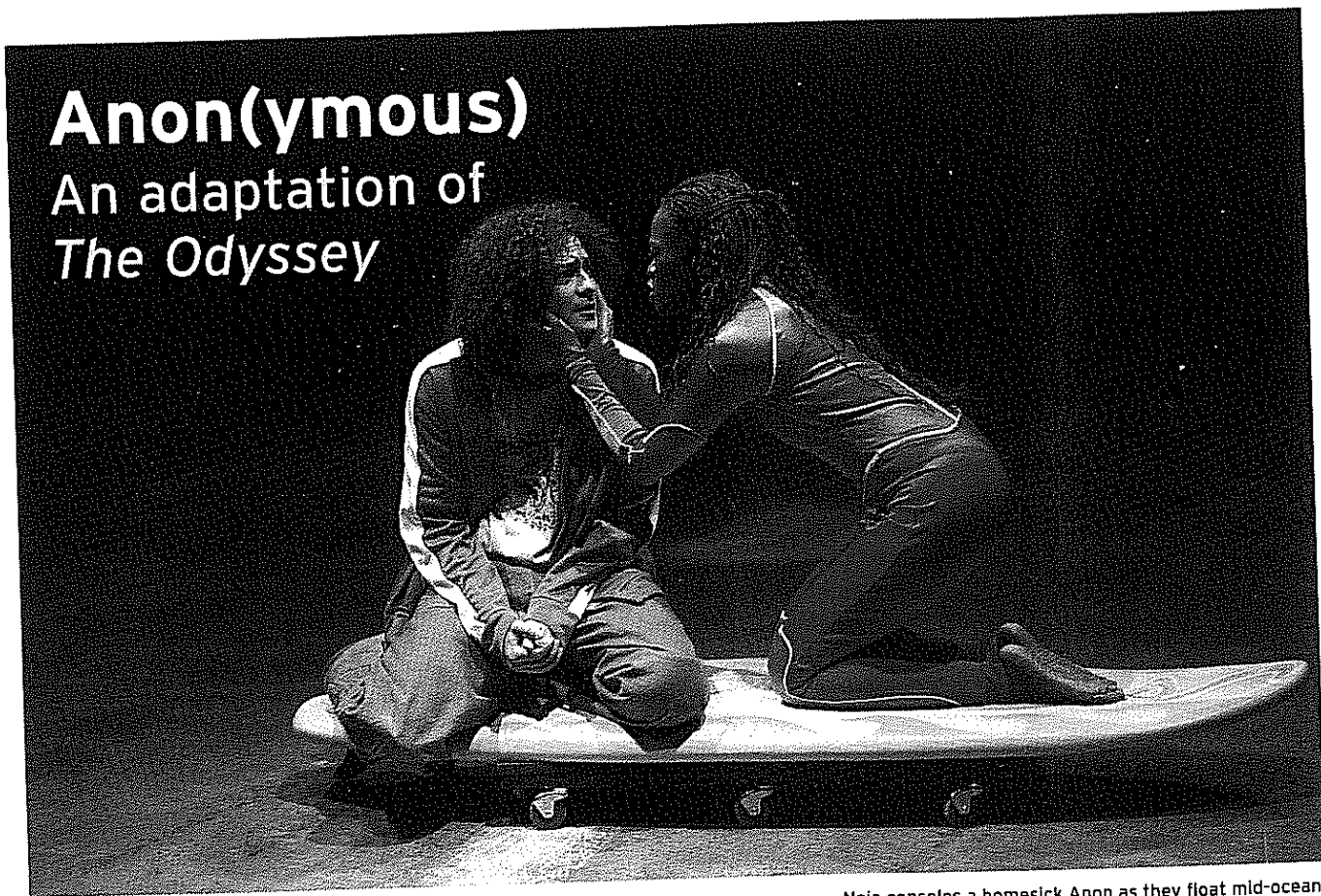


Anon(ymous)

An adaptation of
The Odyssey



Naja consoles a homesick Anon as they float mid-ocean.

