

***The Penelopiad* by Margaret Atwood**

Produced by Crouching Giraffe Productions in association with papermoon theatre
Directed by Kate Blackhurst

Penelope, the wise and patient wife of the ancient Greek hero Odysseus, has passed beyond the veil of death. From Hades – the land of the dead – Penelope can see everything about her past and present, including her historical reputation as a perfectly faithful wife. However, she is haunted by the blood on her hands: the deaths of her twelve maids who were slaughtered by Odysseus under false pretences. Begging the audience not to follow in her footsteps, Penelope re-tells the story of *The Odyssey* from her point of view through a series of visions spanning her life.

This is an all-female cast of thirteen actors in which the women play all the parts, both the maids at the centre of the play and the male characters who control and abuse them. Each actor (apart from the one playing Penelope) plays a double role, that of one of the maids, as well as one of the main characters familiar from the *Odyssey*: Odysseus, Telemachus, Helen of Troy, Eurycleia, etc. We are looking for strong, disciplined stage actors with vivid imaginations ready for demanding ensemble work as committed collaborators.

Open to any age 18+; all ethnicities welcomed and encouraged. Come and read for a maid only and/or for one of the specific parts, but please come and read. Be prepared to show your work and ability to handle the material, knowing everyone except Penelope will play multiple parts. We want an exciting, passionate, dedicated group that can create something beautiful, chilling, and provocative together.

Read the full text, available [here](#), and prepare the monologue on page 9 and 10, as well as the specific character of your choice – it is not necessary to memorise this text but to be familiar with it.

[the penelopiad.pdf](#)

Characters

Penelope (Age 35-55):

Regal, proud, powerful wife of the wandering Odysseus; capable of ruling the kingdom for twenty years in his absence and holding her own against the pressure of all the forces around her; complex, damaged, haunted by her sense of guilt at her unwitting responsibility for the cruel murder of her faithful maids.

The Maids:

the heart and soul of the play; they are the faithful allies of Penelope as well as her tormentors in Hades; a group of twelve women of all ages and ethnicities; strong, bold performers who can create a vivid range of characters in an ever-flowing change of scenes and circumstances; physical and vocal ability and adaptability are a huge plus (there is movement and singing); each one of the Maids will also create at least one of the major characters (partial list below).

Odysseus (35-55)

One of the maids who also plays Penelope's husband, the hero of the myth: famous for his craft and guile, courage and wit; loving toward Penelope but ultimately involved only in his own story as the hero of that story.

Telemachus (18-25)

One of the maids who also plays Odysseus's son; rebellious and unkind to his mother; unknowingly complicit in the murder of the maids.

Helen of Troy (25-35)

One of the maids who also plays the classic character of the myth; vain, beautiful, spoiled, selfish, and the cause of destruction all around her.

Eurycleia (50-70)

One of the maids who also plays Odysseus' nursemaid; she is gossipy and domineering, adores Odysseus and has very little time for Penelope