

**THE
ACTING
COMPANY**

Kent Gash
Artistic Director

Erik Schroeder
Managing Director

Devin Brain
Producing Director

Odyssey

Adapted and directed by *Lisa Peterson*
Based on Homer's *The Odyssey* and translated
by *Emily Wilson*



Artistic Director's Note

By Kent Gash



On behalf of The Acting Company and Marin Theatre Company, I want to welcome you to Lisa Peterson's adaptation of **Odyssey**. The Acting Company has a deep commitment to timeless storytelling that illuminates the human condition. Since I became Artistic Director in 2021, we have been reaffirming our commitment to this mission with a bilingual English-Spanish production of **Romeo and Juliet** directed by Leah C. Gardiner and a newly commissioned adaptation of **The Three Musketeers** by Kirsten Childs that celebrated Alexander Dumas' Blackness.

Our company's deep commitment to celebrating the most exciting and dynamic artists currently working in our country is fully manifest in our commissioning Lisa Peterson to create a new, all-female adaptation of Homer's epic poem. Lisa is a world-class playwright and director, and her adaptation centers on the storytelling impulse and the role it plays in human survival. As we all emerge from the shadows and struggles of the pandemic only to find ourselves in these increasingly turbulent times, there is an urgent need for the connection that storytelling can provide. In a darkened theatre, a shared experience has the power to change us as it reminds us of our common humanity.

Lisa Peterson's unique and surprising adaptation and her brilliant direction of our company of Middle Eastern, North African, and Eastern European actors is an ode to our collective need for home, forgiveness, and grace. It is vital and essential storytelling born out of a special collaborative impulse.

So, on behalf of The Acting Company, we welcome you to **Odyssey**! May it help show you the way home.

Kent Gash is the Founding Director of The New Studio at New York University and the Artistic Director of The Acting Company.

The Acting Company



SINCE 1972

The Acting Company develops actors by touring professional theater across America.

Founded in 1972 by John Houseman and Margot Harley with the first graduating class of the Drama Division of The Juilliard School, The Company has launched the careers of some 400 actors, including Kevin Kline, Patti LuPone, Mary Lou Rosato, Keith David, Rainn Wilson, Lorraine Toussaint, Frances Conroy, Harriet Harris, Lisa Banes, Jeffrey Wright, Hamish Linklater, Jesse L. Martin, Roslyn Ruff, Jimonn Cole, Kelley Curran, among many others, while bringing sophisticated theater to hundreds of communities from coast to coast.



Photo by Kevin Berne

Among many accolades, The Acting Company won the 2003 Tony Award for Excellence in the Theater, and recently won the 2019 Audelco Award for Best Play for its production of Nambi E. Kelley's **Native Son** directed by Seret Scott.

The Acting Company has been seen by over 4 million people in 48 States, 10 foreign countries, on and Off-Broadway, and at leading resident theaters including the Guthrie, the Kennedy Center and New York City Center.

New works commissioned by The Acting Company include plays by William Finn, Marcus Gardley, Rebecca Gilman, John Guare, Beth Henley, Tony Kushner, Lynn Nottage, Meg Miroshnik, Ntozake Shange, Maria Irene Fornés, Spalding Gray, Marsha Norman, and Charles Smith.



Photo by Kevin Berne

What is a Classic?



Photo by Kevin Berne

A "classic" is an established story that has endured through time and is remembered, referenced, and adapted by people from diverse times, places and cultures.

Although a "classic" story is often thought of as the same as an "old" story, The Acting Company produces plays that are "in dialogue with the world as it exists right now," according to Artistic Director Kent Gash. In an Acting Company production, classic texts are often adapted to mirror the world of today. The Acting Company adapts classics that necessitate a precision of language and physicality and require actors who can bring to life every nuance of the meaning of classical verse while creating specific characters relevant to our current human experience.

LEGACY OF ADAPTATION:

While we know **The Odyssey** as a poem, it was likely a poem that was as much performed as read, and so one of the earliest forms of theatrical expression in the Western Canon. This story has been the a pillar of the Western artistic canon since its creation and it has inspired paintings, statues, plays, novels, and films. Each version makes decisions about what aspects of this epic tale speaks most to those artists and their moment in time. Some of them center on the journey and some on the homecoming, some focus on Odysseus as a soldier and some on him as a trickser, and so each sheds new lights on the power and depth of the original poem.

