

See below our Young Reviewers' reviews of *The Odyssey*, performed by Harrogate Youth Theatre. The chosen review was:

Harrogate Youth Theatre's *The Odyssey* is a legend in itself

If the idea of 'youth theatre' conjures up an image of mumbling pre-teens and a cliché commentary on social media, then prepare to have your mind changed. Harrogate Youth Theatre takes a risk with Greek theatre with Hattie Naylor's *The Odyssey*, and the risk pays off. With Hannah Draper and Lizzy Whynes at the helm as directors, and Will Heyes as set designer, this epic piece of art is captivating. It portrays a level of maturity that I've never seen from a youth theatre group and I feel myself forgetting that the many of the actors are not yet 18.

Of course, props must be given to the incredible cast and director, but the set design of the show is so incredibly unique that it really gives an edge to the performance. Towering platforms house the overseeing three wise women, and the mechanical boat is a smooth professional addition. Monsters that are creatively represented by bouncing spherical heads are a refreshing comedic addition, as are the toy pigs that represent the 'pitiful humans.' Frantic Assembly's influence is prominent throughout the play, with the physical theatre elements of the group creating a beautiful human representation of the natural elements.

A moment that struck a chord with me, for example, was the chorus' synchronicity when moving as one, creating a stormy ocean. The piece is obviously very well-rehearsed and polished, with clear deliverance from all.

Bravo Harrogate Youth Theatre! A bold move indeed.

Sophie Robinson, St. Aidan's C of E High School

A review of Harrogate Youth Theatre's *The Odyssey*, performed on Thursday 4th April 2019 at Harrogate Theatre.

Here are the other reviews:

Harrogate Youth Production is an absolute classic!

This famous and historical play tells the ancient greek tragedy, where a group of men take the voyage to the great Kingdom of Ithaca, encountering all manner of mythical monsters and magic on their action-packed journey. 'The Odyssey' is performed by the talented cast and ensemble of 'Harrogate Youth Theatre'. Mesmerising choreography and movement emanates from the ensemble, regularly sending the audience into a hypnotic state.

A particularly memorable moment is when the group of men cross the sea, wrestling the ferocious waves, which almost engulf the fragile boat. These waves are created effortlessly and effectively by the ensemble through a series of complex choreography – usually with such a diverse cast, there is an individual who sticks out like a sore thumb, but not in this production! The ensemble work is faultless, always holding its focus and energy throughout this intense sequence of events. I have to take my (imaginary) hat off to the protagonist, King Odysseus, who never drifts from character or energy under the immense pressure of the colossal amount of lines, brimming with emotion and physicality.

Impeccable usage of sound and music is noteworthy, initiating calm and relaxing moments, juxtaposed with the moments of chaos and clutter created by the ensemble. Subtle lighting paints the vision of the sea and Ithaca beautifully and really enhances this piece of theatre. The positioning of the three witches on the impressive industrial scaffolding, casting an imposing shadow on the scene below moulds an ominous atmosphere throughout. Impressively, the young cast members never leave character during the often long scenes. It is this commitment to the production and absolute attention to detail which results in a convincing and professional performance.

'The Odyssey' was performed at the Harrogate Theatre on the 4th and 5th April 2019. For further information on how to get involved in this incredible opportunity, contact Lizzy Whyne- lizzy.whynes@harrogatetheatre.co.uk

Maisie Jackson, King James' School

An Outstanding Performance from The Odyssey!

Harrogate Youth Theatre's production of this well know tale can only be described as nothing short of spectacular, especially considering the age of the cast. The talent shown was absolutely staggering, and it was apparent from very early on that we were all in for a fabulous performance with a broad spectrum of experience and ability, with each person having a natural flair in one thing or another. By combining two groups of young people, the stage was always busy and every person had something to show; from dance and drama, to authentic comedy and music. It seemed as though everyone on stage always had something to do as we followed Odysseus on his journey back to Ithaca, with the guide of the (slightly scary) weird sisters.

The play was always guided by an extra component - whether it be a moving piece of set, sound that vibrated the seats and even the occasional monster, which definitely kept everyone on their toes! The cast managed to act with such responsibility and ownership for this timeless story that it really became their own. It was obvious that everyone involved was fully committed to their characters and the play.

The use of dance and movement was stunning. We could clearly see that each actor or actress gave all of their effort into achieving a convincing enactment. What struck me the most was the amount of collaboration and co-ordination that was so successfully attained by the dedication and focus that each individual presented on stage – it never faltered. This allowed the audience to be plunged into a world of Greek mythology from the dimming of the lights to the curtain call, totally transfixed the entire time. This is hard for even the most experienced of actors, let alone a 15+ youth theatre.

I can honestly say I learned more in this short performance than two years of Classics lessons! A fantastic and thoroughly enjoyable production. Well done to everyone involved.

Hannah Winter, GSAL

An Ode to the Odyssey

In a fabulous display of the finest young talent Harrogate has to offer, 'The Odyssey' is genius. An eclectic mix of both serious and entertaining moments, the performance has its audience in stitches. Cleverly adapted and directed by Hannah Draper and Lizzy Whynes, Harrogate Youth Theatre brings Homer's Odyssey into the light of the 21st Century, breathing a new life into the ill-fated story of Odysseus' journey home to his native isle of Ithaca.

The creative staging and set design (Will Heyes) provides the main focal point of the show, really capturing the audience's attention by using all elements of the stage, and the accompanying dancers really make this age old tale come alive, providing a minimalistic mix of fluid and contemporary dance that wows audiences with its lightness and fluency. The intense sound and lighting is an excellent accompaniment throughout the show, and helps to transform the main stage of Harrogate Theatre into the raging Aegean Sea.

Throughout my experience of the Young Reviewers programme, I have been amazed time and time again at the large diversity of performances, the flair of the actors and the creativity of staging that has been dreamed up by incredible casts and crews, and 'The Odyssey' is no exception. The hard work of the young people at Harrogate Youth Theatre should not go unnoticed, an incredibly supportive and hardworking group with stacks of talent, 'The Odyssey' is a well-deserved success for this dramatics group. Keep an eye out and expect to see many up and coming talents arising from this group, the portrayal of Odysseus by (insert name) was flawless, and who can forget the comical antics from (insert name) as the plucky Hermes. This gifted group actors are indeed ones to watch.

A great evening out for all ages, the performance of 'The Odyssey' by young dramatics educates audiences with a fun modern twist. Thoroughly enjoyable and a great opportunity to see one of the classic ancient Greek epics come to life on the stage, which may seem unachievable, but which this theatre group has done with tasteful panache.

Adrienne Ives, Harrogate Ladies' College

'The Odyssey' ran at Harrogate Theatre from Thursday 4th to Friday 5th April 2019, and was performed and directed by Harrogate Youth Theatre.