Famous Orpheus

Emmet Robbins

Orpheus. Few names from Greek myth are so evocative. Few figures have so appealed to later ages. For us the name has immediate and automatic associations. We think first of the lover who harrowed to hell to win back his beloved, second of the minstrel whose sweet music enchanted all nature. We may, if we have made particular study of antiquity, be able to add a third role to the first two. Not only lover and musician, but priest: the name of Orpheus is regularly linked in antiquity with mystery, religion and special illumination, with initiation into knowledge of the secret workings of the universe. These three facets of this astonishing character account for the universality of his appeal, for in them myth, folklore, and legend come together.[i] Myth, folklore, and legend are not mutually exclusive categories and definitions of each might be disrupted. But it would probably be reasonable to claim that Orpheus, the revealer of the mysteries, is the most truly mythical figure. Myth, if it is to be separated from folklore and legend, may most easily be recognized as distinct by its more speculative nature and by the seriousness of its preoccupations.[ii] Orpheus the lover is the folklore figure: the motif of the lover who braves the powers of darkness to find his loved one is common to many parts of the world, as is the taboo against looking back or speaking to her which the lover must observe if he is to be successful in his quest.[iii] Orpheus the musician is the figure of legend, for legend comes closer to history than do myth and folklore, and the story of the gentle singer whose gift makes savage nature tame is certainly none other, on one level, than the story of the advance of civilization and the arts. The Roman poet Horace knew this:

> When men lived wild, a spokesman of the gods, The sacred Orpheus, scared them from their foul and murderous ways; and so the legend says: *Ravening lions and tigers Orpheus tamed...*[iv]

Priest, lover, musician – a figure of myth, folk-tale, and legend. Does a real person stand behind this great name, or is Orpheus simply the product of the imagination of a nation that has bequeathed to us other names equally evocative but almost certainly fictitious? To some the matter is of no consequence, for the real value of many great names – Oedipus, Odysseus, Hamlet, Don Quixote, Robinson Crusoe, to list but a few – is undiminished even if there is no historical personality that can be disinterred for our scrutiny. Orpheus, however, is somewhat different for he is not only a figure whose exploits have furnished substance to poets and artists. The Greeks persisted in regarding him as a great poet and one of the spiritual founders of their nation. Aristophanes, writing in the late fifth century BC, accords Orpheus a place with Homer and Hesiod.[v] Socrates, a few years later, could, as he faced death, put Orpheus on a par with Homer and Hesiod as someone he looked forward to meeting in the realm beyond the grave provided life did not end with bodily death.[vi] And Orpheus, in both cases, is mentioned before Homer and Hesiod. It appears highly likely that he was regarded as more ancient and more venerable than the two poets whose works are our first surviving monuments of Greek literature. No Greek of any period,

certainly, ever questioned the existence of Homer or Hesiod. As poets and teachers they enjoyed an honour that no hero we might describe as purely mythical could ever claim.

And so, one is inevitably tempted to look for a historical reality behind the great name. One is inclined to suspect that there was, once, a real Orpheus whose memory lived on, first in the hearts of his countrymen. When and where, if at all, can he be located?

Our first literary mention of the name of Orpheus occurs in the mid-sixth-century poet Ibycus. A brief mention in a lyric fragment is all we have: 'famous Orpheus.' The name is, thus, celebrated one hundred and fifty years before Aristophanes and Socrates mention him, though we are given no indication why. More intriguing yet is the first representation of Orpheus in art. It antedates the first poetic reference by perhaps a quarter of a century and is thus the first certain appearance of Orpheus that we know. It allows us to make some fascinating, if cautious, surmises.

About the end of the first quarter of the sixth century BC, the people of Sicyon, a town in the northwestern Peloponnese, dedicated, under their tyrant Cleisthennes, a 'treasury' or small temple at Apollo's famous shrine at Delphi. On one of the metopes or relief sculptures from the frieze, surviving in badly damaged state and visible today in the museum at Delphi, are the mutilated outlines of a ship, shown in profile and flanked by two mounted horsemen. Two lute players are standing on the ship, one of them with his name, Orpheus, clearly visible beside him. The ship has been plausibly identified as the Argo, the two horsemen as the twins Castor and Pollux. The tradition is well-established, certainly, that Orpheus formed part of the crew of the illustrious expedition that set out to bring back the Golden Fleece. Pindar, in 462 BC, gives us the first detailed account of the voyage of the Argo and he lists Orpheus, as well as Castor and Pollux, among the heroes who sailed from Greece on the great venture.[viii] All later accounts give special prominence to Orpheus too. Notable among latevesions is a fourth century BC epic by Apollonius of Rhodes, a work which we still possess in its entirety. So long as classical civilization lasted, Orpheus was linked with the Argo. An account of the voyage of the Argo, difficult to date but most probably from the early centuries of the Christian era, is put into the mouth of the singer Orpheus. This poem is regularly called the Orphic Argonautica. The association of Orpheus with the Argo is secure from the very beginning. Another lyric fragment, by the poet Simonides (556-468 BC), is our first definite literary reference to Orpheus after that by Ibycus and it is most easily understood if taken as presupposing his presence on board the Argo:

> Over his head flew innumerable birds and to his beautiful song fish leapt straight out of the blue sea.[viii]

Orpheus' link with the fabulous Argonautic expedition is both early and certain...

The love story of Orpheus and Eurydice, so important to the Romans and to us, seems quite clearly the tail-end of a centuries-old tradition that knew Orpheus, shaman and argonaut, as traveller to the world beyond and master of its mysteries...

