

THE ADVENTURES OF PERSEUS

By Will Huddleston

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STORY OF THE PLAY

In pageant, verse and fearsome argument the gods on Olympus present themselves. They set the great Perseus myth in motion. When the Oracle tells the human king, Acrisius, that his grandson will kill him, the old miser locks his daughter, Danae, up in a tower guarded by savage dogs. Zeus comes to her and devours the dogs, and soon Perseus is born. Acrisius locks mother and baby in a chest and sets it afloat on the sea. The gods see the chest safely to the isle of Seriphos where Perseus grows into a local hero. The jealous king sends him on an impossible quest - to bring in the head of the Gorgon, Medusa. The gods Athena and Hermes assist Perseus with gifts that help protect him as he travels to the four corners of the world to witness the birth of Pegasus; save his future bride Andromeda from the Kraken; and slay the Gorgon, Medusa. In the magical land of Hyperborea he witnesses a comic version of a play about King Midas and returns to vanquish the wicked king of Seriphos, rescue his mother, and marry Andromeda. The play contains song, dance, ritual and comedy.

Performance time about an hour.

THE ADVENTURES OF PERSEUS was commissioned in the spring of 1982 by The California Theatre Center under the title "The Greeks." General Director of CTC was Gayle Cornelison. The production included the following artists:

Writer and Director
Set Design
Costume Design

Will Huddleston
Ralph Ryan
Mary Hall Surface

The cast included:
Perseus
Dionysus and Acrisius
Hera, the Naiad, Andromeda
Poseidon, Dictys
Hermes
Danae, Athena

Anders Bolang
Charles Abernathy
Rachel LePell
Dorien Wilson
Kevin Reese
Mary Gibboney

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(Large, flexible cast)

Dionysus: Narrator
Zeus
Hera
Poseidon
Chorus (all actors unmasked)
Dictys
Danae
Acrisius
The Oracle
Three Villagers
Polydectes
Advisors
Perseus
Hermes
Athena
The Grey Sisters (Dino, Pephredo, Enyo)
The Naiad
Medusa (several actors combine to make the monster)
Ethiopians
The Kraken (several actors combine to make the monster)
Andromeda

The Midas Play

Midas
Chiron
Dionysus
Daughter of Midas

**SCENE 1
THE GODS**

(AT RISE: With a fanfare the GODS of Mount Olympus appear and freeze in tableau. They are masked. DIONYSUS appears last. He overdoes his bows and begins to speak.)

DIONYSUS:

Please let me introduce myself. I don't wish to seem odd.
My strange appearance mystifies because I am a god.
Though not the omnipotent god a modern human seeks.
Yet once I had my day; I was adored by ancient Greeks.
Today I like to pass the time by dabbling in the arts;
And in this play myself you'll see performing several parts.
When I play a human, here are the features that I choose.

(DIONYSUS removes his mask.)

But when I play myself, my god-like, good-looks I will use.

(Mask on.)

My name is Dionysus, god of wine and spirits high,
And god of many things that bring a wildness to the eye.
And now the grandest god of all I must now introduce:
The god of eagles, lightning flash, and rain,
His name is Zeus.
He lives on Mount Olympus with his brother gods and me,
Among them Lord Poseidon, god of rivers and the sea.
Poseidon envies Zeus and does avoid his thunderbolt,
And likewise, Zeus flies through the air
And never goes by boat.
Another brother, Hades, is the god of all the dead.
Though you won't see him in our play,
Much of him will be said.
And let us not forget the goddess, Hera, is her name;
Though she's wife to Zeus, it's said,
He fears her just the same.
Sometimes the sky-god, Zeus, *(Cont'd.)*

DIONYSUS: *(Cont'd.)*

Will take a human for a bride,
But if Queen Hera finds it out, there is no place to hide.
“Now, don’t be jealous,” Zeus will say, and Hera will reply,
“I am not jealous of a wretch who’ll wrinkle, age, and die,
While I do beautiful remain, forever young and strong.”
What Hera says is true; you mortals never do live long.
But sometimes Hera’s jealousy will rise above her reason,
And then disasters, earthquakes, storms,
And monsters are in season.
So with this, our play begins: Poseidon’s awful storm.
And now I call the actors forth by blowing on my horn.

(DIONYSUS sounds his horn and the GODS begin to move.)

ZEUS: I, Zeus, God of the Heavens, who saved myself and
my foolish brothers from the cannibal mouth of our father;
I, who can fling lightning across the stormy skies and
drown the earth in torrents of rain, will do as I please!

HERA: I, Hera, wife to this immortal pig of a god who does
as he pleases, will not endure this shame. Your mortal
bride and child have been cast upon the sea. That is your
realm, Poseidon. I insist that you destroy them. Send
them to live in the Underworld where I won’t have to look
upon their death-frightened faces, nagging reminders of
my faithless husband and this intolerable marriage.

(ALL GODS but POSEIDON sweep angrily from the stage.)

POSEIDON: Am I, Poseidon, Lord of all the Waters of the
Earth, a slave to Zeus and Hera? No god can force me to
arbitrate this petty quarrel. The world will feel these insults
and know of my displeasure.

END SCENE 1

SCENE 2
THE MORTALS

(POSEIDON becomes a statue. The actors, now an unmasked CHORUS of ordinary mortals, come wailing onstage to huddle at the foot of the statue. They can see a black and terrible storm gathering at sea.)

CHORUS:

The skies grow black and lightning blazes.
Once again the rage of the gods rises above all reason.
Zeus has come to earth again to take a mortal bride,
And his goddess-wife, Queen Hera,
Has discovered the infidelity.
The top of Mount Olympus, palace of the gods,
Is ablaze with anger, and black clouds,
Racing over the world like a smoky plague,
Pitch the world into darkness and despair.

CHORUS MEMBER:

What can a mortal do but hide and hope
The anger falls on someone else's head.

CHORUS:

The winds rise to a shrieking pitch,
Trees explode from lightning strikes,
The tides rise up and waves roll in upon the land
Like giant hammers.

(The statue of POSEIDON begins to move and the storm begins. Running and cart-wheeling, the CHORUS trail long bolts of cloth that had been the capes of ZEUS and HERA. At last the whirling hurricane subsides and POSEIDON leaves the scene, calming the waves with a set of chimes. A large chest has appeared among the flotsam and jetsam ... the bolts of cloth ... of the storm.)

END OF SCENE 2

End of Freeview

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