

THE ODYSSEY



By Nina Segal
12-14 February | 7pm | PAC

WHITGIFT



THE ODYSSEY

IT'S A REALLY REALLY REALLY LONG JOURNEY

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

In the Twelfth Century BCE, after ten years of fighting, a couple of heroes' hurt feelings and one large wooden horse, the city of Troy was finally sacked by Greek forces. Long and bitter, the Trojan War had been fought over the honour of Menelaus, King of Sparta, whose wife Helen had been taken by Paris, a Trojan Prince to whom she had been promised by Aphrodite – the goddess of beauty.

When the War was settled the Greeks left the city in ruins and took its spoils. Their journeys back to Greece are varied in success – some never make it home. But when they do, the tales are legendary. Odysseus' journeys back from Troy have become iconic in their own right, even giving us the term 'Odyssey'. But when looking at the escapades of these heroes, it is often easy to forget the effects that they can have on those around them.

Telemachus, Odysseus' son and our story's hero, has grown up without his father and only his mother, Penelope, for company. She has tried her best but as Telemachus grows older he becomes increasingly anxious to find his father, not understanding what could have kept him away for so long. The story is one of deep emotion and light-hearted humour, of overcoming adversity and gaining a greater understanding of the challenges people face. It is a tale of empathy and comedy.

As I look back on my nearly eight years of Whitgift Drama – reaching all the way back to *Eugene Onegin* and spanning eight



productions – I realise just how important it has been for me personally. Some of my most treasured memories from my time at this school have been given to me by my participation in productions such as *The Jungle Book*, *Chariots of Fire* and *Twelfth Night*. Across all of them I have made lasting friendships, learned new skills, and bolstered my own confidence. Through this particular production though, I have learned something inspiring: that Drama at Whitgift looks forward to an incredibly bright future.

Directing this show has been an amazing opportunity for me, getting to work out my own vision of this incredible story has been so much fun and an incredible education as to how much deeper the inner workings of a production go beyond an actor and a set. I follow on from a strong legacy of Student Directors, with Oscar Robinson's incredible staging of *Swallows and Amazons* and Matthew Lee's thought provoking direction of *Animal Farm*, and can only hope to live up to the high standard they have set for me with my own vision of *The Odyssey*.

I have been honoured to work with such a talented cast, who have at every step of the way been brilliant not only in their approach to performing each nuance of

the text (and there are a fair few), but have stepped up on occasion to offer their own thoughts and ideas – this production is of course theirs as much as anyone else's. They have been such excellent colleagues throughout this process and the show would not be what it is without them.

The biggest thanks must of course go to my absolutely fantastic production team who have put up with (and enabled) my every mad idea – working with me to put on stage a vision of this story that is both practical and uniquely my own. Although it sounds cliché, but it is a complete

understatement to say that this show could not have happened without each and every one of them. Both I and the show owe them so much, and I can never begin to think where I would be without them.

Making this show has been such a delightful (as well as *really really really long*) journey, and it is one that I will never forget. Everyone involved has put in enormous amounts of effort that I am sure will be plain to see. I hope you enjoy the show.

Joel Gulliford
Director

'I have been honoured to work with such a talented cast'



CAST

Telemachus	Monty Moffitt
Penelope	Kai Galliet
First Ithacan	Tommy Carmalt
Second Ithacan	Max Kan
Cyclops	Eden Moore
Calypso	Milo Lamond
Siren	Rupert Noble
Circe	Alex Kanoutas
Tiresias	George Pang
Scylla	Emilian Stan
First Trojan	Zebulon Duffy
Second Trojan	Harry Mortimer
First Sheep	Caleb Taylor-Smith
Second Sheep	Ethan Roberts
First Guard	Austin Alder
Second Guard	Kai Kazemi
First Wild Beast	Nick Ostrovehkov
Second Wild Beast	Alex Ostrovehkov
Chorus	Edi Hackman Reilly Chen (Understudy First Guard) Marcus Kipps Corban Butler Arshia Saffarizadeh (Understudy Siren) Felix Sweetser Ellis Pang



CREATIVE & PRODUCTION TEAM

Director	Joel Gulliford
Assistant Directors	CO Aluko & AM Weddell
Producer & Musical Director	E Mulligan
Technical Director	DP Jenkinson
Costume Designer	CO Aluko
Production Technicians	AJ Hill & D Olufowora
Lighting & Sound Operator	Arjun Kashyap
Hair & Make-up	HI MacGregor, CD Clipston & AL Trantor
Assistant Stage Manager	AL Eynard

Photography by AJ Hill

ANCIENT vs MODERN THEATRE

It may be a surprise for many to discover how theatre has changed from its role in ancient Greece through to the present day. Theatre is an exceptionally old art form originating from the dithyramb, an ancient Greek choral hymn with singing and dancing, and Thespis, credited with inventing tragedy and being the first actor. He performed in Athens in 534 BCE, over 2,500 years ago.