There is, without any doubt, something about Orpheus that sets him apart from all the other great figures of Greek myth. Greek myth is pre-eminently heroic myth, myth that enshrines martial values: courage, killing, blood-lust. Not surprising in the legacy of a male-dominated warrior society that produced, in the *Iliad*, the world's supreme battle epic and whose agonistic, competitive impulse never faltered for a moment. The honest products of classical Greek poetry, a thousand years after the Indo-European invasion of the peninsula, are plays, produced at competitive festivals,

and victory odes for triumphant athletes. The contest dominated Greek life in all its aspects, from the Gymnasium and the law-courts to dialectic. A modern theologian points out that there is even an intimate connection between the characteristic competitive impulse of the Greeks and their concept of love, always seen as a striving or an *agon*.[ix] Orpheus clearly belongs to another world, as has been suggested above. All the other great figures of Greek myth, whatever else they may be, are great killers: Achilles, Heracles, Jason, Perseus, Oedipus, Odysseus, Agammemnon - the list could be extended indefinitely and would show not a single figure of note who is not blood-stained. Orpheus is unique and he seems to have puzzled the Greeks.

From *Orpheus, The Metamorphoses of a Myth.* John Warden, editor. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1982. Reprinted with permission.

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[i] Cf M.O. Lee. "Orpheus and Eurydice: Myth, Legend, Folkore" Classica et Mediaevalia 26 (1965) 402-12.

[ii] There is good discussion of these matters in G.S. Kirk *The Nature of Greek Myths* (Harmondsworth 1974) 30-8.

[iii] See, eg, Stith Thompson *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* (Bloomington 1933) F 81.1 and C331.

[iv] "The Art of Poetry" 391-3 (tr John G. Hawthorne), in L.R. Lind ed *Latin Poetry in Verse Translation* (Boston 1957) 140.

[v] Aristophanes *Frogs* 1032ff.

[vi] Plato *Apology* 41a.

[vii] Pindar *Pythian* 4. 171-7.

[viii] "Simonides" fr 62 in D.L. Page *Poetae Melici Graeci* (0xford 1962) tr C.M. Bowra *Greek Lyric Poetry* (2nd edn; Oxford 1961) 364.

[ix] M. Scheler *Ressentiment* tr W.W. Holdheim (New York 1972) 84-6.

Interview with
David Gonzalez

Earlier in the history of "Jazz Orpheus," David Gonzalez spoke with two students from PS 78 in the Bronx. La Toya H. and Rodney W. watched his performance, and then questioned him about his approach to the story and his process of storytelling. Below are highlights from their conversation.

DAVID: I've been looking over your questions. I know you worked really hard on them. How shall we begin?.

LATOYA: Okay. What interested you in doing Orpheus and Eurydice?

DAVID: Well, I really love the story of Orpheus and Eurydice because, apart from being a storyteller, I'm a musician, and Orpheus is a character who is a musician. Then, I saw a great movie called *Black Orpheus*.

It's the story of Orpheus and Eurydice told by Brazilian people. It's beautiful, and there is great music in it. It's the story of a musician. I'm a musician, and was excited by it. So, I decided to experiment with it.

LATOYA: Why did you choose a story like this?

DAVID: Well, the story of Orpheus is a tragedy (a tragedy is a story with a sad ending). Many times we want to hear happy stories, but this tragedy of Orpheus means a lot to me because when he loses Eurydice to the Underworld, he finds her, and then he loses her again. That whole thing of losing something that you love, then trying to find it – losing it and finding it – I think is something really important to experience, to human life.

There are some important lessons that Orpheus teaches us. So, I decided it would be good to learn how to tell that story to kids.

LATOYA: How did you feel when you told the story, considering the sadness?

DAVID: I feel the sadness in my own heart, I feel the sadness in my emotions too. But, at the same time, I feel Orpheus' courage. He continues on, he continues to play his music. His love for Eurydice, even though he can't have her, continues in his music. It's a sad story, but there's also something beautiful in it, because he holds her memory close to him; she lives in the music that he plays.

LATOYA: Is this one of the best or one of the worst stories you have ever acted out?

DAVID: Oh, definitely one of the best. It's got great characters, it's got interesting scenes, a lot of feelings and emotions. It's a very old, old story, that people have been telling for a long time.

LATOYA: How did you change the story from a book to a performance?

DAVID: Well, let's see .... it happens by imagination. When I read, I get pictures in my imagination. Does that ever happen to you?

LATOYA: Yes

DAVID: Well, I try to remember those pictures as best as I can. Then, to tell it as a story, I try to describe the pictures that I see in my mind. So, it goes from being words in a book to being feeling and pictures in my mind, and then I put it into spoken words and movements in my body. That's how it goes.

RODNEY: Hello, this is Rodney.

DAVID: Hi, Rodney.

RODNEY: How do you feel when you are acting out any story? Are you nervous when acting out a story?

DAVID: Well, when I first start working with the story, I'm very nervous. In the beginning, I don't know it so well, and I'm pretty nervous to go on stage and all that. But after a while I get more and more comfortable with the story, and the pictures in my mind for the story become clearer and I have more confidence. That takes a little time, but then I develop a confidence with the story. I also feel very excited. Performers get a lot of attention. It's also a lot of responsibility. People come to see something worthwhile, and it's my responsibility to give them something worthwhile. That's a lot of responsibility. So, it's kind of a combination of being excited and having a lot of responsibility, and at times being a bit nervous too.

RODNEY: Can you do lots of different voices?

DAVID: Sure I can.

RODNEY: Do you like being a storyteller?

DAVID: Sure. I like being storyteller because it involves my creativity, it involves me 00 communicating and being creative, and using what I've got – which is my imagination and my body – to express things. I like it very, very much. I also think stories teach a lot.

RODNEY: Do you like working with children?

