

## March 2018 Parent Letter: The Odyssey

### Hello, Parents!

The Parents' Club is proud and excited to support theater arts at our school. Pacific Elementary has a long-standing tradition of the biennial\* school play. This project gives us an opportunity to work together as a school - it brings mainly the 3rd through 6th grades together, includes the IS program along with the mainstream program, sometimes the school Chorus also participates, and there are plenty of opportunities for families to be involved.

Once again, we are partnering with fantastic artist-in-residence, Terri Steinmann, and her crew from West Creative Performing Arts, plus our own community icon, Heather McDougal. They will immerse our students in an integrated artistic and literary learning experience. To connect with the 5th/6th grade curriculum, the project will be based on the classic of Greek literature, Homer's *The Odyssey*.

After planning, writing, and preparing, the creative partners of WEST and Heather McDougal have begun working with the student body. In the early stages of production, students have chosen roles, scripts have been handed out, read-throughs and staging have started. Through all of this, the staff has been cultivating student buy-in and leadership. The next couple of months will give students many opportunities to explore the craft of acting, become familiar with ancient literature, experience the magic of theater, and develop confidence and skills by participating in a multi-faceted creative experience.

In this packet, you can

- Meet our partners (pg. 2)
- Find important calendar dates (pg. 3)
- Learn how you can help support this amazing project (pgs. 4-5)
- Locate resources to further explore the story of The Odyssey with your family (pg. 5)

Thank you for taking the time to look over these materials and to help in any way you can.

Now, on with the show!

\* Yes, we did a school play just last year! However, to best serve our teachers' curriculum and scheduling needs, we are moving to an even-year schedule. To make the crossover, we are implementing the program for a second consecutive year. Going forward, we foresee continuing a schedule of working with a theater artist-in-residence every other spring.

## OUR PARTNERS:

### WEST Creative Performing Arts (WEST):

Terri Steinmann, Artistic Director of the WEST, is our artist-in-residence, working with students in large-group and small-group formats throughout the next couple of months. Fiona Murphy, a core instructor at WEST, will be co-teaching and providing rehearsal and production support. The following description is from their website.

*“We provide educational experiences in literature, performing, expressive and creative arts through classes and productions. We give young artists and audiences the invaluable knowledge that their imaginations have had a positive and profound impact on their world.*

*All of our classes, training programs and productions are process-driven, believing that the creative journey is what matters. Using integrated art forms as our tools, we build confidence, communication and community.*

*We believe in the power of education and the importance of literacy.”*

For more on WEST, visit <http://westperformingarts.com/about/>

Terri Steinmann is a teaching artist with nearly 30 years’ experience in arts education. She is the founder and Artistic Director of WEST Creative Performing Arts and has been the theatre Artist-in-Residence at Pacific School since 2013. Terri will be directing the students in the craft of theatre production and coordinating the set production.

As a SPECTRA Artist, Terri and the WEST Creative Team provide theatre and literacy programs to schools throughout Santa Cruz and Monterey. WEST reaches over 6,000 students annually. Terri has a B.A. in Theatre from University of Colorado and is a member of American Association of Theatre Educators, and Theatre for Young Audiences, USA.

### Heather McDougal:

Heather is a gift to our community in Davenport and works with your students in tech and gate programs. Heather has worked with WEST to develop an original script for our school. She is taking the lead on costume and special effects/monster production. Fonts changed here:

Heather is a writer, educator, and graphic designer who lives on Swanton Road with one of her two older children and her husband. Her novel, **Songs for a Machine Age**, came out in 2012, and she has been writing/translating plays for Pacific School since 2013. Heather has a degree in fashion design, an MFA in sculpture, and she loves working with kids on theatrical productions. To see some of the amazing costume design from past Pacific School productions, check out her website: [http://www.heathermcdougal.com/?page\\_id=345](http://www.heathermcdougal.com/?page_id=345)

## **CALENDAR:**

It will be helpful for your family to be aware of these dates, and the importance of attendance leading up to the final production.

**Tuesday, March 6 - 1pm - 3pm** Rehearsal & Monster Building (Parent support is welcome)

**Tuesday, March 13 - 1pm - 2pm** Rehearsal & Monster Building (Parent support is welcome) \*  
Early Dismissal because of conferences

**Tuesday, March 20 - 1pm - 3pm** Rehearsal & Monster Building (Parent support is welcome)

**Thursday, March 22 - 1pm - 3pm** Rehearsal

**Tuesday, March 27 - 1pm- 3pm** Rehearsal & Monster Building (Parent support is welcome)

**Thursday, March 29 - 1pm - 3pm** Rehearsal

**Monday - Friday March 31 - April 8 - Spring Break.** No rehearsal.

**Tuesday, April 10 - 1pm- 3pm** Rehearsal & Monster Building (Parent support is welcome)

**Thursday, April 12 - 1pm- 3pm** Rehearsal & Monster Building (Parent support is welcome)

**Saturday or Sunday April 14 or 15 - Possible Community Build Day:** Stay tuned for confirmation.

**Monday, April 16 - Rehearsal 1-3pm**

**Tuesday, April 17 - Rehearsal 1-3pm**

**Wednesday, April 18 - Rehearsal all day**

**Thursday, April 19 - Dress Rehearsal 1-3pm; Performance at 7pm (Actors called at 6pm)**

**Friday, April 20 - Matinee Performance at 1pm (IS students called at 12pm, other students meet after lunch); Evening Performance at 7pm\* (Actors called at 6pm)**

\*Load-Out and room restore follows the 7pm performance

<https://www.pacificesd.org/menu-and-calendar.html> for calendar details and updates.

