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Odysseus!

a solo performance piece with found object puppets

written by Brian Guehring

2004 production draft 1.57

Human Character:

Ester Haas a 27 year old woman, still living at home. Ester works at Video Farm(a local video store) and wears their uniform of khaki pants, denim shirt and cow print logoed vest . She is an aspiring film maker who dreams of making it big, but her film submissions have not been well received. Undaunted she is continuing her low budget, bizare found object puppet versions of classic Western literature. All props, backgrounds, and costumes are thrift store cheap and tacky

Puppet Characters

The Humans:

dolls

represented by

| | |
|------------|---|
| ODYSSEUS | strong, courageous warrior has a 10 year journey to return home after the Trojan War. Known for his cunning. <i>He-Man, Spider Man, Ken Doll, Husker Football guy...</i> |
| TELEMACHUS | Odysseus's son. He is 20 and wants to help his dad and mom. Too young to be effective by himself. Wants to grow up badly <i>Baby doll, Teen Boy Doll, Ken in diapers</i> |
| PENELOPE | Wife of Odysseus. Loyal despite all of Odysseus's countless affairs. She is clever and loyal <i>Cheerleader, Barbie</i> |
| NAUSICAA | the princess of Phaacia. She is young and falls in love with Odysseus <i>Barbie with fig leaves</i> |

The Gods: *represented by actress in 2sided hats (like right side Zeus/ left side Poseidon)*

| | |
|----------|--|
| ZEUS | King of gods and men, who mediates the disputes of gods. |
| POSEIDON | God of the Sea. He despises Odysseus for blinding his son, |
| ATHENA | Goddess of Wisdom, purposeful battle and womanly arts. Odysseus is a favorite of hers and she gives him lots of aid. |
| HERMES | The messenger God |

The Monsters

represented by things

| | |
|------------|--|
| SIRENS | luring women who sing sailors towards their doom <i>a cardboard cut-out of Brittany, XTina, and Lil Kim (maybe also the song of Lady Marmalade?)</i> |
| POLYPHEMUS | an uncivilized one eyed giant called a cyclops. He tries to eat Odysseus and his men <i>gorilla stuffed animal with his mouth ripped out so we can shove props down his throat or a KING KONG</i> |

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| CALYPSO | Beautiful nymph who falls in love with Odysseus and holds him prisoner for 7 years. <i>musical instrument, Ariel doll</i> |
| CIRCE | Beautiful Witch Goddess who lets Odysseus live in luxury for a year and turns his men into swine <i>Another Barbie doll</i> |
| SCYLLA | a six headed monster that eats 6 sailors off each ship that passes <i>jerry-rigged stuffed animal with 6 different heads</i> |
| CHARBIDIS | an enormous whirlpool <i>a Spencer's gag toilet with flush</i> |
| <i>Groups of people</i> | <i>Glove puppets</i> |
| SUITORS | All the leachorous, pushy men who want to marry Penelope and get all of Odysseus's land. They get slaughtered (covered with ketchup) by Odysseus <i>Vultures.</i> |
| SAILORS | Odysseus's men that are turned into pigs <i>A doctor's glove (that can be blown up to represent pigs)</i> <i>A knit glove (dipped into trial size pepto containtors to represent the pigs)</i> |
| TROJANS | the victims of the Trojan Horse stunt. They get slaughtered. |
| SHEEP | the flock of Cyclops <i>cotten balls and toothpicks, hair off Ester's brush, dog hair</i> |

Puppetry Settings

Odysseus's palace (home of weddingbed, loyal wife, and slaughter) in Ithaca, Greece
Mount Olympus (home of Gods)
Mediterranean Sea (*a silk blue scarf?*)
A generic island (for all of Odysseus's stops)

Other Props for Film

Title Card
Greek Map
Ketchup (for blood slaughter)
Trojan Horse
Odysseus's Boat

Time of Film story:

12th century B. C.

