



SYMPOSION
MUSIC · ART · MYTHOLOGY

by LaPonta

Odysseus Returns

With these words the Odyssey begins...

*Sing to me of the man, Muse, the man of twists and turns
driven time and again off course, once he had plundered
the hallowed heights of Troy.*

*Many cities of men he saw and learned their minds,
many pains he suffered, heartsick on the open sea,
fighting to save his life and bring his comrades home.
But he could not save them from disaster, hard —
the recklessness of their own ways destroyed them all,
the blind fools, they devoured the cattle of the Sun
and the Sungod blotted out the day of their return.
Launch out on his story, Muse, daughter of Zeus,
start from where you will — sing for our time too.*

The Odyssey is one of the most widely read stories ever told. Its authorship is traditionally ascribed to Homer, a blind poet who lived in the late eight and early seventh centuries, B.C. Many have questioned the notion that the epic poem had a single author, instead ascribing its genesis to a long tradition of oral poetry and collective authorship. The story is set in the Mycenaean Greece of around the twelfth century B.C., considered a more glorious and sublime age by Homer and his contemporaries, when gods still visited the earth and heroic, godlike mortals with superhuman attributes populated the country.

Tonight's concert tells the story of Odysseus' journey home to Ithaca with the voice of music.



SANTUR – *The Journey Begins*

Zeus sends his son Hermes to Ogygia, in order to liberate Odysseus from the beautiful nymph Calypso who, crazed by love, has held him prisoner for ten years. Calypso, aware that she must not cross Zeus, begrudgingly agrees to follow Hermes' directions and provides a raft and supplies for Odysseus. He is ready to go home.

SIDE FLUTE – *Nausicaa*

Surviving a storm brought by Poseidon, Odysseus makes it to the shores of the island of Scheria, home of the Phaeacians. Athena sends Nausicaa, the daughter of the king and queen, to wash clothes with her handmaidens near the spot where the hero has collapsed. Nausicaa, attracted to Odysseus, tells him how to find the palace and endear himself to the queen, thus ensuring his safe passage home.

RIVER FLUTE – *Revelation*

Following Nausicaa's instructions Odysseus seeks out the queen and is given hospitality at the royal household. In time he reveals his identity and welcomes the Phaeacians' offer to return him to Ithaca. Before he departs, however, he tells them of his wanderings...

PAN FLUTE – *Cyclops*

Odysseus relates that after his victory at Troy, he and his men sail to Ismarus, where they are victorious and plunder the city. Odysseus tells his men to leave immediately with their riches, but they ignore his warnings and are forced by counterattack to retreat by sea. Storms blow the ships off course, but they finally arrived at the land of the Lotus-eaters. The inhabitants are not hostile, but Odysseus' men eat the Lotus plants and lose all desire to return home. Odysseus barely gets them back to sea. Their next stop is the land of the Cyclops, lawless one-eyed giants. One of them, Polyphemus, traps Odysseus and a scouting party in his cave. Only the Greek hero's wily plan allows escape.



CANE CLARINET – *Calypso*

The melody evokes the water as it drips within the grotto of Calypso. Calypso enchants Odysseus with her singing as she moves to and fro, weaving on her loom with a golden shuttle. They sleep together, but it is not his will to become her immortal husband. When Zeus sends Hermes to tell Calypso to set Odysseus free, because it is not his destiny for him to live with her forever, she gets angry and complains that the gods hate goddesses having affairs with mortals. Yet she eventually concedes and sends Odysseus on his way.

GAIDA – *The Dogs* (*“Between a Rock and a Hard Place”*)

Scylla and Charybdis are sea-monsters, situated on opposite sides of the straits of Messina, arrow distance apart. Scylla is a six-headed beast lurking in a cavern; Charybdis is a whirlpool that swallows everything in its path three times per day. They are located so close together that they posed an inescapable threat to passing sailors; avoiding Charybdis meant passing too close to Scylla and vice versa. Odysseus is forced to choose which monster to confront while passing through the strait; he opts to pass by Scylla and lose only a six sailors, rather than risk the loss of his entire ship in the whirlpool.

DOUBLE FLUTE WITH REED – *The Sirens*

The irresistible songs of the Sirens lure sailors towards their island’s coastal reefs. Circe advises Odysseus’ men to stop their ears with beeswax, but she knows that Odysseus’ intellectual curiosity must be satisfied; he has to hear the Sirens’ song. The only solution is to lash him to the mast of the ship and, when he pleads to be set free, to tie him more securely. Odysseus and the crew survive temptation, although Odysseus is nearly driven mad by his desire to submit to the Sirens’ call.



TSABOUNA – *The Wind*

After they escape the Cyclops, Odysseus and his men arrive at the home of Aeolus, master of the winds, where they are greeted warmly and hosted for a month. Eager to move on, Odysseus receives an ox-skin pouch from Aeolus. In it all the winds that might drive the ships off course are captured. Only the West Wind is left free to blow them toward Ithaca. After ten days of sailing Odysseus is so close to his home that he can see men tending fires on their island. Exhausted, Odysseus falls asleep. While he is asleep his men open the pouch expecting to find treasure and release heavy squalls that blow them right back to Aeolus' island. The wind god refuses to help them further.

REEDLESS DOUBLE FLUTE – *Return to Ithaca*

Odysseus finishes his account of his wanderings. The Phaeacians' insist on even more gifts for their guest and, consistent with their custom, they provide the wanderer safe passage home. Athena meets Odysseus on Ithaca and disguises him as an old beggar so that he can gain information on the suitors who have been vying for his wife Penelope's hand and plotting against his son Telemachus, without being recognized.

LYRE – *Killing the Suitors*

Odysseus reveals his true identity to his son, and they work out a plan to defeat the suitors. With the help of Athena Odysseus and Telemachus slaughter the suitors like eagles attacking little birds. Odysseus' victory, though bloody, is not bloodthirsty; he spares the innocent and metes out punishment according to the severity of the crime.