

Horned & Hidden Child: The Minotaur & Modern Opera

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PREFACE

“It was 2019, I was a week out from being a composer-performer fellow at the Nief-Norf Summer Festival, and I had just chunked my entire manuscript and project proposal. In my search for new inspiration, I was introduced to Nicole Yackley and her MFA thesis: a beautiful, witty collection of poems entitled *Zoo-Keeping and Other Human-Bull Sh*t*. Her reinterpretation of the Minotaur from a black-and-white monster into a sage and sensitive soul captured my attention immediately. With her permission, I set the first two poems into a chamber piece entitled *The Minotaur*. It premiered at the festival that summer, went on to win the Constantinides New Music Ensemble Call for Scores, and made a successful Carnegie Hall debut in April [2022] ...”¹

When I began to brainstorm topics for my own master’s thesis, my mind kept circling back to *The Minotaur*. The chamber piece only explored the initial destruction of the labyrinth, and I was dying to know where and how the music would continue. So, I approached Nicole about the possibility of her writing an opera libretto based on *Zoo-Keeping and Other Human-Bull Sh*t*. To my sheer delight, she agreed. Since we began collaborating in 2019, *Horned & Hidden Child* has continued to grow and evolve. Though the full opera is told in two acts over the course of several hours, only the first 30 minutes of material workshopped by VolOpera is presented in this thesis.

¹ Mikeila McQueston, “Composer’s Note.” Program for *Horned & Hidden Child Workshop*, Knoxville, 2022.

ABSTRACT

Picture a world in which stories never die. Just down the street is the Halfway House for the Mythically Challenged, where fairytale creatures learn how to prepare for job-interviews. This is the world of Pasiphae, a beautiful sorceress, queen, and former wife of the ancient King Minos. After millennia on her own, she enlists the help of her Greek Chorus to rescue her children from their respective prisons – first Ariadne from the island Naxos, and now the Minotaur from Daedalus’ labyrinth. *Horned & Hidden Child* is a contemporary opera with music by Mikeila McQueston and libretto by Nicole Yackley. It tells the story of Pasiphae, the Minotaur, and Ariadne as they repair their broken family amidst 21st century tensions. *Horned & Hidden Child* features a flexible cast of 10 characters with optional chorus which can be presented with either chamber orchestra (septet) or piano reduction. A partial workshop of the show was premiered in May 2022 by VolOpera and is the primary focus of this thesis.

This document examines the artistic motivations behind retellings of ancient Greek mythology, particularly as they apply to the Minotaur, and explores the lengthy process of composing an extended stage work from a student perspective. Composing both as a student and for students within a collegiate setting poses different challenges and offers unique opportunities in comparison to an established opera composer working along a typical commission timeline. These differences will be explored within the context of producing *Horned & Hidden Child*.

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CHAPTER 1: SUCCESSFUL INCORPORATIONS OF MYTHOLOGY IN THE MODERN NARRATIVE

Greek mythology has long served as a source of literary, musical, and cinematic inspiration. It's attractiveness often lies in its omnipresence in pop culture, its familiar characters and character archetypes, and its close association with the hero's journey as a narrative structure. But what is the point of recreating, revising, or adapting root narratives for modern consumption?

Adrienne Rich claims that "re-vision is an act of survival, consisting of looking back, seeing with fresh eyes, entering an old text from a new critical direction."² Literary scholar Alexander Leighton further posits that successful adaptations of legends and mythology achieve the following:

1. They are enjoyable for readers regardless of their familiarity with the root narrative.³
2. They forge a relationship between the adaption and the source material which both "[activates] familiar archetype narratives... and [places] them in contemporary cultural and social geography."⁴

Often, this dialogue between the original and the adaption means challenging assumptions in the root narrative regarding race, gender, class, and other means. In the article "The Present-Day Medusa: Foregrounding L'écriture Feminism in the Contemporary Retellings of Mythology", Muskaan Kapoor considers the relatively new 20th and 21st century phenomenon of retelling Greek myths from the feminine perspective in order to disrupt "the stereotypical

² Joy S. Ritchie, Kate Ronald, and Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision," in *Available Means: An Anthology of Women's Rhetoric(s)* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001), p. 268.

³ Alexander Leighton, "Re-Discovering Mythology: Adaptation and Appropriation in the Percy Jackson and the Olympians Saga," *Mousaion* 32, no. 2 (2014): pp. 60-73, 68.

⁴ *Ibid*, 71.

thought process and emphasize autonomy.”⁵ While Kapoor cites several examples of contemporary adaptations in novel form, including Margaret Atwood’s *The Penelopiad* and Ali Smith’s *Boy Meets Girl*, I will explore this concept using an example more closely related to the operatic medium in which I am writing *Horned & Hidden Child*.⁶

Consider Sarah Ruhl’s play *Eurydice*, which retells the legend of Orpheus, and which serves as source material for composer Matthew Aucoin’s opera of the same title. In the stories of Ovid and Virgil, Orpheus was such a powerful musician that he could move any creature, even non-living elements in nature.⁷ When his wife Eurydice dies from a snakebite, Orpheus is so disconsolate that he follows her to the underworld and, through song, convinces Hades and Persephone to allow him to bring her back to the land of the living.⁸ However, Hades places a condition upon their agreement that should Orpheus turn back to look at her during the journey, Eurydice will be lost to him forever.⁹ Ultimately, Orpheus cannot help but look, and his rescue mission is for naught. Ruhl’s theatrical adaptation only loosely adheres to the mythology, instead placing a greater emphasis on Eurydice as an archetype and examining the relationship between Eurydice and her unnamed father, who eagerly awaits her presence in the underworld.¹⁰ This added paternal influence changes the power dynamic between Orpheus and Eurydice – now it is she who must decide whether to remain in the underworld or to return to the surface with Orpheus.

⁵ Muskaan Kapoor, “The Present-Day Medusa: Foregrounding L’écriture Feminism in the Contemporary Retellings of Mythology,” *Journal of Comparative Literature & Aesthetics* 44, no. 1 (2021): pp. 89-97, 79.

⁶ Ibid, 89-97.

⁷ Michael Grant and John Hazel, *Who's Who in Classical Mythology* (London: Routledge, 2002), 388-389.

⁸ Ibid, 388-389.

⁹ Ibid, 388-389.

¹⁰ Sarah Ruhl, *Eurydice* (New York: Samuel French, 2004).

Given Leighton's criteria for a successful adaptation, Ruhl's *Eurydice* passes the test. Her incorporation of "dream logic"¹¹ creates a world which is enjoyable for readers regardless of their mythological knowledge – in this intriguing underworld, elevators rain on the inside, stones talk, rooms are made of string, and Hades rides a tricycle.¹² At the same time, the Orpheus myth remains intact, albeit reexamined from a more contemporary, feminine perspective.

Horned & Hidden Child seeks to satisfy Leighton's conditions in addition to my own set of musical criteria. In my paper, *A Composer's Perspective on the Makings of Successful Opera*, I argue that engaging operas artfully consider "length, innate lyricism, humor, and suspense."¹³

1. Length – I posit that contemporary cinema generally shapes an audience's tolerance for a production's duration in minutes. Since the 10 highest grossing US films of 2021 averaged a length of two hours and ten minutes according to a survey by Statista, I feel this is a suitable length to aim for as a final, completed work.¹⁴ However, the workshop portion posed separate length and difficulty requirements, as undergraduate students needed to learn, memorize, and perform the music over a 15-week period. For this reason, the workshop material was restricted to 30 minutes.
2. Innate lyricism – my own definition of innate lyricism refers to the singability of a text and is a collaborative effort between the composer and librettist. The librettist creates the structural framework and general syntax, while the composer further shapes text through pacing and the placement of consonants and vowels in a range which, when sung, will be understood by the audience.

¹¹ "A Conversation with Sarah Ruhl," Metropolitan Opera, accessed January 2, 2023.

¹² Sarah Ruhl, *Eurydice* (New York: Samuel French, 2004).

¹³ Mikeila McQueston, *A Composer's Perspective on the Makings of Successful Opera* [unpublished essay] (2021), 2.

¹⁴ José Gabriel Navarro, "U.S. & Canada: Top Films' Average Length 2021," Statista, March 4, 2022.

3. Humor – Mythology is often dark and brutal, and the myths surrounding the Minotaur are filled with acts of passion, bloodshed, loss, and abandonment. The source material for *Horned & Hidden Child*, Nicole Yackley’s collection of poetry entitled *Zoo-Keeping & Other Human-Bull Sh*t* infuses humor into the narrative through wordplay and the addition of a Greek Chorus and a Halfway House for the Mythically Challenged.¹⁵ Many of these elements were carried over into the libretto for *Horned & Hidden Child*.
4. Suspense – Suspense can be achieved by altering an “audience’s sense of timing or by changing certain elements of the plot.”¹⁶ For this reason, *Horned & Hidden Child* does not seek to retell the stories of Pasiphae, the Minotaur, and Ariadne, but to propel them into the future and continue their story. Pasiphae’s powers have preserved her children and the Greek Chorus throughout millennia, and their anachronistic ways are at odds with a modern city. The workshop portion also ends on a cliffhanger; the Minotaur goes into hiding after a TV interview ends poorly and incites the rage and fearmongering of a fringe group.

When combined and thoughtfully executed, these four ideas create the foundations for a successful and engaging opera. Therefore, I have carefully considered both these and Leighton’s criteria during the creative process of *Horned & Hidden Child*.

¹⁵ Nicole Yackley, *Zoo-Keeping & Other Human-Bull Sh*t* [unpublished thesis] (2016).

¹⁶ Mikeila McQueston, *A Composer’s Perspective on the Makings of Successful Opera* [unpublished essay] (2021), 4.

CHAPTER 2: THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE MINOTAUR

While *Horned & Hidden Child* actively features only three characters from Greek mythology, several others are referenced by name. Understanding the relationship between each, while not strictly necessary, may be helpful in furthering one's understanding of the plot. See Figure 1.

The classical Greek mythology of the Minotaur begins with his father, King Minos, and the fatal flaw of hubris. Minos and his brothers fought over who was to succeed Asterius, their adopted father and then-King of Crete; the sea god Poseidon settled the matter by sending a handsome, sacrificial bull in favor of Minos.¹⁷ However, when the time came to slaughter the animal, King Minos refused, citing its beauty, so in punishment, Poseidon cursed King Minos's wife, Pasiphae, to lust after it.¹⁸ Driven by the curse, Pasiphae commissioned the inventor Daedalus, an exiled Athenian, to build her a wooden cow in which she could hide to attract the bull.¹⁹ During this time, a creature was conceived and named the Mino-taur, or "bull of Minos"; King Minos then tasked Daedalus with creating a labyrinth in which he could hide and house the Minotaur.²⁰ Now, King Minos was a fearsome ruler and subjugated much of Greece, including Athens.²¹ As tribute, he demanded that seven Athenian men and seven Athenian women be sent each year as living sacrifices to the Minotaur.²²

Meanwhile, Theseus, son of Aegeus, King of Athens, had completed many heroic quests, even slaughtering Poseidon's bull (the very same which had mated with Pasiphae).²³ But when

¹⁷ Michael Grant and John Hazel, *Who's Who in Classical Mythology* (London: Routledge, 2002), 348-349.

¹⁸ Ibid, 348-349.

¹⁹ Ibid, 348-349.

²⁰ Ibid, 348-349.

²¹ Michael Grant and John Hazel, *Who's Who in Classical Mythology* (London: Routledge, 2002), 348-349.

²² Ibid, 348-349.

²³ Michael Grant and John Hazel, *Who's Who in Classical Mythology* (London: Routledge, 2002), 510-513.

Mythological Entities Referenced in *Horned & Hidden Child*

- The Minotaur*
 - Minos, the Minotaur's adopted father; King of Crete
 - Pasiphae, the Minotaur's mother; Queen of Crete*
 - Ariadne, the Minotaur's half-sister*
- Theseus, the Minotaur's murderer; Ariadne's lover who forsakes her on Naxos
 - Daedalus, the Minotaur's jailer; inventor; father of Icarus

*Denotes role in *Horned & Hidden Child*

Figure 1: Mythological Entities Referenced in Horned & Hidden Child

Theseus learned of King Minos' tribute law, he included himself among the fourteen sacrifices.²⁴ Upon arriving in Crete, Theseus fell in love with one of King Minos' daughters, Ariadne, and promised to marry her; in order to save him, Ariadne sought the help of Daedalus and gave Theseus a ball of string for navigation.²⁵ Theseus killed the Minotaur and used the string to successfully escape the labyrinth. Then, he and Ariadne fled Crete by ship.²⁶ Before returning to Athens, however, the ship stopped on the Island of Naxos, where Ariadne was abandoned in favor of another woman.²⁷

When King Minos heard of these events, his anger turned toward the inventor Daedalus. Now, it was said before that Daedalus was an Athenian exile, and this was because he had murdered his nephew out of jealousy for his craftsmanship.²⁸ Ever since, Daedalus' livelihood had been dependent on the royal household in Crete; after all, it was he who made the wooden cow, the labyrinth, and the string which saved Theseus.²⁹ So, when King Minos discovered this final act of treachery, he imprisoned Daedalus and his son Icarus in the labyrinth.³⁰ In order to escape, Daedalus fashioned two sets of wax wings and warned his son to keep to low altitudes.³¹ Ultimately, Icarus did not obey and fell to his death after flying too close to the sun. (Who's Who 158-159).³²

While most retellings of the Minotaur encompass many of these details, there are variations based upon the source. For example, the Minotaur is occasionally christened Asterius, after Minos' adopted father, while other times, Asterius is another of King Minos' sons who was

²⁴ Ibid, 510-513.

