

George Woollands and Margaret Rendle founded Proscenium in 1924. The company's first production was the now little-known *The Tide* by Basil McDonald Hastings. Since then, the company has performed nearly 250 plays, using Harrow as a base since 1945. In this time Proscenium has built up a strong reputation for performing challenging plays (both classic and contemporary) to a high standard.

Chairman
MARK SUTHERLAND

Artistic Director
CRYSTAL ANTHONY

Secretary
ISABELLE CARTWRIGHT

Contact us at:
www.proscenium.org.uk

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PROSCENIUM

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Tales From Ovid

Translation By Ted Hughes
Adapted by Tim Supple & Simon Reade

Tales From Ovid

13th, 14th, 15th and 16th March 2002
Travellers Studio, Harrow Arts Centre

Tales From Ovid

The Tales

Part One

Metamorphosis
Tiresius
Echo and Narcissus
Arachne and Minerva
Semele
Bacchus and Pentheus

Interval

Part Two

Myrrha
Midas
Salmacis and Hermaphroditus
Tereus and Philomela
Pan and Apollo

The Cast

Charles Anthony, Crystal Anthony, Denise Bone, Emma Burton,
James Dempster, Anne Gerrard, Linda Hampson,
Jeanne Hawkes, Colin Hickman, Rob Hurcrum, Kathleen Jones,
Olwen Mears, Rod Moor-Bardell, Sam Thornton, David Watkins,
Julian Wood, Clare Wooster, Christina Yeo

Directed by Susi Thornton

Set Design Alan Glover

Music composed by Vince Eavis
Duncan Sykes

Lighting design and operation Barny Daley

Stage Crew Paul Davis
Pauline Patterson

Costumes Evelyn Moutrie
Jan Morley

Thanks to Mark and Ben Thornton, and Laban International Courses
for their help with this production.

The Characters

Acoetes	a Lydian sailor who becomes a devotee and priest of Bacchus.
Agave	moon goddess of the beer revels and mother of Pentheus.
Apollo	the sun god, son of Jupiter and Leto. Music, poetry, astronomy, mathematics are within his sphere. Stands for moderation in all things.
Arachne	daughter of a Lydian dyer in Phocaea. Gains a reputation for weaving and embroidery but will not attribute this talent to anyone but herself.
Bacchus	son of Jupiter and Semele and cousin of Pentheus. God of wine, ecstasy and acting.
Cinyras	King of Assyria and Cyprus. Commits incest with his daughter Myrrha and thereby fathers Adonis.
Echo	a wood nymph in love with Narcissus. She can only repeat another's words.
Hermaphroditus	son of Mercury and Venus.
Itys	child of Tereus and Procne.
Juno	daughter of Saturn and Rhea, wife and sister of Jupiter. Protector of women particularly those who are married.
Jupiter (Jove)	son of Saturn and Rhea, husband and brother of Juno. President of the Council of gods, the source of all authority. An insatiable pursuer of nymphs.
Midas	King of Phrygia.
Minerva	daughter of Jupiter. Goddess of arts and sciences who presides over intellectual and academic activity.
Myrrha	with the help of her nurse, Myrrha tricks her father King Cinyras into incest and conceives Adonis.
Narcissus	son of river god Cephisus and the nymph Lirioppe. Falls hopelessly in love with his own reflection.
Nymphs	every stream, brook, spring and pool harbours a divinity known as a nymph. Not quite immortal but always remain young and beautiful.
Pan	fathered by Mercury. Half man, half goat, easy going and lazy. God of shepherds and flocks, woods and music.

Pandion	King of Athens. Arranges marriage of his daughter Procne with Tereus, king of Thrace. Dies of grief when he discovers what has happened to Procne and Philomela.
Pentheus	son of Echion and Agave, cousin of Bacchus. Tries to prevent the spread of the Bacchant cult but is attacked and killed by his mother and the Bacchantes.
Philomela	daughter of Pandion, raped and mutilated by her brother-in-law Tereus.
Procne	daughter of Pandion, sister of Philomena and wife of Tereus. To revenge her sister's rape by Tereus, she murders their son Itys and cooks him for Tereus to eat.
Salmacis	nymph besotted by Hermaphroditus.
Semele	daughter of Cadmus and Harmonia. Loved by Jupiter and by him conceives Bacchus.
Tereus	son of Mars. King of Thrace and husband of Procne. Abducts and rapes his sister-in-law Philomena.
Tiresius	a Theban prophet, soothsayer and seer. Struck blind by Juno, and in compensation given the gift of prophecy by Jupiter, as well as the privilege of living for seven human generations.
Tmolus	the mountain in Phrygia called upon to judge between Pan's and Apollo's music.

