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Dramatic Publishing

PERSEUS BAYOU

Book by

MARY HALL SURFACE

Lyrics by

MARY HALL SURFACE and DAVID MADDOX

Music by

DAVID MADDOX



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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Music and Lyrics by DAVID MADDOX

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(PERSEUS BAYOU)

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Perseus Bayou premiered at the Theater of the First Amendment (George Mason University's professional theater, Fairfax, Va.) on March 14, 2001. Rick Davis, artistic director. Kevin Murray, managing director.

Directed by Mary Hall Surface
Music Direction by David Maddox

Scenic Design by Tony Cisek
Costume Design by Jelena Vukmirovic
Lighting Design by Dan Covey
Puppets and Crafts by Marie Schneggenburger
Properties by Susan Senita Bradshaw
Choreography by Beth Davis
Fight Choreography by Brad Waller
Dramaturgy by Kristin Johnsen-Neshati
Technical Direction by Ethan Osborn
Company Management by Kira Hoffmann
Stage Management by Cynthia Clark

The Ensemble:

Michael Bryant, Colleen Delany, Sherri L. Edelen,
Eric Lee Johnson, Wanda Kelly, Dori Legg, Paul Takacs,
Steve Tipton, Andrew Ross Wynn,
Dwayne Nitz as Perseus Bayou

The Band:

Bruno Nasta (violin)
Nikky Kraskowska (piano)
Matt Kanon (guitar)
Ralph Gordon (bass)
Zoltan Racz (accordion)

AUTHORS' NOTES:

Perseus Bayou takes the classic Greek myth of the boastful young Perseus and his quest to find the snake-headed Medusa and resets it in the rich world of post-Civil War Louisiana. Like all heroic myths, *Perseus Bayou* follows a young man's journey into the unknown. He faces trials, confronts deepest darkness but finally returns as a better man to right the wrongs he has left behind. In the world of our musical, the bayou suffers in the aftermath of the Civil War. Fortunes have been lost and won, greed prevails, cultures collide and nature itself is filled with the dangers of the swamp. Into this world a boy is born D half mortal, half divine D who must grow up to confront this chaos and renew the world. As in the Greek myth, our Perseus Bayou becomes a Hero once he learns to embrace the values on which a new moral and just world can be built.

All of the central characters from the original myth have been retained, but we have given them distinctive Louisiana personas. Athena becomes an African conjur woman. Hermes is a sly spirit-cat from Louisiana folklore. Acrisius is a new-money millionaire in New Orleans. Polydectes is the evil landlord of what was once family land in his bayou parish. Doucet is the counterpart of the Greek fisherman Dictys. The Grey Sisters are ghost-like swamp creatures and the sea-monster becomes a giant alligator. Our greatest liberty is taken with the character of Andromeda, now a feisty tomboy who helps Percy become who he will be.

The music is based on and inspired by the traditional Cajun music of Louisiana, but also incorporates elements of blues, zydeco and theater music. Performed by a band of six (accordion, fiddle, bass, guitar/banjo, piano and drums), the music is almost continuous. It is highly interactive with the action and text on stage, creating virtually another character. There are five primary singing roles: Perseus, Athena, Danae, Doucet and Andromeda.

Our musical demands a vividly theatrical approach to its staging. Attempts to fully realize the locales and many of the effects would place a deadly weight on the piece. The original set consisted of an oval playing area, with an elegantly curving ramp raking upstage. Woven panels made of a material called “contra” created a surround which, when lit, could become anything from columns in Polydectes’ plantation house to hanging Spanish moss. A dock rolled on for the family scene. Our goal when devising how to achieve effects throughout the play was to make them as actor-centered as possible. Danae’s raft was a small platform on casters manipulated by four actors who held onto triangles of blue water fabric. Percy’s pirogue (his boat for slipping through the swamp) was created by an actor on a single roller skate, propelling himself across the stage with a long pole. The swamp came to life with four actors shifting positions, carrying “umbrellas” of raffia and contra. Masks were key in the depiction of the Gator-Men and the Cajun Mardi Gras-inspired wedding party guests. Our Giant Gator was built off of a rolling chair, in which an actor sat (thus sitting inside the gator’s mouth and opening and closing its giant jaw). Two other actors were behind the

chair, manipulating the Gator's eyes, as well as creating its front legs.

The world of *Perseus Bayou* is essentially magical, a boundary at which nature and supernatural creatures lurk at the edge of the human world. Perseus ventures across this boundary to save his world from greed and destruction. Or rather, he crosses and returns to help the people of the bayou create a new world. In his return to leadership Perseus becomes a hero, fulfilling the promise of this beautiful story full of supernatural and heroic deeds. Percy saves his *mamon* and he and Andy are placed in the stars for all time. And, of course, there are lots of exciting sword fights.