²⁵ Ibid, 510-513.

²⁶ Ibid, 510-513.

²⁷ Ibid, 510-513.

²⁸ Michael Grant and John Hazel, *Who's Who in Classical Mythology* (London: Routledge, 2002), 158-159.

²⁹ Ibid, 158-159.

³⁰ Ibid, 158-159.

³¹ Ibid, 158-159.

³² Michael Grant and John Hazel, *Who's Who in Classical Mythology* (London: Routledge, 2002), 158-159.

killed by Theseus.³³ Therefore, in Nicole Yackley's poetry collection, *Zoo-Keeping & Other Human-Bull Sh*t*, the Minotaur is humanized by being given a full name: Asterius Minosakis.³⁴ Yackley's invented surname, Minosakis, is clever – a combination of the Minotaur's father Minos and the Greek suffix -akis, a “place-based” suffix referring to one who originated in “Crete and the Aegean Islands”.³⁵ However, because full names are more difficult to convey in stage works and the name is not frequently used throughout the source material, *Horned & Hidden Child* simply refers to Asterius Minosakis as The Minotaur.

In versions of the Minotaur myth which focus heavily on Theseus, Theseus is often said to possess a special sword, given to him by his father in an Arthurian coming-of-age ceremony, which enabled him to slay the Minotaur.³⁶ Yackley acknowledges this portion of the myth in her poem “Rumors of My Death,” but neither confirms nor denies his use of it. (See Figure 4).

In other versions, Pasiphae is given more dimension as a character. She laments King Minos' unfaithfulness and turns to witchcraft in anger and vengeance, cursing his future sexual partners.³⁷ In keeping with Kapoor's desire to increase female autonomy, *Horned & Hidden Child* develops this detail further – instead of relying upon the witchcraft of others, she herself is a powerful sorceress. Her magic enables her to control the Greek Chorus and explains how she and her children have continued to live for millennia.

Another oft-changed detail pertains to Daedalus: that his escape was brought on by homesickness and King Minos' unwillingness to lose the great inventor, rather than punishment

³³ Ibid, 81.

³⁴ Nicole Yackley, *Zoo-Keeping & Other Human-Bull Sh*t* [unpublished thesis] (2016), 24.

³⁵ Thomas MacEntree, “Clues in Greek Last Names and Other Genealogy Resources,” *Family Tree Magazine*, February 28, 2022.

³⁶ Jane Bingham, *Classical Myth: A Treasury of Greek and Roman Legends, Art, and History* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 66.

³⁷ Michael Grant and John Hazel, *Who's Who in Classical Mythology* (London: Routledge, 2002), 401.

in either the labyrinth or a tower.³⁸ Since the Minotaur serves as the chief narrator of Yackley's *Zoo-Keeping & Other Human-Bull Sh*t*, and since this detail is beyond the scope of his knowledge, it is not addressed outside the manuscript's introduction. Regardless, the Minotaur-myth as a whole explores the consequences of pride, love, lust, and rocky familial tensions, and is therefore ripe for retellings within the context of modern narrative.

³⁸ Jane Bingham, *Classical Myth: A Treasury of Greek and Roman Legends, Art, and History* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 38-39.

CHAPTER 3: HORNED & HIDDEN CHILD: INSPIRATION & ADAPTATION

Zoo-Keeping & Other Human-Bull Sh*t (Poetry)

The inspiration and basis for the libretto of *Horned & Hidden Child* is *Zoo-Keeping & Other Human-Bull Sh*t*, a full-length collection of poems by Nicole Yackley, which served as her MFA thesis while at the University of Tennessee. The poetry chronicles the mythical Minotaur in his post-labyrinthine life and portrays the Minotaur as a deeply complex individual – often more sensitive and well, human, than those around him. Though his attempt to select a hobby ends in disaster and results in a Greek Chorus narrating his daily activities, he nevertheless gets a job at the zoo, processes his familial trauma in therapy, and even finds love.³⁹

One of the facets of Nicole’s writing style which attracted me most to *Zoo-Keeping* is her use of wordplay – “rhyme and alliteration and consonant clusters and homophones” which contribute to the innate lyricism outlined in Chapter 2.⁴⁰ Ultimately, this made the poems very attractive to me as a composer.

Consider the poem “The Greek Chorus Makes a Poor First Impression”, pictured in Figure 2 with simple annotations. The yellow markings indicate assonance using the [o] vowel, while the green indicates alliteration and consonant clusters. The final cluster “struck his stick on the stand and started” uses [st] to imitate a metered metronome. The pink markings denote a literal depiction of the text in its formal organization: just as the chorus is lined up in three rows, the poem is neatly divided into three stanzas. Such organization could easily be explored or manipulated in the musical composition process – an exciting feature for composers.

³⁹ Nicole Yackley, *Zoo-Keeping & Other Human-Bull Sh*t* [unpublished thesis] (2016).

⁴⁰ Bunkong Tuon, “Poets on Craft: Nicole Yackley and Aline Mello,” *Cultural Daily*, June 8, 2021.

The Greek Chorus Makes a Poor First Impression

When I first saw them, I thought they were government--
their steel backs, eyes that never blink, the mouths that open
and close all at the same time, such tall Os. They were lined
in three perfect rows, the men in the middle, spaced
so every eye could meet mine when I walked in and they swivelled.
“Am I late?” I asked, checking the door to be sure
I was in the right place. “Early is on time” they chorused,
“On time is late.” The conductor didn’t say a word--
just struck his stick on the stand and started.

Figure 2: Example of Yackley’s Writing Style in *Zoo-Keeping & Other Human-Bull Sh*t*⁴¹

⁴¹ Nicole Yackley, *Zoo-Keeping & Other Human-Bull Sh*t* [unpublished thesis] (2016), 11.

Nicole's use of non-traditional line breaks creates new emphases and "hidden interpretations" within the poetry as with Figure 2.⁴² For this reason, subtext is also an important feature of her writing. Several of the poems contain visual wordplay and design, often speaking volumes through censored material. For example, "Redacted / Re-Redacted" uses blackout over an original text to create two identical paragraphs with very different meanings, while "The Minotaur Builds His Resume" uses strike-through text to simulate the Minotaur's unsuccessful brainstorm session.⁴³ Others, like "The Interview is Reported", "Exclusive! Angry Minotaur!", and "Exeunt" use maze outlines as containers for words, where the paths become more direct and eventually open towards the bottom of the page the more the Minotaur adjusts to his new lifestyle.⁴⁴ Figure 3 highlights this concept.

While she frequently utilizes the mythology surrounding the Minotaur by referencing Pasiphae, Ariadne, Daedalus, Minos, and Theseus, Yackley also employs a suspension of disbelief – particularly in regard to Theseus murdering the Minotaur. Consider the following excerpts from the poems "Rumors of My Death" and "While We're Adding to the Guest List" in Figure 4.

Both poems engage a suspension of disbelief. The title "Rumors of My Death" implies through stream of consciousness that Theseus did not actually succeed in killing the Minotaur. "While We're Adding to the Guest List" achieves the same effect by relying on the conditional "if" to neither confirm nor deny the events of the past.

Given the nature of opera and its fixed pacing, it is often difficult to convey subtext or wit – particularly if subtitles are not used during the performance. Furthermore, complex plots with

⁴² Bunkong Tuon, "Poets on Craft: Nicole Yackley and Aline Mello," *Cultural Daily*, June 8, 2021.

⁴³ Nicole Yackley, *Zoo-Keeping & Other Human-Bull Sh*t* [unpublished thesis] (2016), 8.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 20-22.

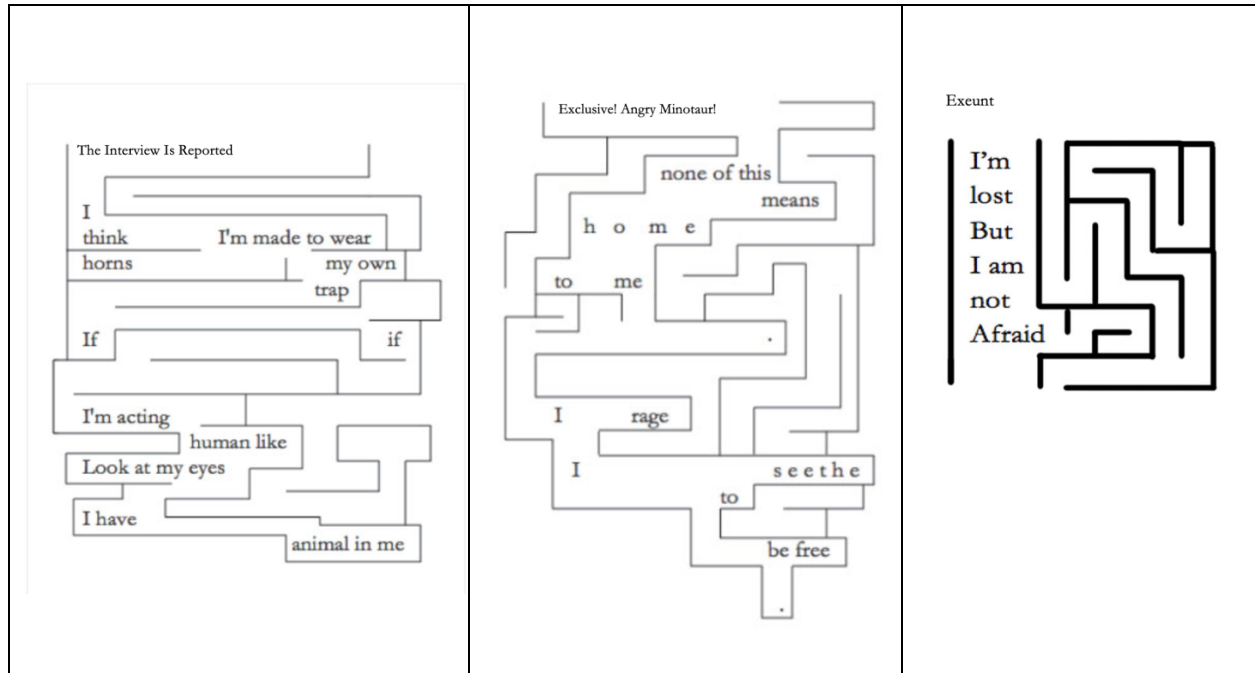


Figure 3: Evolution of Maze Poems⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Nicole Yackley, *Zoo-Keeping & Other Human-Bull Sh*t* [unpublished thesis] (2016), 15-56.

Excerpt: “Rumors of My Death”	“While We’re Adding to the Guest List”
Theseus killed me with the sword of his father Theseus wounded me with the sword Theseus had no sword why would he have a sword every sacrifice had a sword I could be killed by a sword I had been killed 28 times before no sword could harm me. Here I am.	If Theseus, whom I met in the maze when he killed me, or met in the maze but survived, or whom I’ve never met, came to dinner on the arm of my sister in a polo and khakis and a bleached blond buzzcut, if I refused to shake his hand, my sister would call me bull-headed, say “I guess we know who’s the bigger man.” If, when we were eating, he made a crack about not being on the menu this time, I’d have to strangle him. What would he think of rope then?

Figure 4: Suspension of Disbelief in Yackley's Manuscript⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Nicole Yackley, *Zoo-Keeping & Other Human-Bull Sh*t* [unpublished thesis] (2016), 13-45.

numerous minor characters do not often fit within the scope and budget of the average US opera company. So, adapting a witty, cerebral manuscript into an accessible stage work took some modifications. In early discussions of the show, Nicole and I asked numerous questions like: Do we need a clear villain? More resolution at the end? Which characters should we include, and how do they change by the end of the show? Do they change?

