TOBIAS PICKER: FANTASTIC MR. FOX
TOBIAS PICKER  (b.1954)
FANTASTIC MR. FOX
LIBRETTO BY DONALD STURROCK

BOSTON MODERN ORCHESTRA PROJECT | ODYSSEY OPERA
Gil Rose, conductor

JOHN BRANCY  tenor
KRISTA RIVER  mezzo-soprano
ANDREW CRAIG BROWN  bass-baritone
EDWIN VEGA  tenor
GABRIEL PREISSER  baritone
ELIZABETH FUTRAL  soprano
TYNAN DAVIS  mezzo-soprano
THEO LEBOW  tenor
ANDREY NEMZER  countertenor
GAIL NOVAK MOSITES  soprano
JOHN DOOLEY  baritone
JONATHAN BLALOCK  tenor
BOSTON CHILDREN’S CHORUS
Anthony Trecek-King, director

DISC 1  (48:49)
ACT I
[1] Scene I: Dawn in the Valley  8:59
[2] Scene II: The Foxhole  7:51

ACT II
[6] Scene I: The Foxhole  7:40
[7] Scene II: The Farmyards of Boggis, Bunce, and Bean  4:51
[8] Scene III: The Foxhole  6:05
[9] Scene IV: Outside the Foxhole  4:27

DISC 2  (33:52)
ACT III
[1] Scene I: The Devastated Den  5:10
[2] Scene II: An Obscure Corner of the Forest  4:50
[3] Scene III: A Glade Near the Devastated Den  0:54
[4] Scene IV: The Farmyards of Boggis, Bunce, and Bean  8:45
[5] Scene V: The Farmyards  1:41
By Tobias Picker

Fantastic Mr. Fox is my second, and only comic opera. Since it was premiered, it has been misunderstood by those who aren’t familiar with it. Fox is a family opera, not a children’s opera. It works on different levels for children and adults. The adults will “get” the edgy things right away while the children experience it on their own terms. Fox was preceded by Emmeline, followed by Thérèse Raquin, An American Tragedy, Dolores Claiborne, and, most recently, Awakenings. All of my operas come from a deep place in my heart and I needed to write each and every one of them in order to maintain my own sanity. I could not write an opera for any other reason. I was inspired by six extraordinary, but very diverse, writers: Judith Rossner, Roald Dahl, Émile Zola, Theodore Dreiser, Stephen King, and Oliver Sacks, two of whom were dear friends (Rossner and Sacks). I’ve also been extremely fortunate to have collaborated with four genius librettists: the late J.D. McClatchy (Emmeline and Dolores Claiborne), Gene Scheer (Thérèse Raquin and An American Tragedy), Donald Sturrock, (Fantastic Mr. Fox), and most recently my own husband and partner of forty years, the novelist/neuro-radiologist Aryeh Lev Stollman (Awakenings). I was especially happy while composing Fox because, like Emmeline and Awakenings, it seemed to write itself and pretty much all I had to do was show up at my desk—just as if I were a member of the audience.

Fantastic Mr. Fox enjoyed an eye-popping premiere at the L.A. Opera on December 9, 1998. Gerald Finley was the first Mr. Fox and set the bar for all Mr. Fox’s to come. I composed it very fast. From the time Emmeline closed in Santa Fe to the premiere of Fox was only a year and a half! The famous British caricaturist Gerald Scarfe designed lavish, brightly colored sets and costumes that brought out the playfulness of the animals and the grotesquerie of the evil farmers. There were eight performances which sold at 93% capacity—quite a lot in the 3200 seat Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. There was a ninth show just for children.
Busloads of kids poured in and filled all the seats. Noisy at first, as soon as the overture began they all fell silent, but then gasped and laughed at all the right times. It was very gratifying to see them imitating the choreography and hear them singing the Boggis, Bunce, and Bean song outside the theater afterwards.

After LA, Fox was not produced again for many years. It wasn’t until after the Wes Anderson film came out in 2009 that opera companies began to show interest. I then created a 7-instrument version of the opera commissioned by James Clutton with Opera Holland Park (OHP) in London which they performed in a popular promenade production in the Yucca Gardens three summers in a row beginning in 2010. The English Touring Opera (ETO) led by James Conway made their own new production of Fox. ETO’s Fox opened at the Hackney Empire in 2011 and then toured throughout major cities in the UK. Fox was also heard in America in 2011 for the first time since 1998 by the Microscopic Opera Company of Pittsburgh.

In 2013, while Artistic Director of Opera San Antonio, I commissioned a new production of Fox for the opening of the spectacular Tobin Center for the Performing Arts on the San Antonio Riverwalk. I was determined to present Fantastic Mr. Fox as a great entertainment that emphasizes the colorful aspects of the animal world. That meant engaging someone with a visual sense to anchor this world, someone who is a real illustrator. Roald Dahl’s grandson, Luke, led us to the young British artist Emily Carew Woodard. I instantly fell in love with Emily’s illustrations, inspired by Arthur Rackham and the golden era of the Victorian Age. Their spiritual kinship with Dahl’s sense of dark—at times twisted—humor was a perfect fit.

Gil Rose flew down to San Antonio for the opening and decided to bring the production to Boston’s Jordan Hall. It was performed and given its world premiere recording by BMOP/Odyssey Opera on December 7, 2014.

**NOTES**

**FANTASTIC MR. FOX** is an opera in three acts with a libretto by Donald Sturrock based on Roald Dahl’s children’s novel of the same name. It was premiered by Los Angeles Opera, Peter Ash, conductor, at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles, CA, on December 9, 1998.

**GETTING IN TUNE WITH ROALD DAHL:**

**FANTASTIC MR. FOX FINDS A NEW HOME ON THE OPERA STAGE**

**By Thomas May**

As a child, Tobias Picker became intrigued by Roald Dahl’s fiction—only his first exposure wasn’t the children’s books that are beloved around the world, but Dahl’s stories for grown-ups, to which his parents had taken a liking. “I watched Alfred Hitchcock Presents every week as a kid, and one of my favorites was a version of the story ‘Lamb to the Slaughter’. I loved Dahl’s sensibility from the start. But it wasn’t till later that I got to know the things for children.”

The key to the enduring appeal of Dahl’s fiction for children, Picker believes, lies in his gift for writing stories that don’t condescend to their young readers. “Dahl had a unique sense of humor that adults can also relish.” And that’s exactly the kind of work Picker wanted to emulate with his adaptation of Fantastic Mr. Fox for the opera stage. “I recall at the phrase ‘children’s opera,’ because so often it suggests an intentional dumbing down,” he explains. “I think ‘family opera’ is a much better term for this. It’s an inclusive opera, with something for both children and adults.”
The writer and TV film producer Donald Sturrock describes the outlook instinctively shared by these two artists, though they never actually had the chance to meet: “Tobias made the story very much his own. He brought his energy and gifts as a composer to it, but also the enthusiasm, curiosity, and eagerness of a child. He also sees the world through a child’s eyes. That’s one of the reasons why the story works quite well. Roald Dahl would have felt happy with the result, because it isn’t full of artifice. Tobias connects organically to the story.”

Sturrock got to know the often prickly writer in the years right before Dahl died in 1990. His book Storyteller (2010) is the definitive biography. After consulting closely with Dahl’s widow Felicity (“Liccy”) to commission several new pieces of music inspired by her husband—pieces modeled after Prokofiev’s Peter and the Wolf—Sturrock soon realized that Fantastic Mr. Fox would be an ideal source for an opera and crafted a libretto of his own.

Finding the right composer, though, proved more difficult. “One of my keystones was this: does the composer have an instinctive sense of the child still within?” Sturrock recalls. “I didn’t want a composer who would dumb down what they do. And to write a successful opera for kids, you also have to be able to write tunes.”

Flash back to the summer of 1996, when Picker—already an acclaimed composer of orchestral and chamber music—made his stunning debut as an opera composer at the Santa Fe Opera Festival with Emmeline. Based on a novel by the American writer Judith Rossner, Emmeline focuses on the suffering but also strength of a woman who is ostracized in 19th-century Maine.

In the audience were Sturrock and Felicity Dahl, still on the hunt for their Fox composer. It may seem ironic that Emmeline—an opera as stark and grim as a Greek tragedy—convinced them they’d found exactly what they were looking for. Yet both instantly agreed. “Liccy turned to me and said, ‘He should do it.’ And from my own experience with opera, I knew her instinct was right,” says Sturrock. “We both heard a natural lyricism in Tobias’s music for Emmeline that made us confident.”

But he feared that the remarkable success of Picker’s first foray into opera meant he’d inevitably become too booked up to commit to their project, even if it did captivate him. In fact, Picker was soon approached by the Metropolitan Opera as well as Dallas Opera and received commissions from each. These eventually resulted in two more operas (An American Tragedy and Thérèse Raquin, respectively) that feature characters hemmed in by fateful, tragic circumstances, further mining the dark psychology explored in Emmeline.