In recent years Marcus Gardley interpreted it for the stage in his play **Black Odyssey**, Margaret Atwood has looked at it from the point of view of Penelope in her **Penelopiad**, and Madeline Miller reexplored this tale from the point of view of Circe in her novel **Circe**. In theatrical and film adaptations Odysseus has been played by Armand Assante, Sean Bean, Joseph Mawle, and even Wishbone.



What is the *Odyssey*

The Odyssey is a long poem in ancient Greek composed almost three thousand years ago between the late 8th to late 7th centuries BCE. **The Odyssey** is over twelve thousand lines long and divided into 24 books. It is often described as an “epic poem” because it is grand in both scale and story. First written down in the late 6th century BCE, it was first printed in 1488 and in hundreds of editions since then.

The Odyssey was first published in English translation in 1615 by the poet George Chapman. Dozens of writers since have created their own versions, however Emily Wilson is the first woman to publish a translation of **the Odyssey** into English. Despite the fact that the poem was written both by and for men and is told through a male perspective, author Samuel Butler in the nineteenth argued that the *Odyssey* “must have been written by a woman, because it has so many interesting and sympathetically portrayed female characters.” Women have engaged significantly with **the Odyssey** in the 21st century, including through translations like Dr. Wilson’s, and also through adaptations like Madeline Miller’s 2018 novel *Circe* which is currently being adapted as a TV series by HBO.

The Odyssey tells the story of the titular character Odysseus’ ten-year journey home after the Trojan War, the journeys of his son, Telemachus, as he searches for his father, and of Odysseus’ wife, Penelope as she waits for both her husband and son to return home. The story contains multiple nested narratives – stories within stories – as Odysseus recounts his adventures to the people he meets.

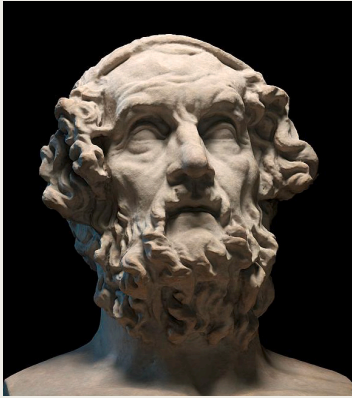
At the opening of **the Odyssey**, Odysseus is held captive by the nymph Calypso on her island. He has been there for seven years, and despite Calypso’s love and promises of immortality, Odysseus longs to return home to his family. In his absence, over a hundred suitors have moved into his home on the island of Ithaca and are courting his wife, Penelope. They try to convince her that Odysseus is never coming back and that she should marry one of them instead. Odysseus’ son, Telemachus, leaves in search of his father.

Calypso reluctantly releases Odysseus on the god Zeus’s orders. Odysseus leaves her island on a raft and heads for home, but is quickly shipwrecked again on the island of the Phaeacians. He tells them about his adventures: before landing on Calypso’s island, Odysseus and his men were waylaid on their journey by ill winds, sacred cattle, lotus-eaters, man-eating Cyclops, a witch named Circe who turns men into animals, Sirens, and the monsters Scylla and Charybdis.

After hearing Odysseus’ stories, the Phaeacians give him supplies to finish his journey to Ithaca. Once he arrives home, Odysseus disguises himself as a beggar to protect himself from the suitors. He reveals his identity to Telemachus, who has returned from searching for him, and later to his father, Laertes. At the urging of the goddess Athena, Penelope tells the suitors that she will marry whichever one of them can string Odysseus’ bow and shoot an arrow through twelve ax heads. After they all fail, the disguised Odysseus wins the contest, reveals his identity, and kills the suitors with his son’s help. Telemachus also kills the maids who slept with the suitors. Odysseus and Penelope reunite, the gods create peace, and the story ends.



Creators



WHO WAS HOMER?

The Odyssey, along with another epic poem called the Iliad, are both attributed to a poet named Homer, however scholars disagree on whether such a man ever existed. Some stories say that he was a blind bard from Anatolia in modern Turkey or from the Greek island of Chios but no definitive evidence exists either way. When Homer is referred to in ancient sources, it is as a poetes, or “poet”, a word that contains the meaning of “maker” implying that he had a role in the creation of the poem in addition to its performance. Aoidoi or rhapsoidos – “singers” or “song stitchers” – were artists who performed but did not create.