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(Actress sets up her card table in the middle of the room. The card table is slightly raked toward the audience. The old (non working) video camera is located in the middle of the audience. A closed box of props and a CD player are located near the card table.

The actress helps the audience get seated and ready, the play begins.

(ESTER enters wearing the tacky cow print vest and khaki pants uniform of VideoFarm. She enters in a huff and throws down her backpack and takes off her coat.)

ESTER

Was that the worst day ever? I think so! I have such a moronic, meaningless job. *(fake perky)* “Welcome to Video Farm, a wonderful place to rent great Mooovies!” It should be called “Video Swamp a dingy place to get overpriced movies.” And I hate my bird-brained boss Cecil. Petty 18 year old who thinks he’s knows all that. “Vacuum the floor! Straighten the videos! Stop telling the customers their movie choices stink!” He treats me like I’m some stupid high school kid. He’ll be sorry. When I’m rich and famous, he’ll be sorry. I won’t let Video Farm stock my movies. That’ll teach him

(shouting up to her mother) Yes, Mom! Its me. I’m home. Work is still terrible and I want to quit, but I know you won’t let me. So there is nothing to talk about! ...No, Mom, I can’t come up for milk and cookies. I’m already behind in my shoot schedule. Hold my calls! All of my calls! ...Unless its Hollywood or the press.

(She notices something by the card table. She throws down her backpack and the mail)

Oh, don’t tell me Mom was down here.

(She notices a note on the table. ESTER reads it)

Dear Ester,

I picked up your dolls and put them back in the box. Aren’t you a little old to play with toys, dear?

Love, Ma

(yelling out the door to upstairs or taking a couple out to put on the table)

THEY AREN’T DOLLS, MA! They are important artistic expressions of my vision! You think a mother would start treating her own daughter like an adult once she turned 27. But, no, still she’s still treating me like a little girl. I swear, she’ll regret that when I’m rich and famous. I won’t buy her a new home when I sign my million dollar movie contract. That’ll teach her...Oh, the mail.

(She runs over to the CD player where there is a stack of mail. She starts to look through them and throwing some away)

Credit card bill, coupons, EW, movie catalogue, request for money, credit card offer *(gasp)* the letter from Steven Spielberg. *(happy dance)* this is it. My big break. Now they’ll all regret it. Now that I’m rich and famous. I’ll never have to go back to Video Farm again! *(opens letter)*

Dear Ms. Ester Haas,

We recently received your film submission of *Romeo and Juliet*. We are not interested at all in purchasing this film . Please stop sending unsolicited....consider it harrasment...forced to take legal action..

(ESTER sits dejectedly for a minute. Then her defense mechanisms kick in...)

ESTER (cont'd)

What does Steven Spielberg know about film making anyway? I am brilliant. He just doesn't understand. I'm just too deep for him.

(ESTER carefully takes out a huge binder of her rejection notices arranged alphabetically.)

Nobody understands, not Peter Jackson, Queen Latifah, Spike Lee, Mickey Mouse, M. Night Shyamalan, Julie Taymor

(ESTER places the letter in the binder)

and not Stephen Spielberg. When I'm rich and famous, you'll all regret it. When I win my Oscar for best film, I'll tell everyone how you missed your chance.....OK, big cleansing breath. *(big cleansing breath she begins mantra)* I am good enough. I am talented. I will become a world famous movie director. I will be rich and famous. *(she is relaxed)*

OK, Ester, its time to make art. *(very loudly)* QUIET ON THE SET!

(she turns on the video camera and speaks into camera)

Hi, I'm Ester Haas. You are about to see the greatest movie ever. A ground breaking style of filmmaking that will revolutionize the industry. Sit back and enjoy!

(in cheesy announcer voice)

Indiana Jones risks his life. Harry Potter escapes death. James Bond always gets his girl. Now, meet a man who does all three! : Odessus: The Movie! An Ester production

And...ACTION!

