



Audio Description Notes for *Metamorphoses*

WELCOME

Welcome to the Guthrie Theater's production of *Metamorphoses*, which is based on the myths of Ovid and written and directed by Mary Zimmerman.

My name is Elana Centor, and I will be your audio describer for this performance, which is approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes with no intermission.

Metamorphoses consists of 11 vignettes, 10 of which are based on David R. Slavitt's free-verse translation of *Ovid's Metamorphoses*. The story of Eros and Psyche is taken from Lucius Apuleius' novel *Metamorphoses* (also known as *The Golden Ass*). Mary Zimmerman included the story of Eros and Psyche because she loved it and felt it had a place her adaptation.

Metamorphoses is a play about change. To "metamorphose" means to experience a striking change in appearance or character. The play asks a key question: What can make a person become something completely different? The most frequent cause throughout *Metamorphoses* is love. At the same time, *Metamorphoses* also looks at what happens when love is ignored.

STAGING

The play takes place in and around a pool of water, which is central to all the stories. The characters enter and exit the water as they are transformed. Depending on the vignette, the water becomes a swimming pool, a washing basin, the Styx River of the underworld and the sea.

The stage has been described as "reminiscent of paintings by [René] Magritte and the dream states they evoke." The entire stage consists of the pool of water surrounded by a 3-to-4-foot deck made of wooden planks. The deck borders the entire pool. There is a crystal chandelier hanging over the middle of the pool. A green-paneled set of double doors with a transom is located at the far-left side of the stage. It has three steps that go from the pool's deck to the door. Starting near the middle of the pool and extending beyond the pool's edge is a huge rectangular screen with billowy clouds symbolizing the sky. The screen is approximately 15 to 20 feet high and three times as long. The color of the screen transforms throughout the play. At times, the gods appear "above" the sky and talk among themselves or to the characters below.

Some of the key props include an armchair, narcissus plant, toy boat, laundry baskets, bright yellow pool raft, red floating bed, bowls with luminaries and a silver tray with a plate, fork and knife.



CAST

A cast of 10 actors portray nearly three dozen characters from Greek and Roman mythology, including Midas and his daughter, Orpheus and Eurydice, Eros and Psyche as well as appearances by Sisyphus, Hermes, Hades and Persephone. Some of the stories are humorous; others are poignant.

The play uses a variety of narrators. The opening vignette is told by a woman at the water, a scientist and Zeus. Three laundresses narrate two of the stories. Vertumnus tells the story of King Cinyras and his daughter Myrrha. Phaeton narrates his relationship with his father Apollo with colorful commentary added by the therapist. Two characters named Q and A narrate a scene where Psyche falls in love with Eros.

Two of the most notable characters are Sleep and Hunger:

Sleep is dressed in loose, black pajama pants and an open black pajama top. However, it is his headwear that garners laughs from the audience. The black cap has individual springs sprouting around the entire cap. At the end of each spring is a big letter Z. As Sleep moves around the stage, the springs bob in multiple directions creating a comic image.

Hunger is a terrifying creature from head to toe. Its hair is partially shaved and the rest of its hair has the appearance of a rat's nest. Each finger is transformed into a bronze claw that creates a threatening effect.

COSTUMES

There are over 100 costumes in the play. They are mostly solid in color and based on classical Greek drapery accented with modern touches, like Hermes' leather motorcycle jacket with white wings painted on the back.

In the vignette with Phaeton and the therapist, Phaeton floats in the swimming pool on a bright yellow raft and wears matching yellow sunglasses and neon-yellow swim trunks. The therapist wears a dark pantsuit. Midas also wears a modern-day business suit, and his daughter wears a frilly, white lace dress with bloomers.

Metamorphoses is playing on the Wurtele Thrust Stage through May 19. It is a co-production with Berkeley Repertory Theatre where it ran earlier this year.