DAVID: I enjoy working with children very much, too. Especially when kids are sitting in the audience, and I can tell they're completely involved with what I'm doing. Their eyes are open, their mouths are open, but their bodies are still. There's this connection that we have, because the stories that I tell all have important messages, and during special moments I know the messages are really going in deep. And that's a great feeling.

RODNEY: Why didn't you use a real horn the story?

DAVID: Well, I don't play the horn, first of all. I'm not a saxophonist, I'm a guitarist. But I sing. I like to use my voice, so I just felt that I would pretend I was playing the saxophone, and I could sing jazz lines better than I could ever play them on the saxophone. I don't want to use the guitar because the guitar is big and bulky. I want to be able to move around freely. So, I just decided to use my voice, and that would be the best way to convey Orpheus' music.

RODNEY: In the mythology books we read, Orpheus plays the lyre. Why did you change it to a horn?

DAVID: You know, these days, people don't know what lyres are. It's like a big harp, you'll see it in orchestras and things like that. But everybody knows what a saxophone is. It's part of many people's lives; it's alive today, in the culture. Most kids know what a saxophone is, and I wanted to choose an instrument that was natural, that wouldn't seem weird. Also, the saxophone is most like jazz.

LATOYA: I was fascinated, Mr. Gonzalez, with your ability to play, or make believe you were playing, an instrument. I am studying the clarinet. How long did you take lessons?

DAVID: Oh, I've been studying music for more than twenty-five years. How old are you, Latoya?

LATOYA: Ten.

DAVID: Ten. Well, I started when I was a little bit older than you. I was about twelve. My first instrument was the harmonica, then I started the guitar bass, then piano, and I sang. So, the world of music has always opened up for me-but I'm always studying.

LATOYA: What is your favorite instrument to play?

DAVID: If I was on a desert island and I had to pick one instrument, I would pick the guitar, my classical guitar with nylon strings, from Spain. It's very beautiful.

LATOYA: What kind of music do you like to play?

DAVID: I like to play all kinds of music, but if were going to a desert island, again, and had to pick, I would take two kinds. I would take jazz music, and I would take classical music.

LATOYA: We heard you were a composer, an actor/storyteller, and music therapist. Which do you enjoy doing or being most?

DAVID: Again, a really hard choice. You know, within all those things – composer, musician, teacher, actor, storyteller and music therapist – the main thing that's in all of those is that I'm an artist, a creative person, always looking for new ways to say things I feel in my heart. That's what I like. If I'm telling stories – I'm a storyteller and I'm really communicating – that's what I like. The same thing is true of being a teacher or composer. Being a music therapist is a little bit different because there, I'm expressing what's inside of me, but I'm really helping kids with special needs.

LATOYA: When and how did you first figure out that you liked music and acting?

DAVID: It must have been in elementary school, when I started getting involved with school plays. I was in the school chorus and stuff, but I didn't really get serious about until I was quite a bit older, until I was about fourteen, beginning high school.

RODNEY: When some of us grow up, we want to be storytellers like you. What do we have to do to become what you are today?

DAVID: Well, let's see. I think there are a bunch of things to do. Reading is very important. Knowing your feelings is very important – being able to really feel what you're feeling at any time is very important. When you're sad, when you're happy, when you're excited – really knowing what you're feeling – because to do work as a storyteller means being able to express the feeling of a story as if it were your own story. So that's really important. One of the things you have to learn to do is be willing, or ready, to be crazy and ridiculous and try new things. Being a storyteller, like me, means sometimes king mistakes and being silly. It's not always something you necessarily have to learn how to do. Just allow yourself to be silly, allow yourself to be ridiculous.

If you find a story that really means something to you, then it's very easy to tell that story, because you yourself axe excited about it, and you can make it sound like it's your own story.

RODNEY: Is this a good job for you, or are you better at something else?

DAVID: Well, you know, life keeps on changing. Right now this is a great job for me. I can't think of anything else I'd rather be doing. It's really fun to walk on stage and have all the eyes on me, and then tell a story, bring a story to life through my body. It's a terrific job for me. I'm also very good as a music therapist; I'm very fortunate to have both of these things in my life. I can't think of anything else right now that I would want to be doing.

I'm a very active person, so sitting on a chair at a desk is not my style. So, who knows what the future will bring? But right now, I'm really content with what I've got.

LATOYA: If you couldn't excel in music, what would you chose to excel in?

DAVID: Aha. Probably dance. If I had to do it all over again, and I couldn't be a musician, I would probably study dance.

LATOYA: Thank you for the interview.

RODNEY: It was nice to talk to you. Thanks for the interview.

DAVID: When I come to your school, you make sure you say hi to me, okay? Goodbye.

Orpheus & Eurydice

Long ago, one of the greatest musicians was Orpheus. On his mother's side, Orpheus was more than mortal. He was the son of one of the **Muses** and a Thracian prince. His mother gave him the gift of music and Thrace, where he grew up, fostered it. The Thracians were the most musical people in all Greece. Orpheus, however, had no rival there – or anywhere – except the gods alone. There was no limit to his power when he played and sang. No one and nothing could resist him. When he played his music, everything animate and inanimate followed him. He moved the rocks on the hillsides and changed the courses of the rivers.

Little is known about Orpheus' life before his ill-fated marriage, which is even more famous than his music. However, he did go on one famous expedition and proved himself a most useful comrade. While traveling with **Jason** on the ***Argo***, he saved the crew by playing his lyre and drowning out the deadly song of the **Sirens**. Were it not for Orpheus, the crew of the Argo would have dased their bones on the shores of the Sirens' island.

