



Anon(ymous)

an adaptation of Homer's *Odyssey*
by Naomi Iizuka
directed by Peter C. Brosius
A WORLD PREMIERE

MOST
ENJOYED BY
15+

Anon(ymous) is as classic as *The Odyssey*, on which it is based, and as contemporary as a headline. The feel of the piece is gritty, poetic, brutal and beautiful. It is terrifying and true. The action ricochets off one chaotic situation and slams into another, to the sound of a beatboxer and the drum songs of the world: taiko, tabla, and gamelon. It's a nightmare and it's a dream. The unflinching journey of a refugee carrying the momentos of war into the invisible America most of us never have to see.

This play contains violence.

• A SYNOPSIS OF THE STORY •

Anon is the name of our hero, who is not a hero, but rather a refugee of war. Shipwrecked while escaping from Southeast Asia, he is washed up on a shore where he is tempted to stay surrounded by luxury, but instead begins a long journey through the underbelly of America in search of a kind of home. For him, home means locating his mother and some sense of identity. It will mean finding his own story.

The parallels between Anon's journey in the present day world, and the ancient saga of Odysseus, are astonishing and frightening. History continues to repeat itself. As you read the next paragraph see how many ways it sounds eerily familiar.

More than two thousand years ago in ancient Greece, the world was torn apart by the Trojan War. It was fought for political reasons that must have seemed trivial in relation to the devastation it produced. Homer's epic poem, the *Odyssey*, relates the story of one war hero of Troy, Odysseus (sometimes called Ulysses), and his return to his home. Odysseus was known for his strategies rather than his strength, and his homecoming lasted ten years through

adventures, obstacles and temptations. He was shipwrecked and then cast upon alien shores time and time again. Each time he encountered a new temptation to become complacent and quit the journey to his destination. His passage introduced him to gods and ghosts, monsters and mortals, love and illusion. Yet he continued to move through it all, and eventually found his way home.

Many scholars have said that the *Odyssey* addresses human savagery and the question of what it means to live an anonymous life. Why cling to the suffering of mortal existence when in the end all will be forgotten? These are the central questions in our play, because they are - still - central questions in our world.

• RELATED RESOURCES •

O, Brother Where Art Thou, Touchstone Video, Released 2000, *The Coen brothers, Joel and Ethan lift the plot line of The Odyssey into 1930's Mississippi and follow three convicts on their journey which contains a Ulysses, a Cyclops, sirens, and many more parallels.*

Many of the actors in **Anon(ymous)** play two or more characters that mirror or double one another. The layers of contrast and similarity this adds are powerful. It seems that individuals are in the hands of fate and fate is a capricious master, tossing us randomly first in one direction and then another.

CHORUS OF REFUGEES: A collection of displaced people from all over the world who give voice to the paradise that is home and its destruction at the hands of war. These actors are also the sweatshop workers, a collection of shadows – homeless, hungry persons, and finally a savage flock of vengeful birds.

ANON: A Southeast Asian refugee of war who has been shipwrecked, separated from his mother and is lost and nearly invisible in America. Our story's Odysseus.

NEMASANI, or PENNY: Anon's mother, who is named for the goddess of memory, mother of the muses, works in a sweatshop sewing factory making a shroud for her lost son. She parallels *The Odyssey's* Penelope.

MR. YURI MACKUS: The abusive and licentious owner of the sewing factory who is pressuring Nemasani to marry him, although he can't say her name and calls her Penny. He is also **STRYGAL:** A truck driver transporting undocumented workers, whose truck blows up releasing the refugees – and their stories.

CALISTA: A clueless rich girl living in the lap of luxury who "loves" Anon. Parallels the seductive goddess Calypso in the *Odyssey*. She also plays a sewing lady, trapped in the sweatshop, and a NICE AMERICAN DAUGHTER.

SENATOR AND HELEN LAUIUS: Two very wealthy and well meaning Americans. The senator is both a war hero and the murderous butcher, MR. ZYCLO. Mrs. Lauius collects "global artifacts" and tends to believe in closure through yoga and meditation. She is conversely "collected" herself, when she becomes Mr. Zyclo's pet bird.

NAJA: a refugee from Southeast Asia who is also a goddess and helps ANON. Named for a Sanskrit earth spirit who protected Buddha.

ALI, RITA, NASREEN: A family who have an Indian restaurant. They loosely parallel the lotus eaters and the blind father resembles the blind soothsayer from the *Odyssey*. Father and daughter portray two sets of immigrants, the first successful owners of an Indian restaurant and the others **IGNACIO** and **BELEN**, Central American immigrants who are lost in the desert. Ignacio, the father, has died crossing into the country and is a ghost when we meet him.

PASCAL: A West African refugee, who becomes ANON's companion for a time, until he is murdered by MR. ZYCLO and becomes a ghost.

MR. ZYCLO: Parallel to the Cyclops who eats human flesh in *The Odyssey*. A monstrous, one-eyed butcher who entraps a beautiful bird and who intends to murder both PASCAL and ANON and make them into the sausage on which he gorges himself.

MORE RESOURCES CONT.

A website that contains easily digested overviews of *The Odyssey*:
www.mythweb.com/odyssey/index.html - 24 encapsulated pages with simple drawings.