— Mary Hall Surface and David Maddox

* * * *

“*Perseus Bayou* is a wonderful play that draws both children and adults into its spell. It beautifully and authentically captures the sounds, the colors, the folklore—all the riches that are the world of Louisiana. My memories of the show are happily rekindled each time my daughter sings along to the original cast CD.”

United States Senator Mary Landrieu
(Louisiana)

Please Note:

In this script, the cue numbers (i.e. **QA4**) correspond to the cue numbers on the recorded version of the score that is available to rent should a producer not be able to use a live band.

These same cue numbers are also listed in the Full Score, which contains all music, text and stage directions.

The placement of the cue number indicates the beginning of the cue. The # sign indicates where the music ends. See the example below:

PERCY

Percy couldn't believe this rich fancy man was
Doucet's cousin.

QA34 (*music begins*)

POLYDECTES

"Have you been living in Doucet's little shack
on stilts in the swamp? Princess, you deserve a
palace,"

(*music ends*)

POLYDECTES (cont'd)

"like mine!"

QA34 (Con't) indicates that cue continues to play.

QA76** indicates a track for rehearsal purposes only. In performance, the CD is not stopped at this point.

The original cast recording of <i>Perseus Bayou</i> contains additional text written for the cast recording only. The play is to be performed with only the text in this script.
--

PERSEUS BAYOU

A Play in Two Acts

For 5m., 4w. playing multiple roles.*

Can be expanded (with no doubling) to 6m., 6w.

Plus 4 of either gender.

* *Perseus Bayou* was originally produced with 10 actors. For the 2003 Theater of the First Amendment remount, 9 actors were used with the following character assignments: (Note that all actors appear in Prologue and final song.)

Man One

Confederate Drummer

Percy

Man Two

Doucet

Swamp

Wedding Party Guest

Grey Sister (Phemphredo)

Medusa Snake

Giant Gator

Man Three

Polydectes

Swamp

Whirlpool

Giant Gator

Man Four

Panther Hermes

Gator-Man

Swamp

Giant Gator

Man Five

Acrisius

Gator-Man

Wedding Party Guest

Beaucepheus

Owl puppet manipulator

Medusa Snake

Woman One

Danae

Swamp

Grey Sister (Deino)

Medusa Snake

Woman Two

Athena

Wedding Party Guest

Woman Three

Andromeda

Heron

Wedding Party Guest

Medusa Snake

Woman Four

Gator-Man

New Gal

Grey Sister (Enyo)

Cassey

Medusa Snake

Swamp

CHARACTERS

Acrisius - a rich New Orleans businessman

Danae - his daughter

Miss Athena - a conjure woman

Panther Hermes - a panther with supernatural powers

Percy - son of Danae

Doucet - a poor Cajun fisherman

Polydectes - a rich cousin to Doucet

Gator-men - evil creatures on whom Polydectes calls

Andy - daughter of Beucepheus and Cassey

Beucepheus - mayor of an island

Cassey - his vain, boastful wife

Les Fantome Gris - (Enyo, Deino and Pemphredo)

The grey ghost sisters, supernatural swamp creatures

The Medusa

The Giant Gator

Polydectes wedding party guests

ACT I

QA1 (Overture)

(As bell tree rings, ATHENA, an owl-like conjure woman, appears above the central playing space. She gestures with her staff. A shower of glitter falls.)

#

PROLOGUE

QA2

(Men waving large flags, suggesting war, race across the space. Chorus assembles, dressed to suggest post-Civil War Louisiana culture. Wealth and poverty, Black, Cajun and a drummer in a tattered Confederate uniform.)

CHORUS

TIME WAS
LONG WHILE AGO
A BLOODY WAR LEFT
SCARS ON THE LAND
BROTHER FOUGHT BROTHER

ACRISIUS
AND GREED BECAME KING

ACRISIUS (cont'd)

Once there was a man who lived like a king in a fine house in New Orleans. A war had made

him rich. Now he'd do anything to keep all his money to himself.

CHORUS

A WORLD LOST
RUINED BY WAR
SOME WILL BE RICH
WHO WILL BE POOR?

ACRISIUS

He had a kind and beautiful daughter that every young man in Louisiana wanted for his bride. But Acricius didn't want anyone marrying Danae. Next, she'd have a baby who'd grow up wanting a piece of his land, his money!

(ACRISIUS gestures and suddenly, DANAЕ is imprisoned. Frightened, DANAЕ struggles to get free.)

CHORUS

LOCKED IN A WORLD
DARK AS THE GRAVE
HEARTS BROKEN AND TORN

ACRISIUS

So he locked Danae beneath the ground with only one tiny window high above her. She would never have a baby now! No one would ever find her!

(ACRISIUS crosses away.)

DANAE

Day after lonely day, Danae prayed that
someone would save her.

(ATHENA appears.)

ATHENA

LIGHT FROM THE HEAVENS

(Magically, a shower of gold fills DANAE's prison.)

