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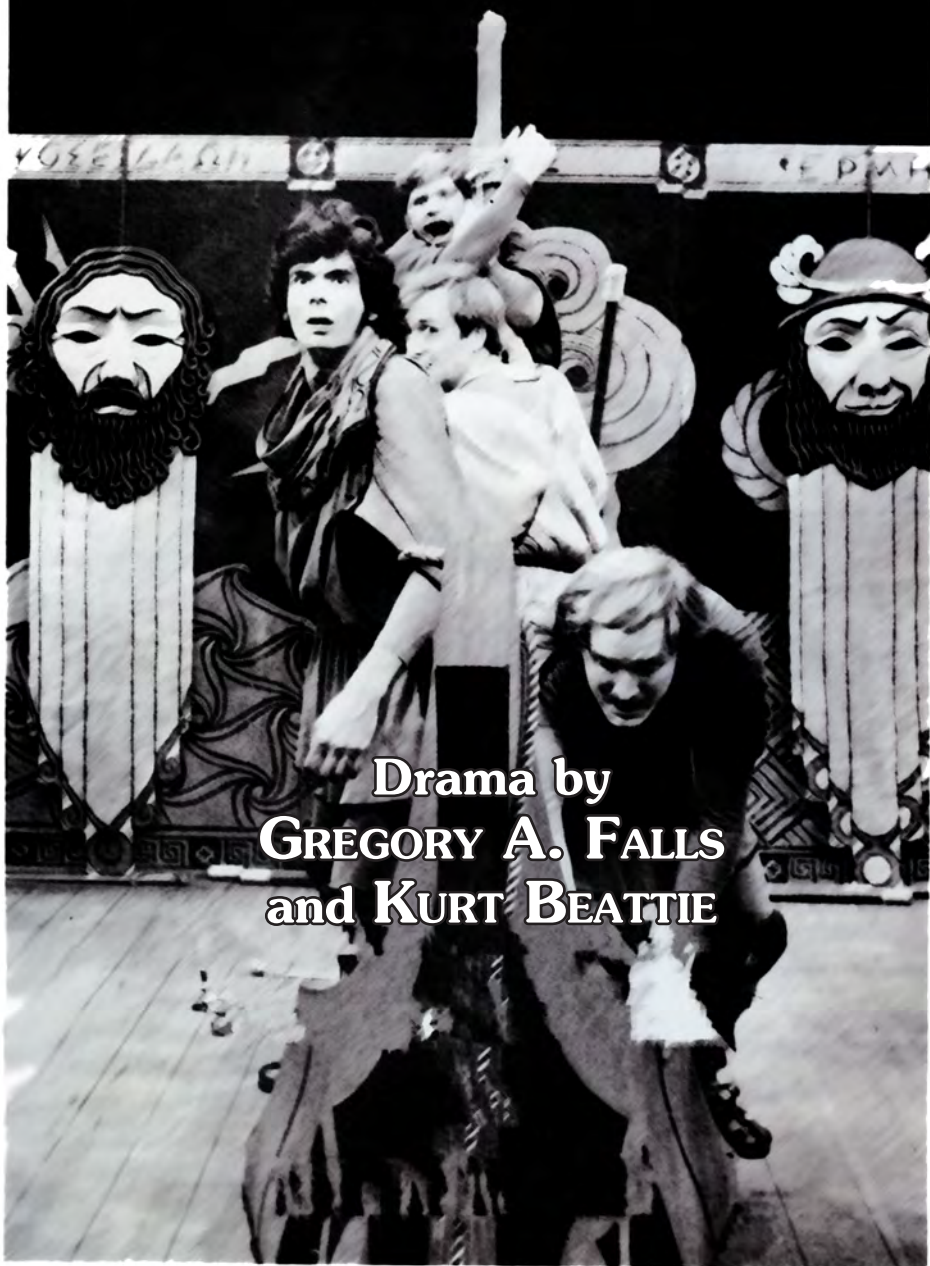
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*Dramatic Publishing*

# HOMER'S THE ODYSSEY



Drama by  
GREGORY A. FALLS  
and KURT BEATTIE

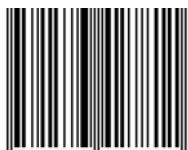
# THE ODYSSEY

**TYA/USA Outstanding Play Award Winner**

Produced at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and nationally applauded in professional productions, this is an action-filled adaptation of Homer's classic, entertaining to children and adults alike. Suitable for a versatile ensemble cast implementing masks, songs, mime and percussive instruments for theatrical effect.