As it happened, their timing couldn’t have been better. “Usually things that come in unsolicited are not very good,” says Picker, “but I recognized Donald’s libretto as a brilliant piece of work and was enthralled. I’d already decided I wanted to look for a children’s story for my next opera anyway, because I knew I would be writing a tragic opera for Dallas. So I wanted something to cleanse my palate, something that could appeal to a child’s sensibility.”

Liccy Dahl invited the composer to visit her late husband’s writing hut in their home located in the village of Great Missenden in south central England. “I was able to soak up the atmosphere and the spirit of Roald by spending time there and saw the garden where he’d spotted the actual fox which had inspired the book.”

Sturrock, he adds, “understood what a composer wants from a libretto. The words were eminently settable. They sparkled like a shiny toy. There was an economy in the way he told the story but he also occasionally spiced it with clever things. Plus, it was very funny and witty, but also touching.”

Fans of Dahl’s original story will notice a few twists that create opportunities for music: the commentary (and atmosphere-setting) of the children’s Chorus of Trees, for example, or the tiny but piquant subplot of the amour between Miss Hedgehog and Mr. Porcupine. “Some of those things came from having heard Emmeline,” Sturrock says. “I could see what Tobias did particularly well. And I wanted to give kids an introduction to all the different kinds of opera voices—the whole range, deep bass and high soprano and between. The
construction, in a sense, is more like opera from the 18th century, with its rapid changes of scene from one place to another, where you suddenly encounter a new character.”

For Opera San Antonio’s new production in September 2014, Resident Conductor Andres Cladera drew on his memories of falling in love with the art of opera at age 7, when he sang in a children’s chorus in his native Uruguay. Cladera described the sophistication that lies hidden behind the seeming simplicity of Fox’s score. “It’s a mistake to underestimate children and their ability to absorb musical concepts and musical emotions. Tobias knows they can assimilate music that is complex but beautiful. He can write a simple tune that kids might remember, with their sense of playfulness, but he doesn’t shy away from real emotions that you feel at any age. His music for the farmers and Agnes is truly scary.”

Picker was determined to present the new production of Fantastic Mr. Fox “as a great entertainment that emphasizes the colorful aspects of the animal world. That meant engaging someone with a visual sense to anchor this world, someone who is a real illustrator.”

“It’s such a shame that opera productions rarely go to actual artists or illustrators for the visual component,” says Sturrock, “so for this production I suggested we use a talented young artist to offer kids a real visual delight that’s true and has integrity rather than just being the work of a competent stage designer.”

The sensibility of the acclaimed artist Emily Carew Woodard (whose costumes for San Antonio’s Fantastic Mr. Fox appeared in the BMOP/Odyssey Opera production) thrilled Picker, who is keenly responsive to the visual arts, in a way that reminded him of his own reactions to Dahl. (Henriette Simon Picker, the composer’s mother, is an active painter in her mid-90s, with solo shows in Santa Fe and in New York’s Soho gallery scene.) “I fell in love with Emily’s illustrations, their incredible detail. There’s a real spiritual kinship between her work and Dahl’s, and they also share a sense of dark, at times twisted humor.”

The London–based Woodard spent lots of time studying animal behavior “and the humor animals can exhibit” when she began thinking of her designs for the production. “The animals have been personified, which would of course appeal to children,” she says, “but actually I think it’s an adult story in a children’s costume. What I’ve come up with overall is true to my aesthetic, which is inspired by Arthur Rackham and the golden era of the Victorian Age.”

In Storyteller, Sturrock declares that Fantastic Mr. Fox represents Dahl’s “most autobiographical” children’s story. “In the 1960s he was struggling to keep body and soul together. His son was injured in an accident, his daughter died, and his [first] wife [the actress Patricia Neal] had a terrible stroke. The book was written at the end of all of that. Roald saw himself as Mr. Fox—the guy who had pulled everyone through this with his tenacity and energy.”

All of these layers coexist—the charm, the eccentric wit and humor, the autobiographical, and of course the story’s power in our era of environmental devastation as a parable of nature out of balance thanks to humanity’s depredations. And they endow Fantastic Mr. Fox with its quality of being more than “just” a children’s tale.

The Magic Flute represents another example of an opera that can be approached from multiple angles: as a fairy-tale and quest story, a political allegory of Enlightenment, even a Jungian journey into the psyche.

“With Fantastic Mr. Fox,” says Picker, “I wanted to write something for children and adults—for the entire family. I like works that are multilayered.” Which might be the most efficient definition of the art of opera itself.

© 2014 Thomas May. A version of this essay originally appeared in the program book of Opera San Antonio. Thomas May is the program writer for Opera San Antonio and also writes regularly for the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera and Symphony, Los Angeles Opera, and many other leading institutions. He blogs at memeteria.com.
ACT I

Scene I: Dawn in the Valley

Curtain up to reveal the three decrepit and foul farmyards of Boggis, Bunce, and Bean. For now the scene is eerily deserted, though Mavis the Tractor stands parked in a corner. Enter Mrs. Fox.

MRS. FOX (speaking)
Once upon a time, not long ago, on a hillside not very far from here, there lived a family of foxes. Their home was a deep, warm, cavernous burrow which they had dug out of the ground, and it had a wonderful number of twisting mazy tunnels and strange, secret holes. Mrs. Fox is my name; and I lived there with my four gorgeous foxcubs, Lennie, Bennie, Jennie, and Pennie.

Enter four Foxcubs, high-spirited and hyperactive.

MRS. FOX (speaking)
And of course, Mr. Fox—the sleekest, most beautiful fox in the world—with bright eyes, sharp ears, and the most handsome bushy tail you ever saw. All of the forest loved him. But others, like the three farmers who live here, hated him. Their names were Mr. Boggis, Mr. Bunce, and Mr. Bean.

FOXCUBS (singing)
Boggis, Bunce, and Bean!
One fat, one short, one lean!
These horrible crooks
So different in looks
Were all of them equally mean!

MRS. FOX (speaking)
Yes. Chicken Farmer Boggis was fat. Very fat. From eating too many chickens.

BOGGIS (singing)
Hey Bean! Hey Bean! Where are you man?
I'll bet he's a-counting his money again.
Or drinking his cider, or making a plan.
Hey Bean! Hey Bean! Where are you, man?

BOGGIS sits down on the wheel of Mavis the Tractor, and belches.

BOGGIS (singing)
I've heard people say go to work on an egg.
They're fools of course—full of air in their heads.
It's quite clear, oh my dear, what's the tastiest treat.
Can you guess what meat intelligent men eat?

Mavis the Tractor shakes her head.

BOGGIS (singing)
That meat is of course a fowl, my friend.
Not foul, but a beautiful fowl!

FOXCUBS (singing)
Boggis, Bunce, and Bean!
One fat, one short, one lean!

RITA THE RAT (singing)
Boggis sits down on the wheel of Mavis the Tractor, and belches.

BOGGIS (singing)
With wings and drumsticks and giblets and breast,
With wishbones, and livers! Make soup of the rest!
The chicken is king! The chicken is king!
The chicken is best!
The best in the world!
Enter Bunce. He too is extremely fat, but he is much shorter than Boggis, and dressed in a more fancy French manner. He looks condescendingly at his neighbour.

Boggis
The chicken is king of the fowls!
Bunce (interrupting and with a French accent)
Not at all, you old fool, you should go back to school! A chicken’s but a subject fowl, A grovelling, scraping servant fowl, Only fit for the masses: its tasteless meat seems to me not a treat but a horrible feat that debases the art of good food!

Boggis
And what do you know, you absurd little mutt?
Bunce
A lot more than you, Mr. Wobbling Butt!
Bunce reaches into his jacket and pulls out a chef’s hat, which he places carefully on his head, and a little notebook, which he brandishes at Boggis.

Bunce
I’ve consulted all the finest chefs a-cooking on the planet, And all of them unanimously agree that the chicken is abominous. In a perfect world, you’d ban it! And it’s a great shame that the only ones who see the company of culinary cognoscenti.

(That’s me!)
Boggis walks over to Bunce with a threatening air.

Boggis
Oh yeah, you little midget!

Bunce
Oh yeah, you great, grand poop!

Boggis backs off.

Bunce
You may call me a microdot, a pygmy, or a squirt. But none of those insults will ever hurt Monseur Bunce! Monseur Bunce! Monseur Bunce! The goose farmer, par excellence! For I’m a pipsqueak gourmet, I’m a gastro-gnome And I know that the emperor of the gourmand’s world is not a chicken, not a chicken, No! No! No!

Bunce begins a gleeful goose-stepping dance around the farmyard.