The story of **the Odyssey** was likely passed down through oral tradition, where stories are spoken and remembered, for hundreds of years before it was ever written down. It may have been composed in kind of an inter-generational game of telephone where each performer adapted the text as it was performed. It is too long for one person to tell in a single sitting and would be difficult for anyone to memorize without the help of writing. If there was an author of **the Odyssey**, he may have been illiterate and worked with scribes to write the story, or written it himself.

WHO IS EMILY WILSON?

Dr. Emily Wilson is a professor at the University of Pennsylvania and the first woman to publish a translation of **the Odyssey** in English. Her first encounter with Homer was when she played Athena in a student production of **the Odyssey** when she was eight years old. Dr. Wilson attended Oxford and Yale and is a Fellow of the American Academy in Rome, a MacArthur Fellow, and a Guggenheim Fellow. Her translation of Homer’s **Iliad** will be published in 2023.



WHO IS LISA PETERSON?

Lisa Peterson is a director and playwright based in New York. Recent NY credits include **An Iliad**, written with Denis O’Hare (NYTW- 2012 Obie Award, Lortel Award, Drama Desk nominations); **Shipwrecked** by Donald Margulies and **Motherhood Outloud** by 15 writers (Primary Stages); **The Trestle at Pope Lick Creek** by Naomi Wallace, **Slavs! (Thinking About the Longstanding Problems of Virtue and Happiness)** by Tony Kushner, **Traps** by Caryl Churchill, **The Waves** adapted from Virginia Woolf by Peterson and David Bucknam (Drama Desk nominations) and **Light Shining in Buckinghamshire** by Caryl Churchill (Obie Award for Directing), all at New York Theatre Workshop; **The Fourth Sister** by Janusz Glowacki and **The Batting Cage** by Joan Ackerman (Vineyard Theatre); **The Square** by 16 writers, and **Tongue of a Bird** (The Public); **Collected Stories** by Donald Margulies (MTC); **Birdy** adapted from the William Wharton novel by Naomi Wallace (Women’s Project); **The Chemistry of Change** by Marlane Meyer (Playwrights Horizons/WPP); **The Model Apartment** by Donald Margulies (Primary Stages); and **Sueno** by Jose Rivera (MCC), among many others.

The Ensemble: *Meet the Actors*

LAYLA KHOSHNOUDI: ANOUD



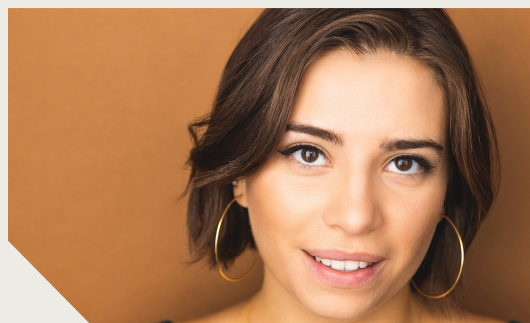
ZAMO MLENGANA: ZEE



ANYA WHELAN-SMITH: HANA



SOPHIE ZMORROD: BEA



One Actor | Many Roles

Our production of **Odyssey** features over hundreds of characters including gods and monsters. Some of them are protagonists with elaborate story arcs and some are servants or soldiers with almost no lines. But hero, villain, or supporting all of them are vividly rendered by our ensemble. Every actor play multiple roles over the course of the play, but all through the lens of their central role.



Setting



OF THE POEM - TROJAN WAR

Odysseus starts his journey home after helping the Greeks win a war against the Trojans. This war is known as the Trojan War and starts when Helen, the wife of a Greek king named Menelaus, leaves with a Trojan prince named Paris. Helen is the most beautiful woman in the world, and the goddess Aphrodite promised her to Paris after he declared Aphrodite the winner of a contest. Stories differ on whether Helen left voluntarily or was kidnapped, but either way, her husband vows to get her back.

He does not go alone. When Helen was unmarried, her father made all of her suitors swear an oath that they would protect her. Helen was so beautiful and had so many suitors – playwright Christopher Marlowe describes her as having a “face that launched a thousand ships” – that when she leaves her husband, hundreds of hopefuls are oath-bound to return her to him. These men and their soldiers travel by boat to the walled city of Troy and lay siege to it.

