

 NASHVILLE  
OPERA



**HERCULES**  
**VS**  
**VAMPIRES**

# NASHVILLE OPERA

## HERCULES VS VAMPIRES

An opera composed by Patrick Morganelli  
Developed in collaboration with LA Opera  
Premiere April 23, 2015, LA Opera

**JANUARY 27, 2018**

Jackson Hall, Tennessee Performing Arts Center

Directed by John Hoomes  
Conducted by Kelly Corcoran\*  
Featuring the Nashville Opera Orchestra

### CAST

Hercules	Conor McDonald*†
Lycos	Jeffrey Williams
Theseus	Brian Skoog*†
Medea / Zarathusa / Chained Woman / Helena	Emily Tweedy*†
Persephone	Allison Deady*†
God of Evil/Procrustes	David Young*
Dianara / Hesperide / City Woman / Peasant Woman	Melissa Shippen*
Telemachus / City Man / Palace Attendant	Andrew Morstein*
Henchman / Kyros / Peasant Man	Jordan Holland*

\* Nashville Opera debut

† Mary Ragland Emerging Artist

### TICKETS & INFORMATION

Contact Nashville Opera at 615.832.5242 or visit [nashvilleopera.org](http://nashvilleopera.org).

#### *Study Guide Contributors*

Anna Young, Education Director  
Cara Schneider, Creative Director



THE JUDY & NOAH  
LIFF FOUNDATION

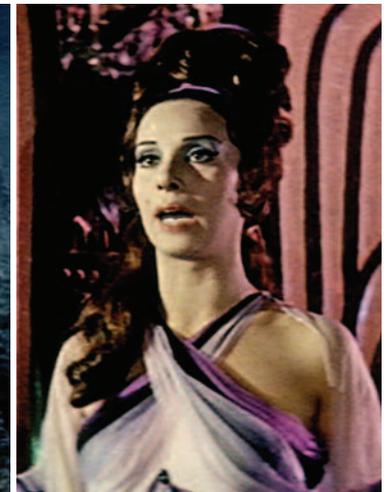
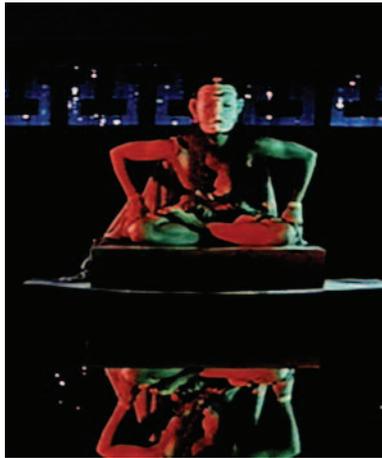


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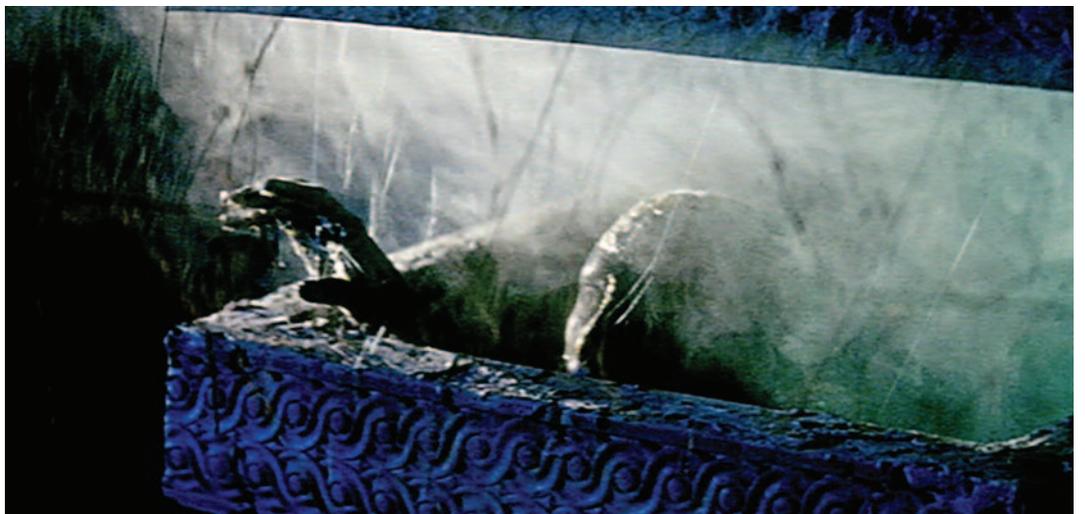
# THE STORY

