

**BACKSTAGE  
PASS!** 2020/21

*Lyric*

**EARTH TO  
KENZIE**

AN OPERA FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

by Frances Pollock and Jessica Murphy Moo

This *Backstage Pass!* belongs to:

Major support provided by the **Nancy W. Knowles Student and Family Performances Fund**. *Earth to Kenzie* and Opera in the Neighborhoods are supported by Lead Sponsor **J. Christopher and Anne N. Reyes** and cosponsors an **Anonymous Donor, The Comer Foundation Fund, Sasha Gerritson and Eugene Jarvis, Robert and Evelyn McCullen, The Jane Wilson and David Mayhew Stone Charitable Trust, Roberta L. and Robert J. Washlow, and Wintrust Community Banks.**

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# WELCOME!

In this edition of Lyric Opera of Chicago's *Backstage Pass!* you'll learn about the world of opera and *Earth to Kenzie*.

**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, opera also uses visual arts, acting, and sometimes dance to help tell the story. The first operas were written over 400 years ago—but *Earth to Kenzie* was written just this year in 2019!

## WHAT TO EXPECT

- The opera is 45 minutes long
- Everything 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 onstage that help tell the story
- Performers changing costumes and playing multiple characters
- How the set changes to show different locations

## LISTEN FOR

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

# EARTH TO KENZIE

AN OPERA FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Music by Frances Pollock  
Libretto by Jessica Murphy Moo

Archival Recording November 5, 2019  
Streaming November 9-20, 2020

Kenzie, a fifth grader, [soprano] ..... Kateri Gormley  
Kenzie's Mother/a student in Kenzie's dream, [mezzo-soprano] ..... Emma Ritter  
Edwin, Kenzie's Avatar/Eddie, Kenzie's new classmate, [mezzo-soprano] ..... Christina Pecce  
Teacher/Taxi Driver, [baritone] ..... Keanon Kyles

Stage Director ..... Jess McLeod

Production Manager ..... Madeleine Borg

Scenic Designer ..... Jeffrey D. Kniec

Costume Designer ..... Mieka van der Ploeg

Stage Crew: IATSE Local 2  
Wardrobe Crew: IATSE Local 769  
Wigs & Makeup Crew: IATSE Local 746

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

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

*Earth to Kenzie* is a co-commission by Lyric Opera of Chicago with Seattle Opera.

Lyric Unlimited, a division of Lyric Opera of Chicago, offers an array of innovative education, community engagement and artistic programs, encompassing company activities beyond Lyric's mainstage.



# OPERA STARTS WITH A STORY

Someone, usually a **librettist** or **composer**, finds a story they think would make a good opera. The story can come from myths or fairy tales, from literature, like storybooks and novels, or from historical or present-day events. It can even be completely made up! *Earth to Kenzie* is fictional, which means that it is an original story that comes from the imaginations of the librettist and composer.

## LIBRETTIST

In opera, the script is called the *libretto*.

The person who writes the libretto is called the *librettist*.



Jessica Murphy Moo  
LIBRETTIST

## THE STORY OF *EARTH TO KENZIE*

Kenzie and her mother are forced to move out of their home before Christmas, and they have no place to go. Kenzie feels scared about her uncertain future and has trouble breathing due to asthma. To distract herself, Kenzie plays video games. She wants to be just like her video game avatar, Edwin, who can escape bad situations, control his destiny, and breathe in any atmosphere.

Kenzie and her mom find a temporary home in a family shelter, but Kenzie worries about going back to school. She has a homework assignment to write an essay on what she did over the break, but Kenzie doesn't want anyone to know that she and her mom spent Christmas living in their car.

At school, the teacher asks for the essay and tries to introduce Kenzie to Eddie, a new student in the class. Upset, Kenzie runs from the classroom.

After school, a taxi picks Kenzie up to return her to the shelter. She gets in and falls asleep, entering a dream world. In Kenzie's dream, Edwin jumps into the taxi, too, and the taxi transforms into a spaceship. As they fly higher and higher, they land on planet Catulon, where the cold temperature makes Kenzie's asthma act up. Panicked and scared, Kenzie realizes that her mom could help her, and that home may not always be a place, but it exists wherever she is with her mom.