Bunce (continued)
Hail to the goose, the bird the French adore! The origin of foie gras and so much more! Hail to the Goose! The food of royalty, the fowl of kings!

Enter Bean. He is tall, thin, and the most immediately sinister of the trio. He creeps silently over to Boggis and Bunce.

Boggis
There’s no way it’s as tasty as spicy chicken wings!

Bunce
You philistine!

Boggis
You phony!

Bunce
You old bore!

Bean (surprising them)
Shut up, both of you! We have work to do. Bickering’s useless. We have to make money.

Boggis
But the drumsticks?

Bunce
And the pâté?

Bean
That’s just food. Now what I adore is my cider store! That’s what delights me! How it excites me! And what makes me smile Is the lovely pile of cash that I can stash, When I sell the stuff at market, yes! Oh, yes! Do you two airheads ever think of that?

Bunce
Well, Boggis
No.

Bean, Bunce and Bean
Lucre, mooalah, and bags of dough, The dollar, the pound, and the humble peso! We’ll get rich and there’ll be no hitch.

To cash! To profit! To wealth! Yes on money we’re hellbent, If it’s nickels, dimes, or the humble cent, So long as there’s lots of it, we don’t really mind a bit. To lucre! To mooalah! To dough!

Bean
That’s all very well. But there is a hitch.

Boggis
What’s that?

Bean
Do I have to remind you about that fox? That verminous, septic, pestilent, pusulent, fibrous fox, Who steals our chickens, roosters, and geese! Not to mention the cider, which I adore. We have got to destroy him and I have a plan. Such a scheming, ingenious, devious plan, It will thwart him forever. Oh yes, oh yes! Shall I tell you about it?
Ears stiffen! Eyes flash! And sparkle like glowing chars!
Adventure, mystery, wonder fills the air!
Feel them! Hear them! Smell them! See them! Taste them!
Why does it feel so good to be alive?
Nature fills me with fierce excitement,
I breathe in her wild scent of life,
Free to wander, untamed and untamable,
She fills me with vagabond joy!
Life burns in my veins, possessing my senses.
It flows through my heart and my mind.
Alive and ecstatic, cunning and quick,
The Fox knows the secret of freedom.
The Owl’s shriek! The Vixen’s cry!
The Nightbat’s squeak! The Wolf’s howl!
And a chorus of crickets to spur me on!
The forest’s alive with a thousand eyes!
Glowing! Gleaming! Flashing! Flickering! Watching!
Why does it feel so good to be alive?
Ah, the thrills of a fox’s life!
To run, to dart, to fly like an arrow
Through forests endless, deep!
The wind at my face, and my cubs behind me,
A scent of ecstatic excitement just ahead.
This is the hour! My hour!
Why does it feel so good to be alive?
Enter Mrs. Fox and the four Foxcubs.
MRS. FOX
Good evening, my darling. I’m glad you’re still home!
MR. FOX
Would I ever go out without saying good night to you?
MRS. FOX
No. But there’s something I wanted to say...
MR. FOX
That my tail’s as fine as the best Chinese silk?
MRS. FOX
No.
MR. FOX
That my nose is sharp as a pen?
MRS. FOX
Well, no.
MR. FOX
That my eyes are as bright as two shining stars?
MRS. FOX
They are. But...
MR. FOX
Could it be that my whiskers need trimming?
MRS. FOX
Not at all...
MR. FOX
Well, what on earth is it my dear?
MRS. FOX
I want to say take care, my love.
There are dangers out there that might hurt you, my love.
And I love you too much to lose you, my love.
So you take care outside!
MR. FOX (seriously)
Yes I know.
But then, my dear, I’m a special fox,
A wonderful, brilliant, fantastic fox  
Per’aps the cleverest fox in the world!  
And for such a fine, fantastic fox,  
The forest is just a big game!  
MRS. FOX  
Be careful...  
MR. FOX  
Just a game.  
He goes over to the Foxcubs and pats them on their heads.  

MR. FOX  
Now Foxcubs tell me what you’ve seen!  
What adventures you had while I was asleep!  
LENNIE FOX  
We went to the farmyard with Foxmama  
JENNIE FOX  
And there we saw three horrible men  
BENNIE FOX  
One as fat as a giant blob of gum!  
PENNIE FOX  
One as thin as a rake!  
LENNIE FOX  
And incredibly glum!  
JENNIE FOX  
One as short as a wart!  
MR. FOX  
What a horrible thought!  
And what were there names?  

Let me guess...  
FOXCUBS and MR. FOX  
Boggis, Bunce, and Bean  
One fat, one short, one lean!  
These horrible crooks,  
So different in looks,  
Were all of them equally mean!  
As the Foxcubs sing, dancing joyously around their proud father, the foxhole gradually disappears and we find ourselves in the forest outside the entrance to the foxhole.  

[1/3] Scene III: Entrance to the Foxhole  
Night. Enter Boggis, Bunce, and Bean armed with shotguns.  
Boggis  
How much further is it?  
Bunce  
My poor feet are aching!  
BUNCE  
Quit complaining, you two. I think we’re almost there.  
BUNCE  
I bet we won’t find it!  
BUNCE  
Of course we will.  
Boggis  
What if we don’t?  
BUNCE  
I think I see it now!  

BUNCE  
Are you sure?  
BEAN  
Yes.  
BUNCE  
And suppose he’s already come out?  
BEAN  
He won’t have.  
Boggis  
Where is it then? This hole?  
Bunce  
Right here. Can’t you see?  
Boggis  
This hole?  
Bunce  
Yes, this hole!  
Now we must step away or he’ll smell us.  
He will smell that we are all here!  
BUNCE  
We should hide!  
BEAN  
Over there!  
BUNCE  
What? In the bushes?  
Bean nods.  
BUNCE  
It might be wet...  

Boggis (imitating Bunce contemptuously)  
It might be wet!  
Boggis  
You stupid small toad!  
BUNCE  
One day you’ll explode!  
Boggis  
Well, at least I am tall!  
BUNCE  
No, you’re just a screw ball!  

BOGGIS, BUNCE, AND BEAN  
Whispering, muttering, making no sound,  
We will run that old fox right out of his ground,  
Just wait till we glimpse his red, crafty, old head,  
Then we’ll shoot with our rifles and he will be DEAD!  
Boggis, Bunce, and Bean disappear laughing into the undergrowth.
MR. FOX

Now my dears, I don’t want to leave you, but I can smell the
Enticing aroma of night weaving up into my nostrils and
Down into my lungs. I must go.

MRS. FOX

Foxcubs!Give your father a foxy farewell!
The Foxcubs embrace their father.

MR. FOX

What a feast we will have when I return!

MRS. FOX

But darling, beware of those horrible men!

MR. FOX

They’ll be tucked up in bed and snoring no doubt.
I have nothing to fear. I’ll be back in a jiffy.

PENNIE FOX

A tick!

BENNIE FOX

No, a trice!

MR. FOX

In an instant as well. Au revoir!

Mr. Fox exits upstage out of the foxhole. There is a loud
volley of gunshots. Mrs. Fox and the Foxcubs huddle up
together. Quick blackout.

[1/4] Scene IV: The Foxhole Interior

Mr. Fox is sitting on the dining-room table. He is dressed
to go out. The Foxcubs are sitting at his feet. Mrs. Fox sits
watchfully in a corner.

MR. FOX

About dinner tonight. Yes what will it be?
A plump chicken from Boggis
So juicy and tender?
PENNIE FOX

Oh, yes, yes, yes!

MR. FOX

Or a goose from Bunce?

BENNIE FOX

Much better I think!

MR. FOX (imitating Bunce’s French)

With some pâté de foie gras...

JENNIE FOX

My favourite food!

MR. FOX

Washed down with some cider from Bean!

LENNIE FOX

That sounds good!

MR. FOX

I think tonight we’ll have a treat!
I’ll get something incredibly special to eat!
With all these ingredients, I’m certain that we’ll
Have one hell of an excellent marvellous meal!

MRS. FOX

You’re wonderful, darling. But do take care!
Those farmers are plotting something above
That Bean’s got a plan, so you’d better beware
I would rather go hungry than lose you, my love!

CHORUS OF FOXCUBS

With all these ingredients I’m certain that we’ll
Have one hell of an excellent marvellous meal!
FOX gets off the table and goes over to Mrs. Fox

MR. FOX

I fear all these games don’t amuse you, my dove!

MRS. FOX

Just take care

MR. FOX

But of course...

MRS. FOX

Nevertheless...
I’m sure tonight we’ll have a treat!
Mr. Fox will get something quite special to eat!
With all these ingredients I’m certain that we’ll
Have one hell of an excellent marvellous meal!
Those farmers are plotting something up there
That Bean’s got a plan, so you’d better beware.
Those three farmers are scheming, be careful, beware!
I would rather go hungry than lose you, my love!