Where Orpheus first met and how he wooed the maiden he loved, the fair Eurydice, we are not told, but it is clear that no one he wanted could have resisted the power of his song. Orpheus and Eurydice were married, but their joy was brief. Immediately following the wedding, as the bride walked in a meadow with her bridesmaids, she was bitten by a viper and died. Orpheus' grief at his wife's death was overwhelming. He could not endure it. He became determined to go down into the world of death and try to bring Eurydice back.

Orpheus dared more than any man had ever dared for his love. He took the fearsome journey to the underworld, crossing the **River Styx** in **Charon's** boat. Then, he struck his lyre, and at the sound all of the demons and spirits were charmed to stillness and silence. The three headed dog **Cerberus** relaxed his guard; the wheel of Ixion stood motionless; **Sisyphus** sat at rest on his stone; **Tantalus** forgot his thirst; and for the first time ever, the faces of the dread goddesses, the **Furies**, were wet with tears, The ruler of **Hades** drew near, to listen with his queen.

No one who was under the spell of Orpheus' voice could refuse him anything. Hades summoned Eurydice and gave her to Orpheus, and told Orpheus that he could return with her to the world of the living. However, there was one condition to Hades' offer: Orpheus could not look back at Eurydice as she followed him. He was not allowed to look at Eurydice until they had safely reached the upper world. So, Orpheus and Eurydice began the long and perilous trek out of the underworld, climbing up and up. Orpheus began to doubt that Eurydice was behind him, and he longed to look back and make certain. They almost made it out of the underworld.. the blackness of the cave was turning gray. As Orpheus was about to step out of the cave and into bright daylight, he turned to face his wife. Alas! Eurydice still stood in the cavern, not yet out of the underworld. Orpheus reached out his arms to clasp her, but instantly she was gone. She had slipped back into the darkness. All he heard was one faint word: "Farewell."

Desperately, Orpheus tried to rush after her and follow her down, but he was not allowed. The gods would not consent to his entering the world of the dead a second time while he was still alive. He was forced to return to earth alone and heartbroken. Orpheus began to wander the earth and forsook the company of others. As he wandered, he played his lyre, and the rocks and the rivers and the trees heard him gladly. One day, a gang of thieves came upon him, and slew the gentle musician. They tore him limb from limb, and threw his severed head into the river Hebrus. The

Muses found his head, and buried it in a sanctuary on the island of Lesbos. Orpheus' limbs were buried in a tomb at the foot of **Mount Olympus**, and to this day the nightingales there sing more sweetly than anywhere else in the world.

"Jazz Orpheus" as performed in *MytholoJAZZ,* is a be-bop retelling of this classic Greek tragedy made hip and relevant for today's audiences. Journey with Orpheus in search of his fallen wife Eurydice as he swings and serenades his way through the ordeals of the underworld.

Synopsis

Glossary of Terms

Muses – the Muses were the nine daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, each of whom presided over a different art or science.

Thrace – a region and ancient country of the Balkan Peninsula, north of the Aegean Sea. It was colonized by the ancient Greeks in the 7th century BC.

Jason – the husband of Medea, who went on a quest for the magical Golden Fleece.

Argo – the ship in which Jason searched for the Golden Fleece.

Sirens – a group of singing sea nymphs whose sweet singing lured sailor to destruction on the rocks around their island.

River Styx – the legendary river across which shades, or souls, were ferried from the world of the living to the world of the dead in Hades.

Charon – the son of the ghastly Erebus (the personification of underworld darkness), whose eternal task it is to ferry souls across the river Styx.

Cerberus – the three-headed monster dog who guards the entrance to Hades.

Ixion – a king of Thessaly, who tried to woo the goddess Hera. To punish him, Zeus bound him to a revolving wheel in Hades.

Sisyphus – a cruel king of Corinth who was doomed forever to roll a huge boulder up a hill in Hades, only to have it roll back.

Tantalus – a king who was condemned to Hades, standing in water which receded when he tried to drink it and under fruit that receded when he reached for it.

Furies – avenging spirits or deities who tormented dead souls as punishment for crimes committed during their lives.

Hades – the mythological underworld, underground dwelling place of the dead. Also the king of the underworld.

Lesbos – an island of East Greece, in the Aegean Sea.

Mount Olympus – home of the mythical Greek gods.

A Mighty Mountain of Myth

by Eve Bernfield

What Is Myth?

The world is a big and scary place, and as humans, we are continually faced with the unexplainable. However, our desire to explain and understand everything around us is the very attribute that makes us human. In many respects, we've come a long way toward accounting for the world in which we live. Even in the past 100 years, science has managed to explain phenomena that mystified humans for millions of years. Imagine having no way to explain the change of the seasons or the twinkling lights in the night sky, or such frightening occurrences as solar eclipses and earth-quakes. But this is not an entirely accurate picture. Ancient peoples did have ways of accounting for these phenomena and other mysteries, such as the origin of the world. In contemporary society, we explain our world through science; ancient peoples explained their world through stories, or myths. Every culture has myths. Westerners tend to be most familiar with Greek myths, but there are many other cultures with a rich history of mythology. Other examples of cultures with a well preserved mythical tradition are Scandinavian peoples and the Navajo and Hopi Indians of the American Southwest.

Origins of Greek Myth

The history of the Greek gods begins several generations prior to the Olympic gods and goddesses, like the familiar Zeus and Athena. "Long before the gods appeared, in the dim past, uncounted ages ago, there was only the formless confusion of Chaos brooded over by unbroken darkness" (Hamilton 63). According to Greek myth, Gaea, the goddess of the Earth, grew out of this dark primitive Chaos. She married her son Uranus, the god of the sky.

