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# THE SCORPIONS' STING

An opera for young people

Music and Libretto by Dean Burry

Major support provided by the **Nancy W. Knowles Student and Family Performances Fund**. The Scorpions' Sting and Opera in the Neighborhoods are supported by Lead Sponsor **J. Christopher and Anne N. Reyes** and cosponsors three **Anonymous Donors**, **Joyce Chelberg**, **Dover Foundation**, **Brent and Katie Gledhill**, **Robert and Evelyn McCullen**, the **Donna Van Eekeren Foundation**, the **Walter Family Foundation**, **Roberta L. and Robert J. Washlow**, 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

You're reading 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 ***The Scorpions' Sting***.



**op·er·a (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 over 400 years ago—but *The Scorpions' Sting* was written in 2006!

## 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

## Look for...

- Scenery and other items onstage that help tell the story
- Performers changing costumes quickly and playing multiple characters
- How the scenery changes from the past to the present

## Listen for...

- People singing their stories
- Different kinds of voices, from high (soprano) to low (baritone)
- Different sounds from the piano: high, low, loud, and quiet

Illustration of Isis by costume designer Noël Huntzinger

# THE SCORPIONS' STING

An opera  
for young people

## Music and Libretto by Dean Burry

United States premiere performances: October 14 & 15, 2017, Studebaker Theater, Chicago  
Opera in the Neighborhoods tour: October 16 - November 17, 2017

**Sally Smith/Isis**, *soprano* ..... Melinda Alberty  
**David Sands/Osiris/The Scorpions**, *baritone* ..... Matthan Black  
**Molly Brown/Nephthys/Tahemet**, *mezzo-soprano* ..... Julia Hardin  
**Professor Hornsby/Set**, *tenor* ..... Curtis Bannister

**Music Supervisor**, *piano* ..... Matthew Gemmill

**Director** ..... Elise Sandell  
**Stage Manager** ..... Amanda J. Davis  
**Scenic Designer** ..... Lauren Nigri  
**Costume Designer** ..... Noël Huntzinger

Set created by Means of Production  
Costumes created by Uber Costumes  
Headdresses created by Laura Whitlock  
Puppets created by Jeff Semmerling  
Wigs created by the Lyric Opera Wig Department; Sarah Hatten, Wigmaster

Photography and recording of any kind are not allowed during the performance.  
Turn off cell phones and other devices.



## CHARACTERS AND IMPORTANT WORDS

**Osiris** (*oh-SIGH-russ*) – King of Egypt and Egyptian god of the afterlife

**Isis** (*EYE-sis*) – Egyptian goddess of healing

**Set** – Brother of Osiris, god of the desert and storms

**Nephthys** (*NE-fuh-thiss*) – Sister of Isis, protector of the afterlife

**Scorpion** (*SCORE-pea-uhn*) – a small eight-legged creature with a venomous stinger

**Hieroglyphs** (*hi-ro-GLIFS*) – Ancient Egyptian writing that uses pictures instead of letters

**Archaeology** (*ark-e-AH-loh-gee*) – The study of artifacts to learn about ancient civilizations

**Sistrum** (*SIS-trum*) – A metal shaker used in ancient Egyptian religious and royal ceremonies

## THE STORY OF THE OPERA

While lost in the Egyptian desert, a group of archaeology students try to help their professor. He has been stung by a scorpion. They stumble upon the Lost Temple of Isis, the ancient Egyptian goddess of healing. The students attempt to find a cure by reading the hieroglyphs. This mythic story unfolds before them...

At a banquet in his honor, King Osiris is tricked by his jealous brother, Set, who wants to be the king. Set brings out an ornate chest and says that whoever fits inside the chest will win it. The prize thrills the banquet guests, but it's a trick. Set built the chest to only fit Osiris. Closing the lid on the king, Set has the chest thrown in the Nile River. He imprisons Queen Isis as a slave in a weaving house in the middle of the desert.