(She turns on cheesy background music and pulls out ODYSSEUS and SAILORS)

Scene 1: The Trojan Horse

SAILORS

Odysseus, I think its time to give up this war. Here we are in 12th century B.C. battling the Trojans off the coast of what will be called Turkey in the future. We've been at war for 10 years ever since the Trojan cad named Paris seduced our King's wife Helen and brought her here. The king wants Helen back, but in 10 years we still haven't been able to get past the massive walls of Troy. Our great warriors Achilles, Patroclus, and Ajax are dead. We have no chance.

ODYSSEUS

We can't give up now! King Menelaus's beautiful wife Helen is still in there. We can't give up! We must save the most beautiful woman in the world!

SAILORS

We've already lost hundreds of men. Lets go home.

ODYSSEUS

No! The most beautiful woman in the world Helen should be with a Greek man! We must never give up! For our goddess Athena! Besides, I have a plan.

(ODYSSEUS and SAILORS plan.)

SAILORS

Hide the boat! Hide the boat!

(ODYSSEUS and SAILORS hide the boat off-stage. Sounds of construction)

SAILORS

Build the wooden horse! Watch where you're swinging that hammer!

(The Trojan Horse appears disappears.)

SAILORS

Quick! Hide in the horse!

(SAILORS and ODYSSEUS hide in horse)

TROJANS

Hey, look, the Greeks have sailed off. They have given up! And look they left a huge wooden horse. Let's destroy it!

THUMB TROJAN

No! If we destroy their horse, we'll endure the wrath of Athena. Lets bring the Horse and keep it as a tribute to Athena.

TROJANS

YEA!!!! Open the Door!

(TROJANS open the door and bring in HORSE into TROY)

TROJANS

After 10 years, we have finally defeated the Greeks! The War is over! Let's party!

(TROJANS celebrate, drink, fall asleep, and snore. ODYSSEUS and SAILORS exit horse)

ODYSSEUS

Now men!

(Dramatic fight music as SAILORS slaughter the Trojans)

SAILORS

To Odysseus, the smartest Greek warrior ever!

Scene 2 Penelope Waits

ESTER

And slow cross fade to scene back in Greece.....

PENELOPE

Oh, whoa is me! Here I am, Penelope, Odysseus's faithful wife, and I have been alone for 10 years awaiting his return from the Trojan War. I hope he returns soon. I love him so.

(TELEMACHUS runs in)

TELEMACHUS

Hello, mother, it is I, Telemachus, your son. I am 10 years old now. I have never seen my father, Odysseus. I wish he were here to teach me to be a man.

PENELOPE

Why did you enter my bedroom, Telemachus? Can't you see that I am faithfully pining for your father?

TELEMACHUS

Yes, mother, I can see that you are faithfully pining for Dad. But I have big news! The ships have returned! Ships from Troy!

PENELOPE

The Trojan war must be over. The Greek warriors must be coming home! My Odysseus will be here any minute. I will go get ready for my long lost husband.

(PENELOPE exits and there is a knock on the door)

TELEMACHUS

Maybe that is my father!

(SUITORS enter)

Welcome back noble warriors! Which one of you is my father?

SUITORS

We're not your father! But I'd like to be your step-father! Ha! Ha! Ha!

TELEMACHUS

Where is Odysseus, my father?

SUITORS

Who knows, kid? If his ship isn't back yet, he's probably dead. Hey where is the banquet for the returning heroes?

TELEMACHUS

Well, these sheep and cattle belong to my father.

SUITORS

Lets EAT!

(SUITORS eat all the sheep)

TELEMACHUS

Well, actually, you shouldn't be doing that...I mean....

SUITORS

Listen, you're just a kid. Come back and talk to us when you're a man! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

TELEMACHUS

Please stop.....

SUITORS

Leave us alone, kid. Or we'll teach you how to play "Toss the Baby"

TELEMACHUS

Toss the baby? That doesn't sound good. Please don't teach me that game.