One of these ex-suitors is Odysseus. He spends ten years fighting alongside thousands of other Greek men to destroy Troy and rescue Helen. Many men are killed on both sides, but the Greeks fail to breach the Trojan walls. Finally, Odysseus comes up with an idea: the Greeks will pretend that they are giving up the war and going home. They will leave behind an enormous wooden horse as a tribute that will have Greek soldiers secretly hidden inside it. After the Trojans bring the wooden horse inside their walls, Greek soldiers will leap out, open the gates, and destroy the city. Amazingly, this plan works. Troy is sacked, Helen is returned to her husband, and the Greeks board their ships to return home. Odysseus looks forward to a swift journey after ten long years of war, little knowing that it will take him ten more years to finally arrive.

Odyssey: An Epic Tale of Soldiers and Sailors

O's Household

Odysseus Introduced in the play as “a soldier” Described in the introduction to Emily Wilson’s translation as “a migrant, a pirate, a carpenter, a king, an athlete, a beggar, a husband, a lover, a father, a son, a fighter, a liar, a leader, and a thief.”

Penelope Odysseus’ wife. She waits for ten years for her husband to return from war while fending off suitors.

Telemachus Odysseus’ son. He was a newborn when Odysseus left and is around twenty years old when he returns. He sets out to find news of his father and helps his father kill his mother’s suitors.

Laertes Odysseus’ father. He does not immediately recognize his son when he returns home.

Suitors Greek soldiers and nobles wooing Penelope in Odysseus’ absence.

Maids Workers who do the labor of running Odysseus’ home.



Others

Menelaus The king of Sparta and Helen of Troy’s husband. He welcomes Telemachus and Athena when they are looking for Odysseus and tells them that Odysseus is with Calypso.

Helen of Troy The queen of Sparta and Menelaus’ wife. Her departure with Paris to Troy starts the Trojan war.

Nestor The king of Pylos. He welcomes Telemachus and Athena when they are looking for Odysseus.

Agamemnon Menelaus’ brother, killed by his wife and her lover when he returned home after the war.

Dido The queen of Carthage. She falls in love with the Trojan Aeneas and kills herself when he leaves her.

The Underworld

Tiresias (underworld) A blind prophet who advises Odysseus on his journey home.

Ajax (underworld) A Greek hero. In the Iliad, he loses a competition for Achilles’ armor to Odysseus and kills himself with grief.

Achilles (underworld) A Trojan hero. He kills the Greek prince Hector and is himself killed by Paris.

Orion (underworld) A legendary hunter who continues hunting in the afterlife.

Tantalus (underworld) A legendary king, punished in the underworld by standing in a pool of water with fruit trees above him. When he tries to drink or eat, the water recedes and the trees bend away. We get the word “tantalize” meaning “to tease by keeping out of reach” from him.

Sisyphus (underworld) A legendary king, forced in the underworld to roll a boulder up a hill that rolls down every time he almost reaches the top.

Heracles (underworld) A legendary hero who performed feats of strength including killing monsters and capturing wild beasts.

Tyro (underworld) A legendary princess and Sisyphus’ wife. Fearing a prophecy that her children would kill her father, she kills her children.

Antiope (underworld) A legendary Amazon princess and mother of twins who help build the city of Thebes.

Megara (underworld) A legendary princess and the wife of Hercules. She and her children are killed by her husband in a fit of madness.

Leda (underworld) A legendary princess and the mother of Helen of Troy.

Odyssey: *The Divine*

The Greek Pantheon was large and filled with fractious human-like beings that held sway over areas of the world. There was a god of the oceans (Poseidon), a god of the underworld (Hades), and god of the sun (Apollo) as well as many others. They often interfered in mortal life and took sides in conflicts, including the Trojan War.

Gods

Athena The goddess of wisdom, daughter of Zeus, and the divine patron of Odysseus.

Zeus The king of the gods. His daughter Athena persuades him to let Odysseus return home.

Poseidon A god of seas and storms, Zeus' brother. He is angry at Odysseus for blinding his Cyclops son and makes his journey home more difficult.

Hermes A god of messengers and travelers, Zeus' son. He tells Calypso to allow Odysseus to continue his journey and leads the spirits of the suitors to the Underworld.

Hades A god of the dead, Zeus' brother. He rules over the Underworld where Odysseus journeys to find Tiresias.

Apollo A god of music, poetry, and the sun, Zeus' son. Odysseus prays to him for aid during the killing of the suitors.