Having arrived at the shelter, Kenzie's mom wakes her from the dream and they head inside. Kenzie is surprised to see her new classmate Eddie, who also lives in the shelter. Kenzie and Eddie team up to do their homework together. The opera ends with Kenzie and Eddie sharing the essay with their class.



# THE CHARACTERS IN EARTH TO KENZIE

## KENZIE

A fifth grader with asthma and homework who loves to escape into the world of video games.

## KENZIE'S MOTHER

The person Kenzie depends on the most. She is trying to do the best she can for her daughter despite difficult circumstances.

## EDDIE

A new student in Kenzie's class who also lives in the family shelter.

## TEACHER

Kenzie and Eddie's classroom teacher.

## TAXI DRIVER

The person who picks up Kenzie from school. (In some cities, laws require transportation to be provided to and from school for children living in shelters.)

## EDWIN

Kenzie's avatar in her video game.

## SPACE KITTIES

Cats from space who inhabit the planet Catulon (and Edwin's greatest fear).

REAL LIFE

VIDEO GAME

# WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HOMELESS?

In the opera, Kenzie and her mother are evicted from their building and have to live in their car before finding a temporary home at a family shelter. At this point in their lives, they are **housing insecure**. Another way to say this, is that they are dealing with **homelessness**. This doesn't mean that they will always be homeless, though. **Homelessness is something that happens to people, but it is not who they are.**

*Imagine if you were in a similar situation, how would you feel?*

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*If Kenzie was your classmate, and you saw her having a hard time, what might you say to her?*

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# MUSIC'S ROLE IN OPERA

Music is an important part of telling the story in opera. It moves the action of the story forward and lets the audience know how the characters feel and what they are thinking.

## SING IT LOUD!

You won't see any microphones on stage at the opera. Why not? Because opera singers train for years to make their voices fill an entire auditorium **WITHOUT** microphones! Here are voice types usually found in opera:

### SOPRANO (soh-PRAH-no)

The highest voice. Kenzie is sung by a soprano.

### MEZZO-SOPRANO (MET-soh soh-PRAH-no)

The middle high voice. Mezzos can be almost any type of character— and in this opera Kenzie's mother, Edwin and Eddie are sung by mezzo-sopranos. Edwin and Eddie are played by the same performer!

### TENOR (TEH-ner)

Usually the highest male voice and often the leading role.

### BARITONE (BEAR-ih-tone)

The middle low voice. Baritones play all sorts of roles. The roles of the Space Kitties, the Teacher and Taxi Driver are all sung by a baritone.

### BASS (BASE)

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

## COMPOSER

The composer writes the music in a way that best tells the story. The written-out music is called the *score*.

Frances Pollock  
Composer



## CAST

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



Kateri Gormley  
Kenzie, soprano



Emma Ritter  
Kenzie's mother,  
mezzo-soprano



Christina Pecce  
Edwin, the avatar and  
Eddie, mezzo-soprano



Keanon Kyles  
Space Kitties, Teacher  
and Taxi Driver, baritone



## PIANO

Operas are typically performed with musicians playing instruments accompanying singers. In *Earth to Kenzie*, the singers are joined by one pianist, who is also the music supervisor.

## MUSIC SUPERVISOR

Like a conductor, the music supervisor leads music rehearsals and performances. In *Earth to Kenzie*, the music supervisor also plays the piano at each performance.

Listen carefully throughout the opera for moments when the pianist tells the story instead of the singers. Do you hear any music that might represent certain characters or actions?

# TELL YOUR STORY!

Now that you know the characters played by the different voice types in *Earth to Kenzie*, try to finish the new story below based on what you've learned.

On the planet Catulon, \_\_\_\_\_ the avatar has to fight the  
mezzo-soprano

evil \_\_\_\_\_ (s) to defend their home. They are very afraid  
baritone

of \_\_\_\_\_ and find courage from their human friend  
baritone

\_\_\_\_\_. Together, they defeat the evil \_\_\_\_\_ (s)  
soprano baritone

and... *What do you think might happen next? Write your answer in the space below.*

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# VISUAL ARTS SET THE STAGE

In opera, the music tells the story that you *hear*. Everything you *see* onstage is part of the **visual arts**. The story in an opera can take place in many different places and times. The location of the opera is called the **setting**. Scenery, props, costumes, wigs, and makeup help create the opera's setting.