CHORUS OF FOXCUBS

With all these ingredients I’m quite certain that we’ll
Have one hell of an excellent marvellous meal!

MR. FOX

Now my dears, I don’t want to leave you, but I can
smell the
Enticing aroma of night weaving up into my nostrils and
Down into my lungs. I must go.

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PENNIE FOX

A tick!

LENNIE FOX

That sounds good!

MR. FOX

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MRS. FOX

Take care, my love!
Mr. Fox exits upstage out of the foxhole. There is a loud
volley of gunshots. Mrs. Fox and the Foxcubs huddle up
together. Quick blackout.

[1/5] Entracte

CHORUS OF TREES

Who knows what trees see?
Who knows what trees hear?
Silently watching the years go by
Noiselessly watching you struggle and die
What are life’s mysteries?
What are life’s woes?
You humans may wonder
But trees know...

Who knows what trees see?
Who knows what trees hear?
The ears of the trees are leaves in the wind,
They hear every footstep you take.
What are you doing?
Where will you go?
You humans may wonder,
But trees know...
LENNIE FOX
You can have mine, Dad, when it’s grown!

MR. FOX
(smiling)
Thank you, children!
(to Mrs. Fox)
Thank you, my love.
(to the Foxcubs)
But your father’s a broken fox.

MRS. FOX
Nonsense, my darling, there’s plenty to do!
And you can’t stay down here in your hole!
There are pleasures galore and excitements to taste
So please quit whining and looking forlorn
It just doesn’t suit you at all!
And, may I remind you, there’s a meal to prepare
And a family of five to be fed.
You took all our orders a while ago
And we’re still waiting, a hungry crew,
So, garçon, get going, adieu!

MR. FOX.
But my tail...

Jennie and Pennie Foxcub enter quietly.

MRS. FOX
Who cares? There is work to be done!
Those farmers may boast that they’ve blown off your tail,
But have they blasted your soul?
I thought I married a stronger fox.
A witty, fantastic, magical fox.
A fox with a first-class mind.
Proud, heroic, inspiring and generous and kind.
A fox whose magnificent, handsome fine head’s
Worth more than his lovely behind!
A fox who’s a fox and not a whining sniveller,
Who hides all night long in his hole!

MR. FOX (to Mrs. Fox)
Darling, I love you.
Though tailless, I know,
I’m the luckiest fox alive!
(to the Foxcubs)
Cubs, we’re all lucky, I feel it now!
Just look how my spirits swell!
Now, off to bed, children, I promise you here,
Tomorrow I’ll give you such a big surprise.
Your whiskers will wiggle, your fur will rise.
It’ll make you gasp, it’ll boggle your eyes.
So off to bed foxcubs, sleep soundly, and then
At sunrise, I will tell you my plan.
My magnificent, marvellous, magical scheme
For revenge on those stupid old men!

FOXCUBS
Our whiskers will wiggle, our fur will rise!
Our whiskers will wiggle and twitch!
It’ll make us gasp, it’ll boggle our eyes.
It will boggle our eyes, we are sure.
Tomorrow we’ll all have such a smashing surprise!
Though tailless our papa is happy we know,
Because our mama she loves him so.
And he knows we love him as well.

ACT II

[16] Scene I: The Foxhole
The Curtain rises on the interior of the Foxhole, some hours after the end of the previous act. Mr. Fox, bedraggled and humiliated, is sitting on a chair. Beside him, lying forlornly on the ground, is his beautiful tail. There is a neat but makeshift bandage on his rump. He is alone.

MR. FOX
What has become of me? What am I now?
My beautiful tail, so bushy and tall,
The pride of my family, the envy of all,
The finest tail for miles around,
Lies lifeless, lonely on the ground.
A ridiculous brush! And it?
A shadow, a form, a ghost no more,
Of the fabulous fox that I was before!
No longer to leave my deep, warm home,
No longer the forest paths to roam,
The object alone of derision and mirth,
Condemned everyone to hide in the earth.
A shadow, a form, a ghost no more,
of the fantastic fox that I was before!
Ah! Oh! What has become of me?
What am I now?

MRS. FOX enters quietly behind him, with Bennie and Lennie in pyjamas.

MRS. FOX
The King of the Forest no less!
MR. FOX
I cannot be king without my tail!
MRS. FOX
Why not, my darling?
MR. FOX
Just look at me! Just look!
I’m absurd. I’m a joke. I’m a fool!
My tail was my pride. It won me respect.
And now that it’s gone, I am nothing at all.
A ludicrous creature, pathetic and spent.
I can never go out again! Never again!
Snickers and giggles will chase me around
Like gnats tormenting my soul.
My friends in the forest will either laugh
Or pity me.—Me, the Fantastic Fox
Once respected and loved by them all
(to Mrs. Fox)
Perhaps even you will not love me much longer?
I shall quite understand if you don’t...—

MRS. FOX
It’s you I love! And not your tail!
BENNIE FOX
Will it grow back, Daddy?
MR. FOX
No. Never. It’s gone.

LENNIE FOX
You can have mine, Dad, when it’s grown!

MR. FOX (smiling)
Thank you, children!
(to Mrs. Fox)
Thank you, my love.
(to the Foxcubs)
But your father’s a broken fox.

MRS. FOX
Nonsense, my darling, there’s plenty to do!
And you can’t stay down here in your hole!
There are pleasures galore and excitements to taste
So please quit whining and looking forlorn
It just doesn’t suit you at all!
And, may I remind you, there’s a meal to prepare
And a family of five to be fed.
You took all our orders a while ago
And we’re still waiting, a hungry crew,
So, garçon, get going, adieu!

MR. FOX.
But my tail...

Jennie and Pennie Foxcub enter quietly.

MRS. FOX
Who cares? There is work to be done!
Those farmers may boast that they’ve blown off your tail,
But have they blasted your soul?
I thought I married a stronger fox.
A witty, fantastic, magical fox.
A fox with a first-class mind.
Proud, heroic, inspiring and generous and kind.
A fox whose magnificent, handsome fine head’s
Worth more than his lovely behind!
A fox who’s a Fox and not a whining sniveller,
Who hides all night long in his hole!
I married you, yes YOU, and not a tail!

MR. FOX (to Mrs. Fox)
Darling, I love you.
Though tailless, I know,
I’m the luckiest fox alive!
(to the Foxcubs)
Cubs, we’re all lucky, I feel it now!
Just look how my spirits swell!
Now, off to bed, children, I promise you here,
Tomorrow I’ll give you such a big surprise.
Your whiskers will wiggle, your fur will rise.
It’ll make you gasp, it’ll boggle your eyes.
So off to bed foxcubs, sleep soundly, and then
At sunrise, I will tell you my plan.
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For revenge on those stupid old men!

FOXCUBS
Our whiskers will wiggle, our fur will rise!
Our whiskers will wiggle and twitch!
It’ll make us gasp, it’ll boggle our eyes.
It will boggle our eyes, we are sure.
Tomorrow we’ll all have such a smashing surprise!
Though tailless our papa is happy we know,
Because our mama she loves him so.
And he knows we love him as well.
BOGGIS
It’s not a chicken, no sir.

BUNCE
And what is it for? What does it do?

BEAN
Can’t you guess? This machine, you fat pimple, will serve us well. Let me introduce you to Agnes!

AGNES
My name is Agnes. A digging machine. I’m extremely unpleasant, impossibly mean. I’m vicious, destructive, repulsive, obscene. So don’t mess with me, guys. Do you get what I mean? My jaws are magnificent, deadly, and dark. My teeth are as vicious and sharp as a shark’s. If I grind ‘em at you, there are sure to be sparks! So don’t mess with this mother of matriarchs!

BEAN
I assure you her bites are much worse than her barks!

AGNES
You wanna hear more, boys?

Boggis and Bunce are cowed into silence. Bean smiles.

AGNES
(to Mavis)
Say, honey what’s your name?

BUNCE
(to Bean)
What are you doing? Take her away! She’ll scare my geese!

AGNES
Oh boy, am I hungry!

MRS. FOX
Our whiskers will wiggle, our fur will rise! It’ll make us gasp, it’ll boggle our eyes! I hope to God his plan his wise!

Exeunt omnes.

[17] Scene II: The Farmyards of Boggis, Bunce, and Bean

The morning after the night before. Boggis is leaning on Mavis the Tractor, and eating a large chicken. Enter Bunce with chef’s hat and cookbook under his arm.

BOGGIS
Bonjour, Monsieur Boggis!

BUNCE
What did you say?

BOGGIS
It’s French, monsieur. But how would you know?

BUNCE
It’s a book, mon ami!

BOGGIS
What’s that? It’s a monster!

BUNCE
It’s grotesque! Quelle horreur!

