



Lyric
OPERA OF
CHICAGO

2020|21

**BACK-
STAGE
PASS!**

This backstage pass belongs to:

Educational Partner:



JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS

AN OPERA FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Music by Gregory Spears
Libretto by Kathryn Walat

Major support provided by the **Nancy W. Knowles Student and Family Performances Fund**. *Jason and the Argonauts* and *Opera in the Neighborhoods* are supported by Lead Sponsor **J. Christopher and Anne N. Reyes** and cosponsors two **Anonymous Donors**, **Dover Foundation**, the **Donna Van Eekeren Foundation**, the **Walter Family Foundation** and **Wintrust Community Banks**.

Lyric Unlimited is Lyric Opera of Chicago's department dedicated to education, community engagement, and new artistic initiatives.

Lyric Unlimited was launched with major catalyst funding from **The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation** and receives major support from the **Caerus Foundation, Inc.**

Welcome!

Welcome to the latest edition of Lyric Opera of Chicago's **Backstage Pass!** This is your ticket to the world of opera and an insider's guide to Lyric Unlimited's production of **Jason and the Argonauts**.

op·e·ra (noun) A play in which most or all of the words are sung, and the music helps tell the story. Like a movie or a play, an opera combines acting, sets, and costumes. What makes an opera different is that the story is told with music and singing instead of just talking. The first operas were written in Italy over 400 years ago—but *Jason and the Argonauts* was written in 2016!

What to Expect...

- The performance will last 45 minutes
- This opera is sung in English
- Our show requires you to be a quiet listener, but you can clap and cheer loudly at the end

Listen for...

- People singing the story
- Different kinds of voices, from high (soprano) to low (bass)
- Different types of instruments—violin, viola, cello, and harpsichord

Look for...

- Musicians playing instruments
- Scenery and other items onstage that help tell the story
- Performers changing costumes quickly and playing multiple characters
- Scenery and costumes made out of recycled and repurposed items

When you watch the opera, see how many old items have been reused to make the set and costumes. Keep your eyes out for plastic bottles, sticks and twigs, fishing nets, and a bicycle wheel!

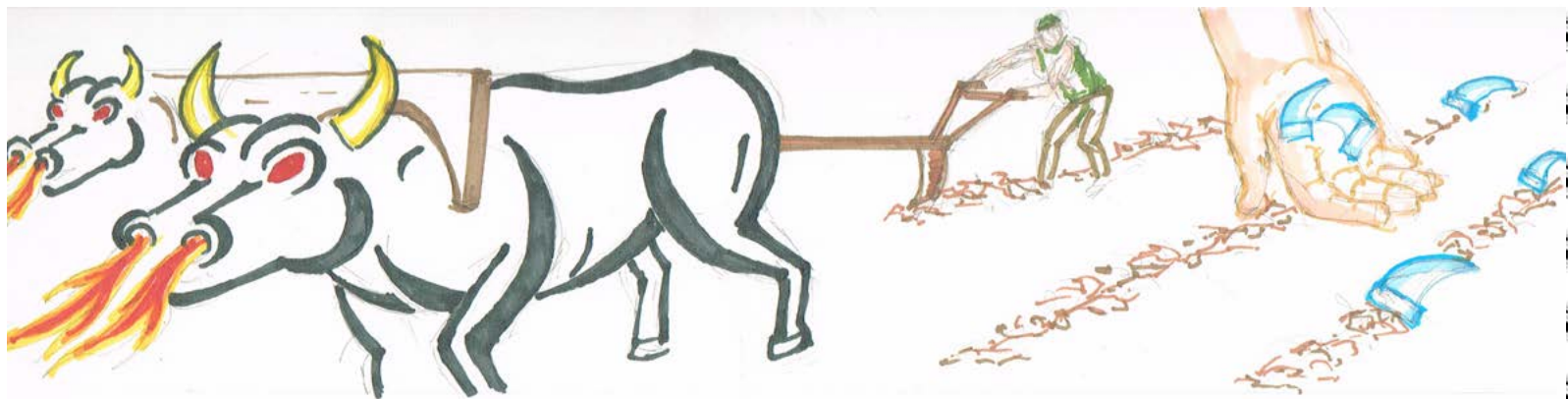
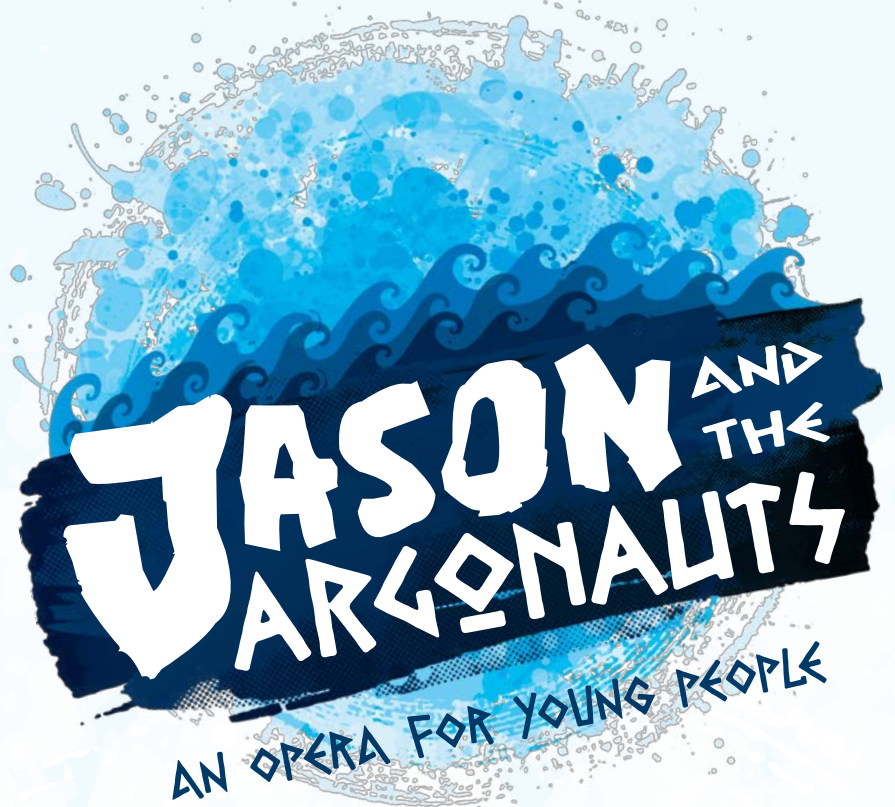


