

LYRIC UNLIMITED
LEARNING & CREATIVE
ENGAGEMENT

Lyric
OPERA OF
CHICAGO

THE SCORPIONS'
& STING

WELCOME

In this edition of Lyric Opera of Chicago's *Backstage Pass!* you'll learn about the world of opera and this production of *The Scorpions' Sting*.

op-er-a (noun) A story told through music with singing, acting, movement, scenery, costumes, and other art forms.

The first operas were written over 400 years ago. *The Scorpions' Sting* is much newer, and was first performed in 2006 in Toronto, Canada!



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, props, and costumes that help tell the story
- Changes in the scenery when the story tells about the past
- Performers changing costumes quickly and playing many characters

LISTEN FOR

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

THE SCORPIONS' STING

Music & Libretto by Dean Burry

Professor Hornsby / Set, *Curtis Bannister*

Sally Smith / Isis, *Molly Hernandez*

Molly Brown / Nephthys / Tahemet, *Miya Higashiyama*

David Sands / Osiris / The Scorpions, *Nicholas Ward*

Music Supervisor, *Michael Pecak*

Original Director, *Elise Sandell*

Revival Director, *Jordan Lee Braun*

Set Designer, *Lauren Nigri*

Costume Designer, *Noël Huntzinger*

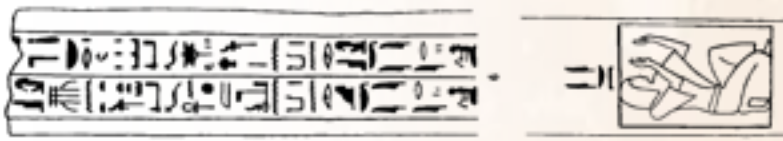
Lighting Designer, *Bridget Williams*

Assistant Director, *Kristen Barrett*

Stage Manager, *Sandra Moore*

Lyric's presentation of *The Scorpions' Sting* is generously made possible by the
Mazza Foundation and **CIBC Bank USA** with major support from the
Nancy W. Knowles Student and Family Performances Fund.





OPERA STARTS WITH A STORY



*Illustration of Isis by
costume designer
Noël Huntzinger*

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

Myth – A traditional story typically involving supernatural beings or events

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?

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



Notebook



Binoculars



Camera



Hiking Boots



Tent



Backpack



Compass



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 human-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 they were used in the past.

HERE'S YOUR CHANCE TO THINK LIKE AN ARCHAEOLOGIST

Look at the objects below and answer the questions.



Papyrus—
Ancient Paper



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?
<i>Rectangle, colorful</i>	<i>Thin paper</i>	<i>Crinkly</i>	<i>Old ink</i>	<i>A story about Egyptian culture</i>

USING YOUR VOICE

Opera is full of different voice types! These different voice types can help give life and special traits to the characters on stage. Here are the voice types usually found in opera, and words that are sometimes used to describe them.

SOPRANO

The highest voice type in opera—when people sing together in harmony, sopranos usually sing the highest note! A soprano's voice may be called shiny, bright, and youthful, and may make you think of flutes, birdsongs, or the color yellow!

MEZZO SOPRANO

The second highest voice type in opera—a mezzo soprano sings some of the high notes of a soprano, with more notes in the lower or middle of their range. A mezzo soprano's voice may be called warm, round, or smooth, and may make you think of clarinets or the color orange!

TENOR

The middle voice in opera—when people sing in harmony, the tenors often sing in the middle! A tenor's voice may be called pointy, sharp, or crisp, and may make you think of trumpets or the color red!

BARITONE

The second lowest voice type in opera—a baritone may sing some of the highs of a tenor, and some of the lows of a bass. A baritone's voice may be called mellow, moody, or rich, and may make you think of cellos or the color blue!

BASS

The lowest voice type in opera—when people sing in harmony, the basses often sing the lowest note! A bass' voice may be called rumbling, spooky, or strong, and may make you think of an upright bass or the color purple!

MAKING THE OPERA HAPPEN

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!

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.

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.



INSTRUMENTALISTS

The instrumentalists are musicians that play the music written by the composer to fit the story. A composer may write for all sorts of instruments depending on the opera—they might write only for one instrument, or for a whole orchestra!

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.

STAGE MANAGER

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

STAGEHANDS

The stagehands support everyone in an opera by making sure the stage is ready for the show! Stagehands help bring in the items important to tell an opera's story, like stage elements, costumes, and the objects that characters use in a show.

CAST

The cast includes all of the singers who perform the opera.