In our early draft notes (see Figure 5), we began by outlining characters and their developmental arcs. To facilitate the same suspension of disbelief and explain the mythical figures' survival, Pasiphae's role as a sorceress and grand architect is more clearly defined and the Greek Chorus was further developed, acting on Pasiphae's behalf as minions who feed off the stories of others in order to survive. However, Nicole and I were concerned that because there was no explicit villain, Pasiphae would be perceived negatively because of her power and status, much like The Queen of the Night in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. For this reason, we altered Pasiphae's character arc and added the character of Karen. Karen serves as a foil to Pasiphae and is the leader of the Fringe Group, an anti-chorus which opposes the Greek Chorus. Though not included in the workshop edition, in the full opera Karen is assumed into the Greek Chorus as punishment for gossip, since she too is incapable of focusing on her own story when there are others around. Additional examples of changes made from the source material to the libretto will be described in Chapter 4.

The Minotaur (Chamber Work)

If *Zoo-Keeping & Other Human-Bull Sh*t* is the inspiration for *Horned & Hidden Child*, then the chamber work *The Minotaur* served as its musical study and catalyst. I composed *The*

Cast:

Asterius (arc-> building of support system, forgiving family for their mistakes, takes control of own narrative from Greek Chorus)

Therapist

Ariadne (arc-> taking responsibility for actions, choosing Minotaur's side)

Pasiphae (static, should change in similar ways to Ariadne, but doesn't)

ARCHITECT--orchestrates finding Ariadne from Naxos and gets Minotaur out, waited so long, not really warm loving, Greek Chorus as minions

Brianna (static, represents normalcy, outside of much of the conflict, busy with her own life and doesn't need to change)

Daedalus/Theseus/Minos (appear in therapy sessions)

Greek Chorus/Newspeople/Coworkers, etc (Greek Chorus kind of like Trickster Gods, chaotic)

Could be fine if at least 3 distinct moments: Prologue, hobby introduction of chorus,

Figure 5: Excerpt of Horned & Hidden Child Draft Notes

Minotaur during my time as a composer-performer fellow at the 2019 Nief-Norf Summer Festival in Knoxville, Tennessee. The piece was shaped by the following constraints:

1. Text – After reading Nicole Yackley’s manuscript, I decided to set the first three poems in *Zoo-Keeping & Other Human-Bull Sh*t*. This was later shortened to just the first two: “The Bulldozer” and “The Bull Wakes” since they were of approximately equal length and similar in nature.
2. Instrumentation – in my festival application, I proposed a piece for a sextet that included piano, clarinet, percussion, violin, cello, and soprano. The latter owed to the fact that I was required to perform in my own composition. However, casting the Minotaur as a female voice further reinforced differences between Yackley’s Minotaur persona and the original monster. I also wanted the instrumentalists to act as a driving force in more ways than one by speaking and shouting text at the Minotaur when not playing.
3. Length – the piece was to be no longer than 8 minutes long.

Additionally, I wanted to explore the full timbral range of the ensemble in depicting the bulldozer as it tore down the walls of the labyrinth. For this reason, the piece begins with an improvised demolition scene that “rose to shattering climaxes of near chaos before subsiding in most effective fashion.”⁴⁷ After its premiere at the Nief-Norf Summer Festival, *The Minotaur* went on to win the Constantinides New Music Ensemble Call for Scores and was performed by the ensemble at Carnegie Hall in April 2022. Both Nicole and I were able to attend.

Ultimately, *The Minotaur* acted as a study for *Horned & Hidden Child*, allowing me the chance to work with Nicole Yackley and her poetry while exploring the character of the

⁴⁷ Frank Daykin, “Distinguished Concerts International New York (DCINY) Presents Constantinides New Music Ensemble in Review,” New York Concert Review, Inc., April 14, 2022.

Minotaur. Other professional composers have operated in a similar capacity; Matthew Aucoin composed the chamber work *The Orphic Moment* prior to his opera *Eurydice* with Sarah Ruhl, and Dominick Argento used the monodrama, *Miss Havisham's Wedding Night*, as a way to revise and strengthen his full-length opera, *Miss Havisham's Fire*.⁴⁸

Additional Sources of Inspiration

During our meetings and email correspondence over the course of 2019 and 2020, Nicole and I considered many possible ways of narrative framing and were undoubtedly influenced by the pop culture surrounding us at the time. For example, Nicole once equated the Greek Chorus to Olaf's theatrical troupe in *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, since both function as comedic relief, are seemingly omnipresent, and wear many disguises.

We also discussed successful moments in popular musicals like *Beauty and the Beast*, *Les Misérables*, and *Wicked* and concluded that many of them featured a quintessential wanting/wishing number in the first act. This established an upbeat, positive mood and informed the audience of the protagonist's dreams and desires. So, we created the Act I Scene 1 trio, "What Comes After?", in which the Minotaur, Ariadne, and Brianna all look forward to life outside the confines of their respective prisons: the physical labyrinth, an academic institution, or tense familial ties. Furthermore, the slam-poetry style delivery of the Newscaster's lines was influenced by my love of poets and lyricists like Sarah Kay and Lin Manuel Miranda.

⁴⁸ "Dominick Argento," Wikipedia (Wikimedia Foundation, December 15, 2022).

CHAPTER 4: HORNED & HIDDEN CHILD: CREATION & PRODUCTION

The Timeline

While there isn't a universally agreed upon way of composing an opera, the traditional sequencing order is as follows: libretto > music > workshop > premiere. This structure easily allows for revision between each step of the process. Though perhaps the least familiar to audiences, workshops are an integral part of the process and should be taken advantage of whenever the timeline and budget allow. This allows the team a chance to adjust for practical concerns like vocal range/singability, show length, and smooth transition between scenes and set changes before the work is presented before a large, paying audience. Workshops may feature reduced cast size/instrumentation or even a piano reduction in lieu of a conductor and ensemble. The workshop may also present a portion of the show rather than the complete work. For example, Stephen Sondheim's early workshops of *Sunday in the Park With George* concluded at the end of what is now considered Act I.⁴⁹

For this reason, Nicole and I sought to follow the traditional process as closely as possible. Figure 6 contains a basic timeline of our process.

After the premier of *The Minotaur* in July 2019, we immediately began discussing what a Minotaur opera might look like. However, the bulk of our conversations and the development of the libretto took place after I was accepted into the graduate composition program at the University of Tennessee and had proposed a Minotaur opera for my thesis project. Nicole and I held regular meetings during the fall of the 2020-2021 academic year in order to discuss character development and sequencing in the operatic adaptation. Nicole completed the libretto

⁴⁹ James Lapine, *Putting It Together: How Stephen Sondheim and I Created Sunday in the Park with George* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2021).

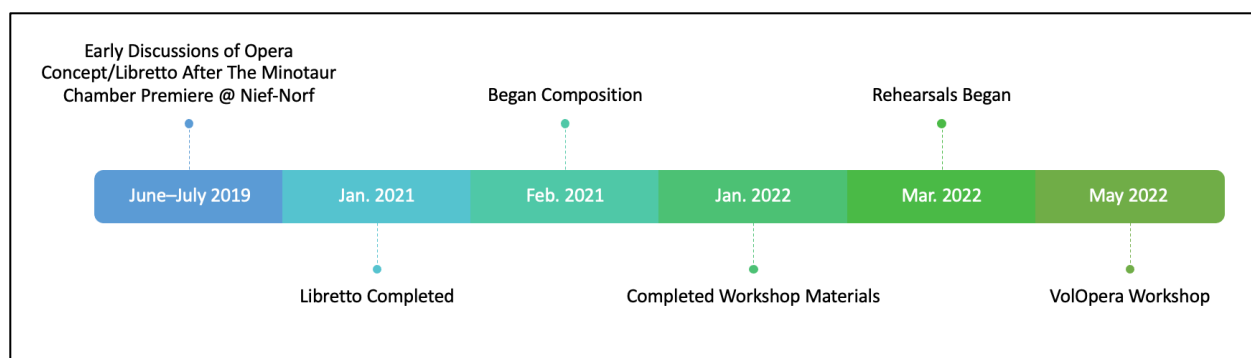


Figure 6: General Timeline of *Horned & Hidden Child* Workshop

in January of 2021, and I began the composition process the following month, taking 11 months to complete a piano vocal edition of the first 30 minutes of the show.

Our involvement with VolOpera began in the fall of 2021, when VolOpera president Karen Wemhoener and I discussed producing the workshop of *Horned & Hidden Child*. We held auditions for the show in November and began individual musical coachings in February 2022 with pianist Dustin Lin. Staging rehearsals with student director Christine Alfano and student conductor Hunter Wilburn began in March and April, with the final performance on May 3, 2022, in Powell Recital Hall. (See Figure 7.)

As a composer, I found that the VolOpera workshop was a significant motivator and facilitated the completion of the work in a timely manner. Without the structure it provided, my personal due dates at the project's onset felt arbitrary. While I used that time to explore many different sound options, I did not feel I was composing efficiently and drew out the composition of the Prologue Scene over a series of months compared to Scenes 1 and 2 which were composed very quickly in January 2022.

Many composition treatises, like Reginald Smith Brindle's *Musical Composition*, recommend composing a melodic line first and then harmonizing it, as this tends to create fewer mental blocks.⁵⁰ Likewise, many operatic composers choose to write a simplified piano-vocal score prior to orchestrating their work. However, orchestrating first allows the clear delineation of contrapuntal lines and deeper thought in terms of texture.

When composing the Prologue, I created the orchestration prior to the piano-vocal version. However, writing the piano reduction first was ultimately faster and more practical because the piano/vocal coachings took place before the orchestral rehearsals. Additionally,

⁵⁰ Reginald Smith Brindle. *Musical Composition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

- January 27 – Libretto Reading
- February 10 – Pasiphae + Greek Chorus Individual Coachings
- February 17- Minotaur + Ariadne Individual Coachings
- February 22 – Brianna + Newscaster Coachings
- Supplemental Coachings During Solo Class Time As Needed
- March 10 – Full Sing Through
- March 17- SPRING BREAK (OFF BOOK DEADLINE)
- March 24 – Staging (Prologue)
- March 29 – Staging (Scene 1)
- March 31 – Staging (Scene 2)
- Apr 11 – New Orchestration Deadline (Score + Parts)
- April 12 – Brush Up Rehearsal
- April 20 – Fundraising Bake Sale
- April 21 – Run Through
- April 28 – Run Through
- May 1 – Preview of “What Comes After?” in Celebration of Collaboration Concert
- May 2 – Dress Rehearsal w/ Orchestra
- May 3 – Performance

Figure 7: VolOpera Schedule, 2022

I was forced to rewrite my initially orchestrated sections because my intended ensemble had changed. Though I had envisioned a 13-piece orchestra, similar in size and scope to Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*, it was not possible to recruit student volunteers for each instrument I had included. Harp especially posed a problem, as there is no harp program at the university. For this reason, the workshop portion was reorchestrated for chamber septet (7 players).

Musical Considerations

When composing my previous opera projects, I have operated in a non-linear fashion. That is, I compose out of sequence, beginning with places which excite or inspire me most before addressing the connective tissue. However, since the workshop of *Horned & Hidden Child* focused on the first three sections of the opera, I opted to compose this project from start to finish. In order to set the musical mood for *Horned & Hidden Child*, I began by composing a musical sketch, initially titled "Umbra" but which would later be revised as introductory material, like an orchestra prelude. To free myself from constraints associated with any particular instrument, this portion was composed for electronics and later orchestrated. This was a common occurrence throughout the process of composing the workshop material, and if I felt I was approaching a mental block, I briefly returned to the concept of electronics or working in a DAW.

Since I greatly admired the wordsmithing and double entendres used throughout *Zoo-Keeping*, I sought to replicate them musically by creating musical puzzles, much like Bach's *Crab Canon*. Nicole's libretto provided ample opportunity. One section which I had in mind was the Scene 2 confrontation between the Minotaur and the Newscaster. Figure 8 shows a partial

example of how the Newscaster cuts and splices the Minotaur's civil words to form a gruesome image.

My original instinct was to work backwards, creating an edgy, harsh song for the Minotaur to serve as the spun "playback" on the Newscaster's recorder. From there I would embed those pitches and rhythms within the context of the Minotaur's longer speech. However, the text spanned three full pages in the libretto – nearly the entirety of the scene. Furthermore, the Minotaur's longer speech was punctuated with interjections from others, and my mental construction of the scene included recitative (speech-like delivery of sung text), an ensemble number, and an aria. Ultimately, I was concerned that without the use of technology to achieve the cut-and-splice effect, audiences would not pick up on the embedded music because it stretched over so long a period. Since technological playback was not accessible for the workshop production, I did not incorporate the musical puzzle into the score and had the Newscaster shout the text as if it were a headline, meant to incite the Fringe Group into a mob.