Gaea and Uranus had a number of children, including three Cyclopses (mighty one-eyed giants) and Hecatoncheires (monsters with 100 arms and 50 heads). Their most important children, however, were the Titans, or Elder gods. The Cyclopses and Hecatoncheires were terribly ugly, and Uranus threw them down into Tartarus, the deep pit of the underworld, so he would not have to see them. This angered Gaea, and she convinced her other children, the Titans, to overthrow Uranus. Cronos, the youngest Titan, led the attack and castrated Uranus with a sickle. Accounts differ as to what exactly became of Uranus – he either died from the attack or was banished. Either way, Cronos took over the role of supreme ruler. However, he did not free the ,Cyclopses and Hecatoncheires from Tartarus as his mother Gaea had hoped.

The Titans, led by Cronos, ruled the world for a very long time before things changed again. This long rule was due to the fact that Cronos was so afraid of being overthrown by one of his children that as soon as his wife Rhea gave birth to a child, he would swallow the child whole. This plan worked quite well, until Rhea tricked Cronos and gave him a rock to swallow instead of their infant son Zeus. Zeus was raised in safety by nymphs, but then came back to seek his revenge upon his father. Zeus' wife Metis warned him that he could not hope to overthrow the Titans alone. Metis formed a plan. She gave Cronos a drink that made him vomit up his children, who were now fully

grown, as well as the stone he had mistaken for the infant Zeus. With the help of his newly freed siblings, as well as the help of the Cyclopses and Hecatoncheires (his uncles), Zeus waged war upon the Titans. Eventually the Olympians (as this third generation of gods became known due to the fact that they lived on Mt. Olympus) overthrew the Titans. The Titans were banished to Tartarus, but Cronos managed to escape to Italy, where he was known as Saturn. Saturn ruled over a long Golden Age in Italy, but Zeus became the new king of the gods in Greece.

Some of the Olympic Gods and Goddesses – A Brief Family History

ZEUS Zeus, or Jupiter in Roman mythology, ruled over heaven and earth as the supreme god. He carried a ,thunderbolt as a weapon and used it to punish gods and mortals when he was angry. Like the rest of the Greek gods, Zeus possessed very human qualities. Today, we generally tend to think of the divine as being all-powerful, all-knowing and all-good, but the Greek gods possessed all the same flaws as people. Zeus, and all the gods, could be spiteful and cruel. He could play favorites among mortals, helping one person and punishing another who hadn't necessarily done anything wrong. Zeus' most notorious exploits were always with women. He was continually seducing goddesses, nymphs and mortals, and had a number of illegitimate children. Many of these children were also gods, but some were famous heroes, like Hercules.

Zeus' first wife was Metis, the goddess of prudence and wisdom. However, Zeus was warned that if Metis ever bore him a son, that son would conquer his father just as Zeus had overthrown Cronos. Anxious to prevent this, Zeus swallowed his wife Metis whole. This way, he wouldn't have to fear being overthrown, but he could also still keep her wise advice. This action increased Zeus' influence as the supreme god, as it enabled him to possess both power and wisdom.

HERA Zeus' second and most famous wife was his sister Hera, the goddess of marriage and childbirth. In Roman mythology, she is called Juno. Hera is best known for her extreme jealousy over Zeus' affairs. She spent most of her time trying to punish Zeus' mistresses and illegitimate children.

POSEIDON Poseidon, or Neptune, was god of the sea. He was more powerful than every other god except Zeus. His weapon, made by the Cyclopses for the war with the Titans, was a trident that could split the seas. He also controlled earthquakes and could swallow sailors with rushing waves caused by his violent temper. As Greece is a country surrounded on three sides by water, it is easy to see why Poseidon was a very important god.

HADES Hades, or Pluto, was Zeus' other brother. He ruled the underworld, and had a helmet which made him invisible. As the god of the underworld and king of the dead, Hades was a frightening and terrible, but not evil, god. He was also the god of wealth and precious medals hidden in the earth. One well-known Greek myth involves Hades' kidnapping Persephone (daughter of Zeus and Demeter – goddess of Harvest, Grain and Fertility) to become his wife and queen in the underworld. Demeter was so angry at this that she vowed to create a famine until Persephone was returned. Zeus saw how dangerous this would be, so he returned Persephone to her mother, but not before she had eaten four pomegranate seeds, the food of the dead. Because of these four tiny seeds eaten in the underworld, Persephone had to stay with Hades for four months of the year and could return to her mother for the remaining eight. During these four months,

Demeter would make the world into a barren waste in mourning for her missing daughter. This story, like all myths, was not just for the purpose of entertainment. Instead, it explained the desolate winter months to the Greeks.

ATHENA Athena, or Minerva in Rome, had no mother in the traditional sense. She sprang directly out of Zeus' head, fully grown and armed for battle. One could argue, however, that she was the daughter of Metis, who still lived in Zeus' belly. This is very likely, as Athena was not only the goddess of war, but of wisdom as well. Athena was also the goddess of weaving, agriculture and civilization. She protected the city and civilized life. It is no coincidence that Athens, Greece's greatest city and the birthplace of democracy, bears her name. Athena was Zeus' favorite child. She was his most trusted advisor, and he allowed her to borrow his mighty thunderbolt.

APOLLO Apollo was the son of Zeus and Leto, a daughter of the Titans. He was a very important god in many respects. Apollo played beautifully upon his golden lyre (an early form of the harp), shot arrows from his silver bow, and taught people the art of healing. He was the god of Light and Truth. He embodied reason and the Greek ideal of moderation. Apollo was also credited with pulling the sun across the sky with his chariot and thus causing the day.