Illustration by set designer Joe Schermoly



JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS

AN OPERA FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Music by Gregory Spears
Libretto by Kathryn Walat

This archival recording is from the Opera in the Neighborhoods performance on November 15, 2016 at Evanston Township High School

World premiere performances August 20 and 21, 2016, Vittum Theater, Chicago

Opera in the Neighborhoods Chicago area tour: October 18 - November 18, 2016

Jason, tenor Kyle Erdos-Knapp
Female Narrator/Atalanta/Siren/Medea/Lamb, soprano Amy Kuckelman
Chiron/King Pelias/King Aeetes/Dragon, bass-baritone Peter Morgan
Male Narrator/Orpheus, bass-baritone Vince Wallace

Music Supervisor, Harpsichord Matthew Gemmill
Violin Maya Shiraishi
Viola Amanda Grimm
Cello Larry Glazier

Director E. Loren Meeker
Assistant Director Alexandra Kunath
Set Designer Joe Schermoly
Costume Designer Theresa Ham
Stage Manager Adrienne Bader

Set built by Means of Production

Costumes built by Uber Costume

Wigs built by the Lyric Opera Wig Department; Sarah Hatten, Wigmaster

Photography and recording of any kind are not allowed during the performance.

Please silence cell phones and other devices.

THE CHARACTERS AND THE STORY

Jason is the rightful king. He is raised in the forest by Chiron. Jason becomes a hero, which is a person who shows great courage, wisdom, and nobility.

The Argonauts are the crew of Jason's ship, the Argo.

Chiron is a centaur, a creature with the head, arms, and chest of a man, and the body and legs of a horse.

King Pelias is Jason's uncle. He wrongfully took the throne from Jason's father.

The Golden Fleece is a coat of solid gold wool that King Pelias wants.

Atalanta, like Jason, also grew up in the forest. A mighty bear raised her, and she can hunt and fight as a bear does.

Orpheus is a musician. His music has powerful magic.

Siren is beautiful but evil. Her enchanted song lures sailors so close to shore that they wreck their ships.

King Aeetes is the king of Colchis, on the other side of the sea. He has the Golden Fleece.

Medea is the daughter of King Aeetes. She's also a powerful sorceress.

The Dragon guards the Golden Fleece and never sleeps. He really, really needs a nap.