In Between

Atlas A old god who holds up the sky and is the father of Calypso.

Calypso A nymph who rescues Odysseus after a shipwreck and keeps him on her island for seven years.

Zephyr The god of the West wind.

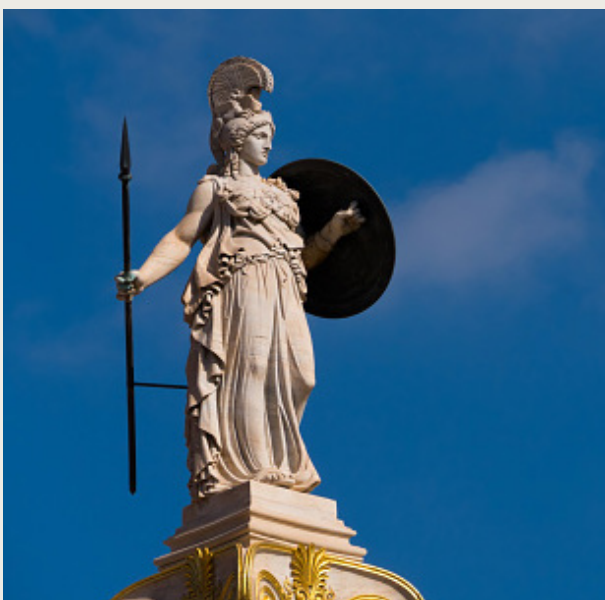
Aeolus The king of the winds. He gives Odysseus winds to help him return home.

Circe A witch who can turn men into animals and keeps Odysseus on her island for a year.

Sirens Half human creatures who lure sailors to shipwreck on the rocks of their island.

Scylla A legendary man-eating monster Odysseus must pass to get home.

Charybdis A legendary sea monster or whirlpool that Odysseus must pass to get home.



Location

POEM

Most locations in **the Odyssey** – the islands of the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas – would have been familiar to Greek audiences, however their inhabitants – giants and monsters – would have been strange.

The Odyssey mixes together locations that are easily identifiable by modern audiences, like Egypt, with fantastical places like the Island of the Sirens and the Land of the Dead. There is some correspondence between the geography of the poem and the modern mapped world but it is imprecise. For example, the poem describes the location of Ethiopia as “between the sunset and the dawn” which is difficult to follow.

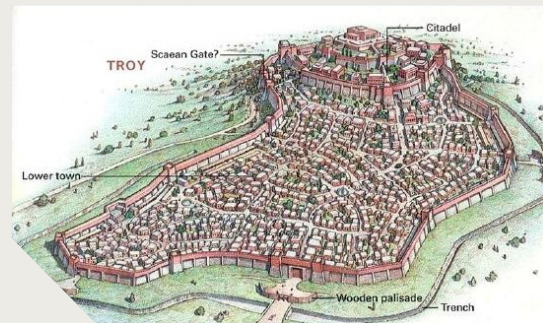


TROY – WHERE ODYSSEUS IS COMING FROM

Some scholars argue that the city of Troy never existed and is merely a poetic invention. For those who think the city did exist, the ancient city of Hissarlik in modern Turkey is most often cited as its location. Archaeologists have discovered that at least nine cities were built on the site. Many of them show evidence of violent destruction by natural causes like earthquakes and by war.

In the 19th century, a German archaeologist named Heinrich Schliemann excavated Hissarlik and announced that he had located the “historic” Troy. He found a number of precious artifacts and named them after characters from Homer including Priam, Agamemnon, and Helen. Schliemann smuggled these treasures out of the country and the Turkish government realized what he had done only after they saw pictures in a newspaper of Schliemann’s wife

wearing Helen of Troy’s crown (allegedly). Schliemann was an amateur and his disorganized excavations destroyed a significant amount of evidence. The artifacts he declared were Helen’s are in fact from an earlier city than the “historic” Troy of Homer and much of the archaeological evidence for that city was destroyed when Schliemann dug through it.



ITHACA – WHERE ODYSSEUS IS GOING TO

While the existence and location of the Homeric city of Troy is still fiercely debated, Odysseus’ home island of Ithaca is a much simpler case. The modern island of Ithaca to the west of the Greek mainland is traditionally associated with the mythic island of Homer. The country of Greece as a unified country did not exist in Homer’s time but was instead ruled by a number of smaller tribal leaders, such as the Spartans and the Athenians.