In my previous experience composing and producing new opera, I have come to learn the importance of having sections which can be excerpted for promotion or concert performance. This makes the work more accessible and is often how audiences are first introduced to the show. The workshop edition of *Horned & Hidden Child* has three specific excerpt-able portions: Ariadne's fiery aria "A Lesson From The Ribbon", the wanting/wishing trio "What Comes After?", and the Minotaur's hopeful soliloquy "Hello to Humanity." Because Nicole and I had planned both solo and ensemble numbers for excerpt, VolOpera was able to advertise the show by performing at the Celebration of Collaboration Concert, a shared recital between all of the student music organizations in the University of Tennessee School of Music in May 2022.

MINOTAUR: I'm guessing by the screams My reputation precedes me But that's no reason To skip the pleasantries Should I start with a Cretan greeting, sweeter than any poet ever wrote? Do we both bow? Or begin with a handshake? [The MINOTAUR starts towards someone with his hand out--they recoil] No? I don't really know The proper etiquette I was never taught not to bite at first sight. Yes, that's a fault of mine. I make mistakes sometimes After all, I'm only human... On my mother's side.	[NEWSCASTER hits the play button on his recording device, the MINOTAUR's voice comes out singing an edited version of his words]: The screams in your throat a sweeter greeting than any poet ever wrote I was taught to bite I was caught and kept to kill And kill I have and kill I will Look at my eyes, I have animal in me
--	---

Figure 8: The Newscaster's Spin (Excerpt)

Workshop Solutions

In previous sections I mentioned that a workshop is a significant asset to composer-librettist teams, as this enables us to truly understand and adapt to logistical concerns. This section will address practical solutions to problems encountered during the dress rehearsal and the workshop process as a whole.

Cast

7 undergraduate students auditioned for the workshop in November. While an excellent group of enthusiastic singers, the cast size made producing *Horned & Hidden Child* in its entirety impossible without extensive revisions. The full work and libretto called for a minimum of 15 characters (See Figure 9).

To circumnavigate this problem, the Greek Chorus was reduced to two individual characters, Melodia and Harmonia, who function less as a single entity and more like henchmen. Similar groupings from established operas and musicals include the First and Second Witch in *Dido & Aeneas* or Flotsam and Jetsam in *The Little Mermaid*. Though a larger group was our original intention, closer to the fish school in *Finding Nemo*, this reduced cast option is also possible in the full show for the sake of accessibility. The full production can now be performed with as few as 10 singers and the workshop version with just 7. Ultimately, the logistical concern of cast size coupled with the challenge of learning and premiering a new work convinced us to produce a shortened workshop edition which did not include Karen, the Therapist, and the Staffers. However, to simulate the Fringe Group and create the feel of a larger cast, we incorporated three supernumeraries who acted as construction workers, cameramen, etc. but did not sing.

Original Cast of Characters (Libretto)	Revised Cast of Characters (Workshop)
The Minotaur	The Minotaur
Pasiphae	Pasiphae
Ariadne	Ariadne
Brianna	Brianna
Karen	Newscaster
Newscaster/Fringe Groupie #4	Melodia
Therapist/Fringe Groupie #1	Harmonia
Staffer 1/Dancer/Fringe Groupie #2	
Staffer 2/Dancer/Fringe Groupie #3	
The Fringe Group (Groupies + Karen)	
The Greek Chorus (suggested 6+)	

Figure 9: Comparison of Dramatis Personae

Sets, Props, Costumes, and Makeup

Another concern addressed in the workshop pertained to production materials. The original libretto called for extensive set design, depicting various locations including the Minotaur's labyrinth, a coffee house, the Halfway House for the Mythically Challenged, a nightclub, and sliding walls in addition to various props (See Figure 10).

Since VolOpera did not have a production staff, director Christine Alfano made executive decisions regarding set design and props. Video projections would have been possible with the use of a white screen, but only at the expense of supertitles. There were also budgetary considerations, as most of VolOpera's funding was designated for the rehearsal pianist. Since VolOpera is a student organization, most of the props and costumes were graciously loaned to us by the University of Tennessee Opera Theatre. A few others were purchased. (See Figure 11).

The most difficult logistical aspect of sets and props was how to move them from their original location in Alumni Memorial Building to the Haslam School of Music, and where to store them when rehearsals were not in session. Many professional opera companies either have or hire a production staff who is responsible for coordinating a load-in. Unless the company has a rotating series of shows which requires them to dismantle or move the set, it usually remains onstage in the theatre until the show's run closes. Unfortunately, this option was not available to us as an independent student production. Student volunteers moved the materials the weekend before the performance, and we were granted special permission to store them in the orchestra room closet. In the event that an orchestral rehearsal conflicted with the time we needed to retrieve the materials, they were stored in the graduate teaching assistant office.

The workshop performance featured a split stage – one half as a garden labyrinth decorated with topiaries, the other as a café with table and chairs. Lighting was used to further

SCENE 1

[The curtains rise on a split stage--on the left a Labyrinth, on the right BRIANNA in bed. In the middle, a construction crew busy at work. The GREEK CHORUS grabs the hard hats and vests that PASIPHAЕ passes out to them, hurriedly pull them on and mingle into the construction crew. PASIPHAЕ exits after passing everything out. Over the noise of the construction work, BRIANNA's alarm starts going off. A bird begins imitating the noise and flies over to perch on the edge of the Labyrinth. The MINOTAUR enters from the left and sees the bird.]

Scene 2

[ARIADNE and BRIANNA leave arm in arm. The MINOTAUR wanders further into the maze. The construction crew comes more to the forefront. Noisy and loud, conversation visible but not heard. We see the GREEK CHORUS members sneaking through the crew in disguise. They have spray-paint and spray a big X on the side of the Labyrinth. A bulldozer comes and knocks over the wall. The MINOTAUR comes running back up to the front at the sound. The crew see him and scatter screaming. The GREEK CHORUS runs to the side of the stage where PASIPHAЕ has different costumes for them--they take off the construction hats and take news crew indicators instead before running back on, joined by a few other newspeople.]

Figure 10: Set/Props Description in Libretto

- 8 topiaries @ various heights
- 4 multi-purpose wood cubes
- 2 chairs
- Table
- Dolly
- Toolkit
- Tablecloth
- Personal technology (phones + laptop)
- Flower
- Costume boxes
- Microphone
- Yarn and scissors

Figure 11: Set/Prop List

differentiate these areas based on the scene. In the Prologue, dark blue stage lights and a center spotlight established the mystical powers of Pasiphae. For the onset of Scene 1, muted green lights covered the labyrinth side, while normal daylight covered the café. When the characters were disassociated with their surroundings or when the labyrinth was fully destroyed, normal stage lighting was utilized. Titles were projected above the stage on the balcony wall rather than distracting the audience with a screen farther above. Since the performance took place in Powell Recital Hall at the University of Tennessee, we had the means for both supertitles and minimal light design. However, based on my prior experience of workshopping new operas, this was a luxury and not an expectation.

Costumes were mostly supplied by the individual singers according to specific directives given by Christine Alfano, Karen Wemhoener, and me. For example, Pasiphae as a sorceress and prima donna dressed in formal attire like a gown and tiara. Ariadne was trendy, trying to fit in with mainstream culture, while Brianna, a PhD student in string theory, was bookish and preppy. The Minotaur was dressed in neutral browns with a fur cape, leggings, and horns. The other cast members wore concert blacks accented with various guises that we supplied like construction vests, helmets, or white blazers to denote bystanders.

Makeup was done by VolOpera president Karen Wemhoener. Pasiphae and the Minotaur had specific forehead painting designs inspired by Greek symbols to differentiate them from civilians. Melodia and Harmonia's faces were painted like drama masks or mimes since they perform a series of silent charades during the orchestra prelude. The supernumeraries wore neutral masks borrowed from the university's Performance Techniques for Singers class.

Orchestra

Thanks to Hunter Wilburn and several other members of the University of Tennessee orchestral program, we were able to have a volunteer conductor and chamber orchestra for the production of *Horned & Hidden Child*. Due to the limited rehearsal schedule, we were unable to have a traditional sitzprobe, a seated rehearsal with both orchestra and singers. However, we were able to hold a final dress rehearsal in Powell Recital Hall the day before the performance. One problem which we discovered during this rehearsal but had not anticipated was where to put the orchestra. For most opera productions, the instrumentalists are housed in the orchestra pit. If the venue does not have a pit, the orchestra is placed on the floor in front of the stage so that the singers can easily make eye contact with the conductor. Another option is to place the orchestra upstage behind a scrim and have monitors at the front of the stage or slightly offstage for the singers to reference. Since Powell is a small hall and not designed for large stage works, there was no way to put the chamber orchestra directly in front of the stage or in a pit, nor was there room onstage. For this reason, we had to experiment with positions where the singers could follow the conductor's beat patterns and chose the floor area on house right next to the stage. While this was the best option in terms of visibility and sonic balance, their position did cover the house right entrance onstage and some blocking had to be adjusted.

Final Thoughts

Horned & Hidden Child was an immense collaborative effort between poet and composer, undergraduate and graduate, and singer and instrumentalist, but it was unique in that every person involved in the creation of this production was tied to the University of Tennessee as either current student, faculty, or alumnus. Such a project created structure operating within

the normal meeting times of VolOpera and allowed us to maintain an incredibly low budget thanks to volunteers and borrowed materials. Our performance on May 3, 2022 was warmly received by all in attendance, and I am immensely grateful to all who came to support our cast and crew. The remainder of *Horned & Hidden Child* will be workshopped and performed at a later date.

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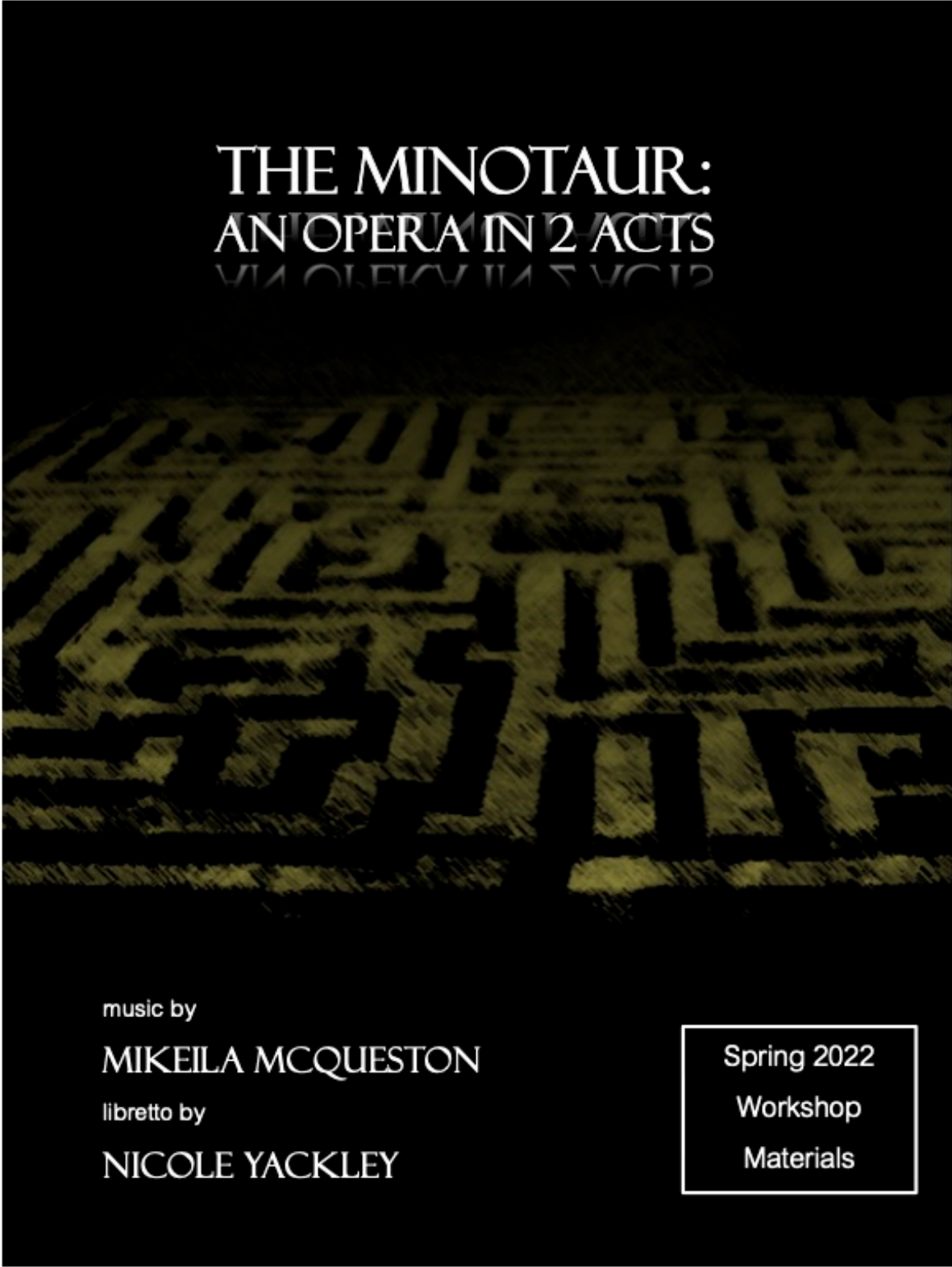
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: The Workshop Score

Readers should note that at the time the workshop materials for *Horned & Hidden Child* were completed and distributed to the members of VolOpera in January 2022, the piece was still referred to by its working title: *The Minotaur*, after the chamber piece. The name *Horned & Hidden Child* was used in promotional materials as of April 2022, but the project was still generally referred to as *The Minotaur* by the cast members. For this reason, the workshop score retains its original working title, while the concert program in Appendix B features the new title *Horned & Hidden Child*. Additional perceived errata in the workshop score are likely due to changes that were made during the rehearsal process.