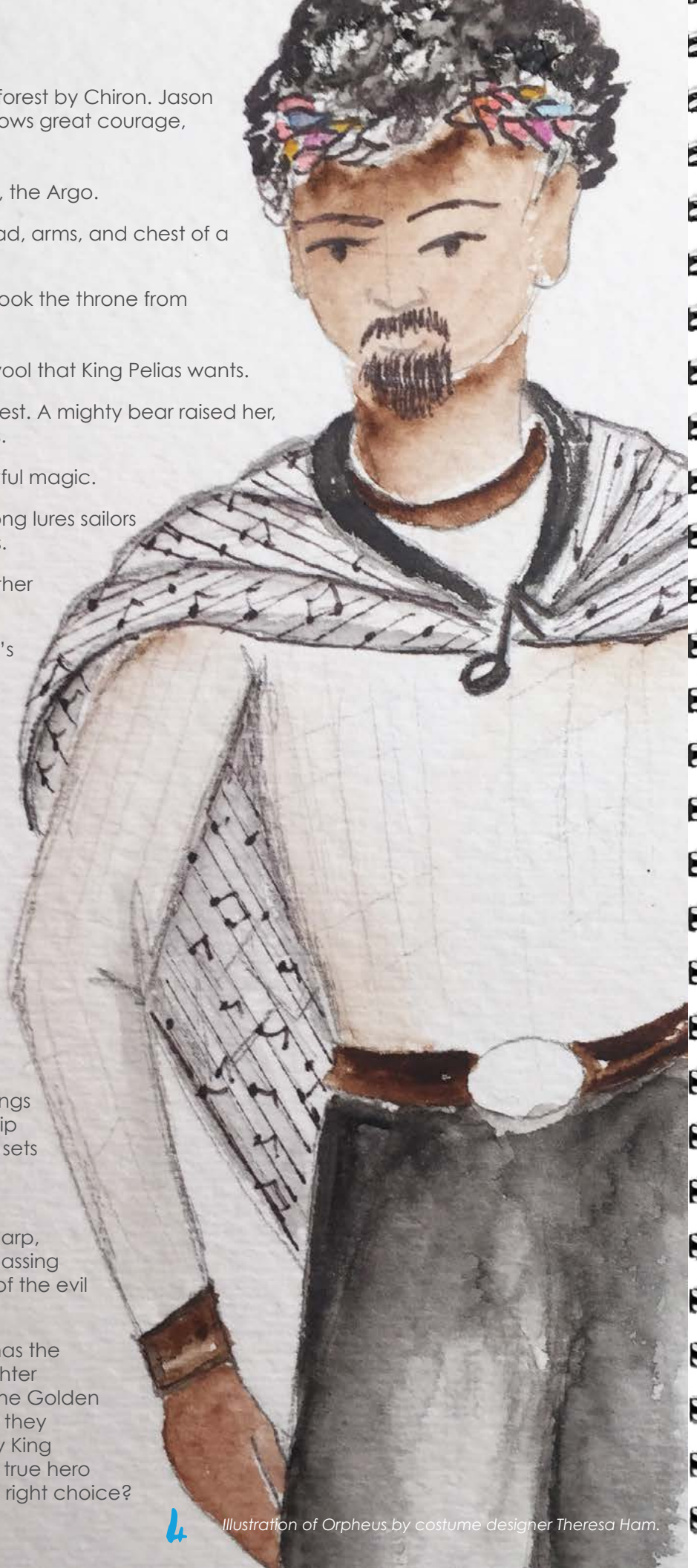
The Lamb is the magical source of the Golden Fleece. It is held captive by King Aeetes.

Long ago in a magical world, Jason is raised in the forest by the centaur Chiron. Wise Chiron plays music and teaches him about nature and the animals, but Jason is impatient to become a hero. When Jason turns 19, he learns that his uncle Pelias took the throne that should be his.

Jason goes to reclaim his throne, but King Pelias says he will give it up only if Jason brings him the Golden Fleece. Jason builds the ship Argo, and with his crew, the Argonauts, he sets sail on his quest.

On their voyage, Jason and the Argonauts face deadly dangers. They sail between sharp, treacherous rocks that snap shut to crush passing ships, and they resist the enchanting song of the evil Siren.

They arrive at Colchis, where King Aeetes has the Golden Fleece. Jason and the king's daughter Medea fall in love, and she helps him get the Golden Fleece. But just as they are about to leave, they discover the golden Lamb, held captive by King Aeetes. Jason must learn that becoming a true hero means respecting nature. Will he make the right choice?



Sing it Loud!

Do you see any microphones on the stage? Probably not—because opera singers don't need them! Like Olympic athletes, opera singers go through years of training. Their voices can fill an entire auditorium **WITHOUT** microphones!

HERE ARE VOICE TYPES USUALLY FOUND IN OPERA:

Mezzo-soprano

(MET-soh soh-PRAH-no)
the middle range of the female singing voice. They might play good or bad characters—everything from sisters to daughters to mothers to evil queens.

Baritone

(BEAR-ih-tone)
the middle male voice in opera. Baritones play all sorts of roles. Sometimes they're good guys, like brothers or fathers. But sometimes they're bad guys, too.

Soprano

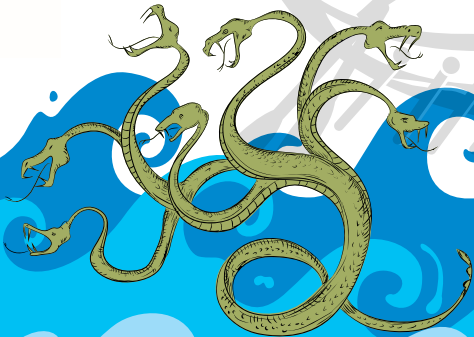
(soh-PRAH-no)
the highest female voice in opera. They usually sing roles like daughters, girlfriends, wives, or princesses.

Tenor

(TEH-ner)
usually the highest male voice in opera. Tenors often sing roles like heroes or princes.

Bass

(BASE)
the lowest, deepest male voice of all. Bases often play characters who are old and wise, but they can also be evil villains.



Other than Jason, all of the male roles in *Jason and the Argonauts* are sung by bass-baritones—their voices can handle baritone and bass characters.

What kind of voices do you think the mythical characters and creatures shown above would have if they were in an opera?

Think of your favorite story, movie, or television show. If that story were to be turned into an opera, what kind of voice types would be best for each character?

