

THE PLAY OF THE NIGHT

20.-21. januar 2025 Studiescenen
Kl. 17 og kl. 20

Opera i en akt af
Britta Byström og
Peter Bäckström

Operaen er støttet af A.P. Møller og Hustru Chastine
Mc-Kinney Møllers Fond til almene Formaal



DET KONGELIGE DANSKE
MUSIKKONSERVATORIUM

*A. P. Møller og Hustru
Chastine Mc-Kinney Møllers Fond til almene Formaal*

dkdm.dk

WELCOME

Welcome to the annual January project at The Royal Danish Academy of Music (RDAM) in which the voice department, the orchestra department and the conductors' class collaborate on a chamber opera production.

This year is very special in that we present the world premiere of Britta Byström's and Peter Bäckström's opera *The Play of the Night* commissioned by RDM with generous support from the A.P. Møller og Hustru Chastine McKinney Møllers Fond til almene Formaal. The title refers to Penelope's nightly dreams where she meets images, goddesses and people while waiting for her husband Odysseus. The opera has been under way for three years and is part of RDM's extensive MUSIPÆD project supported by the A.P. Møller Foundation, so it is with great admiration for all involved that we welcome the audience today.

A special thank you to RDM and Helene Gjerris for launching the project, to composer Britta Byström not only for her wonderful music but also for her presence and input during the rehearsal period, to librettist and director Peter Bäckström for his beautiful libretto and brilliant work with the singers, to conductor Ondřej Soukop for his tireless energy and inspired musical direction, to Sandra Åberg for lovely costumes and visual design, to Robert Follin for stunt coordination, to assistant director Dagmar Skovgaard Boas for her steadfast effort at keeping everybody happy, to production manager Tine Damsgaard-Sørensen for holding all the strings in such a positive way, to the RDM faculty, administration and technical staff for their support, and finally a big shoutout to all the students involved for your passionate dedication and hard work.

Eva Hess Thaysen, Professor

Peter Bäckström - Stage Director and Librettist

Since his directorial debut in 1986, Peter Bäckström has worked as an opera director, playwright, librettist, dramaturge, educator, and theatre director in his homeland Sweden, as well as in Denmark, Norway, Germany, the Netherlands and Italy. He freelances as a director, librettist, playwright and coach, and holds the position of senior associate professor at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen.

Britta Byström - Composer

Britta Byström (b. 1977 in Sweden) began her musical career as a trumpet player. From 1995 she studied composition at the Royal University of Music in Stockholm, where her main teachers were Pär Lindgren and Bent Sørensen. Byström has composed for most sizes of orchestras and contexts including chamber music, vocal music and opera, but the emphasis has been on orchestral music. Some of those who have performed her music are the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra and Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra. *Parallel Universes*, a piece commissioned by BBC Proms to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Royal Albert Hall, was first performed in 2021 with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor John Storgårds. During 2024, the violin concerto *Shortening Days*, written for Janine Jansen and co-commissioned by the NDR Elbphilharmonie and the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, had its world premiere. Since 2016, Britta Byström is a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music.

Ondřej Soukup - Conductor

Czech conductor Ondřej Soukup has conducted the BBC SSO, Czech Chamber Philharmonic, Bohuslav Martinů Philharmonic, Copenhagen Phil, Aarhus and Aalborg Symphony Orchestras, and others. This season, he conducts the Moldovan National Philharmonic, Helsingborg Symphony, and Magna Sinfonia (UK). Recent highlights include working with Sir Thomas Allen, Maxim Vengerov, stepping in for Martyn Brabbins, and with the Prague Summer Nights Festival at short notice. Ondřej was MD with King's College London Symphony Orchestra and recently graduated from London's Royal College of Music with distinction. ondrej-soukup.com.

Sandra Åberg - Costume Designer

Sandra Åberg is a costume designer, set costumer and textile artist based in Malmö, Sweden. Inspiration for her work lays in building character, details and how colours work together. The starting point for the costumes in *The Play of the Night* was movement, simplicity and ancient history of the goddesses.

CHARACTERS

Penelope

Penelope is the wife of Odysseus, and she is the Queen of Ithaka. She married when she was fourteen years old, and less than a year later, she gave birth to a son. Then, her husband, Odysseus, went into the Trojan war, leaving her and their son behind. She has been waiting for Odysseus for the past twenty years, surrounded by young suitors who want her to remarry, as her husband is presumed dead.

Eurykleia

Penelope's loyal servant. The wet-nurse of Telemakhos. About the same age as her mistress.