## STAGE DIRECTOR

The **stage director** creates the vision for the opera and works with designers. The director also determines how the singers will act and move onstage.



Jess McLeod  
STAGE  
DIRECTOR

## SCENERY & PROPS

The **scenery**, or set, shows the location of the story. Sometimes operas happen in a house, a taxi, or even a video game! **Props** are the objects performers use on stage to tell the story. Props can be anything: moving boxes, fake food, video game controllers, and more.



Jeffrey D. Kmieciak  
SCENIC  
DESIGNER

## DESIGNERS

**Designers** work with the stage director to decide how the opera will appear on stage and how its story will be told. They create the scenery (or set), props, and costumes.

## COSTUMES

**Costumes** are the clothes performers wear in an opera. The costumes help tell you about the character – whether they are shy or bold, nice or mean, young or old, or where they might live.



Mieka van der Ploeg  
COSTUME  
DESIGNER

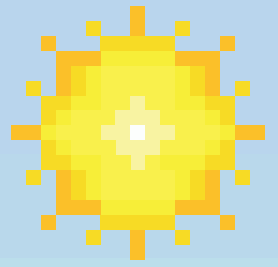
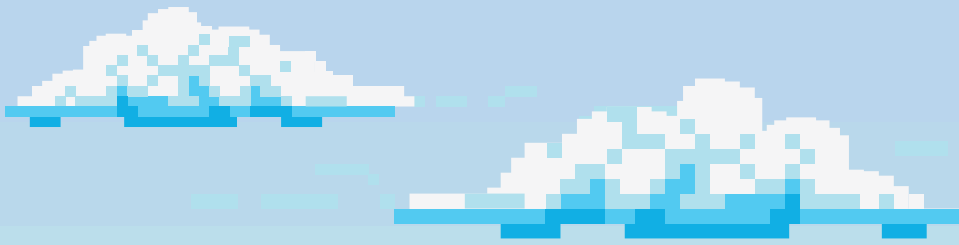
## WIGS & MAKEUP

Like costumes, operas use **wigs** and **makeup** to change the performers into different characters. Makeup and wigs can make a performer look younger, older, like a video game character, or anything else you can imagine!

Here are costume sketches for Kenzie and Edwin drawn by designer Mieka van der Ploeg. Sometimes the design changes when it gets made, though.







# BE A DESIGNER

Now it's your turn to be a scenic and costume designer. Below are two blank figures, and a background. Using what you know about *Earth to Kenzie*, fill in the boxes below to design costumes and scenery based on where the opera takes place!

A design workspace featuring a grey header bar with three colored window control buttons (red, yellow, green). Below the header is a large white grid. Two identical black-outlined human figures are positioned on the grid, facing forward. Each figure has a rectangular head, a torso with a vertical line down the center, and two legs. The grid is intended for users to design costumes and scenery for these figures.

# ACTING AND DRAMA

There are two main types of operas - **comedy** and **tragedy**. Comedies usually have a happy ending. Tragedies can be very sad. *Earth to Kenzie* has moments that are both funny and sad.

Opera singers change their faces, posture, and voices to show how their character is feeling. This is called **acting**.



Which one of these masks is comedy?  
Which one is tragedy?  
How can you tell?

## YOUR TURN TO TRY SOME ACTING!

Read this line from the opera below 3 times:

1. Like a robot with **no emotion**.
2. Like you are **very sad**.
3. Like you are **very happy**.

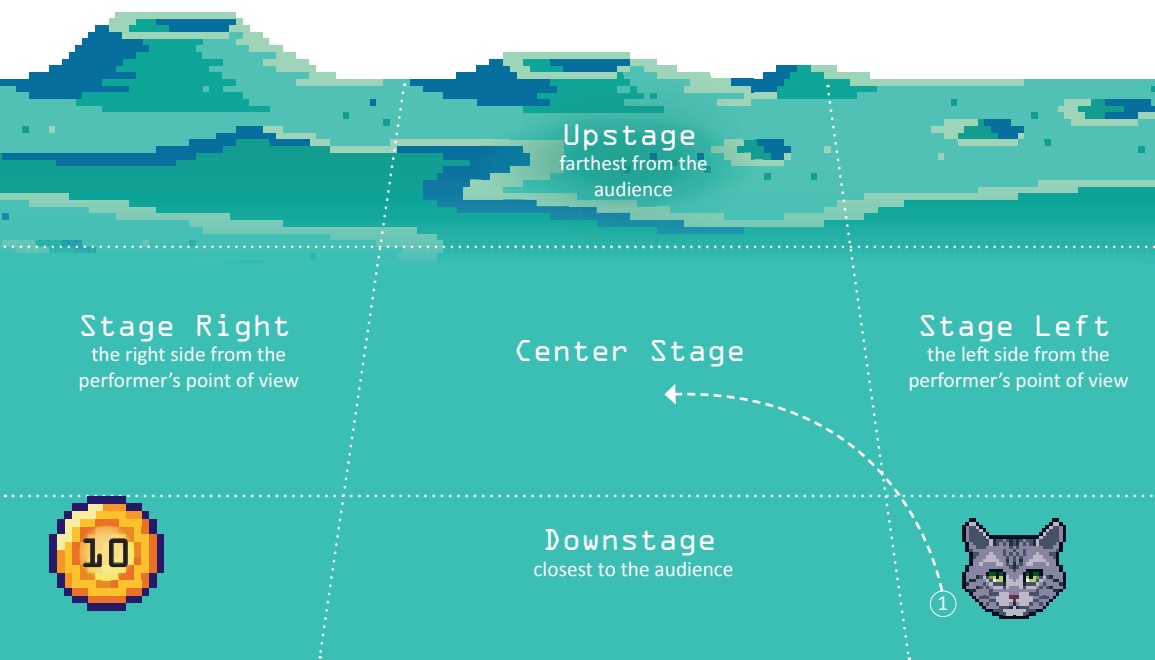
What did you do to your voice, face, and body to act out the line differently each time?



Now I remember  
my weakness, it's  
Space Kitties!

## MOVEMENT AND DANCE

Movement and dance are sometimes part of an opera. In opera, movement and dance can show dreams, fights, imaginary journeys, and more.



Upstage  
farthest from the  
audience

Stage Right  
the right side from the  
performer's point of view

Center Stage

Stage Left  
the left side from the  
performer's point of view

Downstage  
closest to the audience

Help the space  
kitty move across  
the stage.

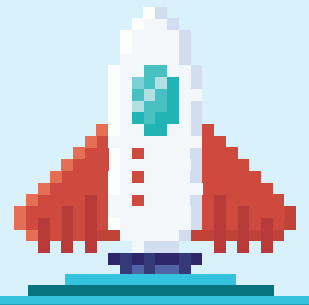
Put a dot on the stage for each of these stage directions. Connect the dots with lines and arrows so the space kitty knows where to move during the opera.

1. Downstage left
2. Center stage
3. Upstage right
4. Downstage right
5. Downstage center



# FROM PAGE TO STAGE: HOW AN OPERA IS CREATED

You have learned a lot about the various roles in creating an opera.  
Now, see how they all come together from start to finish.



**LIBRETTIST**  
turns the story into a script.

**COMPOSER**  
writes the music in a way  
that helps to tell the story.

**STAGE DIRECTOR**  
decides how the opera will look and  
how the singers will move and act.

**DESIGNERS**  
decide how the scenery  
and costumes will look.

**MUSIC SUPERVISOR**  
leads music rehearsals and  
performances (and often plays piano).

**CREW**  
works behind the scenes to make sure all sets and props  
are in the correct place throughout the performance.

**STAGE MANAGER**  
controls everything that happens onstage during a performance  
through signals and whispered commands from backstage.

**CAST**  
is the singers on stage  
who perform the opera.

**AUDIENCE**  
That's YOU. What would a show be without an  
audience? That's when everyone's hard work pays off!



# HOW DO NEW VIDEO GAMES GET MADE?

Video game developers are people who design, create, and test video games. When they have a new idea, they follow the **design process** to turn their idea into a video game for people to play.