(TELEMACHUS tuns away and PENELOPE enters)

PENELOPE

I've missed you so much!

SUITORS

Hubba! Hubba! We've missed you, too!

PENELOPE

You're not my husband. None of you!

SUITORS

Not yet.

PENELOPE

Where is my husband Odysseus?

SUITORS

His ship isn't here yet? He must be dead. Widow Penelope, marry me! No, Marry me! Marry Me!

(SUITORS begin to squabble among themselves)

PENELOPE

I can't marry you. I am the faithful wife of Odysseus. I will stay faithful to him until death do us part.

SUITORS

Alright, then we'll wait here until you find out he's dead.

PENELOPE

Where is he? Where is my hero Odysseus?

Scene 3: Odysseus and the Cylcops

ESTER

Quick diagonal cross cut back to the Mediterranean Sea.

(SAILORS and ODYSSEUS are sailing in boat)

SAILORS

Odysseus, you're the smartest Greek warrior ever!

ODYSSEUS

I am. Sorry we got lost when we left Troy, though. I'm not very good at directions. But now we are definitely sailing toward home. I miss my wife Penelope and my son Telemachus.

SAILORS

Home to our wives. And children. Home. Where we won't need our swords. Or armor. Or have any adventures. Or stay up late.

ODYSSEUS

Yes, home.

SAILORS

My wife nags me all the time. My son is a brat. I hate my mother-in-law. My life at home is pretty boring.

ODYSSEUS

Yes, well...

SAILORS

Hey, look over there! A city. Ismarus. Odysseus, can we stop and get some supplies one last city? Once more for old times sake?

ODYSSEUS

Well, ok. One more adventure. Dock the boat.

(BOAT docks on city of Ismarus. SAILORS plunder city, eating all the sheep and going crazy. THEY all run back on board)

ODYSSEUS

That was fun. Who knew the Ismarus army would get so mad at us for pillaging, stealing, and burning the place down? What fun. Where is everybody? We're missing 6 men.

SAILORS

Oh, yeah. Their army killed 6 of our men.

ODYSSEUS

Oh. Well that does it. Now we're going straight home.

SAILORS

Yes! Home! With Odysseus, the smartest Greek warrior ever.

ODYSSEUS

I so miss my wife Penelope and my son Telemachus.

SAILORS

Home. To our families. And my wife who can't cook. And to curfews. And a boring job. And no more adventures.

ODYSSEUS

Yes. Home.

SAILORS

Hey, look at that cool island. Look at the pretty lotus flowers.

(ESTER puts a Mountain Dew can with flower pedals hot glued to it on the set)

Lets stop there.

ODYSSEUS

We should head home.

SAILORS

One more stop. C'mon, Odysseus. We promise we won't into trouble.

ODYSSEUS

OK. One more adventure. Dock the Boat.

(SHIP stops on island and all get off).

SAILORS

Lets eat these lotus flowers. And then we'll go home.

(SAILORS drink the lotus)

ODYSSEUS

OK, men. Lets go home.

SAILORS (in caffeine addicted spaz mode)

Home, what's home? All I want to do is have more lotus.

ODYSSEUS

We have to go home to Greece. And our families.

SAILORS

What's Greece? What's a family? Give me more lotus!

ODYSSEUS

That does it.

(ODYSSEUS drags them back onto the boat)

SAILORS

No, wait. Just one more lotus. I need it.

ODYSSEUS

We're leaving. Those lotus flowers were addictive. Its time to go home.

SAILORS

Whoa! That was close. Thanks for saving us from those lotus flowers. To Odysseus, the smartest Greek warrior ever!

ODYSSEUS

I'm ready to go home. I miss my wife Penelope and my son Telemachus.

SAILORS

Yea. Home, sweet, home. Hey look over there! Look at those sheep! Odysseus, lets land here and get some sheep for our trip back. Just one last stop.