With the help of her sister Nephthys and a magic sistrum, Isis journeys through the desert to a small seaside town led by seven scorpions. An arrogant rich woman turns Isis away, but a poor fisherman gives her shelter. As revenge, the scorpions sting the rich woman's baby. Isis is angry at the scorpions and casts a spell to heal the child – a spell that cures the victims of the scorpions' sting.

Back in the temple, the students now understand the story of Isis. Can this ancient spell heal their professor, too?



Illustration of Nephthys by costume designer Noël Huntzinger

# Archaeologists "Dig" into the Past

**Archaeologists** are scientists who learn about ancient civilizations. They do this by studying objects and excavating historic sites (often called "digs"). We know a lot about ancient Egypt because of archaeologists.

## What tools do archaeologists need?

Below are items an archaeologist *might* take on a dig. **Circle** the objects you think would be helpful. Next, **write** how you would use the objects you selected to help you learn about the past.

Map



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Pet Cat



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Notebook



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Tent



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Banana



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Winter Coat



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Camera



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Backpack



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Watch



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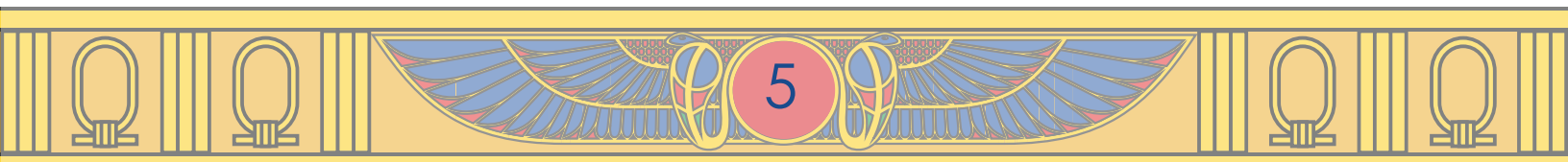
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# Using Your Senses

## to learn about ancient Egypt

After the people of an ancient civilization are gone, their objects remain. **Objects** can be *artifacts*, which are man-made, or *specimens*, which can be living or nonliving items found in nature.

Objects help tell a story about the past. One way to learn from objects is by using your senses (sight, touch, smell, hearing). If you observe objects closely, you can start to understand how it was used in the past.

### Here's your chance to think like an archaeologist.

Look at the objects below and answer the questions.

Map



Scorpion



Sistrum



Chest



What does it look like?	What would it feel like?	What would it sound like?	What would it smell like?	What could this object tell us?
Square colorful	Thin paper	crinkly	Old ink	Where something was hidden

# Sing it Loud!

Do you see any microphones on the stage? Probably not! Opera singers train for years to make their voices fill an entire auditorium **WITHOUT** microphones!

Here are the voice types usually found in opera:



**Soprano**  
(soh-PRAH-no)

the highest voice in opera, usually female. They often sing roles like daughters, girlfriends, wives, or princesses.



**Mezzo-soprano**  
(MET-soh soh-PRAH-no)

the middle high voice, usually female. Mezzos can be almost any type of character—sisters, mothers, or teenage boys to evil queens and emperors.



**Tenor**  
(TEH-ner)

usually the highest male voice. The leading male character is usually a tenor, so they often play heroes or princes.



**Baritone**  
(BEAR-ih-tone)

the middle low voice, usually male. Baritones play all sorts of roles. Sometimes they're good guys, like brothers or fathers, but sometimes they're bad guys, too.



**Bass**  
(BASE)

the lowest, deepest voice, usually male. Basses often play old and wise characters, but they can also be villains.

## Create your cast!

Now that you know the opera voice types (soprano, tenor, etc.) and the kinds of characters they play (heroes, princesses, etc.), try to finish the story below with characters you think match the voice type listed.

A prince (tenor) is captured and hidden in the dungeon of an evil \_\_\_\_\_ (baritone). His sister, the \_\_\_\_\_ (soprano) is looking everywhere for him. Their \_\_\_\_\_ (mezzo soprano) and \_\_\_\_\_ (bass) are very worried.