***Drama. Adapted by Gregory A. Falls and Kurt Beattie. From Homer's The Odyssey. Cast: 6m., 2w., with doubling, or up to 36 (6m., 2w., 28 either gender).*** As the goddess Athena introduces the story of Odysseus' epic journey home from the Trojan War, we see his beautiful wife, Penelope, fending off impatient, would-be suitors. Athena, disguised as an old man, brings news of Odysseus' journey as the play's action segues to his adventure. Captain Odysseus, brave and determined as his sailors are cowardly, cleverly defeats the man-eating, one-eyed Cyclops, then rescues his men from the sorceress, Circe's, spell. Next, he braves the River Styx and resists the hypnotizing song of the twin Sirens, fainting from exhaustion. While Odysseus sleeps, his famished men embark upon a nearby shore to kill a cow for food. It is one of Apollo's golden cows, and, thus offended, the god implores Zeus to punish the men. Odysseus and his sailors are swept into a storm-tossed sea. Meanwhile, Penelope's suitors accept a challenge: he who strings Odysseus' bow and shoots an arrow through the twelve axes wins Penelope's hand. Only one man succeeds, none other than Odysseus himself, returned from his adventure and disguised. Odysseus and his son, Telemachus, are attacked by the suitors, whom they quickly defeat. Athena declares the end to all violence and the end of this *Odyssey*. *Simple set, suitable for touring. Code: 077*

ISBN-10 1-58342-781-3  
ISBN-13 978-1-58342-781-1



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The Odyssey  
(Falls and Beattie)



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Woodstock, IL 60098-330  
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HOMER'S  
**THE ODYSSEY**

A Dramatization by  
**GREGORY A. FALLS**  
and **KURT BEATTIE**

As Produced by  
**A CONTEMPORARY THEATRE,**  
Seattle, Washington



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(THE ODYSSEY)