ODYSSEUS

OK, just one last stop. Dock the boat

(SHIP stops at the island of the CYCLOPS)

SAILORS

Look a cave of sheep and milk and cheese.

(SAILORS start eating food. POLYPHEMUS enters loudly)

SAILORS

AHHHHH!!

POLYPHEMUS

Don't be scared. You must be travelers, welcome to the island of the cyclops. My name is Polyphemus. I live here with my brothers. Please stay in my cave for dinner.

SAILORS

Oh, why thank you. That's very kind. We are very hungry. What's for dinner?

POLYPHEMUS

You!

SAILORS

AHHHHHHHHH!

(POLYPHEMUS tolls huge styrofoam boulder to entrance of cave trapping the men. HE eats two of them)

POLYPHEMUS

I'll save the rest of you for dinner later.

(POLYPHEMUS snores)

SAILORS

Odysseus, smartest Greek warrior ever! He's asleep now, kill him.

ODYSSEUS

We can't. Then we'd never get out of this cave. This cyclops is the only one big enough to move the boulder.

(ODYSSEUS tries to move styrofoam boulder which accidentally falls off the set. ESTER looks at camera , embarrassed. SHE goes around and picks up light boulder. Then she acts like its really heavy. ESTER replaces boulder)

ODYSSEUS

The cyclops is the only one big enough to move the boulder.

(ODYSSEUS barely touches the boulder and it doesn't move)

But I do have a plan.....

(ODYSSEUS and SAILORS plot)

ODYSSEUS

Hey Polyphemus, how would you like some wine?

POLYPHEMUS

You have wine?

ODYESSEUS

Its on our ship. If you let us out, I'll get it for you.

POLYPHEMUS

That's OK, I'll get it myself.

(POLYPHEMUS leaves men in cave)

ODYSSEUS

Now, men, help me sharpen this log to a sharp point.

(SAILORS hold a pencil into an electric pencil sharpener)

POLYPHEMUS *(entering drunk)*

Those 15 barrels of wine were good. Thank you for your hospitality. What is your name?

ODYSSEUS

Nobody.

POLYPHEMUS

What an odd name. Well thank you, Nobody....

(POLYPHEMUS passes out)

ODYSSEUS

Now.

(SAILORS and ODYSSEUS stick the log into his eye)

POLYPHEMUS

AHHHHHH!!!! My eye! My eye! I can't see. I'm blind. Brothers! Brothers! Help me! Nobody has blinded me.....Seriously, guys. I need help with nobody....C'mon. Nobody is in here with me! Nobody is killing me!....Now why won't my brothers help?.....Well, nobody. You still can't get out of here without passingby me. I'll wait here by the door.

(ODYSSEUS and SAILORS hide under the sheep who begin to baaa!)

Oh, my sheep want to graze, but I can't let the humans out. I've got it. By touching the tops of my sheep, I'll make sure only the sheep will leave.....OK, only sheep. Only sheep.

(POLYPHEMUS feels the tops of the sheep as they exit to the island. The SAILORS and ODYSSEUS exit by hanging onto their bellies. THEY run to ship)

ODYSSEUS

Hey Polyphemus! We escaped!

POLYPHEMUS

What? Nobody escaped? How?

ODYSSEUS

We held on to the bellies of your sheep.

SAILORS

Whew! To Odysseus, the smartest Greek warrior ever!

ODYSSEUS

Shhh!

POLYPHEMUS

Your name isn't Nobody. Its Odysseus!

SAILORS

Yep! It was Odysseus who blinded you, tricked you and ate your food. Remember the name Odysseus!

POLYPHEMUS

ARRRRRRRRGGGGGHHHHH!

(SAILORS sail away)

Daddy! Daddy! Poseidon, God of the sea! I call on you to revenge me! A man named Odysseus blinded me and tricked me! Make him pay!