Now that you have the characters for the story, write what happens next.

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# How an Opera

## Story

Someone, usually a librettist or composer, finds a story that would make a good opera. The story can be from literature, myths or fairytales, or from historical or current events. It can even be completely made up! *The Scorpions' Sting* is inspired by an Egyptian myth—a traditional story typically involving supernatural beings or events.

## Librettist & Composer

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

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*. For *The Scorpions' Sting*, the composer and librettist are the same person!



Dean Burry, librettist & 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.



Elise Sandell, stage director

Noël Huntzinger, costume designer



## 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.

Lauren Nigri, scenic designer





# Is Created

**Music Supervisor**  
Like a conductor, the music supervisor leads music rehearsals and the performances. In *The Scorpions' Sting*, the music supervisor also plays the piano at each performance.



Matthew Gemmill, music supervisor

Amanda J. Davis, stage manager



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

Melinda Alberty  
(Sally Smith/Isis)



**Cast**  
The cast is all of the singers on stage who perform the opera.



Julia Hardin (Molly Brown/  
Nephthys/Tahemet)

Matthan Black (David Sands/  
Osiris/The Scorpions)



Curtis Bannister (Professor Hornsby/Set)



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

# Making the

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 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

# Opera Happen



set designer



costume designer

cast



stage manager



music supervisor

musicians



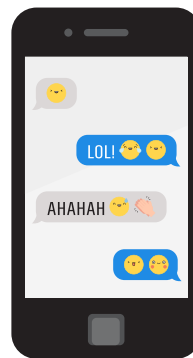
librettist and composer

# Unlocking the Language

## of Ancient Egypt

**Hieroglyphs** are the alphabet of the ancient Egyptians. They are symbols that look like pictures, but also have sounds. While the alphabet we use today is made up of letters, we still use pictures to communicate, just like the ancient Egyptians. We just call them emojis.


Can you see the similarities between how we use symbols today and how the ancient Egyptians used symbols in the past?



### Now it's your turn

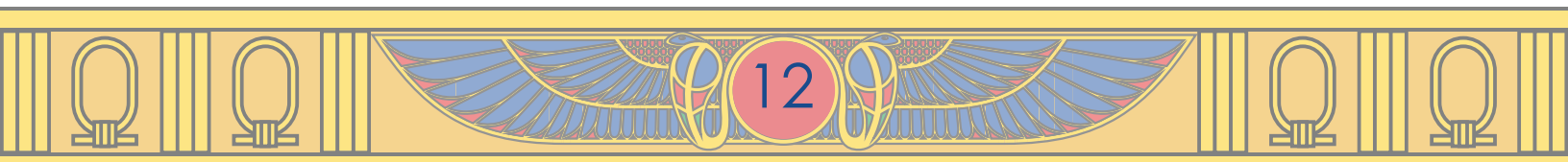
Write a short message and then translate it into symbols or emojis. Once you're done, trade with a friend and try to decode their message.

Example

I love pizza =   

Write your message here:

Translate your message into symbols or emojis:

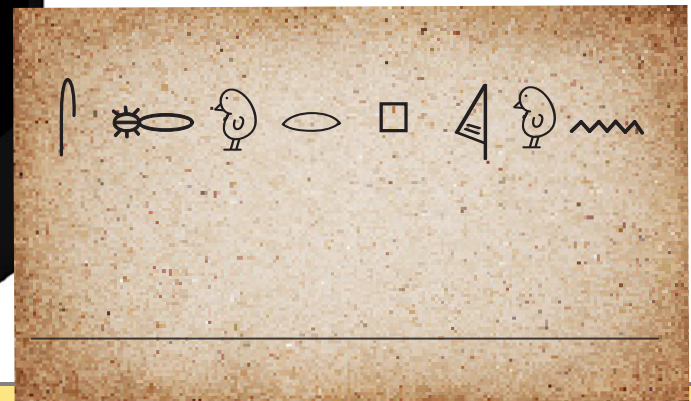
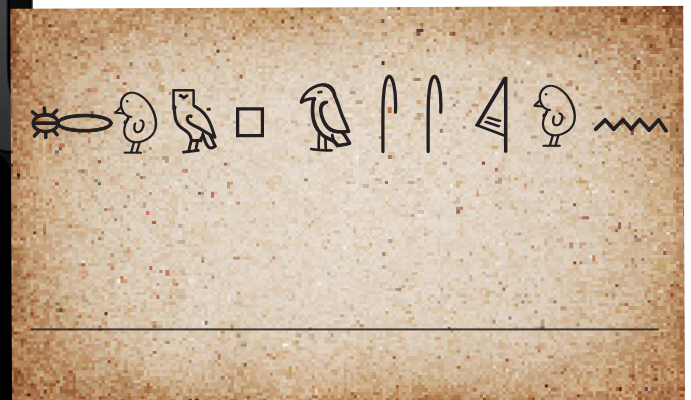
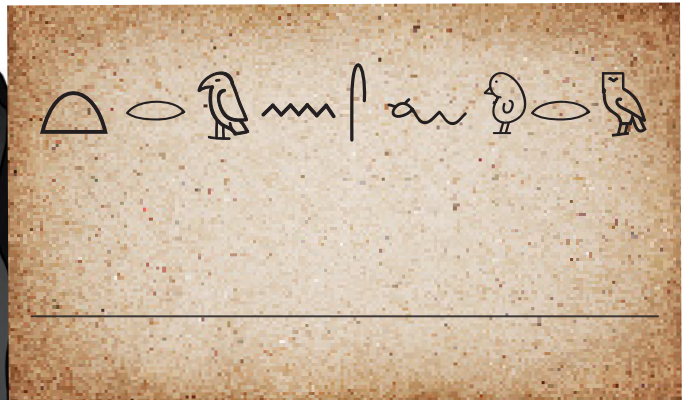


# Translating Hieroglyphs

For many years archaeologists were unable to translate Egyptian writing, or hieroglyphs. They had no way of knowing what the symbols meant. This all changed with the discovery of the "Rosetta Stone."

Archaeologists were able to crack the code because the Rosetta Stone contained the same message written in hieroglyphs and in Greek. Since the archaeologists could already read Greek, the rest was easy!

Using the "Rosetta Stone" below, translate the following hieroglyphs.



# Meet The Scorpions' Sting

## Cast and Production Team

### Dean Burry (Composer and Librettist)

**Hometown:** Gander, Newfoundland, Canada

**First public performance:** I started composing and writing plays when I was 9. The first performances were puppet plays for my grade 4 class.

**Advice for someone wanting to become a**

**composer:** Anyone can compose music; you don't have to be Beethoven or Mozart. When you draw a picture, you are an artist. When you are creative with sound, you are a composer. Trust what sounds good to you, and go with it!

**Favorite kind of music other than opera:** I love Irish and Celtic music and play penny whistle, accordion, and bodhran (an Irish drum) in a band called Merasheen.

**What did you do for fun as a kid?** Funnily enough, I would write music and perform puppet plays in my grade 4 classroom.

### Curtis Bannister (Professor Hornsby/Set)

**Hometown:** Green Bay, Wisconsin

**First public performance:** Christmas concert with Kenny Rogers when I was 7 years old.

**Advice for someone wanting to become a singer:** Be focused. Remember to always love what you do and that hearing a "No" doesn't mean "The End."

**Favorite kind of music other than opera:** R&B and soul.

**What did you do for fun as a kid?** Football, kickball, swimming, putting on shows for family and friends.

### Melinda Alberty (Sally Smith/Isis)

**Hometown:** Edmond, Oklahoma

**First public performance:** Singing in my church children's choir when I was probably 8 years old.

**Advice for someone wanting to become a singer:** Do all you can to learn about your art form: read about it, attend performances, and take lessons if possible.