You can hear different kinds of voice types in popular music too. Do your favorite singers have high voices or low voices? Can you guess what voice type they might be?

How an Opera

Story

Someone, usually a librettist or composer, finds a story that they think would make a good opera. The story can be from literature, like myths or fairy tales, or from historical or present day events. It can even be made up from scratch. *Jason and the Argonauts* is based on a Greek myth—a traditional story typically involving supernatural beings or events.

Librettist

The librettist is a writer who takes the story and turns it into a script, like a play. In opera, the script is called the libretto.



Kathryn Walat, librettist

Composer

The composer writes the music in a way that best tells the story. The written-out music (with the words of the libretto) is called the score.



Gregory Spears, composer

Stage Director

The stage director decides how the opera will look and be acted out onstage. The designers and the performers bring the director's ideas to life.



E. Loren Meeker, stage director

Designers

The designers work with the director on how the opera will look and how its story will be told. They create the scenery (or set) and costumes.



Joe Schermoly, set designer



Theresa Ham, costume designer

Music Supervisor

Like a conductor, the music supervisor leads music rehearsals and the performances. In *Jason and the Argonauts*, the music supervisor also plays the harpsichord.



Matthew Gemmill, music supervisor and harpsichord

Is Created

Stage Manager

Through signals and whispered commands backstage, the stage manager controls everything that happens onstage during a performance.



Adrienne Bader, stage manager

Kyle Erdos-Knapp (Jason)



Cast

The cast is the singers who perform the opera.



Peter Morgan (Chiron/King Pelias/King Aeetes/Dragon)



Vince Wallace (Male Narrator/Orpheus)



Amy Kuckelman (Female Narrator/Atalanta/Siren/Medea/Lamb)

Musicians

The musicians play the music on instruments. In addition to the harpsichord played by the music supervisor, *Jason and the Argonauts* also has a violin, viola, and cello.



Maya Shiraishi (violin)

Audience

The audience is YOU! What would a show be without an audience? That's when everybody's hard work pays off.



Larry Glazier (cello)



Amanda Grimm (viola)

Making the Opera Happen

Can you figure out which people are responsible for each job at the opera?

1. I design the clothes the singers wear in the opera.

2. I control everything that happens onstage during a performance.

3. We are the singers who perform the opera.

4. I decide how the opera should look and be acted out onstage.

5. We play the music on instruments.

6. I lead music rehearsals and the performances. I may also play one of the instruments.

7. I design the look of the scenery or set.

8. We help behind the scenes to move props, scenery, and equipment.

9. We write the words and the music of an opera.
_____ and _____



stagehands



stage director

1. costume designer
2. stage manager
3. cast

4. stage director
5. musicians
6. music supervisor

7. set designer
8. stagehands
9. librettist and composer

Ancient Artifacts

by the National Hellenic Museum

An artifact is a human-made object that is of cultural or historical interest. Artifacts that ancient peoples wore or used on a daily basis can tell us a lot about how they lived. How do the clothing artifacts below tell a story of these people from Ancient Greece?



Was this person male or female?

Do you think this person was wealthy or in the working class?

How old do you think this person was?

What type of job do you think this person had? Student, Ruling Class, Soldier, Farmer?

What do you think this person did for fun?

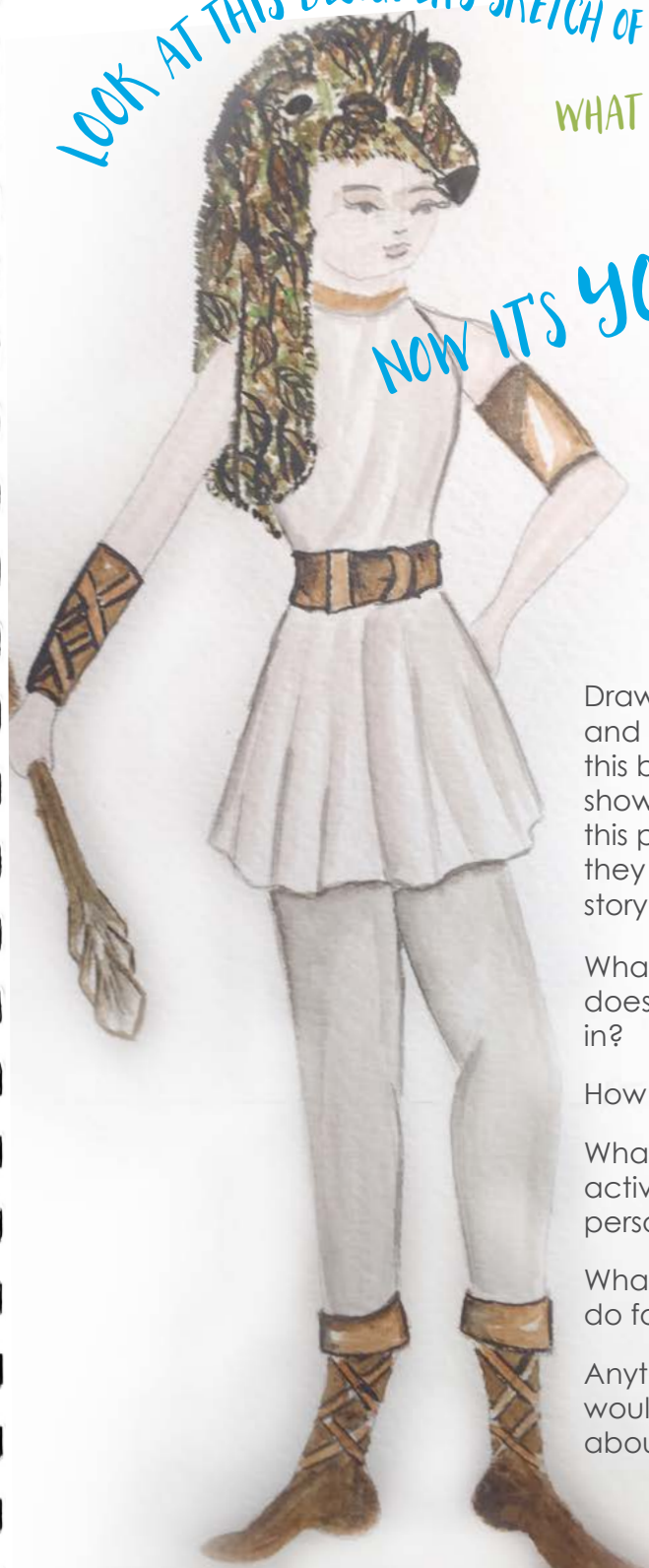
What do you think is the story of this person's life?

