

**Curatorial text by Rainer Mack, artistic director of the International Readers of Homer
For *an odyssey* by Giorgos Gripeos
Nieuw Dakota, 2018**

Among the threads of hospitality that joined friend and stranger alike in ancient Greece were the songs of the oral epic poets. When Odysseus washes up on the island of the Phaeacians he is welcomed with a banquet, games, and the songs of Demodocus, the blind poet who sings stories they all know and share. The poet composes on the spot, his work a stitching together (ἡ ραψις) of sound and sense that weaves bonds of friendship and human sociality among those who listen. An extraordinarily, intimate moment comes when Alcinous, the Phaeacian king, alone among those in the hall, sees Odysseus cry as he listens to Demodocus sing of the war that continues to keep him far from home. It is this empathic connection woven by the poem that will lead to Alcinous's decision to risk Poseidon's anger and help the great hero reach the shores of Ithaka.

Here, in this space opened by Giorgos Gripeos, we reacquaint ourselves with the age-old work of oral epic. For ten hours on Saturday, July 14, we leave the lonely world of the silent reader and join together to read the great tale of Odysseus out loud and at length. In this reading we become the poet, and then in turn the audience, stitching the poem together by passing it along, one reader to the next, friend to stranger, voice to voice. We are reading along with the new voice of Emily Wilson, whose translation of the *Odyssey* is the first ever by a woman in English, and in concert with the singers of Genetic Choir. We are reading with the thrum of the diesel engines and the screech of the gulls as the ferry pushes through the waters of the harbor. We are reading, and in reading together, retelling this old story for all the many *odysseys* that have brought each of us to this place...and will take us on again to other destinations. Meyouthemus.