CHARACTERS

ANON (also called Koo Ri, Lan, Monkey, Nobody), a teenage refugee

NAJA, a girl who is also a goddess

MR. YURI MACKUS, manager of a sewing factory; **STRYGAL**, a truck driver; **LONE BARFLY**

SENATOR LAIUS, a war hero; **MR. ZYCLO**, a butcher; **NICE AMERICAN FATHER**

HELEN LAIUS, the senator's beautiful wife; **ZYCLO'S PET BIRD**;

NICE AMERICAN MOTHER

NEMASANI (also called Penny), Anon's mother

CALISTA, a rich girl; **NICE AMERICAN DAUGHTER**; **SEWING LADY #2**

ALI, a proprietor of a restaurant; **SHADOW**; **IGNACIO**, Belen's father

NASREEN, daughter of Ali and Ritu; **BELEN**, a refugee

RITU, a chef; **SERZA**, a bartender; **SEWING LADY #1**

PASCAL, a refugee from West Africa

The members of the ensemble (except for Anon) also play:

THE CHORUS OF REFUGEES

THE SEWING LADIES

THE SHADOWS

A note about character names:

Nemasani derives from "Mnemosyne," the goddess of memory and the mother of the muses. "Naja" is a Sanskrit word referring to the spirit of the earth who protected Buddha during a terrible storm.

TIME

Now.

PLACE

A stage.

1.

A light comes up on a boy named Anon.

ANON: Where I come from is far away from here.

The Chorus of Refugees, led by Naja, emerges from the darkness. Throughout the play, when the Chorus speaks the individual voices may overlap, but they can distinctly be heard.

CHORUS OF REFUGEES:

Where I come from is oxen in rice fields and hills the color of green tea.

Where I come from is jungles filled with jaguars and pythons thick as a grown man's thigh.

Where I come from is poison frogs the size of a thumbnail and squirrels that can fly from tree to tree.

Where I come from is waterfalls taller than the tallest skyscraper is olive trees and ancient desert

is sampans and temple bells

is sandstorms

is monsoon rains

is tapir and okapi and electric blue butterflies with wings as wide as my arms.

Where I come from is the smell of orchid and mango and ripe papaya

is the smell of my mother's fried bread

is the smell of yerba maté

lemongrass

horchata

coconut milk

pho

fried squid

cow's blood
joss stick
sheep's milk, fresh and warm.
The sound of war is heard, faint and distant.

CHORUS OF REFUGEES:

Where I come from is high up in the mountains and the sound of thunder is so loud it sounds like the end of the world.

Where I come from is the edge of an ocean so blue you can see straight to the bottom, and the sound of the waves crashing is so loud it sounds like the end of the world.

Where I come from giant birds circle overhead, so many you can't count them all, they caw caw caw, and the sound they make is so loud, it sounds like the end of the world.

The Chorus of Refugees disperses in all different directions. Naja remains. The sound of war grows closer.

NAJA: Do you remember?

ANON: No—

NAJA: All those memories—

ANON: I don't remember—

NAJA: Can you hear them—

ANON: No—

NAJA: You can't hear them, all those memories inside of you? You've locked them inside for so long and now they're pounding against your rib cage, against the walls of your heart. Can you hear them? Listen. *Whispered fragments from the first chorus: "Where I come from is high up..." The sound of war grows closer.*

ANON: I don't know how to begin. I don't know where to begin.

NAJA: Ssssssh.

Begin in the middle.

On the border.

On the crossing.

Begin in the place in between.

Naja begins to recede from view. Night falls. The sky is vast and inky blue. The sound of war grows closer. Distant gunfire. The whistling of bombs falling from the sky.

2.

Anon is alone in the night.

ANON: Where I come from is far away from here.

Where I come from there was a war that lasted so long people forgot what they were fighting for.

Where I come from bombs rained down from the sky night after night and boys wandered the streets with M16s.

Where I come from mines are planted in the roads like deadly flowers, and the air smells like death, rank and sticky sweet.

Where I come from you go to sleep at night and dream about the faces of the people you love.

Light on Nemasani. She sings an ancient song. Anon sees her.

ANON: You dream the face of the one person you love. And that person, that person becomes like home. Their eyes. Their skin. Their voice, the sound of their voice. And so you dream about that person. You dream about home. You dream about going home.

Anon approaches Nemasani. The sound of war grows. It gets so loud. It sounds like the end of the world. The whistling sound of a bomb falling from the sky. The whistling grows louder, closer. Naja emerges from the darkness. She pulls Anon out of the path of the bomb. They leap into a vast, uncharted darkness. An explosion. Blinding white light. The sound of war transforms into the sound of sewing machines.

3.