When Odysseus first arrives on his home shore, Athena covers the land in mist so that he does not recognize it. The poem tells of his journey to arrive home, but when he finally does, it is a frightening and foreign place, always receding before him as he reaches toward it.



Places: *Stops on the Journey*

Troy The legendary city besieged and ultimately destroyed by the Greeks.

Carthage Located in modern Tunisia, the capital city of an ancient civilization. Home of the legendary Queen Dido and of the character Anoud.

Ithaca Odysseus' island home.

Pylos The island home of the Greek king Nestor.

Sparta The home of King Menelaus and Helen.

Thrinacia The island where the sun god keeps his cattle. Odysseus' men eat the cattle and are punished.

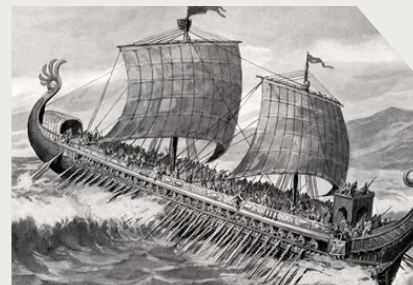
Greek Underworld Where the ghosts of those who have died live. They can be spoken to but not touched.

Modes of Travel

GREEK BOATS VS. MODERN REFUGEE BOATS

Odysseus travels back home to Ithaca in a wooden ship with a long, thin hull rowed by oarsmen on each side. This type of boat is known as a "galley" and Odysseus addresses the men who row it as "friends", "companions", and "servants." These different forms of address – from familiar to hierarchical – reflect the varied roles that these men play for Odysseus. They are both sympathizers and servers, keeping Odysseus company on his journey while doing the physical labor to make it possible. Never once in all his desperate desire to return home does Odysseus ever actually touch an oar. He is willing to face many dangers – monsters, whirlpools, and witches – but not rowing. Ultimately it is Odysseus' men, his "friends", who suffer the most on his journey home. One by one they are bewitched, eaten, and drowned. Not one of them survives and when Odysseus finally arrives home, he arrives alone.

For modern refugees, one of the main dangers of their journey is arriving with too many people. Refugees traveling by water to Lesbos are often crammed into dinghies, small inflatable rubber boats powered by outboard motors, or onto rafts of plywood and pontoons held together with duct tape. Forty or even sixty people are placed on board boats meant to hold half that number, greatly increasing the chance that they will capsize or sink. In the first three months of 2023, over 400 refugees drowned while trying to cross the Mediterranean to Europe. Odysseus' men may not have had his help at the oars, but he is at least onboard ship to help navigate. Today's smugglers push refugee boats into the sea and remain behind themselves, abandoning migrants to find their way in unfamiliar waters. As Zee says, "I hated the captain, until I realized he wasn't the captain. There was no captain. We were on our own, completely."



Play

HISTORY ON THE ISLAND OF LESBOS AND THE EU REFUGEE CENTER

Lesbos is a Greek Island in the Aegean sea. In Homer’s tales, it is ruled by Priam, the King of Troy. In Roman times, the poet Sappho lived there. The rediscovery of Sappho’s erotic poems in the 19th century led to the modern meaning of “lesbian”; previously it simply meant “person from Lesbos.” Today, Lesbos has a permanent population of around 85,000 people and an ever-growing population of transient migrants who pass through the island on their way to Europe. In October of 2015 at the height of the refugee crisis, 10,000 people landed by boat on Lesbos in one day. 500,000 migrants arrived in the course of the year.

International and local aid organizations have set up two centers for processing refugees on the island of Lesbos: Mavrovouni and Megala Therma. Migrants are held in these centers until the Greek government decides what to do with them and conditions in both sites are poor. According to a recent report from Doctors Without Borders, “Many people there have been exposed to violence and have alleged abductions by unidentified masked people, pushbacks that forced them out of Greece, arbitrary detentions, and deprivation of food and shelter.” There are also reports of migrants who attempt to reach shore being towed back out to sea by the Coast Guard. In May of 2023, Greek authorities stopped providing food to migrants and refugees in the centers who were not “officially recognized.”



