



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES

WARRIOR CHORUS FLORIDA

**OUR ODYSSEY:
Veterans' Experiences
from Ancient Greece to Modern America**

[[PARTICIPANTS' PRELIMINARY FINAL PROGRAM GUIDE]]

FIU | FLORIDA
INTERNATIONAL
UNIVERSITY

AQUILA
THEATRE

VFW
NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.

INTRO: ABOUT THE PROGRAM AND THE SHOW (15 min)

1. (7 min.) Bobby: on Stone of Hope, VFW history, mission (7 min)
2. (7 min.) Jessica: background on the *Odyssey*, the overall program, and the evening
3. (3 min.) Documentary portions (intro.?)

PART 1: Leadership and Heroism (20 min)

1. (2 min.) Part 1, Intro.
2. (2 min.) Part 1, Excerpt reader 1: **Connie**

[ENEMY ATTACK, p. 249]

... Leaping

*up high, he reached his hands toward my men,
seized two, and knocked them hard against the ground
like puppies, and the floor was wet with brains.
He ripped them limb by limb to make his meal,
then ate them like a lion on the mountains,
devouring flesh, entrails, and marrow bones,
and leaving nothing. Watching this disaster,
we wept and lifted up our hands in prayer
to Zeus. We felt so helpless. When the Cyclops
had filled his massive belly with his meal
of human meat and unmixed milk, he lay
stretched out among his flocks. Then thinking like
a military man, I thought I should
get out my sword, go up to him and thrust
right through his torso, feeling for his liver.
That would have doomed us all. On second thoughts,
I realized we were too weak to move
the mighty stone he set in the high doorway.
So we stayed there in misery until dawn.*

3. (4 min.) Part 1, Speaker 1: **Willie F.** discussing his experiences at war, and afterwards [and/or another topic of his choosing]
4. (2 min.) Part 1, Excerpt Reader 2: **Jerome**

[ATTACKING THE ENEMY, p. 252]

... All-conquering sleep

*took him. In drunken heaviness, he spewed
wine from his throat and chunks of human flesh.
And then I drove the spear into the embers
to heat it up, and told my men, 'Be brave!'
I wanted none of them to shrink in fear...*

... My crew

*stood firm: some god was breathing courage in us.
They took the olive spear, its tip all sharp,
and shoved it into his eye. I leaned on top
and twisted it, as when a man drills wood
for shipbuilding...*

*... His blood
poured out around the stake, and blazing fire
seized his lids and brows, and fried the roots...
... So did his eyeball crackle on the spear.
Horribly then he howled, the rocks resounded,
and we shrank back in fear. He tugged the spear
out of his eye, all soaked with gushing blood.*

5. (4 min.) Part 1, Speaker 2: **Jerome** discussing his experiences with Agent Orange
6. (3 min.) Documentary portions
 - a. Perhaps: Documentary portions re. conditions of war and history of Black service members' experiences

PART 2: Grief and Loss (20 min.)

1. (2 min.) Part 2, Intro. (Jessica)

2. (2 min.) Part 2, Excerpt reader 1: **Jill**

[GRIEVING FOR A DEAD SOLDIER, p. 281, p. 301]

*First came the spirit of my man Elpenor...
... we left his body in the house of Circe
without a funeral or burial;
we were too occupied with other things.
On sight of him, I wept in pity...
... He groaned...
... 'By the men you left,
the absent ones! And by your wife! And father,
who brought you up from babyhood! And by
your son, Telemachus, whom you abandoned
alone at home, I beg you! When you sail
from Hades and you dock your ship again
at Aea, please, my lord, remember me.
Do not go on and leave me there unburied,
abandoned, without tears or lamentation –
or you will make the gods enraged at you.
Burn me with all my arms, and heap a mound
beside the gray salt sea, so in the future
people will know of me and my misfortune...'
... 'Poor man!' I answered, 'I will do all this.'*

*... Our ship came to Aea...
... I sent my men to Circes' house, to bring
the body of the dead Elpenor. Quickly
we chopped the wood and at the farthest headland
we held a funeral for him, and wept
profusely, crying out in grief.*

3. (5 min.) Part 2, Speaker 1: **Willie B.** discussing his experience returning home and visiting the family of a fellow service member [and/or another topic of his choosing]

4. (2 min.) Part 2, Excerpt Reader 2: **Willie B.** [If Willie prefers not to read, that is OK]

[GRIEVING FOR AN ABSENT OR CHANGED FAMILY, p. 285]

*My mother answered...
... 'Your father stays out in the countryside.
He will not come to town. He does not sleep
on a real bed with blankets and fresh sheets.
In winter he sleeps inside by the fire,*

*just lying in the ashes with the slaves;
his clothes are rags. In summer and at harvest,
the piles of fallen leaves are beds for him.
He lies there grieving, full of sorrow, longing
for your return. His old age is not easy.
And that is why I met my fate and died...
... it was missing you,
Odysseus, my sunshine; your sharp mind,
and your kind heart. That took sweet life from me.'*

*Then in my heart I wanted to embrace
the spirit of my mother. She was dead,
and I did not know how. Three times I tried,
longing to touch her. But three time her ghost
flew from my arms, like shadows or like dreams.
Sharp pain pierced deeper in me as I cried,
'No, Mother! Why do you not stay for me,
and let me hold you...?'*

5. (3 min.) Documentary portions
 - Perhaps: Documentary portions re. grief, loss

PART 3: Higher Powers (20 min.)