A sewing factory in a city somewhere in America. The sound of the sewing machines like a hive of metallic bumblebees. A mountain of fabric reaching up to the heavens. Rows of sewing machines one after the next as far as the

eye can see. The Chorus of Sewing Ladies sews in perfect unison. Nemasani is one of the Sewing Ladies. She sews a shroud. Mr. Yuri Mackus, the manager of the sewing factory, enters. He escorts Senator and Mrs. Laius around the factory floor.

MR. YURI MACKUS (*To Senator Laius*): The first thing I want to say is we are not a sweatshop. We are the first stop on the way to the American dream. Give us your poor, your huddled masses, yearning to be free, and we'll hire them. We'll give them a job, we'll put them to work, nothing wrong with good honest work. As you can see, Senator, the conditions here are first-rate. Light and airy. Modern. Cheerful. We have a great time—don't we, ladies? All the ladies love me and I love them.

SENATOR LAIUS (*To the Sewing Ladies*): Don't mind us please, don't mind us. We're just here to observe.

HELEN LAIUS (*To the Sewing Ladies*): What are you making?

CHORUS OF SEWING LADIES:

Blue jeans

T-shirts

Yoga pants

Sports bras.

Boxer shorts

Warm-up jackets

Polo shirts

Tube socks.

Short-shorts

Sweatshirts

Khaki pants

Baseball caps.

Mini-skirts

Baby bonnets

Oxford shirts

Bikini tops.

HELEN LAIUS (*Seeing Nemasani's shroud*): Ooooooh I love this. What is it?

NEMASANI: A shroud.

HELEN LAIUS: Ooooooh a shroud. How interesting. What's a shroud?

NEMASANI: It's a sheet you wrap around the dead.

HELEN LAIUS: Oh. Oh I see. And do you sell a lot of those? Shrouds, I mean.

NEMASANI: It's not for sale.

HELEN LAIUS: It's lovely, the design is just lovely. I collect primitive art, you know, from all around the world. It's a passion of mine. I have baskets from Guatemala and little Buddhas from Cambodia. They speak to me. This speaks to me. I would love to buy this and hang it on my wall.

NEMASANI: It's not for sale.

MR. YURI MACKUS: Don't mind Penny.

NEMASANI: My name's not Penny.

MR. YURI MACKUS: Her real name is too hard to pronounce. We call her Penny. It's easier. Isn't it, Penny?

SEWING LADY #1: Mr. Mackus wants to marry Penny. He proposes to her every day. "Will you marry me, Penny," he whispers in her ear. He gets so close she can smell his breath. Coffee and Tic-Tacs. She tells him she'll say yes when she finishes the shroud.

MR. YURI MACKUS: I love Penny. I want to give her a good home. She's had a very hard life. I'm just doing my part. I have a big heart. It's my undoing.

SEWING LADY #1: Mr. Mackus had a mail-order bride from Russia.

MR. YURI MACKUS: Not true—

SEWING LADY #1: And one from the Philippines—

MR. YURI MACKUS: Lies lies all lies—

SEWING LADY #1: And one from Thailand, Romania and Honduras—

MR. YURI MACKUS: That's enough!

HELEN LAIUS: Who's it for? The shroud, I mean.

NEMASANI: My son.

HELEN LAIUS: Your son? Is he dead? That's so sad. That makes me very, very sad.

SENATOR LAIUS: Helen, darling—

HELEN LAIUS: You must be devastated. You poor thing. How did he die?

NEMASANI: He drowned.

HELEN LAIUS: He drowned! That's awful. It's so tragic, it's just so tragic. I feel your pain, I really do. How did it happen? If you don't mind me asking. It helps sometimes to talk, you know, to share. That's what human beings do, they share, they share their joy, they share their pain, it's only human, we're only human, you can tell me, go on tell me—and maybe I can help.

The sewing factory transforms into the ocean.

4.

Night. The ocean. Light on Anon. He holds a toy boat, which he steers through a dark ocean.

NEMASANI: Where we come from, there was a war. And my son and me, we escaped. We escaped in the middle of the night. We sailed out to sea in an old fishing boat. There were so many people all crammed together, old people and little babies. We huddled together in the dark in the belly of the ship. We listened to the roar of the waves. We listened to the boat creak and moan. And then the storm started.

The storm begins. Lightning. Thunder.