The Poem

The Metamorphoses was written between 2 and 8 AD. It is Ovid's only poem in epic form: not an epic in the Homeric tradition of one single, heroic, continuous narrative, but a more playful treatment of the form, a series of variations on the theme of metamorphosis change of shape. There is humour never far below the surface, usually based on some form of incongruity. Love is the great leveller reducing goddesses to nagging shrews and gods to absurd old roues. The follies and selfish vanities of the gods are really the follies and vanities of contemporary Roman society (and indeed any society), distorted and magnified. And there is passion and a sympathetic understanding of the vagaries of human emotion.

The Metamorphoses has always been a great source of narrative and imagery for English poets and was a favourite poem of Chaucer, Shakespeare (Frances Meres in 1578: *As the soul of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagorus, so the witty soul of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare.*) and Milton. English critics too have been admiring and perceptive:

There is a plastic quality about Ovid's work. He catches the significant moment or attitude or gesture and imprints it on our mind.

L.P. Wilkinson.

*What is enlarged or diminished or distorted remains fundamentally recognisable as part of the human experience. It is in the depiction of human actions and emotions - and what could be more human than the gods of the *Metamorphoses*? - that Ovid displayed the full range of his poetic powers.*

E.J. Kennedy.

Above all, Ovid was interested in passion. Or rather, in what a passion feels like to the one possessed by it. Not just ordinary passion either, but human passion in extremis, passion where it combusts or levitates or mutates into an experience of the supernatural.

Ted Hughes.

The Translator

Ted Hughes (1930-1998) was one of the most powerful and distinguished poets of the second half of the twentieth century. His early volumes reveal his awareness of the independence and uniqueness of animals, his sense of the beauty and violence of the natural world and his concern for mankind's place in that world. All these themes are present in his penultimate work, the translations from Ovid published in 1997. In a letter to Ann Skea in 1996 he wrote, *Also did 25 tales from Ovid's Metamorphoses - enjoyed that. A holiday in a rest home!* This enjoyment is evident in every line of the Tales from Ovid, which was awarded the 1997 Whitbread Book of the Year and the W.H. Smith Literary Award in 1998. Two reviews at the time bring out the particular qualities of the verse.

Hughes is as broad as Ovid and as subtle, as violent and as erotic, as elegant and as folksy and often all at the same time. It will live as one of the great works of our century.

Michael Hofmann, The Times.

A breathtaking book ..To compare his version with the Latin is to be awestruck again and again by the range and ingenuity of his poetic intelligence .. He rescues the old gods and goddesses from the classical dictionaries and gives them back their terror.

John Carey, Sunday Times.



The Poet



P. OVIDIUS NASO.

Publius Ovidius Naso was born in 43 BC, the year after Caesar's murder. His education was predominantly rhetorical, and the training in debating technique and verbal facility left a lasting mark on the young poet's mind. He went to Rome to begin the political career which was his father's ambition for him but it was not long before he abandoned politics for the poetry which was his first love. In the *Tristia* he tells us that even as a boy verse was his second nature. As a young man he gave public recitations of his poems and became the most fashionable poet of his time.

Ovid loved the sophisticated pleasures of urban life and metropolitan culture: refinement, elegance and polish. In *Amores* he speaks of his easy-going and lazy nature. And yet in 8 AD, at the age of fifty, for some unknown offence against the Emperor Augustus, he was sent to spend the last nine years of his life in exile on the remote Black Sea coast.

This season has been generously supported by Hogarth Recruitment, providers of administrative, commercial and managerial staff.

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2001/2002 Season

The Madness of George III by Alan Bennett

24th - 27th October 2001, 7.45 pm

Compass Theatre, Glebe Avenue, Ickenham

The Birthday Party by Harold Pinter

16th - 19th January 2002, 7.45pm

Travellers Studio, Harrow Arts Centre, Hatch End

Tales from Ovid by Ted Hughes

Adapted by Tim Supple & Simon Reade

13th - 16th March 2002, 7.45 pm

Travellers Studio, Harrow Arts Centre, Hatch End

Bald Prima Donna by Eugene Ionesco &

The Real Inspector Hound by Tom Stoppard

29th May - 1st June 2002, 7.45 pm

Travellers Studio, Harrow Arts Centre, Hatch End

Proscenium Box Office : 020 8422 0400

Compass Theatre : £7.50, concessions £6.50

Travellers Studio : £6.50, concessions £5.50