*Hercules versus Vampires* is a thrilling film score meant to be performed live as a companion to the 1961 Italian sword-and-sandal film, *Hercules and the Haunted World*, directed by Mario Brava. The tale involves the legendary Hercules who finds out his lover, Princess Dianara, has been placed under a spell. According to an Oracle, the Princess's only hope is the power of a magic stone hidden deep within the Underworld. Hercules embarks on a journey alongside his friend Theseus to retrieve this stone and save his love. Meanwhile, he is unaware that Dianara's guardian, King Lycos, is actually allied with the Underworld and is the one responsible for the spell. After an epic battle, Hercules defeats Lycos, and all is saved!



## Screens from the movie:

Medea the Oracle  
Theseus and Persephone  
Lycos and Dianara  
Zarathusa  
The Vampires



# LISTEN FOR THIS!

## Tone clusters!

At the start of the performance, the entire company of singers provide an atmospheric, eerie effect by singing tone clusters. Tone or pitch clusters occur when multiple adjacent notes are sung or played at the same time. This technique dates back as early as Scott Joplin's ragtime music and became more well-known through the music of 20th-century composer Charles Ives, who delighted in experimenting with new techniques and sounds. The tone or pitch clusters in this score direct the singers to randomly pick notes within a specific range or area of their voices! These effects provide the perfect segue to our first scene which takes place in the villainous Lycos' palace. Listen for tone clusters throughout the performance and notice the dramatic tension they provide.

## Clear text and dramatic effects!

The libretto of the score comes from the original film. Careful consideration has been given to the natural rhythmic patterns of the text making sure the sung dialogue is clear and easily understood.

Morganelli also capitalizes on a great range of dynamics to highlight the drama of the story. The score is rich with crescendos in which the music begins with a soft dynamic and blooms to thrilling climaxes. Film scores depend on these kinds of contrasts to support the drama and depict the exciting twists and turns of the plot.

## The character of the voice.

*Hercules versus Vampire* uses a large cast of vocalists and most cast members sing multiple roles. Operatic composers have a specific color or timbre in mind when they decide to cast a character with a certain voice type. This score is a great example of how different kinds of voices are traditionally cast to aid in storytelling. For example, our villainous Lycos, the Rock Monster, and God of Evil use the bass-baritone voice type because the deep, dramatic nature of that sound helps to emphasize those characters. Basses and bass-baritones are notorious for playing villains such as Méphistophélès in Gounod's *Faust*, Nick Shadow in Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*, and Sparafucile in Verdi's *Rigoletto*.

Dianara, our romantic lead, is cast with a lush, lyric soprano. Lyric sopranos have a warm, robust sound and often play the part of the central female. These sopranos sing roles such as Mimi in *La Bohème* and the title character in *Madame Butterfly*.

Although many opera composers use the tenor voice to portray the lead male, Morganelli has cast the hero Hercules with a baritone voice. The overall color is not as dark as a bass and still lends itself to an easy high register providing an exciting heroic sound. Baritones have also enjoyed title roles in famous operas such as Verdi's *Rigoletto* and Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.

The character of Medea, a relation to the mythological sun-god Helios, is cast with a lighter, coloratura soprano. Medea's music contains showy passages and extreme high notes which help portray a superhuman quality. Coloratura sopranos often portray bigger-than-life characters. Other examples include the Queen of the Night in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and Olympia the mechanical doll in Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffman*.

## FUN FACTS

The actor Reg Park, who portrays Hercules, did all of his own stunts due to his unmatched massive frame. (There were no Italian stunt men big enough to double him!)