ARTEMIS Artemis, or Diana to the Romans, was Apollo's twin sister. She was the goddess of hunting and lover of woods and wild things. She also protected the young. She too had a mighty bow and arrow that never missed, a gift from her father Zeus, and she and Apollo would often hunt together. As her brother was associated with the sun, Artemis was goddess of the moon.

APHRODITE Aphrodite, or Venus, was the goddess of love and beauty. Neither gods nor mortals were able to resist her beauty and charms. According to the myths, the Trojan War, (the subject of Homer's Iliad) sprang up because Aphrodite, Hera and Athena wanted to find out which was the most beautiful. They asked Paris, a prince of Troy, to settle the argument by picking the most lovely. He was unable to choose, as they were all equally gorgeous, so they each bribed him. Being a romantic type, he took Aphrodite's bribe, the most beautiful woman in the world, and declared Aphrodite the most lovely of the goddesses. Unfortunately, the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen of Sparta, was already married. When Paris abducted her, her husband and all the other powerful men in Greece went to Troy to get her back. This resulted in a bloody ten-year war.

HERMES Hermes, or mercury, was the son of Zeus and the nymph Maia. He is best known as the messenger god, being graceful and swift with his winged hat and sandals. He was also the god of travelers and a master thief. He was shrewd and cunning. Before he was a day old he had stolen Apollo's cows, leaving Apollo confused and angry. Later he invented the lyre, which he gave to Apollo in return for the cows. Hermes was also the god that led the souls of the dead down to Hades in the underworld.

DIONYSUS Dionysus, also known as Bacchus, may not be the best known of the gods, but his influence is certainly the most lasting. He was the son of Zeus and the Theban princess Semele, who became the most unfortunate victim of Hera's jealousy. Zeus was madly in love with the princess and swore by the river Styx that he would do anything that she asked. Hera, in disguise, convinced Semele to ask Zeus to reveal himself to her in all his glory. Semele requested this, and Zeus, having sworn by the Styx, was bound to do it, even though he knew that no mortal could see him and live. By his overwhelming brightness, Semele was killed, but Zeus managed to snatch the unborn Dionysus from her belly. He sewed the fetus into his thigh, where it stayed until it was born.

Dionysus was the god of wine and revelry. He was the god of joy and ecstatic worship in nature, but also the god of cruelty and savage brutality. His followers, like drinkers of too much wine, were often driven into a mad delirium. The Maenads or Bacchantes, women who left everything to follow him, would run through the land in a wild frenzy, dancing and rejoicing and sometimes becoming so crazed that they would tear wild animals apart with their bare hands and devour the flesh.

Great festivals were held to honor Dionysus each year with much drinking and revelry. It is generally assumed that the Greek theater, the beginning of the theater as we know it, came out of the rites performed at these early festivals of Dionysus. Certainly it is known that the later, more organized festivals of Dionysus were dedicated to the production of plays. The yearly festivals were contests to choose and honor the best playwrights. These performances were not just for entertainment purposes, as we might see them today, but were sacred rites for the honor of an important god. They were also extremely popular, with almost the entire population of the area turning out to watch. "The greatest poetry in Greece, and among the greatest in the world, was written for Dionysus" (Hamilton 61).

What Bearing Does This Have On Us Today? (or, Who Cares About Ancient Myths?)

Since the rise of the scientific age in the Renaissance, there has been a drastic decline of belief in myths. Scientists discovered, for example, that the earth is not the center of the universe, and the seasons are caused by the earth's yearly revolution around the sun. People no longer needed the tale of Demeter and Persephone to explain the winter months or Poseidon's anger to understand a terrible sea storm. Science and reason began to dominate society to such an extent that many people became convinced that science would eventually prove false and eliminate all mythology and religion. Sigmund Freud, the father of modern psychology, saw myth and religion as a sort of universal neurosis. ". . . Freud . . . judged the worlds of myth, magic, and religion negatively, as errors to be refuted, surpassed, and supplanted finally by science" (Campbell 12-13).

However, more recently, many people have begun to suspect that there is more to myth than just a naive explanation of the natural world. Perhaps, these psychologists and philosophers suggest, we have been too quick to throw out this rich tradition of myth. Psychologist Carl Jung suggests that myths are of great use to us even today. He sees these stories as part of our collective unconscious. In other words, the stories we tell, which are remarkably similar from culture to culture, have a much larger job than just explaining natural phenomena such as the sunset or an earth-quake. instead, their most important job is to tell us about ourselves as humans and the thoughts, feelings, dreams and fears that we all have in common.

By learning about the Greek gods, we learn more about human nature, because we can see all of our strengths and flaws reflected in the gods and heroes. We can enjoy myths today not only as a way of delving into the ancient world, but also as a tool for a deeper understanding of ourselves. We see in the Greek gods all the wisdom, insecurity, humor, bad moods, goodness and evil that we each possess as human beings. By thinking about mythical characters, we can begin to become more aware of these qualities in ourselves and people around us. The human race and the universe in which we live are still as mysterious and bewitching today as in the days of the ancient Greeks. The fact that we can still recognize aspects of ourselves and people we know in these myths can help remind us that human nature doesn't really change, even over thousands of years.

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The Storytelling Tradition

by Christopher Milone

THERE IS ONE THING THAT HAS HELPED PEOPLE MAKE SENSE OF THE WORLD BETTER THAN ANYTHING ELSE FOR GENERATIONS ON END: A GOOD STORY. STORYTELLING HAS BEEN A PART OF HUMAN SOCIETY FOR CENTURIES AND HAS A LONG, VARIED HISTORY. IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT WE HAVE BEEN TELLING EACH OTHER STORIES SINCE THE BEGINNING OF HUMAN EXISTENCE, SINCE THE FIRST PRIMITIVE HUMANS RELATED THE STORY OF A HUNT TO THEIR FAMILIES.

FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, AS PEOPLE STRUGGLED AND SURVIVED THEY PASSED DOWN THE WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE THEY HAD GAINED THROUGH TELLING STORIES. BY ESTABLISHING THE ORAL TRADITION, HUMANS BUILT ON THE PAST AND MOVED FORWARD INTO THE FUTURE.

LONG BEFORE the recorded history of humanity; family units and tribes shared their group traditions and values through stories told in caves and around bonfires. Almost everywhere around the globe, ancient people developed folktales and myths that speculated on the origins of the universe and other natural phenomena. Different cultures were able to pass on their values, religion, and history through stories. As pictographs, and later, written languages developed, people were able to preserve these stories on cave walls, in Pyramids, and on parchment paper. Many ancient stories are still around today, such as *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, and *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, though they may be different from the versions which originated thousands of years ago,

A SIGNIFICANT event occurred in the 1450s, which greatly impacted the use of storytelling and the oral tradition. Johannes Gutenberg, a German, invented a practical method of using movable metal type, which made it possible to mass produce books by printing them rather than by having to write each book out by hand. The first printed book the Bible, had previously been told to congregations orally, in mass and at prayer; however, when it became possible to mass produce, it became conceivable that every Christian could own a copy and read the stories on their own.

EARLY PRINT did not initially seize the place of storytelling, because much of the world's population was unable to read and had to rely on people telling stories so that they could hear tales about their family history, their religion. and the news of the times. However, as more of the population became literate, the art of storytelling seemed to fade away because books and newspapers could reach a much larger audience than a single person telling a story, Ancient and medieval literary classics were written down and mass produced as printed books. Newspapers were printed and became a primary source of information.

DESPITE the advent of printing -and literacy, it eventually became clear that storytelling was still a necessary means of communication. Although the actual story itself could simply be read. the Storyteller adds his or her own interpretation to that story. It is as a result of this that storytelling has always been recognized as a kind of entertainment It is said that stories evolved from the human need to communicate experiences to others, and an important part of that communication included speaking to and with each other Stories satisfy an aesthetic need for beauty, regularity, and form through expressive language, music and body movement, things which cannot be captured in print. Stories help us become passionate and expressive people who try to imagine other people's experiences. As the United States

developed, stories and storytelling helped to create a shared culture. Immigrants from around the world brought their own cultural tales and songs with them. These tales spread across America as these immigrants migrated from east to west. People would share their stories with cultures, and soon discovered that similar stories were being told in different ways. In the early 1900s this kind of cultural story sharing was most rapid due to the large numbers of people immigrating to the United States.

ONE MIGHT THINK that the ancient art of storytelling. the simple face-to-face speaking of a tale, would be fading toward oblivion in a world which is so dependent upon technology. On the contrary, storytelling is in the midst of a vibrant and exciting revival. Today, due to a growing matrix of technology, we are able to share our stories with more people than ever. Television, movies, radio, email, and the Internet are new pathways which we can use to reach others and communicate our tales with them. "In recent times the age-old art of storytelling was almost drowned out by the clamorous din of contemporary culture - until the human yearning for genuine one-on-one communication sparked a revival of the art" (storynet. p.1). Storytelling is everywhere-in cafes and restaurants, on the street, at home, in schools, films, television shows, and on the radio. Most of the mass media is comprised of stories which are being told to a very large audience.

STORYTELLING festivals began to spread across the United States in 1975. The earliest was the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee. After the festival people all over the world gradually rediscovered the simplicity and truth of the well-told tale. The festival, growing larger every year, influenced a national movement that celebrates the rich history of American storytelling and tellers. The National Storytelling Festival's impact on storytelling as a major art form continues to be felt worldwide. A storytelling festival gives all ages a chance to hear stories, listen to the different styles of storytelling, and experience the magic of storytelling from different cultures. Today Jonesborough is known as the birthplace of America's storytelling revival, and is still holding annual storytelling festivals.

THE NATIONAL Storytelling Association also organizes an annual "Tellabration." In 1988 this event was launched by the Connecticut Storytelling Center in six locations across the state. A "Tellabration" is an exciting evening of storytelling. It brings storytelling enthusiasts together to share the tales that they have collected from around the world. A great success, the "Tellabration" extended to other states the following year, and then, in 1990, expanded nationwide. By 1997, there were "Tellabration" events on almost every continent

FOR CHILDREN, storytelling is more important now than ever before. With so many forms of entertainment for children, such as TV, video games and movies, children need activities which provide them with the opportunity to develop their own imagination and voice. Storytelling does

just this, as well as developing vocabulary, listening, and communication skills. Also, there is the simple fact that storytelling is a great deal of fun. Children are entertained while they are learning about other people, other cultures, and the world around them.

AS WONDERFUL as storytelling is for children, it's not just for young people. Throughout most of its existence, storytelling has been primarily for adults. Through the efforts of organizations and individuals, more and more adults are finding an afternoon or evening of storytelling to be an enjoyable and rewarding form of enrichment and entertainment

PEOPLE FROM all walks of life use storytelling to hold an audience's attention and help them hear in new ways. Lawyers, for example, use storytelling to plead cases more effectively in the courtroom. Everyday, we tell stories to our friends and families, and we watch stories being told to us on television or in the movies. As the recognized uses of storytelling increase, so do the numbers of tellers, festivals, conferences, degrees and awards.

Storytelling lives at the heart of the human experience. It is a compelling form of communication as ancient as language itself Since the beginnings of humankind, we have shared, through stories, the events, beliefs, and values held dear by our families, communities and cultures.

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What is a Tellabration? Website.

