**BAM Reflective**

‘An Odyssey’. Where does one start? Let’s just begin with a brief on what the production was about. ‘An Odyssey’ is a fusion of contemporary theatre and performance arts, with games and dances, retelling the ancient Greek epic poem in a contemporary setting. We performed season 1 at the National Theatre of Rome and at Ravensfield Theatre for Season 2 for a week in London.

We began the process back in April this year. I remember walking into the room quite nervously for some reason, I think I was nervous with the fact that I was accepted as role of director. For me that’s quite a big thing because directing was a pretty fresh for me. I’d only officially directed one play at university. With that in mind my unexperienced self walks into the room full of experienced creators from all backgrounds and nationalities. As I open the door 20 odd people turned their heads around like owls, their faces were almost a blur only because again, I was slightly nervous, also since I hadn’t worn my glasses that day. An unintentional glare of curiosity of who the hell has just walked into the room. I quickly grabbed one of those painfully annoying blue foldup chairs and slid myself into the creative circle, but as I sat down there was a sense of security, I felt at ease because when I looked up, I saw my BAM & Middlesex family. A collection of memories that I’d shared with each individual brushed passed my mind. Immediately I knew I was ‘home’ again. The exact same feeling I got when I began my journey with BAM project first time round when I began the process of ‘Gilgamesh’ last year.

I just knew I was going to have the best 5 months of the year, eager to learn more and delve myself into the creative process and I was correct. The creative process of season 1 was so open and shared that it broke all conventions on how a theatre company would normally function. Sure, we had our roles that we had to fulfil and having our own initial ideas on how we’d like the scenes or designs to run, yet we were all open to suggestions and ideas that could be challenged and compromised. Even when we had the show prepared in Rome, couple of hours before we were presenting on stage at the Dominio Pubblico (Public Domain) Festival, I remember a particular movement sequence was not corresponding truly with what the scene was trying say, and I asked Tida who was rapidly typing away at her laptop “Tida this isn’t working and I’m not sure if we have time to change it” She looks up, adjusts her flexible frames “just change it” with a blasé tone and continues to carry on with her own work. Moments like this I cherish the most, because you just need a small catalyst as such just to ease your mind during a creative process and further delve into developing new ideas that may or may not be risky. However, I do apologise to Pedro for making him run back and forth for 15 minutes, whilst I was trying to figure out what I wanted. Sorry mate, I still owe you a coffee for that. In the end the show was a success, I remember just observing the audience for a moment just too see their reactions, smiling faces filled with joy and the shine in their eyes.

The London run was another step up, we concluded that we wanted to correspond more with Homer’s text of the Odyssey. Stripping apart old ideas and literally dissecting the whole show into smaller objects of creative materials. Finding the balance of taking extracts of Odysseus’s 10-year journey through contemporary settings but still holding onto the story telling to present a clearer narrative of the production but still holding onto the idea of what is home? Where do you find home? It was a fascinating idea because it reflects Odysseus’s eagerness to find his ‘home’ again and with our own individual ideas of what ‘home’ meant to us, even to the extent of opening this discussion to the audience to question themselves also. I would say season 2 of the creative process was a challenging one. Only because now it was a much larger scale production and we lost members due to scheduling difficulties and you know, life, ever changing our destinations and paths. Also, since we were completely revamping the show into a wider direction. Roles of people had changed, within the creative team and the performance team. A complete refurbishment of ‘An Odyssey. I saw it as more of an upgrade. We knew the show worked prior but now it’s time to see how much more we can develop new ideas and improving overall direction, because as cliché this may sound, there is always room for improvement. I felt like we were heading into a better direction with everything to be honest. It felt as though we cemented our groundings and were ready to keep building this show higher and higher. For myself, I felt as though I was able to work much more closer with Laura, Simone and Tida as directors, and learning how they work, and how I could use this further gained knowledge to take my practice as a director into a higher place. I could feel as though I had gained a better focus in my creative vision, to see things much more clearly and in detail.

Just to end this. I am so proud to what we had achieved, performers, directors and designers. I truly think we had created a very fine and fun piece of theatre. I could never be so honoured to have worked with such a great collaborative team. For this process to end was very sad, even till the point of myself getting up the next day after the final show, thinking we had another run to finish. Honestly, I could happily work with the same people straight into a new production, and I hope we will for the next BAM project with Pinocchio.