Additional Context

HOSPITALITY, FAILURES OF

The epigraph of Lisa Peterson’s *Odyssey* is a line from Emily Wilson’s translation: “One must honor guests and foreigners and strangers, even those much poorer than oneself. Zeus watches over beggars and guests and strangers.” The Greek concept of “xenia” meaning both “hospitality” and “friendship” is deeply important in the *Odyssey*. In Lisa Peterson’s adaptation, Anoud refers to it as “the Mantra of the Generous.”

In the time of Homer, elite men who entered each other’s homes as strangers expected to be treated well. “Xenia” required that hosts feed and house their guests, listen to their stories, and provide them with supplies to continue on their journeys, as the Phaeacians do for Odysseus. This practice of hospitality created lasting bonds of fellowship and turned strangers into friends. In fact, the Greek word “xenos” means both “stranger” and “friend” and is the root of the modern word “xenophobia” or “fear of strangers”. In the *Odyssey*, being a bad guest – like the suitors who harass Penelope or Paris who ran away his his host’s wife – is a sure sign that violence will follow.

Setting

OF THE PLAY - REFUGEE CRISIS & ARAB SPRING

"Tunis....is that...Arab Spring? Where it started?" –BEA

The most recent refugee crisis in Europe began in 2015. However, it has roots in earlier events including a series of pro-democracy uprisings in Tunisia in 2010 that spread to other countries in the Middle East including Egypt, Syria, Libya, Bahrain, and Yemen. Known as the Arab Spring, these uprisings resulted in increased violence and migration in the years that followed. An estimated two million people became refugees as a direct result of the Arab Spring. The escalation of civil war and violence in Africa and the Middle East led to a surge of refugees in 2015, particularly from Syria where there is an ongoing civil war, and migration levels continue to be high as violence continues and people search for opportunity and safety in Europe.

The route into Europe from many refugees' countries of origin is through the Greek Island of Lesbos where Lisa Peterson's *Odyssey* is set. Sixty percent of all asylum seekers in recent years who arrive in Greece on their way West have arrived on Lesbos. In 2015, 1.3 million migrants applied for asylum in Europe, more than double the previous year and the most since after the Second World War.

Conditions for migrants on their journeys are often horrific. Media coverage has brought more attention to the need for humanitarian support, however conditions are still dire and the crisis is ongoing. *Odyssey* is lucky to be rescued each time he is shipwrecked but modern refugees are always not as fortunate.



Bringing a Story to the *Stage*



One of the joys of the theater is that every production is new and different. Whether a play is new or old, each group of artists brings them to life in their own way.

For our production, director Lisa Peterson said this:

Odyssey is the story of a soldier, Odysseus, who has left his home to fight in the Trojan War and the **Odyssey** focuses on him trying to get back home. I think what the **Odyssey** has to talk about now is how we treat each other especially how we treat people who move through our homes. When I started working on this adaptation of the **Odyssey** especially reading Emily Wilson's translation, I was really struck by how much of the story is about hosting a stranger. Over and over again how it stresses that there are rules of generosity that either characters in the story follow or they do not follow the reason the **Odyssey** still moves us is, it's because of it's about that basic human experience of place when it gets broken the whole idea of home and what it means and how some of us have been lucky enough to have homes all of our lives and other people have not been so lucky as to have homes all their lives.

This is going to be a version of the story in a contemporary context and so don't expect it to be old-fashioned and do expect to open your ears and listen to this in a new way.

With that in mind she gathered a company of actors, designers, technicians, and artisans to build an **Odyssey** for this moment.

ARTISTIC TEAM (SOME OF THEM)

Scenic Design by **Tanya Orellano**

Lighting Design by **Russel Champa**

Sound Design by **Sinan Refik Zafar**

Costume Design by **Sarita Fellows**

Original Songs by **Masi Asare**

Voice and Speech Coaching by **Xavier Clark**

Stage Management by **Stephanie Weinzapfel**

Staff Director **Margaret Lee**

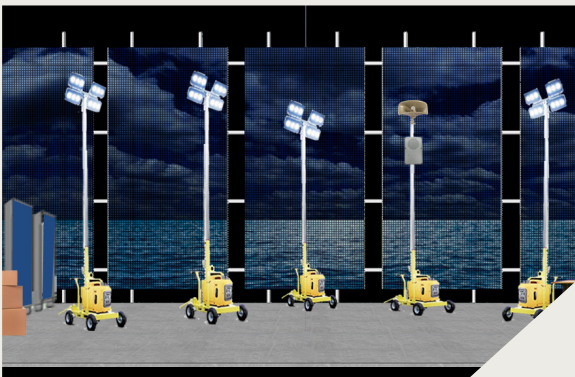
A VILLAGE

Over 100 people worked to create our production of **Odyssey**. They rehearsed for 5 weeks, but they started planning and designing months before rehearsal began.