AUDIENCE

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



WHO MAKES 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 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.

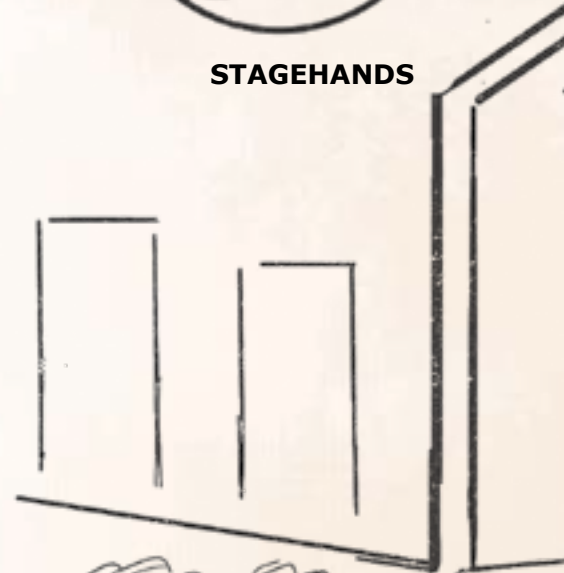
8. We help behind the scenes to move props, scenery, and equipment.

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

_____ and _____

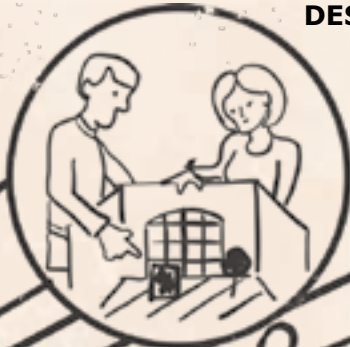


STAGEHANDS



STAGE DIRECTOR

**SET
DESIGNER**



**COSTUME
DESIGNER**



**STAGE
MANAGER**



CAST



**LIBRETTIST
& COMPOSER**



**MUSIC
SUPERVISOR**

MUSICIANS



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?

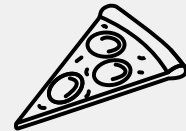


NOW IT'S YOUR TURN

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:

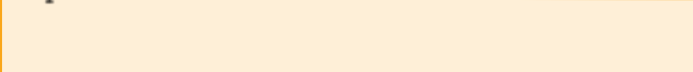
Translate your message to symbols or emojis:

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.



INSTRUMENTS TELL THE STORY

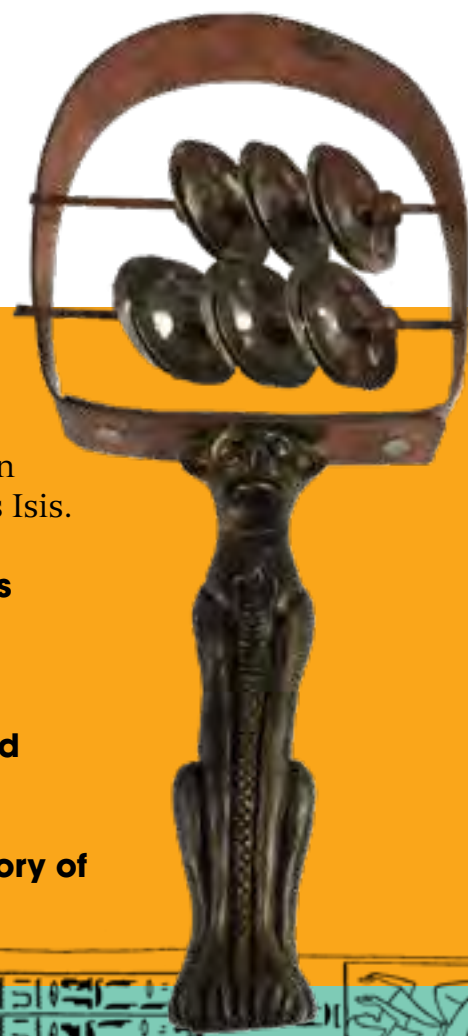
We've learned that singing is a very important part of telling the story in opera. Music and other sounds from instruments help us tell operatic stories, too.

The sistrum makes a percussive rattle sound, a bit like today's tambourine. Ancient Egyptian myths tell us that the sistrum was used to calm the gods. It was also played in rituals and ceremonies, oftentimes in honor of the goddess Isis.

The sistrum is used a little differently in this opera, but is definitely an important part of the story:

The characters find a sistrum by the lost temple. When played, the sound helps each character read and understand the hieroglyphs on the pillars.