NEMASANI: The winds began to howl. The sky opened up and the rain came down, sheets and sheets of rain. And the lightning lit up the sky, bright bright light, and the thunder crashed. And the sound was so loud. And suddenly a giant wave rose up. It rose and it rose like a wall of water. And then it fell over us, and swallowed us whole.

The wave crashes down. Darkness.

5.

The sound of the surf. Lights up on a tropical beach somewhere in America. Anon and a girl named Calista sit on the beach. Calista wears a bathing suit. Anon wears street clothes. Anon examines the toy boat. It is broken. Calista has a camera. She takes pictures. Music plays on a portable CD player.

ANON: Some day I'm going to sail away.

CALISTA: No you're not. Don't be silly. You're not going anywhere. This is your home now.

ANON: It's not my home.

CALISTA: Yes it is.

ANON: It's not my real home.

CALISTA: Yes, it is. Now look at me. Look at me. Smile. I SAID SMILE!

Calista snaps a photo of Anon.

CALISTA: You're very photogenic. You could be a male model. You're so swarthy and exotic. That's very in right now. Exotic is very in. I wish I were more exotic. I'm too pale. I wish I had a tan. I wish my skin was the color of café au lait.

A new song begins on the portable CD player.

CALISTA: Ooooooh I love this song.

Calista dances. And then she stops.

CALISTA: Do you want to watch TV? We could watch TV on my giant flat-screen plasma TV. It's so cool. It's so flat.

ANON: No thanks.

CALISTA: What about a snack?

Calista retrieves a bag of candies. She begins to eat. She eats a lot. She stuffs her face with candy.

CALISTA: I have M&M's and Kit Kats and Nestlé's Crunch and Snickers and Reese's Pieces and Charleston Chews and SweetTarts and

Lemonheads and Skittles and Spree.

ANON: I'm not hungry.

CALISTA: Suit yourself.

We could do something else. We could kiss. You could kiss me. Do you want to kiss me?

ANON: No.

CALISTA: That's OK. You can kiss me later.

ANON: I'm never going to kiss you.

CALISTA: Fine.

ANON: Not now or later. Not ever.

CALISTA: FINE!

Pause.

CALISTA: Why are you so mean to me? You should be nice to me. I saved your life. You washed up on the shore of my dad's luxury beachfront condo and you weren't even breathing. I fished seaweed out of your mouth. I administered CPR. I gave you the kiss of life just like I learned in summer camp. And I thought you were so handsome and exotic and not like any of the boys from around here. I saved your life and you're so ungrateful! You won't even tell me your real name!

ANON: I told you my real name.

CALISTA: Your real name is not "Nobody." What kind of mom names their kid "Nobody"?

ANON: Don't talk about my mom.

CALISTA: I mean I'm sure she was nice and all, but it's not even like she's even part of your life anymore. I mean she's probably dead and even if she's alive, it's not like she's been trying that hard to find you. Honestly, if you want my opinion, she's probably moved on with her life. I know I would. I bet if you showed up on her doorstep like right this second, she probably wouldn't even know who you were. She'd probably be like: "Who are you? Do I know you?"

ANON: I SAID DON'T TALK ABOUT MY MOM!

Pause.

ANON: OK look, I can't stay here anymore. I can't do it.

CALISTA: Why not? It's nice here. It's pretty and clean. And I have satellite TV.

ANON: I gotta go. I'm going to lose my mind if I have to stay here one more day.

CALISTA: Where would you go?

ANON: Home.

CALISTA: But this is your home.

ANON: My real home.

CALISTA: Your "real home"? That's crazy. Your "real home" is a dirty little third-world shack with no running water. It's raw sewage in the streets and malaria and cholera and all kinds of disgusting parasites I don't even want to think about. I'm just saying how it is. Don't be mad. Now you're mad. Let's kiss and make up.

ANON: No.

CALISTA: Why not?

ANON: Because I hate you. And every time you open your mouth, I want to stuff sand down your throat.

CALISTA: OK you know what? I don't care. I don't care what you think. I don't care what you want. You will eat my Skittles and my Kit Kats and my Spree. You will enjoy my flat-screen plasma TV. And you will love me.

Naja enters from the ocean. She's a surfer. She wears a wetsuit. She has a surfboard.

NAJA: Hey.

ANON: Hey.

NAJA: Remember me?

ANON: Yeah. Kinda.

CALISTA: Where did you come from?

NAJA: He called me.

ANON: I did?