THE MINOTAUR: AN OPERA IN 2 ACTS

music by

MIKEILA MCQUESTON

libretto by

NICOLE YACKLEY

Spring 2022

Workshop

Materials

THE MINOTAUR: AN OPERA IN 2 ACTS

music by

MIKEILA MCQUESTON

libretto by

NICOLE YACKLEY

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CHARACTERS

<u>The Minotaur (Asterius):</u>	(Baritone) Half-man, half-bull who has spent millennia in Daedalus' labyrinth
<u>Pasiphae:</u>	(Mezzo-Soprano) Mother to Asterius and Ariadne; master and manipulator of the Greek Chorus
<u>Ariadne:</u>	(Soprano) Daughter of Pasiphae and half-sister of Asterius; was betrayed by Theseus long ago
<u>Brianna:</u>	(Soprano) PhD student in string theory; Ariadne's roommate and best friend
<u>Karen:</u>	(Soprano) Leader of the fringe group and friend of Ariadne
<u>Newscaster/Fringe Groupie #4:</u>	(Tenor or Soprano) Lead media figure. Doubles as a member of the fringe group when not the Newscaster.
<u>Therapist/Fringe Groupie #1:</u>	(Mezzo or Baritone) Therapist at the Half-Way House for the Mythically Challenged. Doubles as a member of the fringe group.
<u>Staffer 1/Dancer/Fringe Groupie #2:</u>	(Soprano or Tenor) Soloist who doubles as a member of the fringe group.
<u>Staffer 2/Dancer/Fringe Groupie #3:</u>	(Mezzo-Soprano or Baritone) Soloist who doubles as a member of the fringe group.
<u>The Fringe Group:</u>	The anti-chorus; Radicals with a mob mentality who portray the Minotaur as both monster and criminal; made up solely of the fringe groupies + Karen
<u>The Greek Chorus:</u>	(6+ people) Pasiphae's minions who feed on story and often act as a singular entity; act as ensemble in other capacities (i.e. construction crew, newspeople, daters, etc.)*

*For the workshop, the Greek Chorus is changed to two more individualistic characters, Melodia and Harmonia

ORIGINAL WORKSHOP CAST

The Minotaur	Jacob Altmann
Pasiphae	Vallie Comstock
Ariadne	Karen Wemhoener
Brianna	Amanda Fintak
Newscaster	Hannah Casman
Melodia	Vivian Hirst
Harmonia	Evelyn Spencer

SYNOPSIS

ACT I

Prologue

Pasiphae plots the release of her son the Minotaur with the Greek Chorus and laments their painful history.

Scene 1

The Minotaur wanders the labyrinth, wondering if there will be more to life than walls and dead ends. Ariadne and Brianna meet for coffee, but each is distracted: Brianna by the pressures of academia, Ariadne by the overbearing presence of her mother, Pasiphae, and the others who've historically dictated her life choices.

Scene 2

The Greek Chorus, disguised as a construction crew, tears down the walls of the labyrinth. The media swarm, and one hungry Newscaster twists the Minotaur's words, painting him as a monstrous creature.

Scene 3

The Minotaur escapes to the Halfway House for the Mythically Challenged, seeking solitude. Desperate for gossip, the Greek Chorus infiltrates his mandatory music class and sings the story of his abandonment as a child.

Scene 4

The Minotaur meets with a Therapist to discuss his family issues. Though little seems to be accomplished, the Therapist issues approval for him to be released from the Halfway House. To the Minotaur's dismay and resentment, Pasiphae and Ariadne (who is technically the Minotaur's half-sister) arrive to take him home.

Scene 5

Brianna's friends invite her to go out dancing. She briefly considers it, but feels guilty and overwhelmed by her course load. Ariadne takes the Minotaur dancing, and he loves the wild, frenetic energy. When Pasiphae discovers her children are bonding without her, she becomes furious and sends the Greek Chorus after them.

Scene 6

A Fringe Group builds a mob-mentality against the Minotaur. When Ariadne sets the Minotaur up on a series of blind dates, the Fringe Group's leader, Karen, uses this as an opportunity to verbally attack him. Since Karen is also one of Ariadne's friends, this creates a huge rift between the two half-siblings.

Scene 7

The Minotaur returns to therapy, this time accompanied by Pasiphae. Pasiphae reveals that she orchestrated the Minotaur's release as a grand gesture of love. The Minotaur finds this too little, too late.

Scene 8

The Newscaster returns, informing us that the Minotaur has moved out of Pasiphae's house and we'll know more after intermission.

SYNOPSIS CONT.

ACT II

Scene 1

With the Minotaur in hiding, it is now Ariadne who is pursued by the Greek Chorus and the Newscaster. The former attempt to narrate her inner monologue while the latter twists her words. Karen hands her a flyer defaming the Minotaur while the Newscaster plays the Fringe Group a "soundbite" of her calling the Minotaur a monster. When the Minotaur finally emerges, they advance on him threateningly. Pasiphae observes this and sends the Greek Chorus to protect him as an effort to mend their relationship.

Scene 2

Ariadne feels guilty for her misconstrued words. Brianna, elated that she's just submitted her dissertation, asks Ariadne to help plan a masquerade. Ariadne agrees, figuring she can also use this as a way to apologize to the Minotaur.

Scene 3

Pasiphae returns to the Therapist alone, hoping for an instant fix in her relationship with the Minotaur. The Therapist remarks the only way to heal the past is to focus on the future and support the Minotaur while letting him control his own life.

Scene 4

The masquerade. Brianna commits to letting loose and having fun, and the ensemble, all wearing monster/minotaur masks, sings about the excitement and uncertainty. Pasiphae tries to apologize to the Minotaur, but is unable to. Ariadne attempts to organize one last blind-date by setting up Brianna and the Minotaur. They are surprised by how easily they connect and find the strength to tell off the Greek Chorus when it starts narrating their inner monologues. Left without their usual target, the Greek Chorus finds Karen stirring up trouble, and assumes her into the group as punishment for falsifying stories about others.

Scene 5

The Minotaur takes Brianna to the remains of the labyrinth, and both recognize how much they've grown. The Newscaster enters, followed in hot pursuit by Ariadne and Pasiphae who fear he may be on the attack. Instead, the Newscaster explains that the Fringe Group has dissolved without Karen as their leader, and he's come to offer the Minotaur the last word. The Minotaur speaks, and when the Newscaster replays his tape, it's still a spun story, but one for the better: "I am learning how to be more human. Your turn."

Score

The Minotaur

Act One - Prologue

Nicole Yackley

Mikeila McQueston

[In front of the curtains, the GREEK CHORUS plays charades with the audience. Should be semi-choreographed where they all move and respond as a unit. Perhaps easy cultural references, but ending with a third one that's a complicated pantomime of a Greek myth.]

Mysterious ♩ = 108

Piano

7

Pno.

rit. -----

Ethereal and dark ♩ = 80

13

Pno.

17

Pno.

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The Minotaur

Piano score for "The Minotaur" (Piano).

Measures 20-23:

- Measure 20: Bass clef, *p* (piano), followed by a rapid ascending scale in the right hand.
- Measure 21: Bass clef, *mp* (mezzo-piano), continuing the scale.
- Measure 22: Treble clef, continuing the scale.
- Measure 23: Treble clef, *mf* (mezzo-forte), continuing the scale.

Measures 27-31:

- Measure 27: Treble clef, *sub. p* (subito piano), followed by a descending scale.
- Measure 28: Bass clef, *mf* (mezzo-forte), continuing the scale.
- Measure 29: Treble clef, *mp* (mezzo-piano), continuing the scale.
- Measure 30: Treble clef, *mf* (mezzo-forte), continuing the scale.
- Measure 31: Treble clef, *mf* (mezzo-forte), continuing the scale.

Measures 32-36:

- Measure 32: Treble clef, *mf* (mezzo-forte), followed by a descending scale.
- Measure 33: Bass clef, *mp* (mezzo-piano), continuing the scale.
- Measure 34: Treble clef, *mf* (mezzo-forte), continuing the scale.
- Measure 35: Treble clef, *mf* (mezzo-forte), continuing the scale.
- Measure 36: Treble clef, *mf* (mezzo-forte), continuing the scale.

Measures 37-40:

- Measure 37: Treble clef, *mf* (mezzo-forte), followed by a descending scale.
- Measure 38: Bass clef, *mf* (mezzo-forte), continuing the scale.
- Measure 39: Treble clef, *mf* (mezzo-forte), continuing the scale.
- Measure 40: Treble clef, *mf* (mezzo-forte), continuing the scale.

The Minotaur

Pno.

Pno.

[PASIPHAE enters and the GREEK CHORUS' attention abruptly shifts to center on her]

Pasiphae

Eerily sweet $\text{♩} = 60$ *mf*

We've been to-ge-ther for a - while now ha-ven't we? —

Mel./Harm.

Pno.

The Minotaur

Cunning and flirtatious ♩ = 120

55 Pasiphae *mf* And in that time, I ha-ven't asked you all for much? Well I think that now's the

Mel./Harm. Yes, my queen. *They respond silently*

Pno. *mp*

59 Pasiphae *f* mo-ment to let a lit-tle loose, to run a lit-tle wild to fi-nal-ly set free

Mel./Harm.

Pno.

63 Pasiphae *freely mp* my horned and hid-den... child... *mf* You re-mem-ber Po-sei-don? *oilily*

Mel./Harm. What do you mean? Of course

Pno. *f* *mf* *p*

The Minotaur



67

Pasiphae

And how he cursed me? You call that jus - tice?

p *whispered, emphasizing the consonants [k], [s], & [t]*

Mel./Harm.

we re-mem-ber the God of the Sea And King Mi-nos' lack of re-spect

Pno.

67

f *outraged* *rit.*

Pasiphae

Was that fair? The god took his pound of flesh right out of my neck!

Mel./Harm.

King Mi-nos' lack of re-spect lack of re-spect re-spect

Pno.

71

mp

71

Restrained but still tense $\text{♩} = 45$

Pasiphae

He wan-ted to make a fool of my hus-band, so he made me a tool

Mel./Harm.

Pno.

71

mp



The Minotaur

rit. ----- ♩ = 50

78 Pasiphae Put a fe-ver in my head that on-ly a bulls bed could cure.

Mel./Harm.

Pno.

accel. ----- Adrenaline-filled ♩ = 120

82 Pasiphae And the ba-by... When a mon-ster is born of your bo - dy,

Mel./Harm.

Pno.

87 Pasiphae who do you in-vite to the birth if not your en-e-mies? To say, "See? We are ruth-less.

Mel./Harm.

Pno.

The Minotaur



rit. ----- **Deeply saddened** ♩ = 95

mp

Pasiphae

We have locked up our own child.* When a mon-ster comes out of you horns first, Are you sup-posed to

Mel./Harm.

Pno.

p *mp*

Pasiphae

love it right a-way? The ve-ry thing that took your life a-way?

Mel./Harm.

Pno.

Spoken: So it took me a millennia or two to come around—
I'm here now. I have knowledge I want passed on, And I
have, in a walled pasture, someone to pass it to. I want to be
loved again, unconditionally. It's my due.

Pasiphae

Mel./Harm.

Pno.



The Minotaur

$\text{♩} = 60$

108

Pasiphae

Mel./Harm.

Pno.

mf

mf

mp

We've been to - ge - ther for a -

112

Pasiphae

Mel./Harm.

Pno.

accel. ----- ♩ = 80

p *timidly*

Don't be shy, you can ask me an-y-thing.

while now ha-ven't we?

Are you sure that you

117

Pasiphae

Mel./Harm.

Pno.

f

[Light change. PASIPHAЕ screams in rage, turning on a dime from benevolently doting to scary. The GREEK CHORUS scatters.]

You don't think I have the mo-ther's

have... the mo-ther's touch?

The Minotaur



120 *mf*

Pasiphae touch? Well let me tell you I was touched by men I did-n't want to touchme

Pno. *mf*

123

Pasiphae And that made me a mo - ther no mat - ter what my tem - per'-ment may be.