*Hercules versus Vampires* is Morganelli's first operatic endeavor.

Morganelli adapted the libretto from the movie, composed the score and all of the orchestration alone.

*Hercules versus Vampires* has been produced and performed by Los Angeles Opera, Arizona Opera, Opera Theater of Oregon, and now Nashville Opera.

**HERCULES  
VS  
VAMPIRES**



# ABOUT THE COMPOSER

PATRICK MORGANELLI

Composer Patrick Morganelli holds degrees in music from both California State University Northridge and the USC Thornton School of Music where he studied piano with Daniel Pollack and composition with Frederick Lesemann and Tamar Diesendruck, graduating with distinction. He also holds a postgraduate certificate in scoring for motion pictures and television from USC, where he was the first recipient of the prestigious Joe Harnell Memorial Scholarship.

Morganelli composed the music and adapted the text for *Hercules versus Vampires*

which combines opera and midcentury pop culture, synchronizing live music with the cult fantasy film *Hercules in the Haunted World*, a

1961 sword-and-sandal epic directed by legendary Italian director Mario Bava and starring Reg Park (a three-time Mr. Universe) and horror icon Christopher Lee. The premiere of the revised version of

*Hercules versus Vampires* was given by LA Opera on their main stage at the

Dorothy Chandler Pavilion of the Los Angeles Music Center in April of 2015, including a cast of 10

singers from the Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist Program and a 26-piece orchestra conducted by

Christopher Allen, presented in association with

American Cinematheque and the Italian Cultural Institute of Los Angeles. In October

2016 *Hercules versus Vampires* was produced by North Carolina Opera in Raleigh Durham, conducted this time by Shawn Galvin, again to great success and acclaim.

Critics have lauded Morganelli's work in film and television as being uniquely evocative and haunting in a way that persists long after the music has ended. He has worked with filmmakers such as Academy Award nominee Randall Wallace and composers Christopher Young and Michael Giacchino. In 2014 he was invited by the Yosemite Conservancy to become an artist-in-residence there in 2015, and he recently was selected to be featured on the California State University San Bernardino Distinguished Artist Series.

In addition to his work in film, television, and opera, he also is active in the world of concert music. Recent commissions include a violin concerto for Washington-based violinist Xi Chen and a large work for solo piano. His song cycle *Songs of Late Summer* for mezzo-soprano and orchestra will premiere in 2018, and he is currently in development on a new opera.

He lives and works in Los Angeles.



Anna Webber

# PATRICK MORGANELLI ON HERCULES

## **How did HERCULES VS VAMPIRES come to be?**

*Hercules vs Vampires* was a commissioned work for a small and very adventurous opera company in Portland called Opera Theater Oregon. They were the ones that came up with the idea to use Mario Bava's film *Hercules in the Haunted World* (as the film is known in America) as the basis for an opera, and in fact their selection of a film by director Mario Bava (and their selection of that specific film) is what attracted me to the project. I'd actually seen the film, and I was aware of the amazing visuals and the operatic possibilities of the story, so overflowing with extreme emotions and story lines.

Opera Theater Oregon actually considered a number of composers for the commission, and I was just lucky enough to be the one that they selected. This was in September of 2009.

The version which Nashville audiences will experience was premiered by LA Opera in April 2015. This version is substantially different from the original version in Portland, largely because LA Opera made available a larger orchestra.

## **How did Bava's original film influence your composition?**

One of the most striking aspects of Bava's art as a filmmaker was his amazing visual sense, which he developed as a cinematographer before becoming a director. This film is an excellent example of his art, with so many scenes that are vivid, rich, and really engrossing, set within a blazing color palette of early-1960s hyper-saturated Technicolor and an amazing anamorphic widescreen format, all of which are incredible for a film that clearly was made on a very small budget.

Naturally, this visual presentation is inspiring to a composer, and when coupled with a story that encompasses love, betrayal, violence, courage, and the supernatural many ideas begin to present themselves. In particular, the scenes in Hades have to be seen to be believed.

