

Adventurous *Odyssey* driven by imagination

THEATRE

THE ODYSSEY

Adapted by John Murrell. Directed by Jack Paterson. A Carousel Theatre production. At the Waterfront Theatre until May 5

◆ This adaptation of *The Odyssey*, written by John Murrell and directed by Jack Paterson, is as wild as a video game and as goofy as a cartoon. Rather than treating Homer's epic poem reverently, these two take it for what it is: a roaring good story that contains big ideas.

The Odyssey is about the adventures of Odysseus, who left his kingdom of Ithaca to battle with Troy and didn't return for 20 years. Half of that time he was at war. Then he wandered lost in the Mediterranean as the sea god Poseidon tossed him from the jaws of one monster to the claws of the next.

Simplifying Homer's complex plot, Murrell focuses on Odysseus's fatal flaw: his pride. At the beginning of Murrell's telling, Odysseus complains to his protector, the goddess Athena, that she hasn't helped him much in his trials. She persuades him to recount his adversities in the hope that he will realize she aided him every step of the way. Theatrically, this framing device doesn't work terribly well. It's abstract and involves too much chat.

The adventures themselves are fantastic, however, largely because they are so imaginatively conceived. When Odysseus meets the fearsome Cyclops, one of his crew translates the monster's gibberish. The sailor explains that he knows the language because his mother's brother-in-law was a cyclops. In this production, when Odysseus encounters the winds of the four directions, they swoop about on fabulous little sparking roller wheels that costume designer Barbara Clayden has screwed onto the heels of their high-top sneakers. The show looks great, from Al Frisk's wrecked-ship set to Clayden's freewheeling costumes.

Director Jack Paterson has infused the evening with a tremendous sense of fun—largely by assembling a tremendous cast. Allan Zinyk is hilarious in a number of small roles, including a sailor and one of Penelope's suitors. The ensemble also features Anthony F. Ingram as a wonderfully sinister Aeolus; Joshua Reynolds as the scary and ridiculous Cyclops; Teryl Rothery as Circe, who turns men into pigs (how hard could that be?); and Tobias Slezak as the stalwart but easily duped hero.

Highest praise: my eight-year-old companion talked about this show all night and well into the next day.

> COLIN THOMAS

ARTS



Teryl Rothery's Circe turns sailors into swine while helping Carousel Theatre transform a dark Homeric epic into a freewheeling display of pure fun.