**Favorite kind of music other than opera:** I sincerely love all kinds of music. Other than opera, I often listen to contemporary Christian, jazz, and rhythm and blues.

**What did you do for fun as a kid?** I loved playing with Barbie® dolls with my best friend. We threw huge Barbie® weddings, and I have photos to prove it.

### Matthan Black (David Sands/Osiris/The Scorpions)

**Hometown:** Fayetteville, Arkansas

**First public performance:** I was in a play called *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* at the Arkansas Arts Center when I was 5 years old. I got to miss a whole month of kindergarten!

**Advice for someone wanting to become a singer:** Get obsessed with the art form! Read everything you can get your hands on. Talk to people who work in the theater, and see as much live theater as you can!

**Favorite kind of music other than opera:** I love jazz. Frank Sinatra, Bill Evans, John Coltrane!

**What did you do for fun as a kid?** I loved to read! I would go to the library after school and stay there for hours reading stories about far-off lands, wonderful adventures, and terrible villains!

### Julia Hardin (Molly Brown/Nephtys/Tahemet)

**Hometown:** Lawrence, Kansas

**First public performance:** In 4th grade I sang "The Second Star to the Right" in a kids' version of Disney's *Peter Pan*.

**Advice for someone wanting to become a singer:**

Listen to lots of people, practice, hear live performances whenever you can, and learn to sightread and play the piano. If you're interested in singing opera, be patient because it takes a while for the voice to grow up.

**Favorite kind of music other than opera:** I love alternative country, folk, indie, and '70s rock.

**What did you do for fun as a kid?** I really liked to play piano and violin and sing in choir. I also loved to read, swim, and play outside with friends in my neighborhood.

### Matthew Gemmill (Music Supervisor)

**Hometown:** Ames, Iowa

**First public performance:** My first public performance was singing a solo with a children's choir when I was 8. I started piano lessons that same year.

**Advice for someone wanting to become a**

**professional musician:** Keep working on getting better, even when things get hard!

**Favorite kind of music other than opera:** I love performing Lieder, which are songs in German for a singer and pianist.

**What did you do for fun as a kid?** I never could stop reading when I was in elementary school. Still can't!

### Elise Sandell (Stage Director)

**Hometown:** Barrington, Illinois. I attended Bartlett Elementary School, Barrington Middle School, and Barrington High School (where *The Scorpion's Sting* will be performed!).

**First public performance:** My first public performances were at Barrington High School, my first crew job was on *Bye Bye Birdie*, and my first directing job was for a play called *Secrets*.

**Advice for someone wanting to become a director:** If you want to be a director, stay curious and learn everything you can: read lots of books, learn a foreign language, and see lots of plays, concerts, and operas!

**Favorite kind of music other than opera:** I love '90's alternative rock like Weezer and They Might

Be Giants, and modern pop like Mumford and Sons and The Punch Brothers.

**What did you do for fun as a kid?** I loved swimming, reading, and putting on shows on our front lawn.

### Lauren Nigri (Scenic Designer)

**Hometown:** Downers Grove, Illinois. I attended St. Josephs Catholic School.

**First public performance:** My first scenic design was at the University of Iowa for the play *Angel Bones*. I was 20 years old.

**Advice for someone wanting to become a scenic designer:** Try all different areas of theater when given the opportunity. You may think you want to do one thing but end up falling in love with something else completely.

**Favorite kind of music other than opera:** Blues.

**What did you do for fun as a kid?** I loved to draw all the time, and building forts out of the sofa cushions with my friends was pretty fun too!