ISBN: 978-1-58342-781-1

**HOMER'S  
THE ODYSSEY**

Produced by  
A Contemporary Theatre,  
Seattle, Washington

Staged by Gregory A. Falls

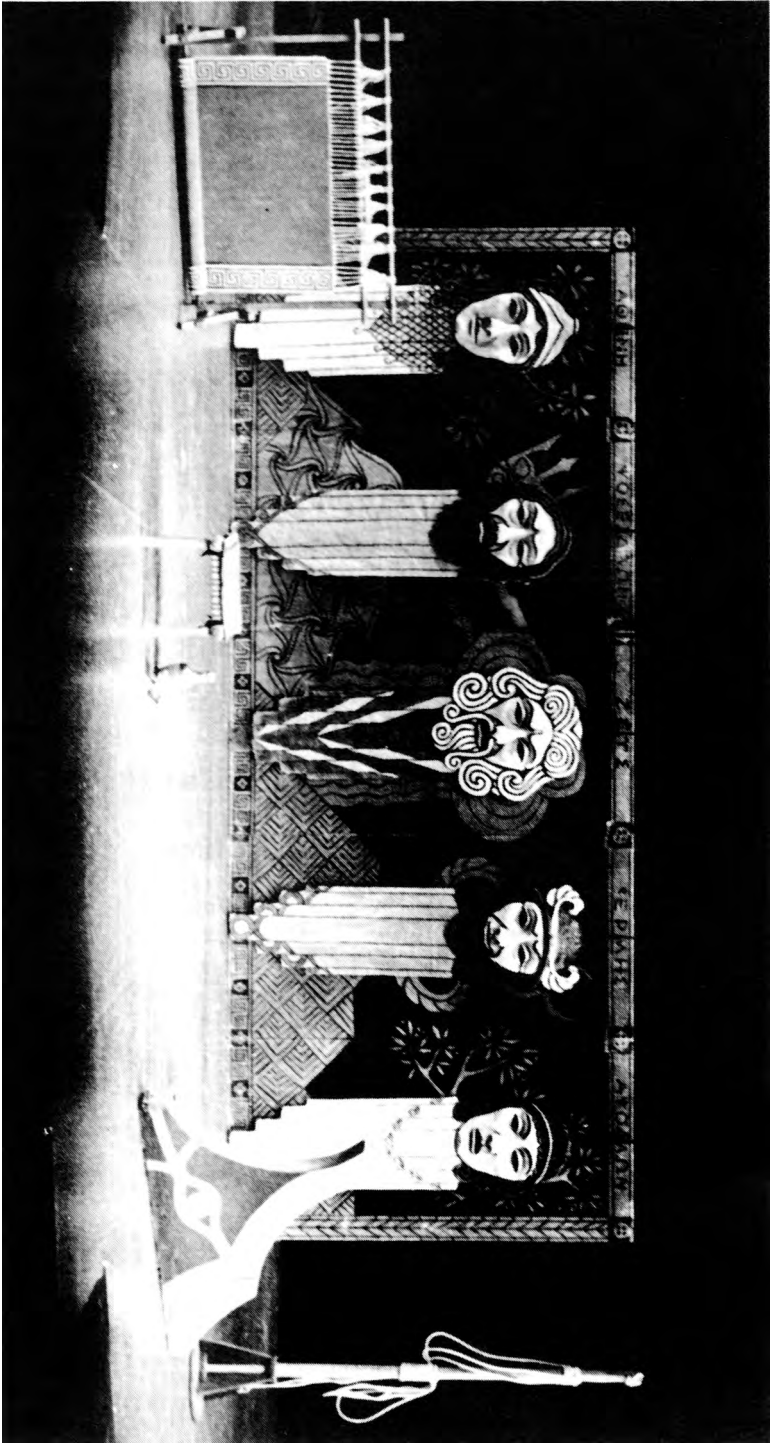
Music by Stan Keen

Settings and Masks by Shelley Henze Schermer

Costumes by Sally Richardson

Technical Director: Phillip Schermer

Stage Manager: Sandra Cruse



## NOTES FOR *THE ODYSSEY*

This play was written for eight actors on tour (*6 men and 2 women*) who doubled, played all the music and created sound effects and, with the stage manager, handled all the scenery, props, costumes, and lighting. Our target audience was the fourth grade, although we usually performed for the entire elementary school, and sometimes for K-12.

The production was designed to play in schools, art centers, any place that could give us stage space 20 feet by 20 feet. In gymnasias we performed with the children sitting on the floor.

The scenery consisted of a standing back-wall and four set pieces: a ship's prow, a free standing mast with ropes, a loom and a stool. The back wall gave off-stage space, behind which costumes could be changed and sounds created.

We used a number of masks ranging from half-masks for the suitors, to the large god masks (*3' in diameter*) which were carried either by the actor playing the god or another actor following behind.

To make the play continuous we mimed many props and places. The most frequently used locale is Odysseus' ship. The actors configurized a ship with the prow and mast and by using dowels for oars and tiller. The movement of the actors created the different storms which Odysseus encounters on his voyage home. The ship would "dissolve" by our laying down the mast and the oars and sliding the prow to the side.

Sound effects and musical instruments were almost exclusively percussive: drums, wood blocks, ratchets, chimes, gongs and a collection of metal pipes.



Note on the text: As we worked on the first production, we used many translations and experimented with several “styles” of dialogue: colloquial, poetic, heroic, and straight translation. The present dialogue evolved both from rehearsals and five months of performance. It always troubled us that it seemed to be an admixture of rhythms and styles, but it was the one that finally worked best in performance.

Gregory A. Falls

## PHOTO CREDITS

### *Cover Photograph*

Actors from back to forward (*upstage-down*):  
James W. Monitor, Richard Hawkins, John  
Hosking and Richard Lee.

