



METAMORPHOSES

BASED ON THE MYTHS OF OVID
WRITTEN AND ORIGINALLY DIRECTED
BY MARY ZIMMERMAN

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ABOUT OVID

Not much is known about him, but historians do know that Publius Ovidius Naso was initially raised to become a senator in Roman society. However, after completing his political studies, Ovid began writing instead. Ovid would go on to publish eight major works, including *Metamorphoses* in 8 A.D, which is considered his most famous work due to its themes of the transformation of humanity.

Ovid would be banished for unknown reasons by Emperor Augustus in 8 A.D. to Tomis (modern day Constanta, Romania) and would remain in exile until his death in 17 C.E.

"I want to speak about bodies changed into new forms. You, Gods, since you are the ones who alter these, and all other things, inspire my attempt, and spin out a continuous thread of words, from the world's first origins to my own time."

- Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book I (Translated by A.J. Kline)



18th Century Engraving of Ovid by an Anonymous French artist, Wikimedia Commons,

MARY ZIMMERMAN AND METAMORPHOSES

Mary Zimmerman is known for her popular adaptations of classical works. Zimmerman, along with the students of Northwestern University in Illinois, first developed and devised *Metamorphoses* in 1996 . The play would officially have its premiere at the Lookingglass Theatre in 1998.

Metamorphoses officially transferred to Broadway in 2002, with Zimmerman directing . The play would win awards including the Drama Desk Award and the Lucille Lortel Prize. It would also go on to be nominated for two Tony Awards; Zimmerman would take home the award for Best Direction of a play.

Zimmerman is a professor at Northwestern University and is a member of the Lookingglass Theatre Company in Chicago today.

THE GODS OF METAMORPHOSES

Procession of the Twelve Gods and Goddesses from the Walters Art Museum, Wikimedia Commons



"What it means to be an American" and how these characters either embody metamorphosis for good, or reject change, ultimately leading them to their demise. As an immigrant to the United States, I have an outside perspective on a show that aims to comment on the ever-changing identity of America." - Steven Rimke, Director

- ZEUS:** King of the Gods. God of the Sky, Storms, and Protector of Gods and Men
- BACCHUS:** Also known as Dionysus. God of Wine and Parties
- POSEIDON:** God of the Sea, Earthquakes, and Horses
- APHRODITE:** Goddess of Love and Desire
- IRIS:** Goddess of Rainbows and a Messenger of the Gods
- HYPNOS (SLEEP):** God of Sleep
- MORPHEUS:** Son of Hypnos, God of Dreams
- CERES:** Also known as Demeter. Goddess of the Harvest
- LIMOS:** The personification of Hunger and Famine
- HADES:** God of the Underworld
- PERSEPHONE:** Queen of the Underworld, wife of Hades
- HERMES:** God of Thieves, Travel, Luck, etc. He is also a psychopomp for the Underworld.
- POMONA:** Goddess of Orchards
- VERTUMNUS:** God of the Seasons
- APOLLO:** God of the Sun

A BRIEF TIMELINE OF AMERICA'S OWN METAMORPHOSIS

"Make do or make without."

1929: The Great Depression begins after the U.S. Stock Market Crashes

1933: Franklin D. Roosevelt takes office, the beginnings of his "New Deal Plan."

The 1950s: Consumerism and a capitalistic society becomes the new norm.

The 1960s: a Decade of Activism and Societal Change

1963: 200,000 people March to Washington during the Civil Rights Movement led by Martin Luther King Jr.

"I have a dream."

The 1970s: The Beginnings of Conservative values, led by newly elected Richard Nixon

The 2000s: Technology is on the rise as almost half of American homes had access to the internet.

September 11th, 2001: The World Trade Center and Pentagon are attacked, pulling the country into turmoil and even more debt.

The Grunge Movement, with its music and key figures like Kurt Cobain, led to more young people's involvement in American politics.

The 1990s: Globalization and a change in American Politics

1972: The ERA (Equal Rights Amendment) is Passed

ACTOR'S CORNER

At the beginning of the rehearsal process, our incredibly talented cast was asked about their own perspectives on a show that deals with themes of questioning identity, change, and hope. Here are just a few of their responses

What does it mean to be an American in today's world?

