

# ALLEY THEATRE

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## **Alley Theatre Announces the Cast & Creative Team of *The Odyssey***

***Derek Walcott's reinvention of Homer's epic tale brings Caribbean language to  
the heart of the story***

HOUSTON TX - The Tony Award®-winning Alley Theatre announces the cast and creative team of **The Odyssey**, written by Nobel Prize Winner **Derek Walcott**. This adventure classic infused with Afro-Caribbean elements runs **March 24 – April 16, 2023** in the Neuhaus Theatre and is directed by **Christopher Windom**.

With rich Caribbean tones of his island home, Derek Walcott adapts the ancient story of Odysseus, the soldier-king who spends 10 adventurous years making his way home from the Trojan War. Interspersing the story with a commentary by the blind singer Billy Blue adds richness and a musical lilt to the classic tale. While Odysseus' loving wife Penelope stays chaste in Ithaca, fending off suitors ready to take the throne, Odysseus and his crew face shipwrecks, wrathful gods, sirens, monsters, incarceration, mermaids, a side trip to hell, and absolutely foul weather.

"With his adaptation of *The Odyssey*, Derek Walcott artfully infuses the classical story with his life experience of growing up in Trinidad" shares director **Christopher Windom**. "This amalgamation of worlds, Ancient Greece and Mid-Century Caribbean is creative, clever, and epic. In the grandness of it all, Walcott demonstrates how the quest for home, honor, and connection is universally felt. At its best, theatre offers us a chance to reflect and grow as we follow each character's journey. I hope audiences at Alley Theatre see aspects of themselves in our telling of this story, inspired to fulfill their own journey through life.

"Derek Walcott's adaptation of *The Odyssey* is a brilliant telling of Homer's epic – one of the greatest adventure stories ever told," shares Artistic Director **Rob Melrose**. "It is quite faithful to all the events of the original story, and it is told in this Nobel Prize-winning poet's language which is filled with the sights and sounds of his native St. Lucia. I'm a deep believer that the classics belong to everyone, and this adaptation is a great way of showing how Derek Walcott makes this classic his own. I saw the world premiere of this play and met Mr. Walcott at the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1992 and it remains one of my best experiences in the theatre. I'm excited to share this play with Houston audiences in Christopher Windom's gorgeous direction featuring many of our Resident Acting Company members."

The cast of *The Odyssey* includes Alley Theatre Resident Acting Company Members **Shawn Hamilton** as "Blind" Billy Blue/Ensemble, **Chris Hutchison** as Menelaus/Eumaeus/Ensemble, **Melissa Molano** as Melanthis/Nausicaa/Ensemble, **Melissa Pritchett** as Athena/Ensemble, and **David Rainey** as Nestor/Alcinous/Ensemble.

Rounding out the cast includes **Vanessa R. Butler** as Penelope/Helen/Ensemble, **Juan Sebastián Cruz** (*72 miles to go...*) as Telemachus/Elpenor/Ensemble, **Ricardo Dávila** (*High School Play: A Nostalgia Fest*) as Thersites/Eurymachus/Cyclops/Ensemble, **Rachel Hemphill Dickson** as Eurycleia/Circe/Ensemble, **Gabriel Lawrence** (TV: *What Would You Do?*) as Odysseus, and **Kyle Ward** as Ajax/Antinous/Ensemble.

The creative team of *The Odyssey* includes Scenic Designer **Tanya Orellana**, Costume Designer **Jacob A. Climer**, Lighting Designer **Cat Tate Starmer**, Sound Designer **Everett Elton Bradman**, Stage Manager **Rebecca R.D. Hamlin**, and Assistant Stage Manager **Ryan Barrett**.

**PRESS NIGHT:** Wednesday, March 29 at 7:30pm. Invitations will be sent later.

**SPONSORS:** *The Odyssey* is supported by Beth Madison (Honorary Producer) and Valerie Jalufka (Associate Producer). Alley Theatre is supported by the 2022-23 Season sponsors United Airlines, the official airline of Alley Theatre, and Hampton Inn and Homewood Suites Downtown Houston, the official hotel of Alley Theatre.

**TICKETS:** Tickets to *The Odyssey* are now on sale and start at \$51. Discounted tickets are available for military, seniors, and any student or educator, regardless of age, with a valid student ID for designated performances. Tickets can be ordered online ([alleytheatre.org](http://alleytheatre.org)) or by phone (713.220.5700).

**CONNECT WITH US:** @alleytheatre, #AlleyOdyssey

#### **ABOUT ALLEY THEATRE:**

Alley Theatre, one of America's leading nonprofit theatres, is a nationally recognized performing arts company led by Artistic Director Rob Melrose and Managing Director Dean R. Gladden. The Alley is committed to developing and producing theatre that is as diverse as the Houston community. The Alley produces up to 11 plays and nearly 400 performances each season, ranging from the best current work and classic plays to new plays by contemporary writers. Home to a full-time resident company of actors and expert artisans in all theatre crafts, the Alley engages theatre artists of every discipline – actors, directors, designers, composers, playwrights – who work on individual productions throughout each season as visiting artists.

Alley Theatre performs at the Meredith J. Long Theatre Center which is comprised of two state-of-the-art theatres: the 774-seat Hubbard Theatre and the 296-seat Neuhaus Theatre. The Alley reaches over 200,000 people each year through its performance, education, and community engagement programs.

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