### *Photograph 2, page 4:*

The setting of THE ODYSSEY.  
Set and masks by Shelley Henze Schermer

### *Photograph 3, page 8:*

Actors (*left to right*)  
Robert John Zenk, James W. Monitor,  
Richard Hawkins, David Colacci (*as Cyclops*),  
and Richard Lee.

### *Photograph 4, page 29:*

Actors (*left to right*):  
Brenda Hubbard, Marie Mathay.

All photographs of THE ODYSSEY in this  
playbook are by *Chris Bennion*.

**HOMER'S  
THE ODYSSEY**

as produced by A CONTEMPORARY THEATRE  
of Seattle,

was featured in the 1979 Children's Arts  
Series of the John F. Kennedy Center for the  
performing Arts in Washington, D.C.



The original production was created by The Young ACT Company for the Washington State Cultural Enrichment Program under the direction of Randall Rockhill. It toured to public schools throughout the state.

The original cast of Richard Hawkins, John Hoskings, Richard Lee, Marcie Mattox, Marie Mathay, James W. Monitor, Merritt Olsen, and Robert Zenk, together with David Colacci and Brenda Hubbard, who joined the company early in the tour, all contributed much to both the text and production.

The first tour was extended and played in several other western states under the auspices of the Western States Arts Foundation.

In 1979, the production was revived and performed at the John F. Kennedy Center, at the Imagination Festival in Seattle, and in Victoria, B. C. as part of their Year of the Child celebration. The Cheney Foundation funded many performances for non-public schools in Washington.

Gregory A. Falls

## **CAST AND DOUBLING PATTERN**

### **IN ORDER OF SPEAKING**

- Actress 1:** Pallas Athena, Old Man, Aeolous' Attendant, Circe, Siren, Apollo, narrator.
- Actor 1:** Ktessipos, Peremides, Teiresias.
- Actor 2:** Eurymachus, Perites, Poseidon, Aeolus attendant, Hylax, Dead Soul.
- Actor 3:** Leodes, Perites, Hermes, Old Man, Dead Soul.
- Actress 2:** Penelope, Old Man, Hermes' Attendant, Anticlea, Siren.
- Actor 4:** Antinous, Eurylochus, Dead Soul.
- Actor 5:** Telemachus, Cyclops, King Aeolus, Dead Soul, Zeus.
- Actor 6:** Odysseus, Old Man.

# HOMER'S THE ODYSSEY

## OPENING

*(A loud steady bass drum beat begins with a parade of the god masks. The HERMES, POSEIDON, ZEUS, APOLLO and ATHENA masks come down across the stage and exit behind it. The last, ATHENA, is introduced with music, one actor supports her mask behind her, then hangs it on the back wall. After each god appears in the play, his mask, too, is hung on the back wall, where they watch the proceedings.)*

### PALLAS ATHENA

I, Pallas Athena, speak of Odysseus  
Whom the whole world knows  
Because of his famous journey.

*(Each character enters as introduced\* by ATHENA forming a tableau.)*

I tell the story of resplendent Penelope,\* *(tinkle)*  
And of the many young suitors\* *(clacker)*  
Who demand that she marry.

I tell the story of wandering Odysseus\* *(3 wood bells)*  
Whom father Zeus calls the cleverest man alive.

Ten years of war against the mighty Trojans  
Nine years of wandering and captivity  
Even to the point of despair  
Until I, Pallas Athena, lead him home.  
Home to Ithaca, to his wife Penelope,  
to his son Telemachus\* *(wood bells)*  
to wreak vengeance on the spoilers. *(wood bells)*

*(Exit ODYSSEUS)*

Even now, I go there myself, disguised  
As an old poet, singing my songs and begging food,  
While Odysseus struggles in vain  
to sail back to his home.

*(Exit PALLAS ATHENA)*

*(Laughter as THE TABLEAU activates.)*

KTESSIPOS

More wine! I die of thirst. Would you like some wine, Eurymachus?

EURYMACHUS

You die of drink, not thirst, Ktessipos.

KTESSIPOS

I die of waiting for the lady to make up her mind which of us  
she will marry.

LEODES

Fair Penelope, we know this weaving is only a trick to put us off.