Mel./Harm.

Pno. *mp* *p*

125

Pasiphae

Mel./Harm.

Pno. *mf*

The musical score is written for three parts: Pasiphae (voice), Piano (Pno.), and Mel./Harm. (melodica/harmonica). The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 120-122) features Pasiphae singing 'touch? Well let me tell you I was touched by men I did-n't want to touchme' with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The second system (measures 123-124) features Pasiphae singing 'And that made me a mo - ther no mat - ter what my tem - per'-ment may be.' with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The piano accompaniment features a more complex pattern with triplets in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The third system (measures 125-126) features Pasiphae singing 'And that made me a mo - ther no mat - ter what my tem - per'-ment may be.' with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The piano accompaniment features a more complex pattern with triplets in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.



The Minotaur

[Advancing on the GREEK CHORUS menacingly]

127

Pasiphae

Al - ways re-mem - ber I freed you. Be - fore you were caged and on - ly oc -

127

Pno.

130

Pasiphae

ca-sion-al-ly fed on tra-ge-dy. You were star-ving and cut off from sto-ry and now I'm ma-king you one

130

Mel./Harm.

Pno.

133

Pasiphae

to sate your ap-pe-tite. Say sor-ry.

133

Mel./Harm.

Sor-ry.

Pno.

mp

The Minotaur

[Pasiphae has pulled herself back into her sickly sweet demeanor; the light shifting back in stages to what it was before, as if nothing happened]

Lyrical ♩ = 60

138

Pasiphae

Say thank you.

Pno.

mf

p

142

Pasiphae

flippantly

mp

3

Re - gard-less of what you think a mo-ther means I am one.

Pno.

mp

146

Pasiphae

mf

Yes, it's been a - while that I've left my son to

Pno.

p

The Minotaur

149 Pasiphae *mf*

stew, But trust me, he was-n't go-ing an-y-where. While he's been walk - ing in

149 Pno.

With angst $\text{♩} = 120$

152 Pasiphae *mp*

cir - cles I've been do-ing what I could-n't as a mo-ther. It's on - ly fair. I took some

152 Pno. *mp*

157 Pasiphae *f* (first time only)

time off for good be - ha - vior, But I'm here for the re - birth, aren't I? _____

157 Pno. *f*

163 Pno.

1. 2.

The Minotaur

overly dramatic rit. -----

167 Pasiphae *f* You may have heard of the Min-o-aur?

Mel./Harm. What do you want us to do?

Pno.

170 Pasiphae *f* = 80 3 A child stuck in a Laby-rinth by a queen who saw what she had done and wept *gnd* -----

Pno. *p* 3

174 Pasiphae 3 He was stuck there by a king who ne-ver called him son and kept an arch-i-tect on re-tain-er who

Pno. *mp* 3



The Minotaur

Pasiphae 178 *3*
built a wind-ing con-tain-er — for him to rot in, to be for-got-ten in and there he is still, and
Pno. 178 *8va*

[PASIPHAE pulls out some costumes for them to wear]

Brusquely ♩ = 100

Pasiphae 182 *f*
now that I have you, my new - ly formed con - struc - tion crew, we're go - ing on — a
Pno. 182

accl. ----- With angst ♩ = 120 Repeat as needed for scene change

Pasiphae 186
res - cue mis - sion.
Pno. 186 *f*

1. 2.
Pno. 189

The Minotaur

Scene 1

[The curtains rise on a split stage--on the left a Labyrinth, on the right BRIANNA in bed. In the middle, a construction crew busy at work. The GREEK CHORUS grabs the hard hats and vests that PASIPHAE passes out to them, hurriedly pull them on and mingle into the construction crew. PASIPHAE exits after passing everything out. Over the noise of the construction work, BRIANNA's alarm starts going off. A bird begins imitating the noise and flies over to perch on the edge of the Labyrinth. The MINOTAUR enters from the left and sees the bird.]

Bright and curious $\text{♩} = 108$ **mp**

193

Minotaur

193

Pno.

199

Minotaur

mock-ing-birds know the strang-est songs these days learnt from far be-

199

Pno.

204

Minotaur

yond these twist-ing ways that turn me a-round in cir-cles, my gaze al-ways ar-rest-od,

204

Pno.

mf

The Minotaur

209

Minotaur

no hor-i-zon e-ver test-ed, on-ly hed-ges tall-er e-ven than my horns, on-ly hed-ges They've en-throned me

Pno.

213

Minotaur

here in these thorns. O Mock-ing - bird, will there e - ver

Pno.

218

Minotaur

be more than this? When can I ex - plore the source of these harsh sounds nev-er

Pno.

The Minotaur



[The MINOTAUR continues weaving through the Labyrinth. BRIANNA wakes up and turns off her alarm, checks the time and then rushes to get ready, pulling on a sweatshirt and shoes and running out the door. She passes through the construction to where a cafe table has been set up and ARIADNE is already sitting]

223

Ariadne

Brianna

Minotaur

heard be-fore? _____

225

Pno.

mf

226

Brianna

mf

Sor-ry I'm late! I dreamed my a-larm was a bird, and a crea-ture some-where was a -

228

Pno.

mp

232

Brianna

larmed at what he heard, A crea-ture in a gar-den, Such a

232

Pno.

mf

Spoken: Brianna!

Spoken: Ariadne!



The Minotaur

Distractedly ♩ = 80

Ariadne *mf* A crea-ture in a gar-den? I've

Brianna tin-ny sound from a ti-ny beak, but I woke be-fore I heard him speak.

Pno. *mp*

Ariadne *3* heard one or two in my time. I told you — of my bro - ther...

Pno.

Brianna *Joking* ♩ = 110 *mf* The one you sa - cri-ficed to the first man with an es-cape plan who swore he'd treat you right.

Pno.

The Minotaur

249 *mp* *rit.*

Ariadne

Yeah, my life went a lit-tle off the rails that day. But who needs rail-ings an-y-way? A

Pno.

Somewhat melodramatic $\text{♩} = 80$

253

Ariadne

cho-sen path is just a-no-ther word for trap.

Brianna

mp

Per-haps, if you weren't the one who chose it.

Pno.

mp

257 *incredulously*

Ariadne

Did you know peo-ple

Pno.

sub p

The Minotaur

Ariadne

261

think I got turned in-to a spi-der? They mix me up with A-rach-ne's old myth. Or if they re-mem-ber

Pno.

261

mp

Ariadne

265

all they re-mem-ber is... that I helped kill my bro-ther and got left by The-se-us...

Pno.

265

Ariadne

269

Ah to be de-fined by the men in your life. Ah, to be... al-ways in their

Pno.

269

pp

mp

The Minotaur

273 *accel.* -----, **With angst** ♩ = 120

Ariadne shade...

Pno. *mf*

276 *mf*

Ariadne Dae-da-lus gets all the glo-ry for the maze

Pno.

280 *f*

Ariadne that he de-signed But I'm the one who found the loop-hole I'm the one

Pno.

The Minotaur

284 *mf*

Ariadne *mf*

who knew to un - wind un - wind the rib-bon fol-low it deep-er

Pno.

288 rit. Distractedly $\text{♩} = 80$ *mp*

Ariadne

The maze was un - win-na-ble but some-how I beat it Ah to

Mel./Harm. *mf*

The maze was un - win-na-ble

Pno.

292 accel.

Ariadne

be de-fined by the men in your life. Ah, to be... al-ways in their shade...

Pno.

The Minotaur

With angst $\text{♩} = 120$

Pno.

Ariadne

mf

I learned a les-son from the rib-bon I learned it best from

Pno.

Ariadne

The-se - us — Ev-ery path has col-la-ter-al dam-age You can't move with-out step-ping on the

Pno.

Ariadne

ground There's no safe and sound You wear a path, break a stick, kick a stone

Pno.

mp *mf*
The Minotaur

Ariadne *311*
The worst con - se - quen - ces are the ones you don't suf - fer on your own

Pno. *311*
p *mf*

Pno. *315*

ARIADNE: What?

BRIANNA: In string theory, what looks like a point in two dimensions
(ARIADNE: yeah--how are your classes going?)

May look like a string in one--everything, even shape
Is based on perspective.

(ARIADNE: almost done with your degree! That must be exciting)

And no matter how obvious an answer appears
There're complications underneath
Even the simplest form in the universe
Is anything but simple
There's no matter that doesn't matter

ARIADNE: and you don't find that paralyzing?

♩ = 60 [ARIADNE's phone rings]

Brianna *318*
Who says I'm not par - a - lyz - ed? Spoken: I've gotten so used to thinking in theory I've forgotten how to act Ariadne: I'll be right back.

Minotaur

Pno. *318*

The Minotaur

[ARIADNE walks to the side of the stage and has a conversation in her phone we cannot hear. The MINOTAUR, who's been weaving through the labyrinth comes more forward and faces the audience]

322

Minotaur

I am tied — to the old world — But when I es-cape I'll do it right I'll make my free - dom worth

Pno.

mf

327

Minotaur

those I've sac-ri-ficed I'll do it right

Pno.

mf

$\text{♩} = 120$

333

Brianna

All my life I've — been reach-ing for a

Pno.

mp

mf



The Minotaur

336

Brianna *mf*
goal and I've al-most reached it... what comes af - ter?

Minotaur
All my life I've been but-ting up to

336

Pno.

343

Minotaur
walls But I can-not breach them... I'm still trapped here

343

Pno. *mf*

346

Ariadne *mf*
I'm still trapped here what comes af - ter?

Brianna
what comes af - ter?

Minotaur
I'm still trapped here

346

Pno.

The Minotaur

354

Ariadne I have sha - ken loose all my ties to the

Minotaur I am tied to the

354

Pno. *fp*

359

Ariadne old world ex - cept my mo - ther's a - prom strings I've done my

Minotaur old world

359

Pno. *mf* *fp*

364

Ariadne best to ex - ist in my own right to make my free - dom worth those I sac - ri - ficed

Brianna I'm

Minotaur When I es - cape I'll do it right to make my free - dom worth those I sac - ri - ficed

364

Pno. *mf*



The Minotaur

369

Brianna

par - a - lyzed... —

Pno.

374

Ariadne

I won't be held back I won't

Brianna

I don't know how to act —

Minotaur

I'll dou-ble back

Pno.

378

Ariadne

be held down — I've made the most of ev - ery si - tu - a - tion life — has thrown And

Brianna

I don't know Which path to go down? I've made the most of ev - ery si - tu - a - tion life — has thrown And

Minotaur

Which path to go down? I've made the most of ev - ery si - tu - a - tion life — has thrown And

Pno.

The Minotaur

383 $\text{♩} = 95$

Ariadne $\text{I'm still stand-ing at the end of the day But I have learned when}$

Brianna $\text{I'm still stand-ing at the end of the day But I have learned in theo-ry I'm caged}$

Minotaur $\text{I'm still stand-ing at the end of the day}$

Pno.

386 $\text{♩} = 120$

Ariadne $\text{life picks up le-mons get the hell out of its way I won't}$

Brianna $\text{Which path to go down?}$

Minotaur $\text{Is this the way? Which path to go down?}$

Pno.

The Minotaur

♩ = 95

393 *f*

Ariadne be held down — What all — have I sac - ri - ficed?

Brianna What all — have I sac - ri - ficed?

Minotaur What all — have I sac - ri - ficed?

Pno. *sub. p*

399 *mf*

Ariadne I have learned

Brianna I have learned And kept on learn - ing — to keep from ha - ving to

Pno.

405 *mf*

Brianna choose

Minotaur I have turned and keep on turn - ing — but ne - ver get close to loose...

Pno.

The Minotaur

$\text{♩} = 60$

410

Minotaur

Ah — to be de-fined by the walls in your life. Ah, to be... al-ways in their

410

Pno.

p

415

Minotaur

shade...

415

Pno.

pp

[ARIADNE walks back over to where BRIANNA is]

ARIADNE: Sorry Brianna, I've gotta go

BRIANNA: What? *[gathering up her stuff and starting to stand]*
 You, the patron saint of loopholes, of doubling back,
 Of the impenetrable box and the widening crack
 Are telling me you can't wiggle out of whatever this is?

ARIADNE: At best I'm the patron saint of the indecisive.
 And no, my mother called--she says there **will be** a crisis?



The Minotaur

Scene 2

[ARIADNE and BRIANNA leave arm in arm. The MINOTAUR wanders further into the maze. The construction crew comes more to the forefront. Noisy and loud, conversation visible but not heard. We see the GREEK CHORUS members sneaking through the crew in disguise. They have spray-paint and spray a big X on the side of the Labyrinth. A bulldozer comes and knocks over the wall. The MINOTAUR comes running back up to the front at the sound. The crew see him and scatter screaming. The GREEK CHORUS runs to the side of the stage where PASIPHAE has different costumes for them--they take off the construction hats and take news crew indicators instead before running back on, joined by a few other newspeople.]