### Noël Huntzinger (Costume Designer)

**Hometown:** Tulsa, Oklahoma

**First public performance:** At a summer theatre camp in grade school.

**Advice for someone wanting to become a costume designer:** See as much live performance as possible!

**Favorite kind of music other than opera:** I love jazz music.

**What did you do for fun as a kid?** I've always loved my dolls. I used to make them clothes!

### Amanda J. Davis (Stage Manager)

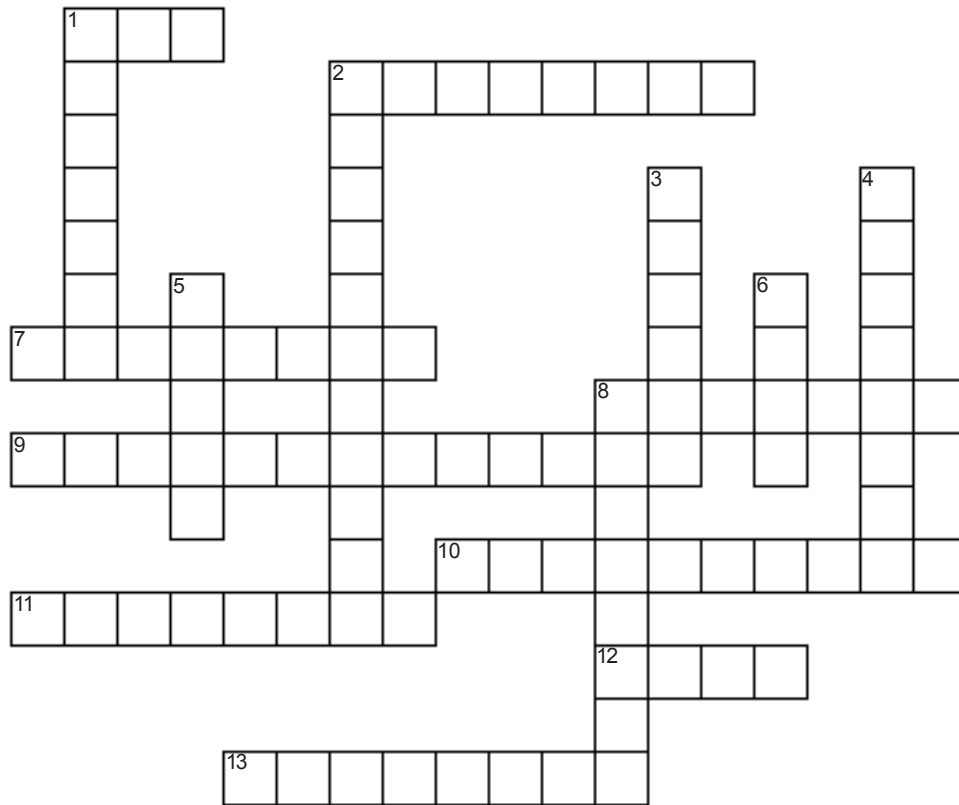
**Hometown:** Tampa, Florida.

**First public performance:** I stage managed the play *'Twas the Day* when I was 12.

**Advice for someone wanting to become a stage manager:** Being involved behind the scenes is a lot of fun! Seek out opportunities, learn as you go, and know you're as important as the performers onstage.

**Favorite kind of music other than opera:** Hip-hop  
**What did you do for fun as a kid:** Going to theme parks, watching the Olympics, and baking.

# Crossword Excavation



## Across

1. Brother of Osiris, god of the desert and storms
2. A human-made object of cultural or historical interest
7. A person who writes music
8. A metal shaker used extensively in ancient Egyptian religious and royal ceremonies
9. Ancient Egyptian writing that uses pictures instead of letters
10. A person who writes the words or script of an opera
11. Sister of Isis, protector of the afterlife
12. Egyptian goddess of healing
13. An object that was once a living organism

## Down

1. The highest female voice type
2. The study of artifacts to learn about ancient civilizations
3. King of Egypt and Egyptian god of the afterlife
4. The clothes singers wear in an opera, play, or movie
5. A story told through music with singing, acting, scenery, and costumes
6. A traditional story typically involving supernatural beings or events
8. Small eight-legged creature with a venomous stinger