PENELOPE

Young princes, I tell you again, I cannot think of marriage until  
I have finished this winding sheet for my husband's father. He  
is very old and near death.

EURYMACHUS

You do not fool us anymore. We have discovered that while you  
weave cloth by day, you unravel it by night.

ALL

Yes!

ANTINOUS

It is only a way to avoid choosing one of us to be your husband.

PENELOPE

I see.

ALL

Choose!

*(The SUITORS all press around PENELOPE at the loom when OLD MAN enters, masked.)*

OLD MAN

Peace! To all travellers in this land.

PENELOPE

Telemachus, take this cup and give it to the stranger who now enters our door. Tell him not to be shy, for he may freely beg from these suitors.

TELEMACHUS

Old stranger.

OLD MAN

May Lord Zeus make you a happy man.

TELEMACHUS

You are welcome here. My mother makes you this gift: go round and beg at your pleasure.

ANTINOUS

Penelope, may I ask, why you let this old beggar in to pester us?

PENELOPE

Zeus forbid that we should not welcome a stranger to our house.

KTESSIPOS

He stinks so he will ruin my exquisite sense of taste!

ANTINOUS

Telemachus, don't you already have enough guests eating up your father's wealth?

TELEMACHUS

I appreciate your fatherly concern, Antinous, but he is welcome here. Give him something yourself.

OLD MAN

A small coin, sir, you look to be a king and can afford a generous gift. There was a time when I, too, was lucky, and rich, lived in a house, had many servants and went . . . .



**ANTINOUS**

What god has inflicted this talking plague upon us, to spoil our dinner. Stand off, you leech!

*(ANTINOUS kicks him away.)*

**OLD MAN**

Ah . . . I was wrong about you. You eat freely from another man's table and yet you will not give even a crust to a beggar!

**EURYMACHUS**

Watch your tongue, old man, and get out of here. Next time I will drag you out of here by the leg. Ha!

*(EURYMACHUS grabs the OLD MAN'S arm and flings him out.)*

**TELEMACHUS**

Gentlemen! This is not a public inn, but Odysseus's palace. Though I am young, I know right from wrong . . . You are many and strong, and so I must . . . but if . . .

*(SUITORS threaten TELEMACHUS)*

**KTESSIPOS**

My friends, my friends! Let us not bully Telemachus. I feel that he speaks prudent . . prudent . . . hic . . . URRRRP!

*(SUITORS laugh.)*

**LEODES**

Then I shall speak prudently, and to fairest Penelope.

**PENELOPE**

Speak, Leodes, I shall listen.

**LEODES**

As long as there was any hope that your husband would return, none of us could blame you for waiting.

**EURYMACHUS**

Daughter of Icarus, the time for waiting is over. Odysseus is gone forever. All the men in Argos will fill this house, for in beauty there is no one to match you.

**PENELOPE**

Alas, all beauty that I had was destroyed when Odysseus embarked for Troy. Now I am alone and my house cursed with strangers.

**ANTINOUS**

Madam, your husband has been gone for nineteen years. Some wave has washed him into the sea. He is either dead or lost forever. Therefore, you must pick the best, most generous of your suitors, marry him and go live in his house. Then Telemachus can enjoy his natural inheritance.

**KTESSIPOS**

It is the custom, fair Penelope.

**PENELOPE**

The custom? None of you observe the custom! Surely it is the oldest of customs for suitors to entertain the lady, bring her gifts, not carouse at her expense.

**ANTINOUS**

You speak true. That is our custom, but we shall not leave your palace until you agree to choose a husband.

**SUITORS**

Aye . . . Aye . . . We shall not . . . etc.

**PENELOPE**

I see. Very well, you have driven me to this moment. Antinous, we must both observe the custom. If all the suitors will bring their traditional matrimonial gifts to the palace, I shall select one to be my husband. Will you accept my choice?

**ANTINOUS**

I will! Do you all agree with the lady?

**SUITORS**

We do! Come . . . a fine proposal . . . etc.

*(SUITORS exit, ANTIPOUS last, bowing graciously to PENELOPE and nodding to TELEMACHUS.)*

PENELOPE

If I had my way, there's not a man among them who would see tomorrow's dawn.