Just like artifacts, costumes help tell a story about the characters in an opera. The colors, fabrics, and details of a costume might tell you where and when a character lives, what kind of activities they do, and how different characters relate to each other.

LOOK AT THIS DESIGNER'S SKETCH OF ATALANTA'S COSTUME.

WHAT CAN YOU LEARN ABOUT HER FROM HER COSTUME?

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN TO BE A COSTUME DESIGNER.



Draw a costume and artifacts on this blank person to show others who this person is, what they do, and the story of their life.

What kind of climate does this person live in?

How old is this person?

What types of activities does this person do?

What does this person do for fun?

Anything else you would like to share about this person?

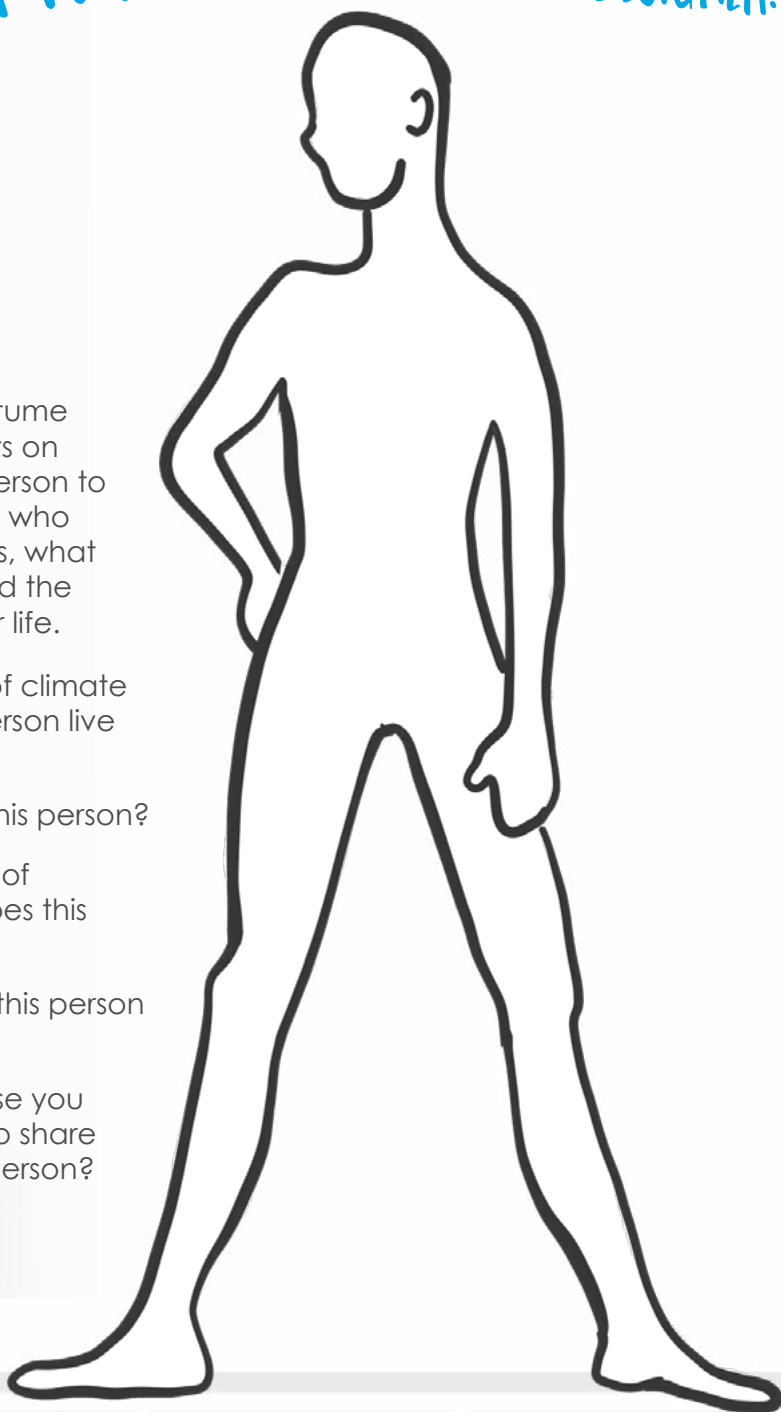


Illustration of Atalanta by costume designer Theresa Ham

Storytelling in Ancient Greece



Greek pot with meanders, Oinochoe geometric period, circa 8th century B.C.E.



Jason & the Dragon. Apulian red-figured kylix, 4th century B.C.E., Naples National Archaeological Museum, Naples

Ancient people used pottery to tell stories about mythical heroes, monsters, and important historical events. Artists would draw scenes from these stories and sometimes use *meanders*, or ornamental designs featuring intricate turns, to decorate their pots. These twisting, turning designs were supposed to represent the mythical *labyrinth*—a vast maze containing the monstrous *minotaur*.

Study the scenes from *Jason and the Argonauts* depicted on these ancient Greek pots. What important events from the story are being told? Use clues in the clothing to determine who the characters are.



Jason bringing the Golden Fleece to Pelias. Apulian red-figured crater. 350-340 B.C.E., Louvre Museum, Paris



Much like the stories drawn on these pots, in the opera you will see a scroll of images telling how Jason defeated King Aeetes's fire-breathing bulls and skeleton army. Watch for this moment toward the end of the opera. You can see more of the scroll on page 2 of this guide.



The Ancient Greeks also told stories with words and song in large, outdoor theatres. The actors wore large masks to help audience members know which character was which. These masks also had unique shapes around the mouth to help amplify the actors' voices.

Often an actor had to perform multiple characters and would wear a different mask for each. The cast of *Jason and the Argonauts* also performs multiple characters. But instead of changing masks, they change costumes.

Theatre masks. 4th-3rd century B.C.E., Museum of Ancient Agora (in the Stoa of Attalus), Athens. Photo by Giovanni Dall'Orto.

A TALL TWO-HANDLED POT USED FOR STORAGE OR AS A PRIZE IN GAMES
IS CALLED AN AMPHORA.



