

Carousel Theatre hits a Homer

The Odyssey

At the Waterfront Theatre until May 5

Tickets: 604-685-6217

Reviewed by Jo Ledingham

HOMER MIGHT BE GROANING in his grave at the shrieks of laughter coming from the Carousel Theatre audience of five-year-olds and older caused by his one-eyed monster Polyphemus. On the other hand, Homer's epic poem has survived almost 3,000 years. That ought to make him happy.

John Murrell's adaptation for children of Odysseus's trials and tribulations is light on gore (although the sounds of Scylla gobbling sailors is both horrendous and hilarious) and heavy on giggles. Thanks to set designer Al Frisk and lighting designer Darren Boquist, *The Odyssey* looks handsome: the broken hull of a sailing ship, its mast askew and hanging with shredded sails. Costume designer Barbara Clayden makes magic with regal Athena (Lisa Bunting) in shimmering garb, temptress Circe (Teryl Rothery) in an exotic Eastern-inspired gown, tricky Aeolus (Anthony F. Ingram) in kingly robes and various nymphs, sailors and piglets.

Murrell puts a light spin on the heroic tale and follows the story with remarkably few performers who are double, triple and even quadruple cast. It's hard to put anything past the kids, though, and when Polyphemus (burly Joshua Reynolds) re-emerges as one of Odysseus's sailors, the kids all laugh in recognition. Allan Zinyk, in various roles, keeps all of us in stitches with a salacious grin or a quizzical double take.

The hero—flawed as he is by pig-headedness and hubris—is, of course, Odysseus (handsome Tobias Slezak) followed closely by his son Telemachus (Adam Bergquist), but there's no doubt that the strings are always being pulled by Athena.

The public library has a good selection of beautifully illustrated "junior" versions of this and other Greek myths on the shelf if you want to acquaint your children with the story (or brush up your own Homer) before the show. Directed by Jack Paterson, this production is fun, action-packed and provides an entertaining introduction to the most enduring tale of derring-do in Western culture.



Homer's 3,000-year-old heroic tale *The Odyssey* gets a light, kid-friendly spin.

FRIDAY, APRIL 20, 2007 THE VANCOUVER COURIER 31