Yawn! Yawn! Yawn! Yawn!

BUNCE
It’s a COOK book, my friend. Not boring at all. And look what I’ve found here, Look! Look! A most merveilleux dish. A dish that I wish I could sample right now. My mouth is watering. My lips are moist. My tongue is quivering, quivering, quivering! My tum is rumbling, rumbling. My tum is rumbling!

BOGGIS
What is it? What is it?

BUNCE
Renard farci avec la matiêre grasse d’oie Fox roasted and stuffed with goose fat!

BOGGIS
Ugh! No chickens? Forget it!

BUNCE
(aside)
So vulgar, so coarse, and so crude!

Bunce enters, driving Agnes the Digger, a huge, powerful, and terrifying earthmover, with gaping jaws, vicious teeth, and fierce eyes.

BOGGIS
What’s that? It’s a monster!

BUNCE
It’s grotesque! Quelle horreur!

BOGGIS
It’s not a chicken, no sir.

BUNCE
And what is it for? What does it do?

BEAN
Can’t you guess? This machine, you fat pimple, will serve us well. Let me introduce you to Agnes!

AGNES
My name is Agnes. A digging machine. I’m extremely unpleasant, impossibly mean. I’m vicious, destructive, repulsive, obscene. So don’t mess with me, guys. Do you get what I mean? My jaws are magnificent, deadly, and dark. My teeth are as vicious and sharp as a shark’s. If I grind ‘em at you, there are sure to be sparks! So don’t mess with this mother of matriarchs!

BEAN
I assure you her bites are much worse than her barks!

AGNES
You wanna hear more, boys?

Boggis and Bunce are cowed into silence. Bean smiles.

AGNES
(to Mavis)
Say, honey what’s your name?

BUNCE
(to Bean)
What are you doing? Take her away! She’ll scare my geese!

BOGGIS
And my chicks!

BEAN
Agnes is here to help us, you fool! I’ve brought her here to destroy! That old fox got away. I went up and checked. There’s no sign of his corpse at the den. So, I’ve devised an ingenious plan. A plan that is ruthless and savage. We’ll dig him out from under his tree. We’ll dig down as far as it takes. If we dig down a mile then we dig down a mile, But this time we’ll get him, I am sure!

BOGGIS
He’ll have nowhere to run to!

BUNCE
He’ll have no place to hide!

BEAN
We’ll get all of his family as well!

AGNES
Oh boy, am I hungry!

MVIS
Can I come too?

AGNES
Sure thing, sister. Sure thing!

ALL
Tonight in the forest we’ll gather again With our devilish Agnes We’ll dig that old fox right out of his den!
Alone in my hole in the hedge.
I shall never again feel the surge of warm blood
Rise in my body and quicken my spirit!
Yes, time’s hoary finger
Entices me closer,
And closer,
And closer,
And then,
Then I know solitude is my friend.
Mr. Fox enters noisily with Badger the Miner and Burrowing Mole. They are carrying plans under their arms.
MISS HEDGEHOG
Up and about! You fantastic fox!
MR. FOX
Why, Miss Hedgehog, hello, good day!
Mrs. Fox re-enters.
MISS HEDGEHOG
What have you been plotting so long in that room?
MRS. FOX
A new plan?
MR. FOX
I’ve been hatching a scheme to get revenge With Badger the Miner and Burrowing Mole!
BADGER THE MINER/ BURROWING MOLE
Together we’re planning a digging vendetta Against Boggis and Bunce And what’s even better We’ll raid the cellar of Farmer Bean! It’s as clever a plan as the world’s ever seen!
Together we’re plotting a cool, cunning caper. It will make the front page of every newspaper. We’ll rule the Animal Hall of Fame! And forever the Forest will honour our name!
A noise of mechanical digging can be heard in the distance. It gets increasingly louder.
MRS. FOX
Beware, my dears, of those rotten men. They’re plotting and planning to kill us, I know. Especially that Bean. He’s the worst of the trio. And as sly and as quick as a fox!
MR. FOX
What’s that noise? Get the children! We’re in deepest danger!
Mrs. Fox dashes off to collect the children. Fox, Badger and Mole huddle together. Miss Hedgehog trembles nervously. The stage gradually darkens.

Scene IV: Outside the Foxhole
Boggis is driving Mavis the last few feet up towards the entrance to the foxhole, in the roots of a massive and beautiful tree. Mavis is pulling a trailer in which Bunce is sitting. He looks rather alarmed. The ground is rough and bumpy. Mavis is having problems.
Mavis
You’re pushing me too hard, I’m old, you know. I’m old, you know!
We’ll kill that old fox! We’ll kill that old fox! We’ll dig his whole family out of their den! We’ll kill all of them! We will gather again and we’ll kill all of them!

Miss Hedgehog enters with a bag of worms. Mrs. Fox greets her.
MISS HEDGEHOG
I wish I believed you, my dear Mrs. Fox. But I think not. I really think not. Mrs. Fox exits from the room, carrying a large pile of washing.
MISS HEDGEHOG
I have now reached the age When spinnerhead beckons, And destiny reckons My sweet days of youth, They have gone. Yes, time’s hoary finger Entices me closer, And closer. And closer. And closer. And closer. And then, I know solitude is my friend.
Mr. Fox enters noisily with Badger the Miner and Burrowing Mole. They are carrying plans under their arms.
MISS HEDGEHOG
Up and about! You fantastic fox!
MR. FOX
Why, Miss Hedgehog, hello, good day!
MRS. FOX
Beware, my dears, of those rotten men. They’re plotting and planning to kill us, I know. Especially that Bean. He’s the worst of the trio. And as sly and as quick as a fox!
MR. FOX
What’s that noise? Get the children! We’re in deepest danger!
Mrs. Fox dashes off to collect the children. Fox, Badger and Mole huddle together. Miss Hedgehog trembles nervously. The stage gradually darkens.

Scene III: The Foxhole
Miss Hedgehog enters with a bag of worms. Mrs. Fox greets her.
MISS HEDGEHOG
Well, hello, Miss Hedgehog. Hello there, hello!
MISS HEDGEHOG
But am I disturbing you?
MISS HEDGEHOG
I heard of the accident. How can I help? (offering Mrs. Fox some writhing worms) Some lovely fresh nibbles perhaps?
MISS HEDGEHOG
You’re lucky my dear to have found such a mate. When I just have no luck at all.
MRS. FOX
You will, dear Miss Hedgehog. I’m sure you will. One day your prince will appear.
MISS HEDGEHOG
I have long watched the pattern Of all the four seasons, And common sense reasons My summer and spring Have passed on. I smell the warm earth, And it tells me a story I don’t want to hear. It whispers it into my ear: “I shall die without children With no one to love me With no one to stroke me And hug me, and hold me
I shall die without children With no one to love me With no one to stroke me And hug me, and hold me
Together we’re plotting a cool, cunning caper. It will make the front page of every newspaper. We’ll rule the Animal Hall of Fame! And forever the Forest will honour our name!
A noise of mechanical digging can be heard in the distance. It gets increasingly louder.
MRS. FOX
Beware, my dears, of those rotten men. They’re plotting and planning to kill us, I know. Especially that Bean. He’s the worst of the trio. And as sly and as quick as a fox!
MR. FOX
What’s that noise? Get the children! We’re in deepest danger!
Mrs. Fox dashes off to collect the children. Fox, Badger and Mole huddle together. Miss Hedgehog trembles nervously. The stage gradually darkens.

Scene IV: Outside the Foxhole
Boggis is driving Mavis the last few feet up towards the entrance to the foxhole, in the roots of a massive and beautiful tree. Mavis is pulling a trailer in which Bunce is sitting. He looks rather alarmed. The ground is rough and bumpy. Mavis is having problems.
MAVIS
You’re pushing me too hard, I’m old, you know. I’m old, you know!
Now we’d better get digging. Come on!

AGNES
To dig is to devastate, crush, and destroy. To demolish and bulldoze gives me such pure joy. That digging’s my only desire and delight, And I long to annihilate—all day and night! I was born foul and hideous, ugly as sin, As grotesque as a gargoyl, embittered and grim, But I’m strong as a lion and fierce as a fiend, I’m an engine of terror, I’m a killing machine!

MAVIS
You’re awesome and magnificent, my new heroine!

AGNES
If we don’t start the battle, we might never win!

BOGGIS
Come on, come on, move
Come on, you sluggard, come on!

MAVIS
I’d go faster if you were not weighing me down
With your great fat belly, you overweight clown.

BOGGIS
You’re a clapped-out and useless machine!

MAVIS
Are we here, mon am? Are we here?

BOGGIS
No. Not quite.

With a great roar Agnes enters. Her great digging jaws are raised threateningly. In her tiny cockpit is Bean. There is a wicked glint in his eye.