Use this blank amphora to tell your story about an epic journey. Where would you go? What exciting things might happen along the way?

Meet the Jason and the Argonauts

Cast, Players, and Production Team

Name: Gregory Spears (Composer)

Hometown: Norfolk, Virginia, and Greensboro, North Carolina.

Favorite kind of music other than opera: The music of the troubadours. Troubadours were traveling musicians from medieval times who sang songs about love and adventure.

Favorite subject in school: History and learning about other cultures, other times, and other ways of life.

First inspiration to become a composer: When I was eight years old I started playing the piano and making up little pieces to play. I was pretty shy as a kid, so I loved the fact that I could express my feelings in music rather than in words.

Favorite Greek god or mythological character: Of course Apollo, the god of music!

Name: Kathryn Walat (Librettist)

Hometown: Longmeadow, Massachusetts.

Favorite kind of music other than opera: Bluegrass.

Favorite subject in school: English.

First public performance: When I was in third or fourth grade, I wrote a poem about a horse and read it in front of my class.

Advice for anyone who wants to become a writer: Get a journal, and write as much as you can!

Favorite Greek god or mythological character: Athena. She has an owl, and is also the goddess of wisdom.

Name: Kyle Erdos-Knapp (Jason)

Hometown: Bath, Ohio.

Favorite kind of music other than opera: Everything! But especially folk, rock, and bluegrass.

Favorite subject in school: I loved English and History, and I'm still a big reader.

What you did for fun when you were a kid: I played outside a lot and loved having friends over to play make-believe in the yard. I also read a lot and loved playing the piano and listening to music.

Favorite Greek god or mythological character: Dionysus. I've always related to the fun-loving, casual god of wine who never takes himself too seriously.

Name: Amy Kuckelman (Female Narrator/Atalanta/Siren/Medea/Lamb)

Hometown: Denver, Colorado, then Naperville, Illinois. I went to River Woods Elementary, Madison Junior High, and Naperville Central High.

Favorite kind of music other than opera: '80s-'90s grunge.

Favorite subject in school: Geography.

Advice for anyone who wants to become a singer:

Believe in yourself, stay on your path and keep pushing forward, take chances, and it is OKAY to make mistakes.

What you did for fun when you were a kid: Playing games like red rover, ghosts in the graveyard, football, and I loved putting puzzles together.

Favorite Greek god or mythological character:

Pegasus. He's so beautiful and strong, it would be amazing to have a companion like that.

Name: Peter Morgan (Chiron/King Pelias/King Aeetes/Dragon)

Hometown: Ypsilanti, Michigan.

