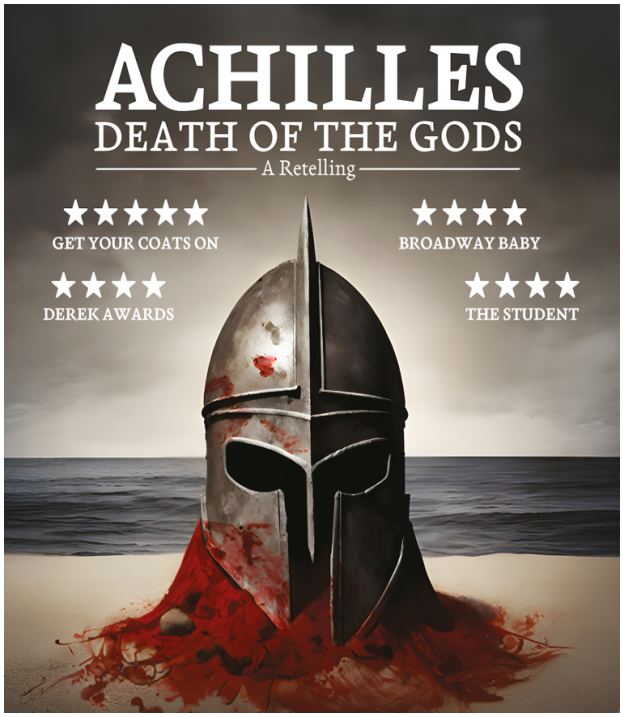
Achilles: Death of the Gods

written & performed by Jo Kelen



Achilles and Patroclus fall in love. War happens. Patroclus is killed. Achilles, unable to process his grief, flies into rage — filling rivers with bodies, killing and mutilating the man who killed his lover. He eventually returns Hector's body to his father, and dies. The war carries on without him.

A gripping piece of solo storytelling, *Achilles* explores what happens when grief — personal, societal, political — cannot be processed: how it curdles into rage, and rage into devastation. It is a story that wishes for peace and settles for a ceasefire. The patterns of power, greed, destruction and vengeance map unmistakably onto current world events.

It is also a love story between two men, told without apology or explanation. Queer love, here, is simply love.

"Why does tragedy exist?
Because you are full of rage.
Why does rage exist?
Because you are full of grief."
Anne Carson, *Grief Lessons*

★★★★★
“Spellbinding…Kelen weaves a tale that doesn’t shy away from the casual cruelty of the war and those who wage it.”
The Reviews Hub

★★★★★
“Every action reverberates, reshaping lives and altering destinies.”
Counter Culture

★★★★★:
“A masterclass in storytelling.”
One 4 Review

★★★★★: “An outstanding example of what a good storytelling performance is capable of.”
Theatre and Arts Review

★★★★★
“If you like the Ian McKellen reading of *The Odyssey*, you will love Jo Kelen’s telling of ‘*The Illiad*.”
Get Your Coats On

★★★★
“Beautifully captured the complexities of grief.”
The Student

★★★★
“A strong production that has an important message.”
Broadway Baby

“Mesmeric…hypnotic…elegant”
Watford Fringe Reviews

Edinburgh Fringe Theatre Award 2025:
Achilles Death of the Gods



Jo Kelen is a poet and playwright based in South London. At nineteen, she spent four months living with Mongolian horsemen — experiencing oral storytelling as a living tradition, by campfire and on horseback. This shaped everything: a Classics degree at Nottingham specialising in Homer, then an MA in Writing Poetry with Glyn Maxwell at the Poetry School, graduating with distinction.

Her work asks why we keep retelling old stories, and what they reveal about us. By day, she lives this question as Head of Classics at a London grammar school — adapting myths for students, processing world events through a Classical lens, and occasionally abandoning the lesson plan entirely in favour of a retelling. She has recently been commissioned to write ten short Norse myth adaptations for the Hindawi Foundation, published free to children worldwide via the app Booktime.

Achilles: Death of the Gods is her answer in practice: a sell-out solo show, one performer embodying ten characters, stripped-back staging, no off-stage sound. Written in loose tetrameter and structured on operatic principles, it uses authentic Homeric motifs to draw audiences into their own imaginative world.

Four five-star reviews and a Fringe Award at Edinburgh 2025. The British School at Athens has offered to promote a future London or Edinburgh run and host an academic Q&A. Further support has come from the Civil Service Classical Network and authors Artemis Cooper, John Farndon and Tamar Yosseloff.