Foreboding ♩ = 150

Continue until Labyrinth is destroyed.

CRASH!

Confused, curious, and somewhat shell-shocked ♩ = 95

Pno.

418

mf

pp

mf

423

Pno.

p

429

Minotaur

In awe

What's this? There's a step to the left and I don't know where it

Pno.

The Minotaur

434

Minotaur

leads What's this? There's rub-ble in a-mongst the leaves I look a -

Pno.

438

Minotaur

round _____ and my world is na - ked _____ What's this? There's a sound and I did-n't

Pno.

mp

442

accl. $\text{♩} = 150$

Ariadne

Brianna

Pasiphae

Mel./Harm.

Newscaster

Minotaur

Pno.

p

(As Chorus) Scream, sigh, yell upon seeing the MINOTAUR for the first time

Ah _____ Ah _____

What's this? What's

What's this? What's

make it _____ Ah _____ Ah _____



The Minotaur

[MINOTAUR sees the NEWSPEOPLE. They freeze and go silent when he looks at them. The MINOTAUR is also shocked and silent for a moment. Everyone circles each other nervously for a moment before the MINOTAUR pulls himself together]

447

Ariadne

Brianna

Pasiphae

Mel./Harm.

Newscaster

Minotaur

Pno.

mp *f*

Ah

f (Harmonia only)

this? Ah

this? Ah

mp *f*

Ah

447

f

ten *

The Minotaur

(Melodia (as a bystander) shrieks and faints after the Minotaur steps toward her)

452

Mel./Harm.

Minotaur

mf freely and a little nervously

I'm gues-sing by the screams my rep - u - ta - tion pre - cedes me

Pno.

457

Minotaur

But that's no rea-son to skip the plea-san-tries Should I start with a Cre-tan greet-ing? _____

457

Pno.

mf

462

Minotaur

Sweet - er than an - y po-et ev - er wrote? _____

462

Pno.

The Minotaur

[The MINOTAUR starts towards someone with his hand out—they recoil]

Mel./Harm.

Minotaur

Pno.

467

Do we both bow? Or be - gin with a hand - shake No?

472

Minotaur

Pno.

I don't real - ly know — the pro - per et - i - quette I — was re - ver taught not

478

Minotaur

Pno.

— to bite at first sight Yes, that's a fault of mine. I make mis - takes some - times

The Minotaur

483 *rit.* $\text{♩} = 60$

Minotaur Af - ter all _____ I'm on - ly hu - man... on my mo - ther's side.

Pno.

488 $\text{♩} = 150$

Minotaur You're speech-less. Or do you lack speech? Have you ne-ver seen a

Pno.

493 $\text{♩} = 80$

Minotaur fam' - ly's black sheep? Have you ne-ver seen a cen - tu-ries old scape-goat?

Pno.

497 $\text{♩} = 80$

Minotaur Cat got your tongue? Frog in your throat?

Pno.

Spoken: Ohhh
You want to address the elephant in the room.
Why the long horns?
My dad had 'em, too.



The Minotaur

[NEWSCASTER pushes their way to the front]

503 **mf**

Newscaster

Spoken: Quit your mooing
And all your self-pitying boohooing
Look at it from our point of view:

When a mon-ster just ap-pears what are we sup-posed to do,

Pno.

507

Newscaster

Wel-come it with o-pen arms? Tell me should we o-pen up our homes to you, or our barns?

Pno.

511 **mf**

Minotaur

I have no-thing more to say — to — you then if you can't e-ven see me as hu-man. I'm

Pno.

mf

The Minotaur

515

Minotaur

sick of be-ing stuck in a box from the neck up caught and kept sep'-rate from my -

Pno.

accel. ----- ♩ = 100

517

Minotaur

self as if I'm no-thing. — I'm more than a ma-chine made to

Pno.

520

Minotaur

kill and kill and kill — I would e-rase my past could I will it gone. But what's done is done... Is there a

Pno.

The Minotaur

♩ = 60

524 Minotaur

way to move on?

Spoken: I may be bull-headed, headstrong, strong as a bull
I may be woolly-headed, head in the clouds, or stubborn as a mule
You don't know me

Pno.

pp

527 Newscaster

♩ = 85 *mf* Rapped

Spoken: And we don't need to

Lis-ten I'm a

Pno.

530 Newscaster

pun - dit, I can speak in puns too and let me tell you, It's a zoo out there. There's

Pno.

mf

532 Newscaster

plen - ty to fear... and you're on - ly part of it. You want to pin our an - i - mus on your an - i - mal?

Pno.

The Minotaur



Mel./Harm. *p* 534 The Min-o-taur is an - gry gets

Newscaster 534 That's just the start of it. Like I said I'm a pun-dit, I can speak in puns too and let me

Pno. 534

Mel./Harm. *mf* 537 an - gri - er the more you talk. All these

Newscaster 537 tell you, It's a zoo out there. Ev-ry crea-ture that is e - vil comes from man-kind. You're

Pno. 537

Mel./Harm. 539 years he's been forced to walk and walk and walk

Newscaster 539 walk - ing on two legs with a fore - head that Cain signed.

Pno. 539

The Minotaur

Mel./Harm. ⁵⁴¹ He's just a boy, a lit-tle hir-sute.
And now you want to run him once more in cir-cles.

Pno. ⁵⁴¹

Mel./Harm. ⁵⁴⁴ man walk-ing a-round in a fur-suit.

Newscaster ⁵⁴⁴ You think you're cle-ver, huh?

Minotaur ⁵⁴⁴ Spoken: I'm not two halves you can separate out
into a good or a bad thing.
I'm just me.
I'm already cow-tipped,
I don't like being pigeon-holed.

Pno. ⁵⁴⁴

Mel./Harm. ⁵⁴⁷ The Min-o-taur is an-gry The Min-o-taur feels all a-

Minotaur ⁵⁴⁷ Gods give me the maze back.

Pno. ⁵⁴⁷

The Minotaur

550

Mel./Harm. *lone*

Minotaur *Gods give me the maze back. I may be bored of the paths*

Pno.

553

Newscaster *O - kay, you want to have your say,*

Minotaur *but at least they're safe from at - tack.*

Pno. *p*

555

Newscaster *State your case, go for it. There's a cam-'ra in your face, no bet-ter time for it.*

Minotaur

Pno. *f*

The musical score is written for three parts: Mel./Harm., Minotaur, and Pno. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into three systems, each starting with a measure number (550, 553, 555). The first system (550) features a vocal line for the Minotaur with lyrics 'Gods give me the maze back. I may be bored of the paths' and a piano accompaniment. The second system (553) features a vocal line for the Newscaster with lyrics 'O - kay, you want to have your say,' and a vocal line for the Minotaur with lyrics 'but at least they're safe from at - tack.' The piano accompaniment includes a dynamic marking of *p*. The third system (555) features a vocal line for the Newscaster with lyrics 'State your case, go for it. There's a cam-'ra in your face, no bet-ter time for it.' and a piano accompaniment with a dynamic marking of *f*. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and articulation marks.



The Minotaur

Sincerely $\text{♩} = 60$ *mf*

Minotaur 559 Hel - lo _____ to a world I've nev - er

Pno. 559 *mp*

Minotaur 565 seen _____ and would-n't know how to ap - peal to _____ Hel -

Pno. 565

Minotaur 571 lo _____ to hu - man - i - ty that's nev - er been more than a meal to me

Pno. 571

Minotaur 577 You broke me out You knocked my home down You broke me out of pri - son but it's the

Pno. 577 *mf*

The Minotaur

Minotaur 582 *f*
 on - ly one I've ev - er known Now where am I sup - posed to go? The walk - ways aren't laid out

Pno. 582

Minotaur 587 *mf* *mp*
 No one has built the next route for me. I'm lost,

Pno. 587 *mp*

Minotaur 593 *mf*
 Spoken: More than I've ever been, even when labyrinth. Here are my hands Palm up and hu - man like the

Pno. 593

Minotaur 599
 most of me. Look at my eyes, li - quid and lashed like your own.

Pno. 599



The Minotaur

Minotaur

605

How do you ac-know-ledge on - ly the an-i-mal in me?

Pno.

605

Pno.

610

$\text{♩} = 80$

f Like a news station theme

Pno.

613

pp

NEWSCASTER: You heard it here first, folks

[hits the play button on his recording device, the MINOTAUR's voice comes out singing an edited version of his words]:

The screams in your throat
a sweeter greeting
than any poet ever wrote
I was taught to bite
I was caught and kept to kill
And kill I have and kill I will
Look at my eyes, I have animal in me

The Minotaur

[a crowd starts to gather as they hear NEWSCASTER's broadcast, some of them carry signs with anti-Minotaur sentiment]

MINOTAUR: That's not what I said!

NEWSCASTER: But you said all those words

MINOTAUR: Well it's not who I am.

$\text{♩} = 150$ *f* *[advancing on the MINOTAUR as he retreats]*

616

Newscaster

Have you eat - en peo - ple? Are your horns sharp? Are your arms strong? Could your bo - dy harm?

Minotaur

mf

Yes. Yes. Yes, but

616

Pno.

620

Mel./Harm.

The Min - o - taur does - n't know what you want from him. He's used to dead ends, but not

Newscaster

Spoken: Have you robbed parents of their children?

Minotaur

620

Pno.

p

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 616-619) features Newscaster's vocal line in treble clef with lyrics: "Have you eat - en peo - ple? Are your horns sharp? Are your arms strong? Could your bo - dy harm?". The Minotaur's response is in bass clef: "Yes. Yes. Yes, but". The piano accompaniment (Pno.) is in grand staff, starting with a forte (f) dynamic. The second system (measures 620-623) features a Mel./Harm. line in treble clef with lyrics: "The Min - o - taur does - n't know what you want from him. He's used to dead ends, but not". The Newscaster's line is in treble clef with the spoken line: "Spoken: Have you robbed parents of their children?". The Minotaur's line is in bass clef. The piano accompaniment (Pno.) is in grand staff, starting with a piano (p) dynamic.

The Minotaur

Mel./Harm. 624 push - ing past ob - sta - cles.

Newscaster

Minotaur

Pno. 624 *f*

[The MINOTAUR has been backing away from both the NEWSCASTER and the GREEK CHORUS, perhaps with a backdrop/projection of the Labyrinth in the background. A doorway reading The Halfway House for the Mythically-Challenged is pushed out on stage right. The MINOTAUR gets cornered up against it.]

NEWSCASTER *[gesturing to the growing crowd of onlookers]*: A fringe group calls for your beheading, do you have any retorts?

[The MINOTAUR, overwhelmed and feeling trapped, covers his ears and screams/roars before fumbling for the knob behind him and disappearing into the safety of the Halfway House, slamming the door behind him and disappearing offstage. The NEWSCASTER turns to face the audience.]

Mel./Harm. 626

Newscaster *f* The Min-o-taur — is vio-lent, the news re-ports.

Minotaur

Pno. 626 *ff*

Appendix B: The Workshop Program⁵¹

⁵¹ Program for *Horned & Hidden Child Workshop*, Knoxville, 2022.



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

VoLOpera Workshop

Tuesday, May 3, 2022 at 6 p.m.

Sandra G. Powell Recital Hall

Natalie L. Haslam Music Center

HORNED & HIDDEN CHILD

AN OPERA IN 2 ACTS

music by

MIKEILA MCQUESTON

libretto by

NICOLE YACKLEY

Spring 2022

Workshop

NOTES

From the Director...

Welcome to VoiOpera's workshop of *Horned and Hidden Child*, composed by my dear friend Mikella McQuestion. It has been a great privilege of mine to help bring this story to life! The story and the music feel excitingly fresh and are immediately accessible to modern audiences. As a director, I aimed to fuse the rich mythological traditions of ancient Greece with the familiarity of the present. Though this workshop will focus only on the prologue, scene 1 and scene 2, I hope you'll get a good feel for the rest of the opera. I'd like to thank the whole cast for their hard work and dedication, and I'd like to express my gratitude to Mikella for trusting me to give her baby its stage legs. With all that said, please, sit back and enjoy these talented undergraduate students performing *Horned and Hidden Child*!

-Christine Alfano

From the Composer...

It was 2019, I was a week out from being a composer-performer fellow at the Nief-Norf Summer Festival, and I had just chunked my entire manuscript and project proposal. In my search for new inspiration, I was introduced to Nicole Yackley and her MFA thesis: a beautiful, witty collection of poems entitled *Zoo-Keeping and Other Human-Bull Sh*t*. Her reinterpretation of the Minotaur from a black-and-white monster into a sage and sensitive soul captured my attention immediately. With her permission, I set the first two poems into a chamber piece entitled *The Minotaur*. It premiered at the festival that summer, went on to win the Constantinides New Music Ensemble Call for Scores, and made a successful Carnegie Hall debut in April (last month!). Still, I wanted to dive deeper into the stories and characters Nicole had created.