Favorite kind of music other than opera: Metal. I

played in metal bands in high school and college.

Favorite subject in school: English. I actually really liked doing book reports.

Advice for anyone who wants to become a singer: Sing as much as possible! Find a voice teacher and take part in your school's musical or choir or music classes.

What you did for fun when you were a kid: I loved playing baseball.

Favorite Greek god or mythological character: All the Titans Hercules had to fight. I'm a big fan of big scary monsters.

Name: Vince Wallace (Male Narrator/Orpheus)

Hometown: St. Louis, Missouri.

Favorite kind of music other than opera: Jazz, R&B, gospel, soul, old school, rap, and hip hop.

Favorite subject in school: Math and science. And I loved band and played percussion.

First inspiration to become a singer: Both of my parents were professional singers; my dad released an album on Motown records in the 70s, and my mom was a gospel singer.

What you did for fun when you were a kid: I played baseball, basketball, and football. I was also a boy scout and played drums at church.

Favorite Greek god or mythological character:

Either Zeus or Poseidon. They ruled everything!

Name: Matthew Gemmill (Music Supervisor)

Hometown: Ames, Iowa.

Favorite kind of music other than opera: I love, love, love playing Lieder (songs in German for voice and piano) with singers.

Favorite subject in school: Math.

Advice for anyone who wants to become a musician:

People always tell me they're sorry they stopped music lessons when they were kids. If you like music, don't quit, even if it gets hard!

What you did for fun when you were a kid: Practicing piano and reading.

Favorite Greek god or mythological character: The sphinx because I like riddles, and sphinxes ask riddles.

Name: Maya Shiraishi (Violinist)

Hometown: Hiroshima, Japan

Favorite kind of music other than opera: I love classical music, I really do! I feel a special connection with Schumann, but I also love listening to all kinds of music. I also like Bob Dylan, Édith Piaf, movie soundtracks, the list goes on and on.

Favorite subject in school: Arts and crafts, also I liked writing class.

Advice for anyone who wants to become a musician:

My dad always says "never give up," and I think it's the best advice for me to be a musician. If you love music and want to be a musician, never give up, be gentle to yourself and carry lots of love.

What you did for fun when you were a kid: Gardening with my mom, and fishing with my dad!

Favorite Greek god or mythological character: Medusa popped up in my head. Even though her stories are all scary, I find her quite interesting and fascinating.

Name: Amanda Grimm (Violist)

Hometown: Medina, Ohio.

Favorite kind of music other than opera: I love pop music!

Favorite subject in school: I liked history and literature.

Advice for anyone who wants to become a musician:

Stick with it; even during the frustrating times, finding your passion and a way to express yourself is so very important!

What you did for fun when you were a kid: Violin and ballet.

Favorite Greek god or mythological character: Medusa—having a hairdo made of snakes is super cool.

Name: Larry Glazier (Cello)

Hometown: Indianapolis, Indiana.

Favorite kind of music other than opera: Symphonic music.

Favorite subject in school: Science.

First inspiration to become a cellist: I started playing cello at age 11, picking it from an instrument fair for students.

What you did for fun when you were a kid: Playing outside, flying model airplanes, catching crayfish, tadpoles, etc.

Favorite Greek god or mythological character: Poseidon—love the beach.

Name: E. Loren Meeker (Stage Director)

Hometown: Ashland, Massachusetts.

Favorite kind of music other than opera: I genuinely adore pop radio!

Favorite subject in school: Science! Directing a production is like doing a big experiment!

Advice for anyone who wants to become a stage

director: Go to museums and theaters to experience the visual arts, dance, opera, musicals, and beyond. **What you did for fun when you were a kid:** Gymnastics and dance.

Favorite Greek god or mythological character: The phoenix. I've always been fascinated by this creature who can regenerate.

Name: Alexandra Kunath (Assistant Stage Director)

Hometown: Chicago! I grew up in Jefferson Park and went to St. Robert Bellarmine school.

Favorite kind of music other than opera: Indie/alternative rock and musical theater.

Favorite subject in school: Art.

First public performance: I was five or six years old. I started piano lessons at a very young age and got very nervous before recitals.

Advice for anyone who wants to become a stage

director: Aside from working hard, reaching out to professionals you admire.

Favorite Greek god or mythological character: Apollo! He is the god of music and art.

Name: Joe Schermoly (Set Designer)

Hometown: Johannesburg, South Africa and then Kansas City.

Favorite kind of music other than opera: Modern bluegrass instrumental.

Favorite subject in school: Physics.

Advice for anyone who wants to become a designer:

Learn from those older than you. Go see lots of art of all kinds.

What you did for fun when you were a kid: Swimming.

Favorite Greek god or mythological character:

Hephaestus, because he is always trying to make new things that make people's lives better.

Name: Theresa Ham (Costume Designer)

Hometown: Oak Forest, Illinois. I went to Lee R. Foster Elementary and Oak Forest High.

Favorite kind of music other than opera: Folk and bluegrass.

Favorite subject in school: Reading. I love the idea of being immersed in stories and information. I also really love earth science.