BEAN
You’re here already. That’s terribly good. Have you Brought your shotguns? Good, good.

BOGGIS
Do we really need to do this?

BEAN
Sure, we do.

BOGGIS
All of this fuss for a single fox?

BEAN
We might find a nest of them. Bet we do.

There are probably hundreds down there!

BOGGIS
We can have a massacre! We can shoot them all!

BUNCE
Will they bite me?

BEAN
Sure they will.

BUNCE
I’m going home!

BEAN
No you’re not, you grungy greaseball!

BUNCE
Oh yes, I am!

AGNES
No, you ain’t!

BUNCE
But couldn’t we poison them?

BEAN
Secretly, silently, softly steal
Up to their den and leave outside
Some rancid old chicken
All stinky and stenchy
Steeped in cyanide
Soaked in strychnine.
They’ll eat it at once
And die in agony!

BEAN
No. If you do that,
They’ll die in their hole.
We won’t know they are dead!
Besides, there is sport in this kill!

Will you join me, my dear in this dig?

MAVIS
It’s an honour, a privilege! Yes!

ALL
To dig is to devastate, crush, and destroy.
To demolish and bulldoze gives us such pure joy.
That digging’s our only desire and delight.
And we long to annihilate—all day and night!

DIG!

The two machines start to dig. The light begins to fade, the music rises to a deafening climax. And the curtain falls.
ACT III

Scene I: The Devastated Den

Where the den was, there is now the most enormous hole in the earth. The great tree whose roots formed its entrance lies on its side, destroyed by the rapacious digging of Agnes. She now stands at the bottom of the huge pit, exhausted. Mavis, Boggis, and Bunce look down from the rim of the crater nervously. Bean is still in the driver’s seat. He is furious.

BEAN
Where is that vermin?
Where is that four-legged fiend?
Where is that foul, filthy, feculent fox?
All around me the dregs and the dross of his den,
But no sign of the scavenger or his cruddy crew.
No sign except this fusty, flea-ridden fur!
The septic slimeball’s tail is here,
But where’s the rest of him?
Where can he be?
We’ve been digging him out here for hours!

AGNES
I think that you have made a mistake!

BEAN
This is his hole. He’s here. He’s deep in this hole.

AGNES
I don’t believe it!

BEAN
But look, Agnes, here is his tail!
The rest of him must be terribly near.
Just under our feet or your wheels, my dear!
And are you not the best of your class?

AGNES
Yes I am!

BEAN
Well, get digging and shift your ass!

MAVIS
Oh no! That’s too cruel!
You’re too cruel!

AGNES
My fuel tanks are low and my flyshaft’s exhausted.
I’ve worked till my teeth and my jaws ache in pain.
My spark plugs are spent and my battery’s blasted!
My joints are disjointed, my brain is in strain!

MAVIS
(to Bean)
You are cruel and obnoxious!
You silly old bean-pole!

BEAN
She must work! She must work!

AGNES
I refuse! I’m an artist! I don’t take orders!

MAVIS
Hip! Hip! Hooray!

BUNCE
I’m bored of this banter. Shall we go away?

BOGGIS
I’m hungry. And it’s getting cold.

BUNCE
My feet are all wet!

BOGGIS
Yeah, they’re covered in mould!

BUNCE
Au revoir, mes amis.

BEAN
No, you don’t, you French fool!

BUNCE
Do not insult me, you peasant!

BOGGIS
You lucky!

BEAN
Mucky!

BOGGIS
Poxy!

BEAN
Pity!

BOGGIS
Plop!

BUNCE
I’m off to my farm! A bientôt! Cheerio!

AGNES
No way! No, no, no! If you do try and go,
I’ll pursue you, and CRUNCH, you’ll be Agnes’s lunch!

BUNCE
Well, maybe I’ll stay....
(to Bean)
But for just how long?

BEAN
We’ll stay here until we kill that scrofulous fox.
Until he’s come out of his den.
Then we'll shoot him and string him up. Ha, what a sight! He won't be so clever right then!

BOGGIS
But how long will that be?

BEAN
An hour at most! Just believe me, an hour, you'll see!

Lights dim and the scene changes.

[2:2] Scene II: An Obscure Corner of the Forest

As the curtain rises, we find ourselves in a peaceful corner of the forest a long way from the hubbub and noise that ended the previous act.

CHORUS OF TREES
Ah...ah! Listen! Ah...ah! Listen!
Ah...ah! Listen! Ah...ah! Listen!
Breezes gusting, leaves are rustling,
Roots are whispering ancient stories.
Ah...ah! Listen! Ah...ah! Listen!
Ah...ah! Listen! Ah...ah! Listen!
Buds are bursting, blossoms thirsting,
For the quivering wind delivering pollen for the seed!
Ah...ah! Listen! Ah...ah! Listen!
Twigs still chatter, branches natter,
Tales of magic from a distant time!
If you listen, you may hear them!
If you listen... If you listen...!

There is a stirring underneath one of the trees, and then from underground emerge Mr. and Mrs. Fox, Badger the Miner, Burrowing Mole, the Foxcubs, and Miss Hedgehog. They are tired, dirty, but triumphant.

MR. FOX
Well, we did it!

MISS HEDGEHOG
We've made it!

BADGER THE MINER
We're heroes!

BURROWING MOLE
We're cool!

FOXCUBS
Yes, we're talented!

MRS. FOX
Lucky as well!

ALL
We're brilliant, bogglesome beasts!

MISS HEDGEHOG
But the jaws of that horrible, fearsome machine will haunt me like some horrible dream!

FOXCUBS
That gnashing and grinding and raging and roaring!

MRS. FOX
My home that I tended is gone forever, The rooms that I furnished are ground to dust.
There was love in my burrow. Is that gone too? Will we ever sleep sound in our beds?

MR. FOX
We've a natural gift for forest life.
That humans all lost years ago.
They seek to destroy Nature’s beautiful patterns,
But somehow she always survives!
We dug ourselves out of a hole today.
We picked ourselves up, we got away.
But the fight’s not quite finished,
The war’s not yet won,
There is one brilliant deed that remains to be done!
BADGER THE MINER / BURROWING MOLE
What’s your plan, Mr. Fox, what’s your plan?
MR. FOX
There are farmyards of food
In the valley down there.
Tasty chickens, plump geese, cooling cider
I swear they’ll all be ours.
I will stage a raid,
I’ll stage a bold raid.
I will stage the greatest raid
That has ever been staged!
MRS. FOX
But how can you do it?
Tell us, foxy dear, just how!
MR. FOX
That goofy trio has all neglected
Their chicken coops and their cellars.
They’re unprotected,
We’ll walk right in.
While they’ve dropped their guard,
We’ll take all we want.
It won’t be hard.
BADGER THE MINER/ BURROWING MOLE
Bravo, Mr. Fox, you’re a star!
MR. FOX
But whatever the total, it is clear to me—
Through my powers of deductive philosophy—
There are far, far, far more rats!
But d’y know why you’ll never see ’em? I’ll tell ya! O students, just listen to me! Rats are quite remarkable, we’re clever, cool creatures. We have brilliant minds and intelligent features. We are poets and we’re scholars, too. We are incredibly talented and I’ll bet you Don’t know of a single great rat in world history! Yeah, you’re ignorant! Why, our whole life is a mystery To you airhead humans! And I don’t know Why it is that you scorn us and hate us so! You put us in cages and take us to labs, Where we’re vivisected, injected with jabs, You’re afraid of our intellect, afraid of our soul, Afraid of our knowledge, so your only goal Is just to revile us, defile us, and then You compare our good name with the worst of your men. Yeah, the life of a rat is hard! But I’ve got a problem, A terrible problem. There’s something strange in the cellar, So, it gives me the creeps. It makes no sense. It’s counterfactual. Could it be something supernatural? My mind’s a mess and all confusion. Perhaps it’s a paranoid delusion Or something else! Whatever it is, It scares me! Suddenly from all corners of the stage emerge Badger the Miner, Burrowing Mole, and Fantastic Mr. Fox.
MR. FOX
Greetings, Rita!

RITA THE RAT
What do you want?

MR. FOX
Just let us through.

RITA THE RAT
No way!

MR. FOX
We’d like some chickens, a goose or two. Washed down with some cider from Bean.

RITA THE RAT
Give you lot my cider? You’ve got a nerve!

MR. FOX
And why not, darling, why not?

RITA THE RAT
’Cos it’s mine!

MR. FOX
That’s not good enough, Rita, my dear!

RITA THE RAT
A few days ago, I was down in the cellar. It was midnight. I felt in need of a drink. A nightcap, you know, just to send me to sleep. I heard a rustling, creeping, scary sound. And this gigantic shadow appeared on the wall. There’s a terrible beast alive down there, bristling with needles and long, spiky hair! I’m afraid to go into the cellar now, Fox.