At its heart, *Horned & Hidden Child* examines the nature of stories - what stories do we choose to tell about ourselves and others? And what are the consequences of those stories?

Nicole, I am deeply grateful to you for sharing your story of the Minotaur (Asterius), Pasiphae, Ariadne, and Brianna. It has been the most challenging compositions I have ever endeavored to write, but it has also been one of my favorites. Thank you to Dr. Andrew Sigler for your continued feedback on the score and libretto, and to Christine, Karen, Hunter, and all the performers for bringing this project to life. Last but not least, thank you to my family for your constant support.

-Mikella McQuestion

HORNED & HIDDEN CHILD

AN OPERA IN 2 ACTS

music by

MIKEILA MCQUESTON

libretto by

NICOLE YACKLEY

cover art adapted from the "Traquair House Maze"

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VolOpera Presents

**HORNED & HIDDEN CHILD
(WORKSHOP EDITION)**

Tuesday, May 3, 2022 at 6:00 pm

Sandra G. Powell Recital Hall

Natalie L. Haslam Music Center

Composed by Mikeila McQueston

Directed by Christine Alfano

Libretto by Nicole Yackley

Conducted by Hunter Wilburn

CAST

The Minotaur	Jacob Altmann
Pasiphae	Teyah Young
Ariadne	Karen Wernhoener
Brianna	Amanda Fintak
Newscaster	Hannah Cipriana
Melodia	Vivian Hirst
Harmonia	Evelyn Spencer
Greek Chorus	Megan Cox
	Faith Nevarez
	Claudia Schorr

ORCHESTRA

Flute	Chloe Upshaw
Clarinet	Alberto Martinez
Percussion	Turner McCabe
Violin 1	Mei Lia White
Violin 2	Hayden Daniel
Viola	Jeremy Simmons
Cello	Joel Rosen
Rehearsal Pianist	Dustin Lin

VOLOPERA LEADERSHIP

President	Karen Wemhoener
Vice-President	Jacob Altrock
Faculty Sponsor	Dr. Kimberly Roberts

Additional thanks to:

Chris Jerger

University of Tennessee Opera Theatre

SYNOPSIS (WORKSHOPPED MATERIALS ONLY)

ACT I

Prologue

Pasiphae plots the release of her son the Minotaur with the Greek Chorus and laments their painful history.

Scene 1

The Minotaur wanders the labyrinth, wondering if there will be more to life than walls and dead ends. Ariadne and Brianna meet for coffee, but each is distracted: Brianna by the pressures of academia, Ariadne by the overbearing presence of her mother, Pasiphae, and the others who've dictated her life choices. Each contemplates their control over their own futures.

Scene 2

The Greek Chorus, disguised as a construction crew, tears down the walls of the labyrinth. The media swarm, and one hungry Newscaster twists the Minotaur's words, painting him as a monstrous creature. The Minotaur eloquently pleads his case but is ultimately overwhelmed by the negative press and runs away.

“WHAT COMES AFTER?”

ACT I

The Minotaur escapes to the Halfway House for the Mythically Challenged, seeking solitude, despite the Greek Chorus' attempts to break in and narrate his inner monologue. Soon after, the Therapist issues approval for him to be released into the custody of his mother, Pasiphae.

Ariadne tries to connect with her brother by taking him out dancing, but tensions bubble over. Pasiphae is infuriated to see her children connecting without her. Meanwhile, the family learns of a fringe group spreading anti-Minotaur sentiment led by Ariadne's friend Karen. The Minotaur runs away once more.

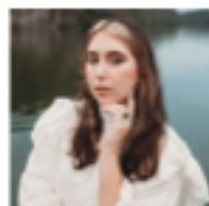
ACT II

Ariadne is now being pursued by the Greek Chorus and the Newscaster, who narrate her inner monologue and twist her words. When the Minotaur also emerges, they advance on him threateningly, but Pasiphae protects them.

Meanwhile, Brianna finally submits her dissertation and asks Ariadne to help plan a “monster” masquerade. Ariadne agrees, figuring she can also use this to apologize to the Minotaur. At the masquerade, Ariadne sets up Brianna and the Minotaur. They are surprised by how easily they connect and find the strength to tell off the Greek Chorus when it starts narrating their inner monologues. Left without their usual target, the Greek Chorus finds Karen stirring up trouble, and assumes her into the group as punishment for falsifying stories about others.

After the masquerade, the Minotaur and Brianna return to the ruins of the labyrinth and recognize how far they have come in their respective journeys. Pasiphae and Ariadne join just as the Newscaster arrives on the scene to everyone's horror. Fortunately, they come in peace, and offer the Minotaur the last word.

CAST & CREATIVE TEAM



Christine Alfano



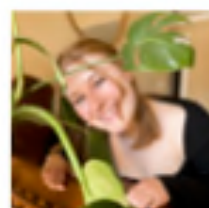
Jacob Altrock



Hannah Cipriana



Megan Cox



Amanda Fintak



Vivian Hirst



Mikella McQueston



Faith Nevarez



Claudia Schorr



Evelyn Spencer



Karen Wemhoener



Hunter Wilburn



Nicole Yackley



Teyah Young

BIOS

CHRISTINE ALFANO, DIRECTOR

Christine Alfano is currently a second-year MM Voice Performance student at the University of Tennessee. This UT Opera Theatre season, she sang Rosalinde in Strauss II's *Die Fledermaus* and Zweite Dame in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. She also appeared in Bolto's *Meisterspiele* and in opera outreach events with the Knoxville Opera. Christine is also active as a director and will be making her international debut this summer in Vienna with the new opera *Pluto* by Michael Polo. While in Vienna, she will also be assistant directing Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and *Le Nozze di Figaro*. Last season, she assistant directed *Hänsel und Gretel* and *La Bohème* at the Vienna Summer Music Festival, *The Rake's Progress* at Lakes Area Music Festival, and was the directing intern at Druid City Opera and the production intern at Marble City Opera.

JACOB ALTROCK, THE MINOTAUR

Baritone Jacob Altrock is a sophomore majoring in vocal performance. Born and raised in Memphis, TN, Jacob's recent credits include the role of Frank in UTOT's *Die Fledermaus* and recitals with VolOpera. He has received the NATS semi-finalist award with NSA eligibility and the Haslam Scholar Award. He currently serves as the Vice President of VolOpera.

HANNAH CIPRIANA, THE NEWSCASTER

Soprano Hannah Cipriana is from Las Vegas, NV, and is currently a sophomore majoring in Vocal Performance. Recent credits include chorus in UTOT's production of *Die Fledermaus* and a Spirit in their production of *The Magic Flute*.

MEGAN COX, GREEK CHORUS

Megan is a senior studying Animal Science with a minor in French. This production proudly marks her operatic debut! In her spare time, she enjoys drawing, learning languages, and caring for her cat, dog, and 9 plants—as well as watching opera, of course! She is excited to be a part of this talented group and to share such gems with her friends.

BIOS

AMANDA FINTAK, BRIANNA

Amanda Fintak is from Seymour, TN and is a Junior Music Education major at UTK. She has performed in VolOpera's *Aria Night*, *Night of German Art Songs*, and *Love & Nature Art Songs*. She will be debuting the role of Brianna in Mikella McQueston's original opera *Homed & Hidden Child*.

VIVIAN HIRST, MELODIA

Soprano Vivian Hirst is from Nashville TN, and is a freshman majoring in vocal performance. Recent credits include UTOT's production of *Die Fledermaus*. This is her first year participating in VolOpera.

MIKEILA MCQUESTON, COMPOSER

Mikella McQueston is a composer and soprano who delights in storytelling and the capacity of the human voice. Regularly commissioned and performed across the United States, her works have recently been featured at the WUTM Choral Festival, the UT Contemporary Music Festival, the Tutti Festival, and at Carnegie Hall. In 2022, Mikella was named one of the National Opera Association's first Dominick Argento Fellows in Opera Composition. She has also been honored as a Presser Scholar and a Herman E. Spivey Fellow, and placed 2nd in the 2021 American Prize for Composition (Choral Student Division).

FAITH NEVAREZ, GREEK CHORUS

Faith Nevarez is from Amarillo, Texas. A first-year student with a vocal performance major, her musical background comes from her lovely mother Lauren Colleen Nevarez who is a lyrical soprano. Faith has done opera since she was 10 years old and will continue to pursue music for the rest of her life. Recent performances include *Evita* being in the ensemble with The Amarillo Opera, *La Traviata* being an assistant manager with the Amarillo Opera, *The Magic Flute* with UTOT playing the role of the third spirit, and she recently just finished the production of *Die Fledermaus* having a chorus role also with UTOT Opera. She plans on continuing to perform and looks forward to working with Knoxville Opera next year!

BIOS

CLAUDIA SCHORR, GREEK CHORUS

Claudia Schorr is a first-year soprano from Nashville, Tennessee. She was in UTOT's recent production of *Die Fledermaus* and is a member of Women of UT Music.

EVELYN SPENCER, HARMONIA

Soprano Evelyn Spencer lives full-time in Knoxville and is a sophomore Vocal Music Education and Music and Culture double major. Recently, she has been a part of the chorus of UTOT's *Die Fledermaus* and has been involved in VolOpera for her entire time at UT.

KAREN WEMHOENER, ARIADNE

Karen Wemhoener is a soprano currently pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Vocal Performance with a minor in Composition at the University of Tennessee. Born in Dallas, Texas, Karen began singing and performing with the Dallas Opera at 10 years old. Most recently, Karen has performed as Adele in *Die Fledermaus* and First Lady in *The Magic Flute* with UT Opera Theatre. Her recent awards include first place at the National Student Auditions in 2019. Composing has become a more recent part of her musical journey, and her piece *Faces* was recently published in Volume 1 of *Modern Music for New Singers for Soprano*. Karen is looking forward to graduating in the Spring of 2022 and is excited for future opportunities to come.

HUNTER WILBURN, CONDUCTOR

Hunter Wilburn is a violinist from Signal Mountain, Tennessee. He currently attends the University of Tennessee-Knoxville and majors in violin performance. Hunter currently studies with Dr. Evie Chen. His previous teachers include Dr. Josh Holitz (Associate Concertmaster of the Chattanooga Symphony) and Dr. Geoffrey Herd. Throughout the year, Hunter plays in the University of Tennessee Symphony Orchestra and Opera Orchestra. He is also a founding member of the Knoxville Repertory Orchestra. Hunter's musical studies have resulted in summer experiences at Sewanee Summer Music Festival and Bay View Music Festival. After completing his undergraduate degree, Hunter will attend the University of Tennessee Knoxville where he will pursue a graduate degree in orchestral conducting.

BIOS

NICOLE YACKLEY, LIBRETTIST

Nicole Yackley is a poet and artist from GA. Her work has been published in *Bellevue Magazine*, *Sunset Liminal*, and the *Phoenix Literary Arts Magazine*, among others. Her earlier collaboration with Mikella McQuestion was recently performed at Carnegie Hall. She has a BA in English from UGA and an MFA in Poetry from UTK. More of her poetry can be found at nicoleyackley.com.

TEYAH YOUNG, PASIPHAË

Soprano Teyah Young hails from Collierville, TN, and is a sophomore majoring in voice performance. Recent credits include chorus in UTOT's production of *Die Fledermaus*, chorus in Marble City Opera's production of *I Can't Breathe*, and one of the 3 spirits in UTOT's production of *Die Zauberflöte*.



VITA

Knoxville-based composer and soprano Mikeila McQueston strives to write accessible and engaging music which emphasizes music's rich capacity for storytelling. Her compositions have been performed across the United States and in Europe, including at Carnegie Hall, the Nief-Norf Festival, the University of Tennessee Contemporary Music Festival, the TUTTI Festival, the Operability Micro Opera Festival, and the Uuden Musikiin Lokakuu in Finland. In 2022 Mikeila was selected by the National Opera Association as a Dominick Argento Fellow in Opera Composition. She was also 1 of 4 composers selected for an international masterclass with Kaija Saariaho and 1 of 10 composers selected for the National Association of Teachers of Singing's Mentoring Program for Composers. Mikeila has won numerous call-for-scores and was awarded 2nd Place in the American Prize in Composition for both her opera *Aurelia* and her choral work *Descent*.

Mikeila received her BM in Composition and Vocal Performance with a history minor from Louisiana State University. She is currently pursuing double MM degrees in Composition and Vocal Performance at the University of Tennessee, where she is a Herman E. Spivey Humanities Fellow and Theory/Composition Graduate Teaching Assistant. *Horned & Hidden Child* is her third opera.