

## Tell me more about ..... the story of Pericles

Below is a synopsis of **Pericles re-imagined for audiences aged 6 and up** at **Regent's Park Open Air Theatre**. This synopsis, based on the adaptation by **Natalie Abrahami (Director of Pericles)** will give children attending the show an insight into the plot of this specially created version of Shakespeare's play.

**Pericles** is the story of a family torn apart, longing to be reunited. As you will realise, if you are familiar with Shakespeare's original play, this re-imagined version is an entrancing fairytale, engaging and the appropriate for the target age group. There are certain elements of the performance that I have held back from this synopsis so that there will be a few surprises when the children see the show.

**Sarah Gordon, Head of Education, Open Air Theatre, Regent's Park.**

Our story takes place in faraway lands around the Mediterranean Sea. It is a calm day on board a ship sailing from Pentapolis to Tyre. Prince Pericles is travelling with his beautiful wife Princess Thaisa. She is heavily pregnant with their first child. Suddenly a violent storm hits the ship. Pericles is desperately worried about his wife and unborn baby. He is out on the deck surveying the storm when he is brought two pieces of news - the wonderful news that he has a newborn baby daughter and the terrible news that Thaisa, his beloved wife, has died in childbirth.

Prince Pericles is heartbroken when he hears of his wife's death. The sailors on board this ship are very superstitious. They believe it is bad luck to carry a dead body on board ship so they tell Pericles he must throw Thaisa's body overboard as the storm will not calm until he does so. Pericles buries his lovely wife Thaisa at sea. She is placed in a watertight, satin-lined coffin with jewels, sweet smelling spices and a letter from Pericles. The coffin is thrown overboard.

Pericles calls his newborn baby daughter Marina for she was born at sea. He believes that she will not be safe on the long sea voyage back to his kingdom of Tyre so he decides to take her to the nearby kingdom of Tarsus. Here he leaves her in the care of his friend Queen Dionyza who promises to look after her. Pericles must return to his Kingdom of Tyre to oversee royal matters of state. Pericles hates to be parted from his baby daughter and really hopes that he will be able to return as soon as possible to take her home to Tyre with him.

Marina, as she grows up in Tarsus, thinks constantly about her father. As the years go by she hopes desperately that she will soon find him and be re-united with him.

Queen Dionyza - like a wicked step-mother from a fairytale is sweet and charming on the outside but is really very evil. As Marina grows up Dionyza becomes very jealous of her because she is beautiful and sweet-natured and gets more attention than Dionyza's own daughter. Over the years, Dionyza becomes so angry about this that one day she instructs her servant Leonine to take Marina for a walk along the sea shore and kill her.

As Leonine is about to do this terrible deed a band of pirates appear from nowhere and snatch Marina from Leonine's grasp shouting "A prize! A prize!" Leonine is

unable to fight the pirates who are fully armed bearing cutlasses and pistols! Marina is seized from him and taken away by the pirates. Leonine believes that the pirates will kill Marina and do the job for him so he tells Dionyza that Marina is dead. However the pirates take great care of Marina. They befriend her and she, in turn, helps to look after them a bit like Snow White with the Seven Dwarfs. When the pirates' ship reaches the shores of a land called Mytilene they realise they have run out of money and can no longer look after Marina. They leave her with some people called Pander, Bawd and Bolt who run a rather odd human zoo. These three treat Marina unkindly. She becomes an exhibit, wearing a mermaid's tail outfit and singing to paying customers at the zoo. Marina hates being stared at each day and begs the owners to help her find a better life. Lysimachus, the Governor of Mytilene comes to see her and takes pity on her, giving her some gold coins. She hopes to use these to buy her way out of this horrible lonely life. Marina has given up all hope of ever seeing her father again.

Meanwhile, after all these years, unknown to Marina, her father, now King Pericles, is setting sail from his kingdom of Tyre to go to Tarsus to fetch his daughter. He believes he has left her in the good care of Queen Dionyza. He is horrified to discover from Dionyza that Marina has died. Dionyza, showing only her false-charming side, takes Pericles to the monument that she has had built in memory of Marina. Pericles believes that Marina is dead, and heartbroken he leaves Tarsus and sets sail on the Mediterranean Sea.

The royal ship carrying the distressed King Pericles arrives in Mytilene (of all places!). Lysimachus tells Pericles that there is a young lady here in Mytilene who is so kind and sympathetic that she will be comfort him. He does not tell Pericles that this young lady is called Marina!

Pericles and Marina find themselves sitting face to face in the same room but neither know who the other is. They certainly don't realise they are father and daughter. Marina speaks gently to Pericles, telling him her parents were royal and that she too has suffered great sadness in her life. The more Marina tells him about herself the more Pericles begins to wonder whether this is his long-lost daughter. He can hardly believe what he hears as she recounts the story of her life. And she looks so much like her mother, Princess Thaisa.

When they are reunited there is great happiness and joy. Pericles then becomes so overwhelmed by finding his daughter Marina alive here in Mytilene that he is overcome by exhaustion. He lies down to sleep and as he sleeps he has a vision. The goddess Diana appears to him and brings him yet more good news.

When you come to the **Open Air Theatre** to see **Pericles** you will find out what the goddess Diana tells him in this vision and you'll see what happens next to King Pericles and Princess Marina. Perhaps before then you could imagine what you think might happen as the play comes to an end?

We look forward to seeing you at the theatre.