ATHENA (cont'd)

WARM AS THE SUN
BRIGHT AS THE STARS.

*(DANAE spins and transforms her shawl into a baby,
which she cradles.)*

ATHENA (cont'd)

A SHOWER OF LIGHT
FILLING HER HEART WITH HOPE.

DANAE

A GIFT FROM THE HEAVENS
FINGERS WARM AS THE SUN

ATHENA & DANAE

EYES BRIGHT AS THE STARS
A CHILD OF LIGHT...

DANAE

MY SON!

#

(Baby cries. ACRISIUS turns and sees the baby.)

QA3

ACRISIUS

Acrisius was enraged! How could Danae have a baby! How could she deceive him?!

(At ACRISIUS' order, DANAЕ and baby PERCY are placed on a raft.)

CHORUS

A WORLD LOST
RUINED BY WAR
HEARTS BROKEN AND TORN
WHO CAN SAVE THIS BROKEN LAND?

#

ACRISIUS

So he cast her out,

QA4

ACRISIUS (cont'd)

helpless, onto the river so that the murky, dark waters would be her death!

(DANAЕ and infant PERCY are on the raft, tossing on the river in a dark, frightening storm.)

DANAЕ

“Ah! Help!” Danae was sure that she and her child would drown.

(ATHENA reappears and calms the waters.)

DANAE (cont'd)

But suddenly the river grew calm, as if by magic!

(ATHENA disappears.)

#

DANAE (cont'd)

(To PERCY.)

“And you.”

QA5

DANAE (cont'd)

“Asleep in a storm.”

SLEEP ON, BABE

SLEEP ON, MY PERCY

AND DREAM OF CALM WATER

THAT GOD IN HIS MERCY

WILL FIND US

AND KEEP US

FROM HARM.

THE RIVER WILL ROCK US

TO THE EDGE OF THE SEA

WE'LL RUN DOWN THIS RIVER

NOW THAT WE'RE FREE

THE BAYOU WILL HIDE US

OUR TROUBLES ARE THROUGH

YES WE'LL RUN DOWN THIS RIVER

ME AND YOU.

SLEEP ON, BABE

WHILE THE STARS SHINE ABOVE US

OUR LOVE WILL DEFEND US

AS WE TRAVEL SO FAR.

AS WE TRAVEL SO FAR.
Danae closed her eyes and slept.

(The raft comes to rest near the bank.)

#

QA6

SCENE ONE

(Light of the last moment of night before dawn—suspending us between the natural and supernatural worlds. HERMES, a spirit-cat panther, pops up and slinks along the bank of the bayou. He creeps up to the sleeping DANAË and her baby.)

HERMES

(Preparing to pounce.)

“Gerrrrrr....”

ATHENA

(Appearing.)

“Spirit-cat!”

#

ATHENA (cont’d)

“Leave them alone.”

HERMES

(Like a disappointed little kid.)

“Aaaaaahwa.”

ATHENA

“That baby is not for you.”

HERMES

“But I’m hungry.”

ATHENA

“The bayou is hungry”

QA7

ATHENA (cont’d)

“from war and greed. The bayou is starving for a good boy who can grow into a great man.”

#

ATHENA (cont’d)

“This baby might be the boy.”

QA8

HERMES

“This baby doesn’t look good for anything but being my breakfast!”

(HERMES advances toward them again.)

ATHENA

“Panther Hermes!”

#

ATHENA (cont’d)

“Do you not see? Look at him.”

QA9

(HERMES looks closer.)

HERMES

(Recognizing a half-mortal, half-god.)

“Well, well.”

ATHENA

“He is a child of the stars! His father is the same as yours and mine.”

#

HERMES

“I don’t like little brothers.”

ATHENA

“You jealous, Hermes?”

HERMES

“Me?”

QA10

HERMES (cont’d)

“Jealous of a little would-be hero-boy when I get to slink about the bayou as a servant to you,”

#

HERMES (cont’d)

“wise Athena!”

ATHENA

“At least you are immortal.”

HERMES

“Don’t remind me.”

QA11

ATHENA

“Spirit-cat of liars, tricksters and thieves—”

HERMES

“At your service.”

ATHENA

“We must guide this boy.”

HERMES

“Why does a ‘child of light’ need me?”

ATHENA

“He might fall into darkness!”

#

ATHENA (cont’d)

“We must help him find his way.”

QA12

HERMES

“He might rather stay a boy and play.”

ATHENA

“Hermes! From the smallest seed the tallest cypress can grow.”

HERMES

“Save your wisdom for the little hero.”

ATHENA

“Panther must listen to sister owl.”

#

HERMES

“I will guide him, sister. But you’ll have to guess how!”

(HERMES and ATHENA hiss and growl at each other.)

DOUCET (FROM OFF)

“Ayeeeeee!”

QA13

(Hearing DOUCET, the gods exit quickly.)