Each of these artists lent not only their skill but their ideas to the production. Lead by the director, this production is a true collaboration, bringing together artists from a wide range of ages, backgrounds, and cultures to create something new.

Producing a play takes a village, especially when one is producing plays for tour. This story is challenging, and in order to reach our audience it must be both cherished and challenged. The artists on this page, and the actors listed earlier, were the ones doing that work.

The People *Behind* the Scenes



THE PLAYWRIGHT

A "wright" is a type of artisan who makes things that people can use. For example, a wheelwright makes wheels. A playwright makes plays and usually completes a draft of the script before rehearsals begin.

THE DIRECTOR

After reading the playwright's script, the director decides on an overall vision for the production and decides which designers to hire to support their ideas. The director meets with the creative team to assemble a unified look for the sets, costumes, lighting, and other elements. The director oversees the actors in rehearsal with the help of the stage manager.

THE ACTORS

The actors perform the play and draw on their own experiences and understanding of life to create believable characters. Actors usually audition for their parts after the play is written and the director is chosen. Actors must memorize their lines and attend many rehearsals before opening night.

THE STAGE MANAGERS

The stage managers facilitate communication across departments, organize rehearsals, and call technical cues during performances as well as maintain the artistic intentions of a production after opening. They are usually hired around the same time as the designers and actors.

DESIGNERS (SETS, PROPS, SOUND, LIGHTS, AND COSTUMES)

All theaters need an environment created on stage for the play to take place and the designers help create that world in collaboration with the director. The set can be a literal world, with many objects ("props") and lots of furniture or it can be a suggestion of reality with minimal actual components. Music and sound effects can make the theatrical experience more real or more fantastical. The lights add to the environment of the play and enhance the mood that the other designers have created. The costume designer and costume staff work within the vision of the director for each character. They choose colors and styles to help the audience better understand the characters and often do historical research to make the world of the play come to life. For The Acting Company touring productions, the set must be easy to assemble and disassemble and the sound and lighting design must be able to be recreated in each venue.

Your *Odyssey*

ACTIVITY

Once you have seen The Acting Company's **Odyssey**, you get a chance to Imagine your OWN **Odyssey**.

Our **Odyssey** is a world where contemporary Europe meets stories of Ancient Greece. It is a place where young women with only the clothes on their backs conjure oceans and monsters, where songs become storms, and tables become ships.

But what would your **Odyssey** look like? Sound like? Where is it set? Who are the actors? How do they fight?

THE PEOPLE

The key to any production is the cast, they are the heart and soul of your show. When you close your eyes, can you see what Odysseus looks like to you? How about Athena? Do they look like you?

Go to the front of the guide and look at the cast list. For each role find a picture online of an actor or historical figure that you would choose to play each role. With that you can create your **Odyssey** facebook.

THE SET

Now, you have a cast, but where are they? Homer's story takes place in the islands and oceans of Ancient Greece, but for your production these islands can look however you want it to look: Downtown NYC, Tokyo at night, or your block. Think about this play, about these characters, what do you think would help an audience see it and understand the story?

Find three images that represent the world of your **Odyssey**.

THE SOUND

What does your play sound like? Are there the drums and pipes of Homer's theater? Are there synths and guitars like The Acting Company's production? Music can be the heartbeat of a production, shedding light on your world.

Pick three songs from any artist that you think represent the sound of your **Odyssey**.

THE CLOTHES

You've already picked the actors, but what are they wearing? Are they casual or formal? Do they live today or a thousand years ago? Are they wielding a might bow or a machine gun?

Find four images of people in clothes that you think represent your production. Be sure to find one for the Odysseus and one for a Monster.

*Think when we talk of horses, that you see them
Printing their proud hoofs i' the receiving earth;
For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings*

- Henry V, Prologue

PARENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

Contains adult themes, mature language, stylized violence, and adult situations.

MORE RESOURCES AVAILABLE ONLINE

www.theactingcompany.org



Photo by Kevin Berne



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