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Post-Show Discussion Questions

1. What does a storyteller need in order to perform? How did David Gonzalez use the space, and differentiate between characters? Were you able to tell the characters apart? How did he challenge you to use your imagination?

2. What role did music play in the story of Orpheus? How did the music support the action and create an environment or mood? Why does Orpheus play the sax in this version instead of a lyre? What was the relationship between the storyteller and the musicians?

3. How did David Gonzalez use the jazz music to help him tell the story of Orpheus? Did you recognize any of the music? How would the tale of Orpheus be different if it had been set to classical, hip-hop, rap, reggae, or Latin music?

4. What is a myth? What characteristics make "Orpheus and Eurydice" a myth? How does David Gonzalez update the story, but maintain the spirit of the original?

5. Why did Orpheus turn around?

6. How did the story of "Orpheus and Eurydice" make you feel? Do you think that "Orpheus and Eurydice" would have the same effect if it had a happy ending?

7. What contemporary references did you see or hear in the performance? How did these references fit within the telling of the story?

8. Why do you think David Gonzalez chose to tell this these two stories in the same performance?

9. if you could change something about this performance, what would it be? Which of the two stories did you find most enjoyable?

10. How is watching a storytelling performance different than watching a fully cast play? How is it similar?

11. How was "Delgadina" different from "Orpheus"? How was it similar? What are the differences between a folktale and a myth? Of what other stories did "Delgadina" remind you?

12. How and when was music used in "Delgadina"?

13. Both "Orpheus and Eurydice" and "Delgadina" include snakes as characters. What were the roles of the snake characters in each story? Do you know any other stories that include snakes? What are they? What ideas do people often have about snakes? Why do you suppose people have these ideas?

Suggested Classroom Activities

Mythmaking

Ancient people used mythology to explain the various phenomenon of the world around them, to explain the flaws of humans, and to understand the mysteries of life and death. For example, the ancient Greeks believed that the sun rising and setting each day was the result of Apollo riding his chariot across the sky. Create a myth to explain one of the following phenomenon:

* Why a ball drops in Times Square on New Year's Eve
* Why there are bees on the seats of The New Victory
* Why the buildings in Manhattan are so tall
* Why Manhattan is an island
* Why palm trees don't grow in New York City
* Why there is no school in the summertime

There are logical explanations for all of these phenomenon, of course, but when making a myth, you must create your own explanation. Carefully consider when your story is set, who the characters are, and how the story results in the phenomenon you are trying to explain.

Older students may consider creating "fake derivations" for modern-day names, places, or ideas. For instance, the hero in a story about Times Square could be called Timz, thus explaining the name of the area.

A Fascinating Family Tree

Using the "Mighty Mountain of Myth"' essay earlier in this chapter, construct a family tree for the Greek gods, utilizing all of the races, creatures, siblings, and children mentioned. Be sure to use a big piece of paper, and read the essay carefully before attempting to create the family tree.

As an alternate activity, create portraits of the various Greek gods as you visualize them.

Orpheus Neurosis

Why do you suppose that Orpheus turned around and looked at Eurydice, sending her back to Hades and the underworld? Have you ever done something you were specifically told not to do? What do you think you would have done in Orpheus' position? How do you think Orpheus felt after he lost Eurydice? How do you think Eurydice felt when her escape was thwarted?

Divide your class into two groups. One group will be working in role as either Orpheus or Eurydice, and the other group will be in role as a therapist or an advice columnist.

Instruct the Orpheus/Eurydice group to write letters in role, to a therapist or advice columnist. How are the characters feeling? What are their feelings toward each other? How are they dealing with their losses?

Give the Orpheus/Eurydice group letters to the therapist/advice columnist group. Instruct the therapist/advice columnist group to carefully read the letters, assess the problems contained in them, and thoughtfully respond to them. Have Orpheus and Eurydice dealt with their predicament in a productive way? Why or why not? What helpful advice can be given to them?

After the therapists/advice columnists have finished their responses, let each group read their letters and responses aloud. What similarities are there between the letters and the advice? What are the differences? Were the letters funny or serious? How would you characterize the various Orpheuses and Eurydices? What do you think was the best advice they received?

Scoring a Story

David Gonzalez chose to tell "Orpheus and Eurydice" using jazz music to highlight different aspects of the story. Do you think the music supported the story? How did the music create a mood or feeling to the story? Would the performance be different if it were performed without music? Why?

Pick a fairy tale, myth, or fable with which you are familiar. How could music be incorporated into the story? Remember, David Gonzalez's performance was not a musical, in the traditional sense. What, songs could you use in a musical storytelling adaptation of the tale you have chosen? For example, the song "Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head" could easily be used in a retelling of the Biblical story of Noah, or the song "I Will Survive" could be used in an adaptation of the Medea myth.

If you want to get tricky, try to pick music which is all the same style. Could "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" be told with reggae music?

Write out a list of the songs you choose, accompanied by an explanation of when they would be used in the story. Illustrate your list with a drawing of a production of your adaptation.

Snakeskin Wishes

In the story "Delgadina," a magical snake gives the heroine the ability to make gold whenever she washes her hands. Delgadina then uses this power to help those who are in need. Pose the question to your class: "What would you do if you had an unlimited supply of gold, but could ONLY use it for the benefit of others?"

Instruct each student to cut a large, Frisbee-sized circle out of a piece of colored construction paper (or, you can use colorful paper plates). On each circle, students should write what they would use the gold to buy and to whom they would give their purchase. Urge students to stay away from the edges of the circle.

Attach all of the circles to each other in a long, snake-like line. Create a head and tail for your snake with more construction paper, and then hang your snakeskin wishes on your classroom wall.