

THE TALES OF...

MORE THAN A SCHOOL PRODUCTION

When the curtain rose on *The Tales of Odysseus* at The Castle Theatre, the audience saw an hour of music, mythology and hundreds of smiling faces. What they didn't see were the months of creativity, collaboration and hard work that had brought the production to life.

Now in its fourth year, the annual **Tales of...** project has become a highlight of the school calendar. Designed to enrich the Year 5 History curriculum while supporting transition to secondary school, the project brings together Weavers Academy students with children from local primary schools to create a truly unique theatrical experience.

This year's production followed the epic adventures of Odysseus through an original script, ten specially arranged songs and a live band, taking the audience from the fall of Troy to the Cyclops' cave, the Sirens, Helios' island and finally home to Ithaca. Along the way there was plenty of humour, memorable characters and opportunities for every child to shine.

Learning Beyond the Classroom

Long before performance day, the project was already making an impact.

Throughout the summer term, members of the Weavers cast visited eight partner primary schools to deliver workshops, teaching songs, exploring characters and introducing pupils to the story of Odysseus. These sessions gave Year 5 pupils the confidence to perform while also bringing their History learning to life in an exciting and memorable way.

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By the time the children arrived at The Castle Theatre, they weren't simply visiting to watch a show—they were stepping onto a professional stage as performers.

The project was recognised in a recent NODA review as *"a spectacular, joyous show only a 'Tales of...' production can deliver,"* highlighting the unique way it combines curriculum learning with live performance.

The educational value of the project was echoed one of the Primary school heads, who wrote:

"The opportunity for the children to be led in their singing rehearsals by a music specialist and to perform on stage in a working theatre was wonderful... Every child in Year Five thoroughly enjoyed themselves and were left with a lasting and positive memory of a great experience... Last night gave our children some real cultural capital."

Our Students Take Centre Stage

At the heart of the production were the talented students of Weavers Academy.

From principal roles to ensemble performances, every cast member brought energy, humour and commitment to the stage. Alongside them, the live band provided the soundtrack to Odysseus' adventure, performing ten musical numbers that ranged from *Roar* and *Food Glorious Food* to a triumphant finale of *Dancing in the Street*.

Behind every performance were months of rehearsals after school, learning music, refining scenes and supporting one another as a company.

The NODA review praised the production's creativity, commenting on the *"excellent"* costumes, imaginative props and the

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commitment of the performers, while recognising that "months of hard work, planning and rehearsal were evident in every moment."

Perhaps the greatest challenge came on performance day itself. With temperatures soaring on one of the hottest days of the year, every performer showed remarkable resilience, with NODA describing the cast as "true troopers" for delivering such a polished and energetic performance despite the heat.

A Community Project

One of the most rewarding aspects of the **Tales of...** project is the way it brings together students, families and schools.

Parents whose children performed in the live band, summed up the experience perfectly:

"Excellent cast, great script, innovative costumes, lovely choirs and a not too shabby pit band! Thanks so much for everything the Creative Arts team do for the kids—they love being part of it and we love watching."

For many of our Sixth Form performers, the annual project has become a highlight of their time at Weavers. Reflecting after the final performance, one student wrote:

"I love doing this every year and I'll miss it next year."

Another added:

"The band was amazing, your directing was amazing and just the show itself, writing and everything! You should be proud."

These comments capture what makes the project so special. While audiences enjoy the final performance, the real success lies in the friendships formed, the confidence developed and the opportunities created for hundreds of young people to perform together.



Thank You

The success of *The Tales of Odysseus* would not have been possible without the support of our partner primary schools, whose staff embraced the project from the first workshop to the final curtain.

Thank you to the staff and Year 5 pupils from:

- All Saints Primary School
- Earls Barton Primary School
- Irchester Community Primary School
- Olympic Primary Academy
- Our Lady's Catholic Primary School
- Redwell Primary School
- Ruskin Academy
- Victoria Primary Academy

This project would not have been possible without the generous support of our sponsors and partners. Our sincere thanks go to **The Castle Theatre** for once again providing a wonderful venue for our performance; **The Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies** and **The Gilbert Murray Trust** for funding the coach transport that enabled our partner primary schools to take part; and **Team Eventex** for their expertise in stage management, lighting and sound, helping to bring our production to life. Their support has enabled hundreds of young people to enjoy an unforgettable theatrical experience, and we are incredibly grateful for their continued commitment to arts education.

Thank you also to our incredible Weavers Academy cast, live band, backstage helpers and staff, whose enthusiasm, professionalism and commitment made this year's production such a memorable success.

Every year begins with a story. Every year ends with hundreds of young people discovering that they can be part of one. Let's see where next years' *The Tales of...* project will take us.

The NODA show report can be read in full here:
<https://www.noda.org.uk/show-reports/the-tales-of-odysseus>

The show programme can be found here:
<https://heyzine.com/flip-book/dee073d2e5.html>

The Numbers...

8 partner primary schools worked together with Weavers Academy.

311 Year 5 pupils took to the stage, performing alongside our own students.

29 Weavers Academy cast members brought the story of Odysseus to life.

1 live band of 10 students provided the soundtrack throughout the performance.

10 specially arranged songs transformed an ancient Greek myth into a musical adventure.

1 original script was written specifically for this year's production, bringing Homer's epic to life for a modern audience.

8 school workshops introduced pupils to the story, taught the songs and helped build confidence before performance day.

Countless costumes, props and set pieces were designed and created to transport audiences to Ancient Greece.

1 of the hottest days of the year couldn't stop our performers, who were described by NODA as "true troopers."

592 family members, friends and supporters filled the theatre to celebrate the achievements of every young performer.

1 unforgettable experience that enriched the primary History curriculum, strengthened partnerships between schools and created memories that will last long after the final curtain.