The design process can be simplified into 4 steps: Design, Build, Test, and Share.

Kenzie uses video games to escape the world around her, but what does it take to make a world like Planet Catulon and game avatars like Edwin?

## 1 DESIGN

Video game developers start by writing down big, important ideas like:

- the main characters
- the goal of the game
- challenges the characters will face

They often work together in a group to make a plan for these ideas and to decide how the game might look. This is very similar to how an opera like *Earth to Kenzie* gets made, too!

## 2 BUILD

Next, they build a model of their video game using code! Like opera, they create characters, design the setting, and add in all of the events and activities that make the game fun to play.

## 3 TEST

Then it's time to try out the game. Video game developers test their games for hours and hours. They want to be sure that everything works how they planned. In testing, they look for any mistakes in the code. Sometimes, they discover new ideas and circle back to step 1 to re-design their game.

## 4 SHARE

Finally, once the video game is complete, the last step is to share it with the world so that people like you can play! Now it is time to create your own video games for real! Learn more at [www.codeverse.com/lyric](http://www.codeverse.com/lyric)



# ANYONE CAN BE A VIDEO GAME DESIGNER

The first step of making a new video game is to design it and plan it out. Circle your choices and fill in the blanks below to dream up your own game!

My main character . . .

LOOKS: \_\_\_\_\_

(examples: scary . cute . silly . adventurous . fuzzy . slimy)

WEARS: \_\_\_\_\_

(examples: moon boots . a jet pack . a crown)

EATS: \_\_\_\_\_

LOVES TO: \_\_\_\_\_

DRAW YOUR CHARACTER HERE

The goal of my game is to:

---

---

---

HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES:



DEFEAT THE SPACE KITTIES!



COLLECT THE COINS!

100

GET 100 POINTS!

The obstacles my character faces are:

---

---

---

HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES:



FACE A BUNCH OF ALIENS!



AVOID THE BLACK HOLES!



FINISH IN 10 SECONDS!

DRAW A PICTURE OF WHAT THE BACKGROUND MIGHT LOOK LIKE WHEN YOU PLAY YOUR VIDEO GAME:

Now you can go online to create your own video games!  
Learn more at [codeverse.com/lyric](https://codeverse.com/lyric)



# WHAT IS CODING?

Coding is using a special language that computers can understand!

Similar to spoken languages (like English and Spanish), **code** is a language that you can learn to control computers! There are many different ways to use code.



Some code uses just 1's and 0's like this:

```
01101001 01101110 01110110 01100101 01101110 01110100
```

That spells INVENT in **binary code**!

```
01101001 01101110 01110110 01100101 01101110 01110100
```

(I)

(N)

(V)

(E)

(N)

(T)

Other code can be a little easier for humans to read and write (*even though it still requires some additional coding knowledge*). Here is an example:

```
Import Human  
var Kenzie = new Human (50,50)
```

There are many types of code that you may already know, without realizing it! Even using numbers for letters is a common example of code that you may have used.

Can you read this code?

```
CODING IS SUPER FUN, EVERYONE SHOULD TRY IT!
```

# SOMETIMES CODES ARE HIDDEN IN OTHER WORDS!

By highlighting certain spaces, you can send a code in secret.  
Can you unscramble the words below to reveal the secret code?

0EDC

Hint: A special language computers can understand



MPTUCRO

Hint: A device that performs processes and calculations based on code instructions



MEBNUSR

Hint: Some code uses these instead of letters



INBYRA

Hint: This type of code uses just 1's and 0's



AMNHU

Hint: This is what Kenzie is; she is not a robot, a space kitty or an alien!