By deciphering the hieroglyphs, they experience the story of Isis and discover the way to cure their teacher.



ACTIVITY

Draw a picture and write the names of some musical instruments. Do an internet search if you need some ideas! Would you add any of these instruments to the story of Isis? When? Why?



TAMBOURINE

The tambourine adds to the excitement when each character tries to fit into Set's box!

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Find the answers to this crossword puzzle using terms found throughout the *Backstage Pass*!

Illustration of Nephthys
by costume designer
Noël Huntzinger

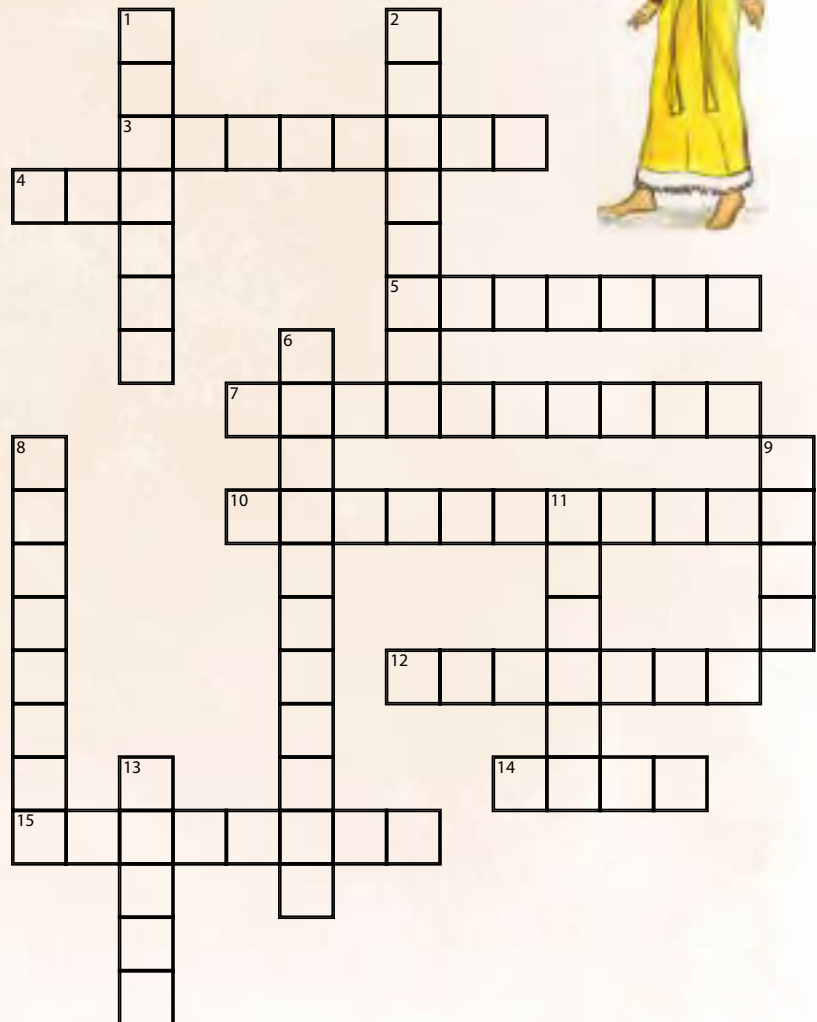


ACROSS

- 3 Living or nonliving items found in nature
- 4 Brother of Osiris, god of the desert and storms
- 5 A metal shaker used extensively in ancient Egyptian religious and royal ceremonies
- 7 A person who writes the words or script of an opera
- 10 The study of artifacts to learn about ancient civilizations
- 12 The highest voice type
- 14 Egyptian goddess of healing
- 15 Sister of Isis, protector of the afterlife

DOWN

- 1 The clothes a singer wears in an opera, play or movie
- 2 A person who writes music
- 6 Ancient Egyptian writing that uses pictures instead of letters
- 8 Small eight-legged creature with a venomous stinger
- 9 A traditional story typically involving supernatural beings or events
- 11 King of Egypt and Egyptian god of the afterlife
- 13 A story told through music with singing, acting, scenery, and costumes



ACROSS 3. Specimen 4. Set 5. Sistrum
7. Librettist 10. Archaeology 12. Soprano
14. Isis 15. Nephthys **DOWN** 1. Costume
2. Composer 6. Hieroglyphs 8. Scorpion
9. Myth 11. Osiris 13. Opera



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