## **What was the compositional process like?**

When I began the project, I assumed that the task of writing the opera would be more or less equivalent to scoring a feature film, and as I had done plenty of those I didn't anticipate any big issues. I was very sadly mistaken about that! Though I'd loved opera my whole life it had never occurred to me that I would one day compose one and I was ignorant of the very substantial challenges of the art form. And I had little experience with writing for the human voice.

I quickly found out that it was going to be much more complicated than I'd anticipated. Fortunately, I had access to several friends who had spent decades working with opera and the voice and I'm greatly in their debt for the help they supplied.

The process itself was basically similar to scoring a film, except that the degree of complexity was much higher because of the need to synchronize the music with the mouth movements of the characters instead of a few major moments on screen. For example, instead of having perhaps three or four hit points in a three-minute section of music there might be ten times that many.

## **What was it like to write the libretto for this type of piece?**

This, too, was no simple matter. The process began with transcribing the dialogue from the print of the film that we were using.

This particular film exists in a number of versions, depending on which country it was being sent to. The print we use was actually the British print of the film, titled *Hercules in the Center of the Earth*, which is an exact translation of the Italian title *Ercole al Centro della Terra*.

Once I'd transcribed the dialogue I had to rewrite it so that it would be more singable, which in this case means making the words conform better to musical phrases and generally telling the story in fewer words. That last part is important, as I did not want to make this into 74 minutes of recitative to accommodate all of the words!

## **How do composing for opera and composing for film compare?**

Both art forms are about storytelling, and under the best of circumstances everything the audience sees and hears serves that purpose above all others.

## **Without giving anything away, what's your favorite part of the movie (or perhaps, opera)?**

Of course, I do have a few favorites! I do like the two scenes between Hercules and Medea the Oracle, the fight between Hercules and Procrustes, Persephone's farewell scene, and the grand battle between Hercules and the forces of evil at the end.

## **What should audience members expect? Anything they should look out or listen for?**

I hope that audiences will approach *Hercules vs Vampires* with as few preconceptions as possible and simply look, listen, and decide for themselves.

Many people assume that I wrote this as a way to mock the admittedly modest production values of the film, and I'd like to put that idea to rest. My intention was to bring the same spirit to the opera that I believe Mario Bava brought to the film, namely, to tell an adventure story as well as it could be told within the limitations of what he had to work with. Having said that, however, there will be many places in the work where the audience will laugh at things that, to our eyes in 2017, are hard to take seriously. I encourage the audience to enjoy themselves!

## **You're coming to Nashville to see the production! What's on the must-see/do list while you're here?**

This will in fact be my first visit to Nashville and I'm incredibly excited! Unfortunately, I expect to be quite busy while I'm in town with the opera, but if I get some time of course I'd love to visit the Country Music Hall of Fame and the Musician's Hall of Fame. In all likelihood those will have to be deferred to a later visit, but at a bare minimum I'm looking forward to seeing a little of the town, having some great food and drink and making new friends.

# EARS WIDE OPEN

INSIGHTS FROM  
HERCULES' CONDUCTOR  
**KELLY CORCORAN**

## How do you prepare to conduct a new piece?

It's always important to understand the language, influences and context of each unique composer. One of the great things about conducting new works is getting to know new composers. I spend lots of time alone with the score—noting the structure, pacing, colors, and harmonies. Once I arrive at the first rehearsal, I like to have an understanding of the potential and scope of a work—the details and why they matter—and also remain open to that which can be discovered in each moment.

## You've done live orchestra and film experiences before. In terms of preparation and technique, how do these differ from more conventional staged pieces?

When synching between live musicians and screen media there is often either a click-track or a clock to use as a tool for synchronization. For *Hercules* we'll use a click and a monitor with measure numbers to confirm the alignment. It's very different from conducting without a click, since you need to stay within its rhythmic structure and cannot take spontaneous liberties with the tempo. As a result of that consistent element, it can be a great exercise in musical exploration—still shaping, growing and connecting lyrically within a fixed rhythmic structure. It's a fun experience to balance the jobs of staying with the click and screen and guiding the musicians to play at the exact right moment while also leading a musical, inspiring, alive performance.

