

At home, TYRA and her THUNDERTHIGHS use witchcraft to examine OEDIPUS' past. They see his youth in Corinth, dreaming of fame and power, and abusing his shepherd mentor, BOLAN (*CORINTHIAN BLUES*). OEDIPUS attacks KING POLYBUS when he learns the king is not his biological father, then flees to the Greek wilderness (*THE MARATHON*). At a narrow bridge, OEDIPUS kills King LAIUS in a dispute over who has the right to cross first.

The next morning, TYRA tells JOCASTA of OEDIPUS' past. Before she can, OEDIPUS admits his past wrongs to the people of Thebes, playing his magical Golden Lyre (*THE WINNER*). The people love him more. TYRA attempts to advise OEDIPUS, but the new king refuses to listen to her because she is old, out of style, and a woman. TYRA performs to show him her many skills, including prophecy, witchcraft, and the ability to commune with the dead (*RAZZMATAZZ*). Unimpressed, OEDIPUS plows forward with his use of military force to suppress Athenian raiders at the southern border.

The THUNDERTHIGHS fast forward the story, detailing the birth of three children to JOCASTA and OEDIPUS, and OEDIPUS' continued refusal to heed TYRA's council (*SEVENTEEN YEARS*). The plebeians suffer continued drought, plague, and war, while OEDIPUS enjoys wealth and gains power. Despite new problems, OEDIPUS blames his predecessor, refusing responsibility.

After OEDIPUS shuns TIGGY in favor of her brothers, merely because they are boys, TYRA and JOCASTA teach the young girl to find her powers as a woman, and mock the foibles of men (*LIKE A MAN*). Reminded of her powers, and fed up with OEDIPUS' repeated snubbing, TYRA visits the shrine of Dionysus to pray for power and guidance. She sees two snakes fighting. When she strikes them with her walking stick, she magically turns into a man: TYRESE. TYRESE rubs ash from the fire on his face, making his skin white. He returns to Thebes transformed (*IN EVERY CITY A TYRANT*).

TYRESE leads the THEBANS in revolt against OEDIPUS, and they take up her song (*THE PLAGUE*). OEDIPUS calls TYRESE to parley; when he offers TYRESE bribes instead of solutions, TYRESE and TIGGY flee, stealing the Golden Lyre. When the Gods decree that Thebes will suffer plague until LAIUS' murderer is punished, TYRESE demands a trial.

At the trial, a MESSENGER reveals it was OEDIPUS who killed LAIUS, and that OEDIPUS was not King POLYBUS' son, but in fact a baby found in the hills outside Thebes many years ago. TYRESE and JOCASTA realize OEDIPUS is JOCASTA's first-born son, who has now fulfilled the prophecy that he would kill his father, Laius, and marry his mother (*THE TRIAL*).

JOCASTA laments her fate and hangs herself (*I LET MY SON GO DOWN ON ME*). OEDIPUS, realizing his pride has caused him to ignore the truth, stabs his eyes out with Jocasta's brooch (*BLIND*).

In the chaos after these revelations, TYRESE and TIGGY argue that a woman should be given leadership of the city-state, but the people refuse (*THE FEAR AND THE PITY*). As Oedipus' sons, THEO and POLLY, fight, TYRESE turns into a woman, and DIONYSUS flies in to stir the women into a Bacchic frenzy and kill the remaining men (*DEUS EX ROCKIN' YA*).

With no men left alive, the BACCHAE, led by TIGGY, agree to start over with a blank slate, planting the bodies of men in order to raise a new line of powerful women to lead Thebes. The BACCHAE elect TIGGY as Tyrant, and a new Thebes is born (*ROCK N ROLL PATRICIDE*).