TELEMACHUS

I hate them all . . . especially Antinous, who is the most treacherous.

PENELOPE

May Apollo strike him, even as he did that old man. Go, my good son, ask the old man to come here that I may greet him and ask if he has any news of Odysseus.

*(TELEMACHUS exits.)*

Unless my husband returns soon and purges our house of these terrible men, I must bid farewell to it forever, although in my dreams I shall never forget it.

*(TELEMACHUS enters with OLD MAN.)*

TELEMACHUS

And so, if you speak the truth she will give you a warm cloak to protect you from the cold.

OLD MAN

Royal Madam.

PENELOPE

Peace, old man! Where is your home? Have you any news of Odysseus?

OLD MAN

I have, fair Queen.

I am from the land in the dark blue sea called Crete, a mighty island. My grandfather, King Minos, once reigned there, and long ago, nine years ago, Odysseus himself touched our shores. It happened thus.

*(Seven notes sound as PENELOPE and TELEMACHUS exit. ODYSSEUS and his men push the prow on stage, set the mast, kneel with their oars in a ready position, ODYSSEUS at the helm.)*

After the burning of Troy, all the finest Greeks set sail for their homes, carrying their rich booty. All reached their homes safely, except Odysseus. A mighty gale blew his ship off its course to my island Crete.

I took him to my home and made him welcome for thirteen days, until the winds fell and he bade us thanks and farewell.

*(ODYSSEUS waves good-bye to the OLD MAN, a bass drum beat begins, and the men start to row.)*

And so he left my country, his sailors raising their sails and pulling their oars. I have heard that he sailed into unknown seas, even to the land of the giant Cyclops.

*(OLD MAN exits. Rowing stops, the ship lands and ODYSSEUS leaps to the shore.)*

**ODYSSEUS**

Good sailors, we must go on to this shore. Make fast the ship.  
*(Ship prow and mast are pushed aside)*

Well, we shall soon see whether these Cyclops are lawless savages, or a god-fearing people who are bound by Zeus' laws.

*(The sailors are EURYLOCHUS, PEREMIDES, PERITES, and POLITES, who later becomes HYLAX. They step ashore and begin exploring the island, accompanied by jungle sounds.)*

**EURYLOCHUS**

Although I am no coward, I have a forboding about this place.

**PEREMIDES**

Watch carefully then. Be ready.

**PERITES**

Look!

**EURYLOCHUS**

Where?

**PERITES**

Here, a cave. And look at the size of the opening.

PEREMIDES

Why it's large enough for a giant.

POLITES

He's a shepherd. Look at all these lamb and goat pens.

ODYSSEUS

Come, let's go in the cave and see.

*(They mime entering and exploring the cave.)*

POLITES

Oh, look, cheese! Goat cheese!

PERITES

Polites, I have never seen a wedge of cheese *(Sheep bells)*  
as large as this.

PEREMIDES

What's that? *(Sheep sounds)*

ODYSSEUS

Quiet. The shepherd is coming back. He may be friendly but we'd better be careful. Let's hide.

*(While the men hide, the CYCLOPS enters herding his sheep into the cave and rolling a big stone across the opening. We created a large CYCLOPS head with one eye that could be pushed in out of sight. The head was attached to an ankle-length tunic and strapped to the actor who looked through the mouth. The arms were extended with sticks and gloves. Because he must be able to move freely, we opted not to elevate him on stilts; his height did not seem to worry the children.)*

CYCLOPS

In goats . . . in rams, in sheep for the night . . . there in, sheep. Now I roll the big stone in front of the mouth of the cave so you can sleep safely until the morning. There . . . over, there, big ram, sleep. Wait! Who else is here? Strangers? And who may you be?

ODYSSEUS

We are Greeks. A contrary wind has driven us to your island.

**CYCLOPS**

Are you not roving pirates come to rob me of my sheep?

**ODYSSEUS**

No. We are Greek soldiers returning home from our great victory over Troy. We hope for hospitality from you, remembering Zeus' great edict binding all to give hospitality to travellers.