BADGER
If this is a trap, you’ll pay, Miss Rat!

RITA THE RAT
Now my hero Spinoza says that our deeds are completely controlled by our needs. So here’s my logical term and condition expressed into aphorist proposition:

If you get that thing out of there, you can do what you like!

MR. FOX
It’s a deal!

MR. FOX
Mr. Foxcubs! Mr. Porcupine!

PORCUPINE (drunk)
Thanks a lot, Fox! I thought I’d be stuck in that dirty dark hole forever!

MR. FOX
Well, now you’re here, please stay for supper! We’ll need some cider.

PORCUPINE
Be glad to, my friend!

MR. FOX
We’ll go down into the cellar. Rita follows them nervously.

[Scene V: The Farmyards]

Mr. Fox and the Foxcubs scamper out into the farmyard. Badger, Mole, and Porcupine go down into the cellar. Rita follows them nervously.
RITA THE RAT
Yeah, the life of a rat is hard!

At that moment Boggis and Bunce arrive. Rita scuttles into a corner.

BUNCE
Oh, mon dieu! What’s ‘appened ‘ere?

BOGGIS
We’ve been raided!

BOGGIS
Ransacked!

BUNCE
By whom?

Boggis and Bunce scamper round the farmyard in horror.

BOGGIS
Oh my chickens! My chickens! They’ve all escaped!

BUNCE
And my geese! They ‘ave all flown away!

BOGGIS
Oh my chickens! My chickens! They’ve all escaped!

BUNCE
By whom?

Boggis and Bunce scamper round the farmyard in horror. They begin to realize the full scale of the foxes’ revenge.

BOGGIS
I want my revenge!

BUNCE
Let’s get back straight away!

[26] Scene VI: The New Foxhole

The Foxcubs are scurrying around, carrying plates and dishes of food onto a large table set for eleven people. Mrs. Fox enters in an apron.

MRS. FOX
Foxcubs, our guests are about to arrive. Is the table all set with food?

MR. FOX
My good friends, welcome! Thank you for coming.

MISS HEDGEHOG
Oh, Mr. Fox I’m so glad to be here. I’m not often asked to a party.

MRS. FOX
For you, my dear, we’ve a special surprise. I think it will soon make your lovely brown eyes Simply sparkle with hedgehog delight!

Rita arrives in mortarboard and academic gown.

MR. FOX
Rita, my dear, so glad you could come!

RITA THE RAT
I can’t stay long!

The animals sit down at the table. The Foxes show them to their seats. Mr. Fox sits Rita down next to Burrowing Mole. There is one empty space left at the end of the table beside Miss Hedgehog.

MRS. FOX
May I have your attention! Are you ready my friends with your Burrowing Song?

BADGER / MOLE
We’ve heard people say that to dwell in the soil Is a miserable living—all hard work and toil But I tell you in my view there ain’t nothing finer Than the comradeship that you’ll find with a miner! Yes, life with a miner!

MISS HEDGEHOG
That was wonderful. And I’m not a burrower, Only a lonely forager! (aside) That’s why they’ve left the empty seat beside me!

MRS. FOX
Rita, my dear, sing us a song! Sing us a song, sing to us.

RITA THE RAT
There’s just one I know. On my favourite theme! So please raise your glasses and utter a toast To the rat whose tragedy moves me the most! There was an old rattie from Ryde Who ate some green apples and died The apples fermented Inside the lamented And made cider inside her inside!

MRS. FOX
Like an earthworm!

BADGER
A toad!

MOLE
Or a slug!

ALL
No, nothing compares with the life of a miner!

BADGER / MOLE
The world underground is so strange and so sweet That to burrow and delve is the greatest, a treat! There are all kinds of wonderful creatures to meet Some are smooth, some are furry, and some you can eat!

MISS HEDGEHOG
That was wonderful. And I’m not a burrower, Only a lonely forager! (aside) That’s why they’ve left the empty seat beside me!

MRS. FOX
Rita, my dear, sing us a song! Sing us a song, sing to us.

RITA THE RAT
’Cos she ate some green apples and died!
At that moment Porcupine enters. His eyes meet Miss Hedgehog’s across the room. Rita scurries under the table to hide.

MR. FOX
And welcome now to our latest new friend! Oh, may he stay with us long in the woods! Rita, see how you have nothing to fear From the monster that dwelt in your cellar! Mr. Fox drags Rita out and makes her shake Porcupine’s hand. Slowly he and Miss Hedgehog move towards each other, and while Mr. and Mrs. Fox dance an elegant foxtrot, Badger and Mole each shed a tear.

MISS HEDGEHOG
Is this the one...

PORCUPINE
...that I’ve waited for?

MISS HEDGEHOG
Could it be him?

PORCUPINE
Could it be her?

MISS HEDGEHOG
I feel excited.

PORCUPINE
I feel insecure.

MISS HEDGEHOG
He’s spiny handsome!

PORCUPINE
She’s prickly bliss!

MISS HEDGEHOG
His eyes are sparkling.

PORCUPINE
She’s too good to miss.

MISS HEDGEHOG
Can it be true?

PORCUPINE
Things are moving fast.

MISS HEDGEHOG
Is it me and you?

PORCUPINE
This is love at last.

MISS HEDGEHOG
Where have you been...

PORCUPINE
...all those lonely years?

MISS HEDGEHOG
My nose is twitching.

PORCUPINE
Why am I close to tears?

MISS HEDGEHOG
Are you the one?

PORCUPINE
Will you be mine?

MISS HEDGEHOG
Darling, of course.

PORCUPINE
Till the end of time.

MISS HEDGEHOG
Your spines are splendid.

PORCUPINE
Your nostrils are neat!

MISS HEDGEHOG
Your tail’s so bushy!

PORCUPINE
Your sweet furry feet.

MISS HEDGEHOG
Oh, what desire!

PORCUPINE
Who could ask for more?

MISS HEDGEHOG
I am just on fire!

PORCUPINE
Will you take my paw?

TOGETHER
Hand in hand, foot in foot, over leaf, over stone
We will wander together, sleep never alone
Though our quills may go grey and our prickles fall out,

MISS HEDGEHOG
Your spines are splendid.

PORCUPINE
Your nostrils are neat!

MISS HEDGEHOG
Your tail’s so bushy!

PORCUPINE
Your sweet furry feet.

MISS HEDGEHOG
Oh, what desire!

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PORCUPINE
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MISS HEDGEHOG
Oh, what desire!

PORCUPINE
Who could ask for more?

MISS HEDGEHOG
I am just on fire!

PORCUPINE
Will you take my paw?

GUIDE
In the distance...

MISS HEDGEHOG
...I never felt before.

PORCUPINE
...all those lonely years?

MISS HEDGEHOG
My nose is twitching.

PORCUPINE
Why am I close to tears?

MISS HEDGEHOG
Are you the one?

PORCUPINE
Will you be mine?

MISS HEDGEHOG
Darling, of course.

PORCUPINE
Till the end of time.

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MISS HEDGEHOG
Your tail’s so bushy!

PORCUPINE
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MISS HEDGEHOG
Oh, what desire!

PORCUPINE
Who could ask for more?

MISS HEDGEHOG
I am just on fire!

PORCUPINE
Will you take my paw?

TOGETHER
Hand in hand, foot in foot, over leaf, over stone
We will wander together, sleep never alone
Though our quills may go grey and our prickles fall out,
ALL
It’s cold and it’s wet and we’re hungry, but we
Won’t give up till those foxes are history!
We shall stay here forever and ever until
They are dead meat, O brothers and sisters!
BUNCÉ
We will?
BOGGIS, BEAN, MAVIS, AGNES
Yeah, we will!
BUNCÉ
’Course we will!
ALL
It’s cold and it’s wet and we’re hungry, but we
Won’t give up till those foxes are history!
We won’t talk, we won’t think, we won’t drink, we won’t
eat!
We shall stay here until we return with dead meat!
The lights dim and the action freezes. Then, as the rain
continues to fall on the farmers and their machines, Mrs.
Fox appears. She walks downstage.

MRS. FOX (speaking to the audience)
For all I know, they are waiting still!
She looks behind her and smiles. At that moment she is
joined by Mr. Fox and the Foxcubs, by the Porcupine and
Miss Hedgehog, and by Badger, Mole, and Rita. They all
stand downstage, clutching their glasses.

MRS. FOX (to the audience)
So here’s to my husband, Fantastic Mr. Fox!
ALL
To Mr. Fox!
ALL
Here’s to the most fantastic fox upon the planet!
There’s no question he’s the greatest and the grandest.
Can it
Possibly be doubted? We don’t really think it could
He’s undoubtedly the ruler and the master of the wood!
Curtain.
Tobias Picker, whose music has been described as “displaying a distinctively soulful style that is one of the glories of the current musical scene” by BBC Music Magazine and “a genuine creator with a fertile unforced vein of invention” by The New Yorker, has drawn performances and commissions by the world’s leading musicians, orchestras, and opera houses.