To look back to ancient Greece, where theatre was more than just entertainment as it is today - though that certainly was important - it was a way of life. Imagine the towering amphitheatres, open to the elements, with audiences sitting in their thousands in semi-circular stone seating. Plays were performed as part of exciting festivals and choral competitions honouring Dionysus, the god of wine, fertility, and theatre; it was a more significant event than going to the theatre on a casual Saturday night in the present day, theatre for the Greeks was a religious, communal, all-day event to honour their god. The Theatre of Dionysus in Athens could seat up to 17,000 people, all cheering, jeering, and weeping openly. This is a far cry from theatrical performances today, offering a more intimate, indoor space or an elaborate proscenium where audiences sit in

darkened rooms, focused entirely on the performance; today, we go to passively watch and appreciate the art form of theatre, but in ancient Greece theatre was a communal experience.

These differences are not all that might confuse modern audiences. Ancient Greek performers were exclusively men, even in female roles, and they always wore masks. These masks would have exaggerated features to express emotion and allow the audience to differentiate between characters especially for those in the furthest seating. This does not exist today as the different setting allows audiences to more easily recognise nuanced facial expressions. Alongside the main characters, there was always a chorus, who didn't take part in the action instead serving as a character's conscience, or a commentator on the events of the play. The chorus is rarely seen in modern theatre today as the role of individual actors and dialogue has become much more central to storytelling.

Greek theatre was split into tragedies, about Ancient Greek myths and legends, often having a sad ending, and comedies. These comedies parodied real life people and contemporary political situations, playwright Aristophanes in his satirical plays

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A SHORT ANALYSIS OF TELEMACHUS AND PENELOPE'S RELATIONSHIP IN THE ODYSSEY

The story you have before you is one of the two Great Epics of Homer, each Twenty Four books, and acts both chronologically and thematically as a sequel to the Iliad; we follow Odysseus' return from the successful destruction of Troy, already absent from his homeland of Ithaca for a decade of gruelling warfare. There he is King, husband of Penelope, father of Telemachus. But his time away has introduced jealousy and ambition amongst the younger Ithacan men, many of whom believe Odysseus dead or left behind in Turkey.

One hundred and eight suitors fight for Penelope's hand, the boldest of them being Antinous, who treat the palace as their personal banqueting hall. Due to the perennial custom of 'xenia' or 'hospitality' in Ancient Greek culture, both characters are forced to bear the weight of the suitors without the Kingly authority that could expel them. The suitors drain their wine, slaughter their livestock, and behave excessively as a result. Penelope's response is delaying tactics - she states that she would remarry after she finishes weaving a burial shroud for Odysseus' father, but secretly unthreads what she has done each night for three years.

Telemachus, for his part, has inherited much of Odysseus' guile, and he vows to rid the world of these vultures, who too desire him to join his father in death. We see in Book One Telemachus eager to prove himself as the man of the house in his father's absence, and importantly, worthy of Kingship. Throughout these moments from *The Odyssey* we see Telemachus'

frequently mocked politicians in Athens for its deteriorating state. Plays were, and still are, an effective way to comment on politics. Greek tragedy in particular was deeply structured, with prologues, parodos, episodes and exodus, neatly arranging the storyline. Ancient Greek theatre relied on innovative techniques such as the wheel platform which displays scenes that occurred off-stage, and a crane, often used when gods intervene to resolve mortal problems at the climax of a play, where an actor would be hoisted above the stage. Modern theatre, however, often has no such restrictions. With modern methods and technology, creating an atmospheric performance with lighting and equipment, modern theatrical performances can revive ancient Greek plays. The modernisation of ancient Greek plays and other texts such as the *The Odyssey* brings a different and unique perspective to these ancient characters.

Whether staged in an open-air amphitheatre with expressive masks and a chorus, or brought to life in modern innovation, these great ancient Greek stories can endure. This performance of *The Odyssey* is the chance to blend these traditions together and as Emily Smith said, "the stories have gained new dimensions and relevance."

Charles Richmond
Upper Sixth Form

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frustration for inaction butts against Penelope's wish to mourn a most idyllic relationship, leading to what we now refer to as The Telemachy – four books dedicated to Telemachus and the search for information about his father.



These stories, and particularly the relationship between Telemachus and Penelope, serve as an illustration of themes very much at the core of Ancient Greek Theatre. Stories of honour, revenge, gods, and epic journeys often being used to explore or frame the lives of ordinary people. In this relationship in particular, the epic is used to explore how we mourn and what families owe each other in difficult times.

Tom Benett
Lower Sixth Form

THANK YOU...

Every production requires a multitude of support from across the school, and tonight's show is no different. The company would like to thank: the Headmaster and Governors for supporting the programme, subject teachers for their patience and guidance in helping the cast balance this process alongside their studies, J Hammond for his guidance and advice throughout the process, S Leonidas for her constant administrative support, G Maudsley for the design of the programme, H Ghumra and the marketing team for their continued support with advertising the production, the Catering team for providing dinners during the show week and for providing our pre-show refreshments, C Pennicott for managing the box office, J Hickey-Birkett for ensuring the company always had rehearsal space, the cleaning team for cleaning up after long rehearsals and finally, the parents of the cast for their constant support and patience, helping with the learning of lines, and to commit to such a rewarding process.





WHITGIFT

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