1. (2 min.) Part 3, Intro. (Jessica)
2. (2 min.) Part 3, Excerpt reader 1: **Jonathon**

[FINDING HOME, p. 324-325]
*Odysseus... did not recognize the place
from which he had been absent for so long.
... looking at his native land, he groaned
and smacked his thighs, and sobbed,
“Where am I now?...”*
*... Odysseus was overjoyed to see [Athena].
He cried,
“Oh friend! You are the very first
person that I have met here. Greetings!
... tell me, please, what is this place?... Who lives here?”*
*And with twinkling eyes the goddess
said, “Stranger, you must be a foreigner
from distant parts, or foolish, since you ask
about this famous country. Many people
know it, from those who live towards the east
under the rising sun, to those out west
in lands of gloomy dusk...
... Foreigner I think the name
of Ithaca is even known in Troy,
a land they say is far away from Greece.”*
*Odysseus, who had endured so much,
so long was overjoyed, to hear from her
that he was in his own dear native land.
His words took wings and flew, but he did not
tell her the truth; he bit his story back.
His mind was always full of clever schemes.
“Yes, I have heard of Ithaca, although
I come from distant Crete. Now I am here
With all this wealth; I left an equal share
Of riches for my children back at home.
I am in exile.”*

3. (4 min.) Part 3, Speaker 1: **Jonathon and/or others** discussing returning to Miami during height of civil rights movement [We could also have two excerpts in a row, rather than a speaker here.]
4. (2 min.) Part 3, Excerpt Reader 2: **Sheila**

[ASSERTING POWER; PROTECTING HONOR, p. 491]

*Tell me now about the household women.
Which ones dishonor me? And which are pure?
The slave who loved her master answered...
Twelve stepped away from honor: those twelve girls
Ignore me; and Penelope our mistress...
The master strategiest Odysseus
Said...
“Call the women
who made those treasonous plots while I was gone...
we must start
to clear the corpses out. The girls must help...
When the whole house is set in proper order,
restore my halls to health: take out the girls
between the courtyard wall and the rotunda.
Hack at them with long swords, eradicate
all life from them. They will forget the things
the suitors made them do with them in secret,
through Aphrodite.”*

5. (4 min.) Part 3, Speaker 2: **Sheila** discussing her impressions of this excerpt
6. (3 min.) Documentary portions
 - Perhaps: Documentary portions re. higher powers, forces bigger than one's self??

PART 4: Homecoming and Relationships (20 min.)

1. (2 min.) Part 4, Intro. (Jessica)
2. (2 min.) Part 4, Excerpt reader 1: **George**

ENCOUNTERING PARTNERS AND LOVERS, P. 497

*So she went downstairs. Her heart
could not decide if she should keep her distance
as she was questioning her own dear husband,
or go right up to him and kiss his face
and hold his hands in hers. She crossed the threshold
and sat across from him beside the wall,
in firelight. He sat beside the pillar,
and kept his eyes down, waiting to find out
whether the woman who once shared his bed
would speak to him. She sat in silence, stunned.
Sometimes when she was glancing at his face
it seemed like him; but then his dirty clothes
were unfamiliar.
... "If this is really him,
if my Odysseus has come back home,
we have our ways to recognize each other,
through secret signs known only to us two."*

3. (4 min.) Part 4, Speaker 1: **Arthur** on homecoming/relationships [and/or another topic of his choosing]
4. (2 min.) Part 4, Excerpt Reader 2: **Delvena**

[ENCOUNTERING PARENTS, p. 517-518]

*"Father! It is me! I have
been gone for twenty years, and now am home,
In my own father's country. Stop your tears.
I will explain, though we do not have long.
I killed the suitors in my house; I took
revenge for all the pain they caused."*

Laertes

*answered, "If you are really my own son
Odysseus come home, show me a sign; let me be sure of it."*

Odysseus was quick to answer...

*"... When I was little, I would follow you
around the garden, asking all [the trees'] names.
We walked beneath these trees; you named them all
and promised them to me..."*

At that, Laertes' heart

*and legs gave way; he recognized the signs
Odysseus had given as clear proof.
He threw both arms around his ruthless son,
who caught him as he fainted.*

5. (4 min.) Part 4, Speaker 2: **Charles** on homecoming [and/or another topic of his choosing]
6. (5 min.) Documentary portions
 - Final 5-10 min.
7. (5 min.) Participants make themselves available on stage for audience to ask questions and talk [Do we want a formal Q&A session, or an informal “feel free to come and say hello”?]