## You are the founder and director of Intersection. Tell us about this collective.

Intersection is a flexible contemporary music ensemble dedicated to re-imagining

the concert experience, supporting living composers, and embracing collaboration, the avant-garde, and cultural diversity. Through live performances, Contempo Kids (teaching music creation and composition), and our many partners, we expand and shift the perspectives of audiences and musicians of all ages and build community through new music experiences. Our mantra is EARS WIDE OPEN! We're in our fourth season and proud to be a part of the arts community in Nashville.

## How would you define the creative climate of Nashville?

Collaboration! Nashville is a place where artists understand the value of working together and the exciting things that can happen when we come together. That's been a central part of the work of Intersection—to explore what happens when diverse, talented musicians and artists come together to create relevant, meaningful work. Nashville is growing rapidly and so is the arts scene and creative climate. This is a city where things are possible and there remain lots of opportunities; the future is bright! Plus, I believe the creative climate and the arts are central to the strength and vibrancy of our city. By supporting the arts we can ensure Nashville will continue to thrive.

## Why should people come see *HERCULES VS VAMPIRES*?

*Hercules* will be fun, unique, entertaining and musically rewarding! It's a great opportunity to experience music and opera in a new way. I'm looking forward to it!



Bill Steber and Pat Casey Daley



# A SOUND ANATOMY OF OPERA

There are many different kinds of songs in opera. Performers may sing alone, in couples (duets), trios, or larger groups, and there are also moments when no one sings at all—and each composer develops his or her own preferred combinations of these options.

## THE OVERTURE

An opera usually begins with an orchestral piece of music called the overture, which functions as an introduction to the opera. Lasting anywhere from five to twenty-five minutes, these opera overtures usually contain important themes from the rest of the production. Before 1800, house lights were not dimmed while the overture played, and audience members continued to talk, drink, and even play cards! This ceased in the 1900's as the overture became a more integral part of an operatic performance. At the end of the overture, the curtain rises and the story of the opera unfolds through a series of scenes. These scenes are organized into acts.

## ARIAS

An aria is a solo moment for an opera singer and is usually accompanied by the orchestra. Italian for “air” or song, an aria stops the plot momentarily, giving each character the opportunity to express their innermost thoughts and feelings. These pieces also provide an opportunity for the singer to demonstrate their vocal and artistic skill. Mozart, Verdi and Puccini were able to achieve a remarkable balance between memorable melodies that perfectly suit the human voice while still reflecting the drama of the text.

## RECITATIVES

Recitatives, a type of singing unique to opera, help propel the action forward. They can be accompanied either by a full orchestra, or, as is often the case with opera written before 1800, by harpsichord or keyboard instrument. Often introducing an aria, the text is delivered quickly and encompasses a very limited melodic range. It has no recognizable melody and the rhythms follow those of the spoken word.

## ENSEMBLE (“TOGETHER”)

Ensemble singing deals with two or more voices of different range performing together. These include duets, trios, quartets, quintets, and sometimes sextets. The composer blends the voices depending on the dramatic requirements of the plot. For instance, a love duet may begin with each performer singing different music at different times, then gradually unifying into harmony. Conversely, the music of a duet may depict conflict. Georges Bizet used this technique in *Carmen*: if you listen to the duets sung by Carmen and Don José, you might notice that their musical lines are never completely blended, and this foreshadows their tragic ends.

## CHORUS

Most operas include music sung by a large group of singers (sometimes more than 40) called a chorus. The chorus often appears in a crowd scene and can provide a stunning contrast to solo or ensemble singing. In one opera by Benjamin Britten, the chorus is played by a single male and a single female, as in the tradition of ancient Greek theatre.

## ORCHESTRAL MUSIC

The orchestra accompanies the singing and introduces the opera with the overture. Musical and emotional themes often appear in orchestral introductions and conclusions to arias, recitatives, and choruses. In many cases, the orchestra plays such an important role, the gravity of its existence is that of a leading character.