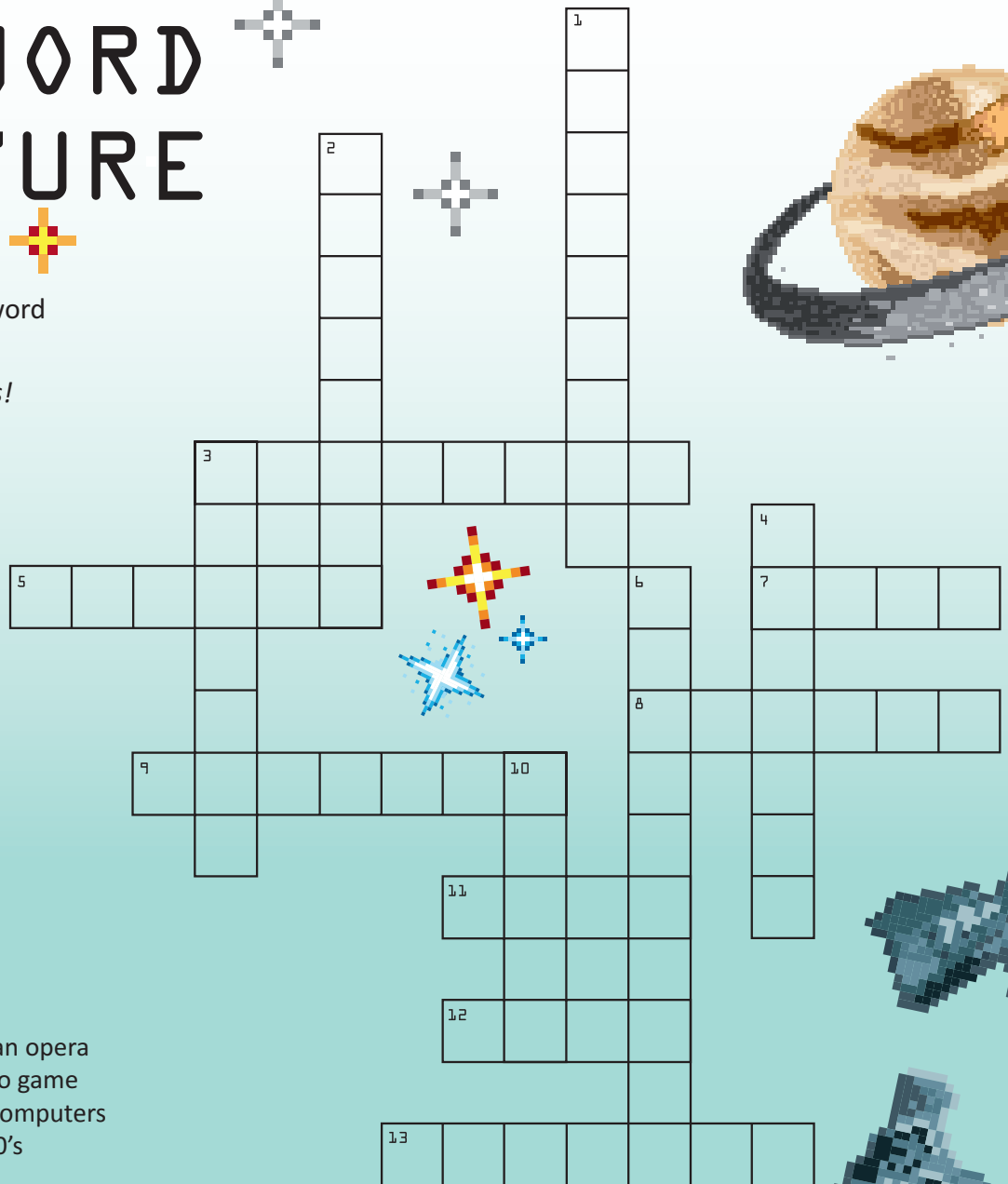
Write all of the pink highlighted letters here to reveal the secret word!



# CROSSWORD ADVENTURE



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



## ACROSS

3. The clothes singers wear in an opera
5. Edwin is this in Kenzie's video game
7. A language used to control computers
8. Code that uses only 1's and 0's
9. The highest voice type
11. Part of the video game design process when you try out the game
12. Car in the opera that takes Kenzie to the shelter
13. Place where families have temporary housing

## DOWN

1. Person who designs and makes video games
2. A person who writes music
3. Home planet of the Space Kitties
4. Visual art onstage that shows the location of the story
6. A person who writes the words or script of an opera
10. A story told through music