"In my opinion, [it] spans beyond a sense of pride for one's country. To be an American, ideally, means to be open to change, even when it is difficult. To not turn a blind eye to injustice, and to see every individual as one worthy of love, acceptance, and safety. To me, being an American means to put community over ego. Being an American doesn't have a physical look, only a character of welcoming any and all."

- Tyler McCabe (Hermes/Bacchus/Vertumnus/Phaeton)

"I feel like [it] isn't about freedom anymore... it's about power. Who has the most money, and who has the most followers behind them. We've become so divided I think we've lost sight of what the initial American dream was supposed to be."

- Taytum Ligman (Daughter/Iris/Hunger/Others)

What's your favorite myth in *Metamorphoses*?

"I really love Alcyone and Ceyx. I love that despite the intense grief and fatal mistakes these characters experience, they still find happiness in the end through metamorphoses, both internal and external. I love seeing the beauty of their love prevail, but even more so I love seeing the journey these characters take as they confront their own faults and fears and eventually overcome them. I also love the message that it is never too late to change."

- Grace Fillmore (Alcyone/Pomona/Ceres/Others)

"Eros and Psyche. It is a tragedy with a happy ending. The heros are not perfect but they endure tragedy and work to come together and again build a stronger more truthful happiness. It's the ideal human experience."

- Michaella Hales (Scientist/Mother of Erysichthon/Others)

How do the myths of *Metamorphoses* connect to the world we know today?

"Everyone can find either a part of them in these myths or a part of someone they know and hopefully learn from it. History repeats itself and we as humans like to think we may have learned from our mistakes but we continue to make them."

- Hyrum Housley (Sailor/Sleep/Narrator)

"It seems to me that the Greek in us hasn't completely faded. Humans are quite similar in nature to the ones who lived thousands of years ago, still telling the same stories, encouraging us to sacrifice our vices and cling to virtue."

- Charles R. Mosher (Midas/Narrator/Others)

"I think we can connect [all of them] to an experience or a person that we've encountered in real life... I'm a firm believer of the idea that history is prone to repeat itself, but if we can just be presented with these warnings in a tolerable way, I hope that we can all leave as better people AND that we can then call others into the conversation in our own lives."

- Paola Molina Guzmán (Laundress/Baucis/Narrator/Others)

What can we learn from these myths?

"Good things will come to those willing to change and become better."

- Clara Thompson (Silenus/Hades/Narcissus/Others)

"Through these myths, we learn the detriment that follows unwillingness to change-- in varying levels of severity. There is always room to change. It is always the time to change. (Along with twenty-seven billion other things.)"

- Sasha Wilkinson (Aphrodite/Eurydice/Q/Others)

"The way that Mary Zimmerman wrote this script makes it very easy to see how these myths relate to our current lives. Who doesn't know an NFT bro that's almost exactly like Midas? Even though there might not be a Greek god giving him gifts, at their core they're the same person. Both the Vices and Virtues that are portrayed in these stories still exist today, even if the context is a little different. "

- Tabitha Whittekiend (Narrator/Therapist/Others)

A NOTE FROM THE SCENIC DESIGNER

"The assemblage displayed in the frieze is an iconography of the contemporary American experience. The objects represent symbols of national identity, nostalgia, and patriotism, with a focus on political ideologies of cultural significance. The display features motifs of immigrant contributions alongside classic Americana imagery, emphasizing the diversity and dynamism of the American identity."

- Janice Chan

CAN YOU FIND THESE ITEMS IN THE FRIEZE:

- Baseball bat
- Handcuffs
- The Bible
- Grill
- Barbed wire
- Gavel
- Star
- Stanley cup
- Football
- Prescription bottles
- Liscence plate
- Pitchfork
- Petrol nozzle
- Steering wheel
- Glock
- Some donuts
- Aviator glasses
- Carton of milk
- Gaming console
- Computer keyboard

DRAMATURG'S NOTE

As the dramaturg, it was interesting to look at how beautifully woven Ovid's retelling of these myths can be tied into reality.

We live in a country where greed and consumerism rules all, a society ruled by those who view money as the most important thing, and a society where change is often looked down on because we're so used to things staying the same. But we're also a society that is always and forever changing.

The core of these stories is change, and the biggest takeaway for me is that metamorphosis is inevitable. It is a terrifying thought, but these stories taught me that there is always hope. In a country that is seemingly catapulting itself into disaster, it will change, and this show truly captures the essence of the ups and downs of American life in a devastatingly beautiful way.

- Bethany Brynne Lamb

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