Advice for anyone who wants to become a designer: Be passionate about your work and curious about the world. Be someone that others want to work with and learn from.

Favorite Greek god or mythological character: Dionysus, god of fertility and wine.

Name: Adrienne Bader (Stage Manager)

Hometown: Oxford, Ohio.

Favorite kind of music other than opera: Musical theater—I can't stop listening to *Hamilton*!

Favorite subject in school: Definitely reading! I still always have a book with me.

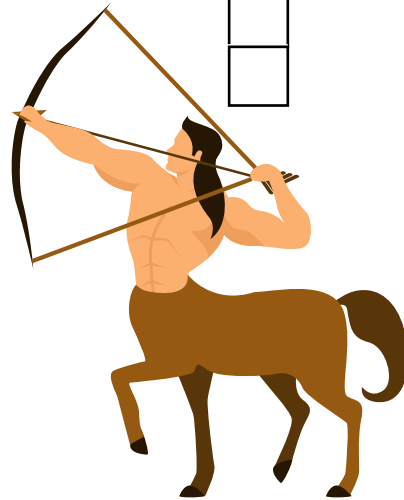
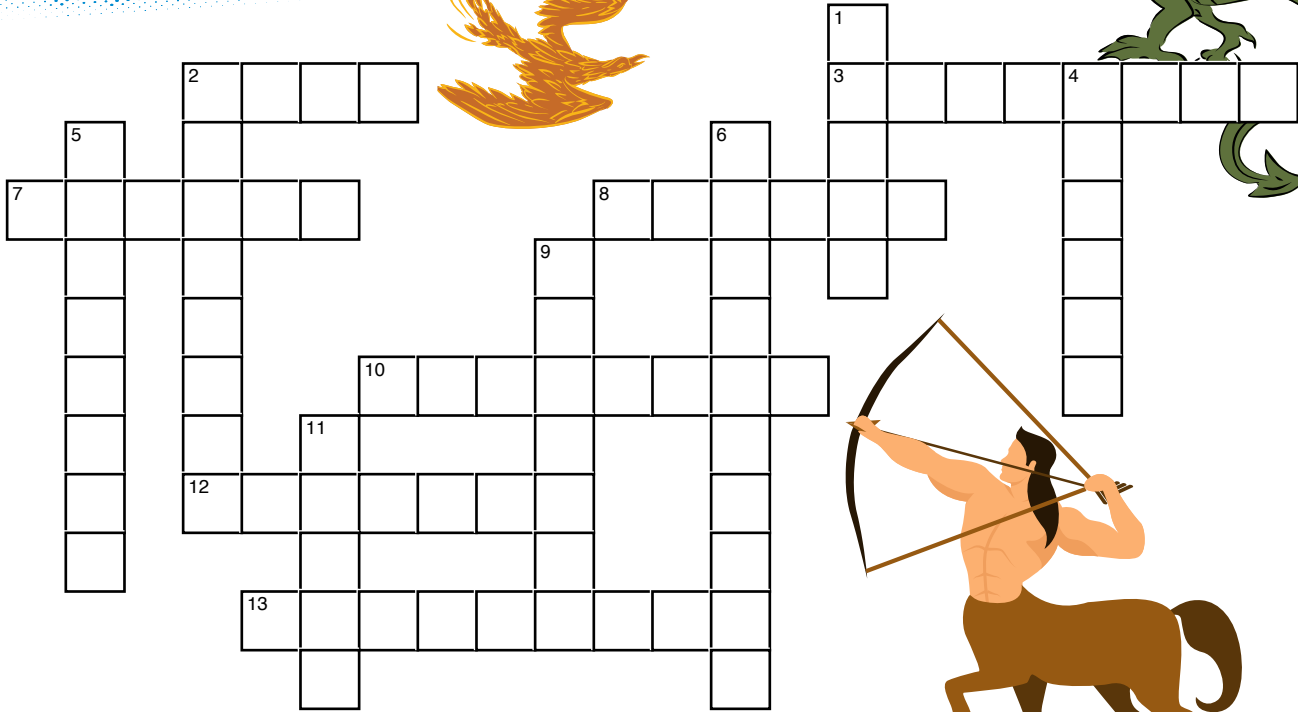
Advice for anyone who wants to become a stage

manager: Be kind to everyone you meet. You will go further if you can work well with a variety of people.

What you did for fun when you were a kid: Sports.

Favorite Greek god or mythological character: Hestia, the goddess of the hearth and home.

Chiron's Clever Crossword



Across

2. a traditional story typically involving supernatural beings or events
3. a human-made object of cultural or historical interest
7. a long journey involving travel by sea
8. the character in the opera that is half horse and half man
10. a person who writes music
12. the highest female voice type
13. the crew aboard the Argo

Down

1. the main character and hero of this opera
2. ornamental designs featuring intricate turns used to symbolized a labyrinth
4. this magical wool is golden in color
5. the clothes singers wear in an opera
6. a person who writes the words or script of an opera
9. type of tall Greek vase with two handles
11. a story told through music with singing, acting, scenery, and costumes