Telemakhos

Penelope's and Odysseus' son. Aged twenty.

Odysseus

King of Ithaka. Went into war as a young man, only twenty-one years old, leaving his wife and a newly born son behind. This was twenty years ago: After ten years at war, on the winning side, he left and has been on his way home for the past ten years.

Eurymakhos

A young man, and one of Penelope's suitors.

Amphinomos

Another young man, and one of Penelope's suitors.

Antinoos

Another young man, and one of Penelope's suitors. There seems to be a sort of attraction between him and Penelope.

Melantho

A servant girl.

THE GODDESSES**Artemis**

Independent and self-governed, with no need of men, she goes hunting in the moonlight. She is good at taking care of herself, but can be destructive and cause others great suffering. Quick to anger.

Athena

Goddess of wisdom and knowledge. She is strategic, can judge any situation, reflects, and has a lot of self-control. She lacks sympathy with other women, is very much focused on herself, and without friends. And yet she has great sympathy for Odysseus.

Hestia

Goddess of the domestic hearth. She has a calm inner centre. She represents relation and connection and integrity. She emphasizes the importance and value of being your own person. She meditates. She is introspective. She looks to her own needs. She is intuitive. She realizes the essentials of any situation. She seeks solitude and develops herself. She has no experience of love-affaires.

Hera

Goddess of married life. For Hera, the husband is the centre of life. She lacks any relation to other women. She is hostile towards Aphrodite. She can easily feel anger towards other women. Dissatisfied with one's marriage or not, being married is still of importance. If her husband is unfaithful, her anger is pointed to the other woman, not to her husband.

Demeter

Motherly. The most generous of the goddesses. She takes care of others. She is caring, supporting, helpful and open-handed. Being a mother is more important than marriage.

Persephone

Passive, inactive and governed by others. She can move in any direction. She has obliging manners. She is calm, well-mannered, amenable and vague. She is not sure about the idea of marriage.

Aphrodite

Goddess of love. She is invulnerable. She is never victimized. She is committed to what seems to be important at any given time. She feels great joy at love and beauty. She has an appetite for life. She lives only in time present.

SYNOPSIS

The action takes place during five days, five nights and one dawn, in Penelope's house

Scene 1 Promises DAY

Penelope is weaving; she has promised her suitors that she will marry one of them when the weave, that she has been working on for the past three years, is completed.

Scene 2 Images of a dream NIGHT

With help from Eurykleia, Penelope unravels the weave, delaying her work, trying to avoid having to choose any of the suitors. In a dream she meets with seven goddesses, and with Odysseus, her husband.

Scene 3 Who will she choose? DAY

The suitors press in upon Penelope, but she keeps them at a distance.

Scene 4 Ambivalence NIGHT

In a dream the seven goddesses reveal Penelope's inner conflict: continue to wait for Odysseus, or seek a lover among the suitors? In her dream she meets with Odysseus, and she questions herself and her waiting. Waking up, she unravels the weave.

Scene 5 Treason DAY

Melantho, one of the servant girls, has discovered that Penelope secretly unravels the weave. The servant girls threaten to tell the suitors of Penelope's betrayal, and Penelope has to agree to let her son, Telemakhos, spend the night with Melantho. Antinoos, one of the suitors, tries to convince Penelope that her husband, Odysseus, is dead.

Scene 6 After all she is human NIGHT

In a dream Penelope reflects on memories of her husband, and their marriage. The goddesses suggest that Penelope remarries. Eurykleia tries to wake her up with news of her husband. Finally, while awake, Penelope unravels the weave.

Scene 7 I know not yet myself DAY

Penelope's and Odysseus' son, Telemakhos, wants his mother to return to her parents and marry again, making him the new master of the house. It upsets her to realize that not even her son is on her side. The suitors demand an answer from her, but she refuses to answer and makes them leave.

Scene 8 Remember NIGHT

In a dream the goddesses remind Penelope of her childhood. She was then a self-governed young person, not influenced by others, and innocent. But aged fourteen she was given away by her parents to marry Odysseus. In the dream she meets her husband and questions their marriage.

Scene 9 Betrayal of promise DAY

Telemakhos, Penelope's son, enters, regretting his harsh words. The suitors want Penelope to decide, and the servant girls want another night with Telemakhos, using their knowledge of how Penelope unravels the weave as a threat. When Penelope refuses to agree on their terms, they expose Penelope's betrayal to the suitors. The suitors demand that Penelope marries. Telemakhos defends his mother.