## **WAYS TO HELP:**

### **In-School Support:**

**Tuesdays:** Terri & Heather are working with students on Tuesday afternoons: 1 - 2 pm is typically 3rd & 5th grade work, and 2 - 3 pm is typically the 4th and 6th grade time frame (although scene by scene there is crossover). If you are at school, you can help staff by working on various tasks, such as reading lines with small groups, helping Heather with costumes and props, or working with students on poster art.

### **Tech Support:**

- Monster building laboratory; Heather is building a cyclops and two other monsters with children, but adult help is always welcome.
- Stage Flats: Terri is coordinating the build for set design and there is always a place for parents in this work. Please let us know if you can help by collecting materials (paint, canvas, wood, etc., building the set structure, or painting).
- Community Work Day: Watch the calendar for details.
- Load In & Load Out: We need help the week of the show! On Monday, ADD THE DATE, we will transform the MU to a theater! On Friday, we will restore the MU to a classroom. Please let us know if you are available to help on either of these days.
- Post-show help: There are 63 characters and costumes in the show. We need help laundering and restoring the costumes for their next use.

### **Parents Club Support:**

There are a couple of play support jobs we would love to have parent volunteers take on. You will have guidance and a template to work with! Sign up in the office or contact Julie 831 713-9277 / jswildera@gmail.com

**Tickets:** We would love 1 or 2 parents to take the lead on printing and distributing tickets to families, and making sure everyone knows what to do with them. You don't need to invent this process; we have a detailed Google doc to lead you through the process!

**Sweatshirts** - We need one or two parents to take this on. We can showcase school spirit and raise some money for the project through apparel sales. Again - it's been done before so we have instructions to guide you through the process!

**Refreshment Sale** - We also need a lead parent volunteer to coordinate thematic concessions for refreshments. You can count on many parents to help bring goodies!

## At-Home Support:

**Script Support:** Students will be bringing their scripts home on Tuesdays and taking them to school the following Tuesday morning. You can help your student by:

- Supporting them in being responsible for getting their script to school and bringing it home.
- Familiarize yourself with your student's role. Help them run lines.

**Spring Break:** Spring Break will be an important time for your student to cement their lines.

**Family Learning:** *The Odyssey* is an important body of classical literature. The students will be learning some basics about the story within the development of production. You can enhance your child's depth of knowledge about their character, the Homeric tradition, and the story of The Odyssey. See resources below.

## RESOURCES:

Homer's Odyssey is thick, complex, and includes many adult themes! Yet its classic history means that references are embedded in many aspects of our lives today. Sharing this story as a family can add depth and meaning to your child's theater experience. Here are just a few resources you may choose to check out...

1. A very simple story for the very young:  
<https://www.storyjumper.com/book/index/16541142/The-Odyssey-For-Kids#page/20>
2. Ducksters - a website with wonderful information about the Odyssey, Ancient Greece Arts & Culture, Daily Life, Mythology and the Olympian Gods. This site is designed for elementary ages. [http://www.ducksters.com/history/ancient\\_greece/odyssey.php](http://www.ducksters.com/history/ancient_greece/odyssey.php)
3. Marcia Williams has a really great graphic novel book that tells the story of **The Iliad** (the prequel to the Odyssey) and **The Odyssey** in one book. You can find it at Amazon or Bookshop Santa Cruz.
4. From author of The Magic Treehouse series by Mary Pope Osborne: **Tales from the Odyssey, Part 1 & Part 2**
5. Alfred John Church, **The Odyssey for Boys and Girls** This adaptation from the early 1900s is pretty rich, with old fashioned language. But it is read-aloud ready, and has modified language for the very violent or sexual parts. It is a free ebook. There are numerous reviews available.  
[https://books.google.com/books/about/The\\_Odyssey\\_for\\_Boys\\_and\\_Girls.html?id=EETWAAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=kp\\_read\\_button#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com/books/about/The_Odyssey_for_Boys_and_Girls.html?id=EETWAAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=kp_read_button#v=onepage&q&f=false)
6. **Sparknotes** - a series of 3 youtube videos. Straightforward narration, colorful graphics, some grown-up language /violence (notably "and they go back to Calypso's cave, where they make love," which is of course not in our play.)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BCXRxD85Xc0>