**CYCLOPS**

Ha, ha, ha! Strangers, you are either fools, or have come very far afield. We Cyclops care not a jot for Zeus' law nor any of the gods. But, tell me where you have moored your ships.

**EURYLOCHUS**

*(Whispering)* Captain, he is trying to trick us.

**ODYSSEUS**

Softly . . . I know. Cyclops—

**CYCLOPS**

My name is Polyphemus.

**ODYSSEUS**

Polyphemus, our ship is wrecked upon your shore. We desperately need food.

**CYCLOPS**

So do !! I am hungry too, so I think I shall eat you, pirate sailor!

**PEREMITES**

Look out! He's got Polites!

**ODYSSEUS & EURYLOCHUS**

Help us!

*(POLYPHEMUS reaches out and grabs one of the sailors by the neck, who is rescued only when several sailors combine to pull him from the strong CYCLOPS. This leads to a chase accompanied by drums, clackers, and other noises. We used tumbling rolls and flips by the men trying to avoid the slower CYCLOPS. Eventually the CYCLOPS catches POLITES. The sailors rush the CYCLOPS. During the struggle, POLITES puts his cloth cowl partially in the CYCLOPS' mouth. with a mighty movement the CYCLOPS throws the sailors to the side of the stage. The*

*actor playing POLITES goes with them and exits unnoticed. The CYCLOPS puts his hand to mouth as he goes upstage to sit and eat POLITES.)*

EURYLOCHUS

He's eating him! He is eating him! We must kill him before he eats us all.

PERITES

I'll stab him with my sword.

EURYLOCHUS

No, wait. Let's all rush him together. Ready? Now.

ODYSSEUS

Hold, hold fast. If we kill him now, we may be trapped inside this cave forever. That is a heavy stone across the door. Eurylochus, men, come help me try to move it. *(They mime trying to move the great stone, even using an oar as a lever, but they cannot budge it.)*

EURYLOCHUS

It's no use. We can't move it, and he is not likely to move it for us. I would rather die killing this monster than be eaten.

ODYSSEUS

Maybe he would do it for us! I have a plan. Give me that wineskin.

*(ODYSSEUS takes wine skin and goes to the CYCLOPS.)*

Cyclops! Polyphemus, here, have some Greek wine to wash down your meal of human flesh. Come, take it in your hands. It will be the finest wine you ever tasted.

*(He places the wineskin between the two hands of the CYCLOPS who drinks the wine.)*

CYCLOPS

Hmmm. Ahh. This wine is delicious. A pleasure to drink . . . Tell me your name, sailor, and I will reward you for giving me this good wine, it tastes like nectar and ambrosia. What is your name?

ODYSSEUS

My name is "Nobody."

CYCLOPS

*(Little tipsy now)* Whatsch that?

ODYSSEUS

“Nobody”. That is the name my father gave me: “Nobody.”

CYCLOPS

*(Yawning now)* Ahhhhh . . . Well, then, Nobody, your reward shall be this: I shall eat you last. Ahhhh . . . Eat all the others first. I am getting schleeepy from this good wine . . . so very schleeepy . . . . .

*(Now drunk, the CYCLOPS sits down and sleeps as his eye closes.)*

ODYSSEUS

Success. The wine’s made him sleepy. Perimedes, take that staff. Perites, sharpen it with your sword. Now put it in that fire to harden it. Good, now lift it up and aim it for his eye. Now drive it home. Take that, you cannibal!

*(The sailors mime the action described by ODYSSEUS, using an oar for the staff, a red cloth for the fire. Then they take the staff and start toward the sleeping CYCLOPS. He almost wakes but then mumbles and lays his head on his other hand. The sailors guide the staff to the eye and with a big push, force the eye into the mask, leaving only the eye hole showing. They scramble to one side as the CYCLOPS roars and stands up.)*

CYCLOPS

Help, neighbors! Cyclops, neighbor Cyclops! I am being attacked!

VOICES *(Off stage)*

Who is attacking you, Polyphemus?

CYCLOPS

Nobody!

If nobody is attacking you, you must be dreaming. Leave us alone. We must dirve our sheep out to pasture. It is morning already.

*(Sheep noise and bells.)*