Scene 10 Penelope I am no longer NIGHT

Penelope wants the night and the goddesses to arrive. In a dream the goddesses make her reflect on her life, and she admits and accepts that she is in pain and under too much pressure. When she meets with Odysseus, in her dream, she takes leave of him.

Scene 11 Killing them all DAWN

Penelope wants to be left alone. Suddenly, she hears a sound, coming from the house. Eurykleia enters and triumphantly announces that Odysseus has returned. He has killed all the suitors and all the servant girls. Penelope and Eurykleia run to The Great Hall. After twenty years of waiting, finally, Penelope meets her husband, Odysseus.

WHAT IS THE OPERA REALLY ABOUT

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

From: Four Quartets, Little Gidding, V, by T. S. Eliot, 1943

THE PLAY OF THE NIGHT is an opera about a person's individuation process. Penelope has been waiting for her husband, Odysseus, who has been at war, for the past twenty years. She imagines that her husband is still alive, avoiding answering the men that want her to remarry. They, on their hand, suggest that her husband is dead, and that he shall never return.

In her nightly dreams Penelope meets seven goddesses, and their presence form a great weave of psychic factors. Scenes, images and the same characters return night after night.

In her dreams she meets Odysseus, her husband, but she also meets Antinoos, one of the suitors that wants to marry her. They are both important images, and represent, each in their own way, her animus.

During the opera Penelope undergoes a process of change and maturity through psychological growth. The inner centre from which this process operates is her inner self, the true core of her mind and psyche. In order to establish her inner individuation in an outer reality, Penelope has to make decisions about how to live her life. The questions are: Is she the waiting wife and a mother – only? What is Penelope's true self? Who will she become?

Peter Bäckström

CAST

Penelope	Thea Bresson
Eurykleia	Marie Borup
Odysseus	William Tarrach
Telemakhos	Thor Huttunen
Melantho	Signe Haugaard Lauridsen
Antinoos	Marcel Slakonja
Amphinomos	Magnus Mariegaard
Eurymakhos	Anna Gerda Sylvest
The suitors	Joseph Mossop, Jo Angeloff, Per Svenson, Anton Josef Puscha, Magnus Bille Fought Kristensen, Johan Kullander, Darnell Boddie
The servant girls	Yinuo Niu, Xiaoya Shi, Indigo Laurén, Dafne Stilund Nielsen, Mathea Kvalvåg-Andersen, Ida Dreisig Sarnar, Therese Schoder-Larsen, Ingrid Rydh, Victoria Elmas, Berte Wiggers Lyneborg, Karen Sofie Nilsen Hafskjold, Veronika Pervan, Steinunn María Pormar, Anna Zedníčková, Martine Johanne Olsen, Zoe Kaznelson

THE GODDESSES

Artemis	Inga Lohne-Otterstad
Aphrodite	Anna Christine Bauer
Hestia	Astrid Elise Thomsen
Demeter	Klara Kofod Lauridsen
Athena	Nikolaj Høybye
Persephone	Tuomas Pääkkönen
Hera	Mikkel Zielinski Ajslev

ORCHESTRA

Conductor	Ondřej Soukup
Violin 1	Cassandra Andrea Juul
Violin 2	Olga Larsson
Viola	Viktorija Viktorova
Cello	Arthur Daems
Bass	Leo Klintman
Flute	Sille Amalie Enevoldsen
Oboe	Ioana Lavinia Opris
Clarinet	Kristopher Nash
Bassoon	Nanna Else Johansen
Horn	Magne Christiansen Meyer
Trumpet	Preben Zijlstra
Trombone	Elias Fridolfsson
Percussion	Zheng Cao
Piano	Denisa Irina Pîrvulescu
Harp	Steaph Chaimbeul

PRODUCTION TEAM

Stage director	Peter Bäckström
Costume designer	Sandra Åberg
Assistant director	Dagmar Skovgaard Boas
Stunt consultant	Robert Follin
Lighting master	Rasmus Ammitzbøll Egegaard Sørensen
Lighting assistant, visuals	Gabriel Bäckström
Technical assistance	Jacob Due
Dresser	Therese Schoder-Larsen
Graphics	Klara Kofod Lauridsen
Translation consultants	Lene and Max Rognmo Bäckström
Casting	Tuva Semmingsen, Eva Hess Thaysen, Jan Lund, Peter Bäckström
Musical coaching	Erik Karlberg
Pianists	Merel Beelen, Denisa Irina Pîrvulescu, Sebastian Nawrocki, Eirik Stave, Manuel Esperilla
Head of Voice Department	Eva Hess Thaysen
Production manager	Tine Damsgaard-Sørensen
Programme book	Anne Heide