

# Seven Against Thebes

by Aeschylus

If a company undertakes to produce the entire Theban Cycle, it makes sense to interpolate a play by Aeschylus between "Oedipus at Colonus" and "Antigone." The play is entitled "Seven Against Thebes" and is rather simply constructed.

Eteocles appears at the beginning and justifies his decision to prevent his brother from sharing the throne. The chorus dominates the action with a long description of the army gathering outside the gates of Thebes. Eteocles returns, trying to calm their hysteria: another long choral sequence.

A messenger then reports on the seven captains who are to lead the attacks at the city's seven gates. The shield of each is described in detail, with the device on each depicting the character of the man who wields it. As each enemy warrior is named, Eteocles nominates a Theban to oppose him. The last enemy to be cited is Eteocles' brother, Polyneices, and Eteocles proposes to face his brother himself.

After the battle is joined, the messenger announces that the city is saved, but that Eteocles and Polyneices have killed each other. A Herald announces an edict ordering a ceremonial burial for Eteocles, but that Polyneices' body is to be left outside the city gates to be devoured by scavengers.

There is another scene, between Ismene and Antigone which covers the same material as the opening of "Antigone." This scene can be omitted with a segue into the opening of "Antigone."