Picker’s operas have been commissioned by the Santa Fe Opera (Emmeline), the LA Opera (Fantastic Mr. Fox), the Dallas Opera (Thérèse Raquin), San Francisco Opera (Dolores Claiborne), and the Metropolitan Opera (An American Tragedy). His operas have gone on to be produced by New York City Opera, San Diego Opera, Opéra de Montréal, Chicago Opera Theater, Covent Garden, Opera Holland Park, English Touring Opera, the Glimmerglass Festival, and many other distinguished companies. In 2015, Opera Theatre of St. Louis mounted a major new production of Picker’s Emmeline, that garnered universal acclaim as “a work of gripping emotional intensity and extraordinary musical expressivity” (The Dallas Morning News); “one of the best operas written in the past 25 years” (The Wall Street Journal); and “the greatest American opera of the 20th century” (The St. Louis Post-Dispatch). In 2020, Opera Theatre of St. Louis will premiere Picker’s sixth opera, Awakenings, based on the book by Oliver Sacks.

In addition, Picker has composed numerous symphonic works, commissioned and performed by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Helsinki Philharmonic, Orchestre de Paris, Munich Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Opéra de Montréal, Philadelphia Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Vienna RSO, and Zurich Tonhalle among others. In addition to three symphonies, he has composed concertos for violin, viola, cello, oboe, and four piano concertos, and a ballet, Awakenings, commissioned by the Rambert Dance Company.

This BMOP CD adds to the Picker discography of such labels as Sony Classics, Virgin Classics, Angel, Chandos, Ondine, Albany, Weiro and two upcoming releases on Naxos.

Mr. Picker has received numerous prestigious awards and prizes and was elected to lifetime membership in the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2012. Picker served as composer-in-residence of the Houston Symphony (1985–1990) and subsequently for the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival and the Pacific Music Festival. Picker has served as Artistic Director of Tulsa Opera since 2016. His music is published exclusively by Schott Helicon Music Corporation.

John Brancy’s intense musicality and communicative power place him in the front ranks of baritones of his generation. Hailed by The New York Times as “a vibrant, resonant presence,” Brancy won first prize in the Art Song Division of the 2018 Concours Musical International de Montreal, a win that recognizes him as a premiere interpreter of Art Song repertoire. The New Jersey native also won first prize in the 2018 Lotte Lenya Competition in New York, second prize at the 2017 Wigmore Hall Competition in London, and prior to that won the media prize in the 2017 Belvedere International Singing Competition in Moscow and first prize in the Jensen Foundation Vocal Competition in 2015. He is also a past winner of the Marilyn Horne Song Competition and the Sullivan Foundation Grand Prize.

Brancy’s discography includes his war-themed recital A Silent Night: A WWI Memorial in Song, with pianist Peter Dugan. Their work together has presented them with debuts at Alice Tully Hall as part of the Juilliard Alumni Recital Series, Carnegie Hall as part of the Weill Recital Series, and Vocal Arts DC at the Kennedy Center. As well, they have won numerous awards and critical acclaim for their work together. Their forthcoming CD Live from the Kennedy Center: The Journey Home will be released later in 2019.
Brancy has been engaged by Semperoper Dresden, Oper Frankfurt, Edmonton Opera, Paris’s Théâtre du Chatelet, Opera Saratoga, and Opera San Antonio in works ranging from Tobias Picker’s The Fantastic Mr. Fox to Dandini in La Cenerentola to John Adams’s I Was Looking at the Ceiling and Then I Saw the Sky. He has also appeared with the San Francisco Symphony, LA Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Kansas City Symphony, and the Edmonton Symphony. Brancy holds a graduate degree from the Juilliard School in New York.

Krista River, mezzo-soprano, hailed by Opera News for her “lovely clarity and golden color,” was a winner of the Concert Artists Guild International Competition and a grant recipient from the Sullivan Foundation. Recent notable performances include the International Water and Life Festival in Qinghai, China, and recitals at Jordan Hall in Boston and the Asociación Nacional de Conciertos in Panama City, Panama. The New York Times praised her debut recital at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, lauding “her shimmering voice...with the virtuosity of a violinist and the expressivity of an actress.”

Opera appearances include Sesto in La clemenza di Tito with Emmanuel Music, Dido in Purcell’s Dido and Aeneas with Mercury Baroque (Houston) and the Connecticut Early Music Festival. Cherubino in Mozart’s Le nozze di Figaro with the North Carolina Symphony. Narcissus in Boston Baroque’s Agrippina. Rosina in Il barbiere di Siviglia at the Crested Butte Music Festival, and the title role in Handel’s The Great Gatsby.

Ms. River has premiered works by numerous composers including Tom Cipullo, Howard Frazin, and Herschel Garfein. She created the role of Genevieve in Brian Hulse’s chamber opera The Game at the Kennedy Center. She is featured on two recordings of the music of Scott Wheeler: The Construction of Boston and Wasting the Night: Songs.

Ms. River began her musical career as a cellist, earning her music degree at St. Olaf College. She resides in Boston and is a regular soloist with Emmanuel Music’s renowned Bach Cantata Series.

Andrea Craig Brown, bass-baritone, has performed at San Francisco Opera as Dr. Grenville in La Traviata, English National Opera as Achilla in Julius Caesar and Colline in La Bohéme, and as Chick in Wonderful Town with the Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi. Andrew has sung the roles of Paolo in Simon Boccanegra and il Duca Ramiro in Maria Padilla at the Ludwig van Beethoven Easter Festival of Warsaw, roles which he also recorded with the Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra.

Equally at home on the concert stage, Mr. Brown has sung performances of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9 with the Pasadena Symphony, Bach’s Magnificat and Handel’s Alexander’s Feast with the Baroque Artists of Champaign, and Handel’s Messiah with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra. Andrew has sung concerts with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, the Baroque Artists of Champaign, and the Millikin-Decatur Symphony Orchestra.
Edwin Vega made his professional debut at the English National Opera as Molqi in a new production of John Adams’s The Death of Klinghoffer, a co-production with the Metropolitan Opera, and his Carnegie Hall debut in Jerry Springer the Opera. Career highlights include Bunce (Opera San Antonio/BMOP/Odyssey Opera, Fantastic Mr. Fox), Junge Offizier (Komische Oper Berlin, Die Soldaten), Tierhandler/Faninal’s Major Domo (Kennedy Center, Der Rosenkavalier), 4th Jew (Santa Fe Opera/Opera San Antonio, Salome), Tanzmeister (Virginia Opera, Ariadne auf Naxos), and performances with the Chicago Opera Theater, Cincinnati Opera, dell’Arte Opera Ensemble, New York City Opera, Opera Omaha, and the inaugural PROTOTYPE Festival as the title character in Mohammed Fairouz’s Sumeida’s Song. In addition to his professional opera work, Edwin serves as a certified Executive Leadership Development Coach and Facilitator and is a proud graduate of Ithaca College and the Chicago College of Performing Arts (CCPA) at Roosevelt University.

Additionally, he has been honored as a district winner in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and won the American finals of the International Lirico Concorso Competition.

Elizabeth Futral. American soprano, has established herself as one of the world’s leading sopranos. With her stunning vocalism and vast dramatic range, she has embraced a repertoire that ranges from the Baroque to world premieres. A native of Louisiana, Ms. Futral studied with Virginia Zeani at Indiana University. She joined the Lyric Opera Center for American Artists at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, won the Metropolitan Opera National Council auditions in 1991 and was catapulted to stardom with critically acclaimed performances of Delibes’s Lakmé at the New York City Opera in 1994. Career milestones soon followed, cementing her star status: a win in Placido Domingo’s Operalia Competition, the title role in Rossini’s Matilde di Shabran in Pesaro, her debut at the San Francisco Opera as Stella in the world premiere of André Previn’s A Streetcar Named Desire, and her Metropolitan Opera debut in a new production of Lucia di Lammermoor.

Ms. Futral’s operatic recordings include Ricky Ian Gordon’s 27 with the Opera Theatre of St. Louis on Albany Records, Previn’s Brief Encounter and A Streetcar Named Desire as well as Ravel’s L’enfant et les sortilèges for Deutsche Grammophon, Rossini’s Otello and Zelmira, Pacini’s Carlo di Borgogna for Opera Rara, Lucia di Lammermoor for Chandos as part of their “Opera in English” series, Of Mice and Men on Albany Records, Six Characters in Search of An Author on New World Records, and Philip Glass’s chamber opera Hydrogen Jukebox for Euphoria Records.

Gabriel Preisser has been praised for his “matinee idol charm and charisma,” “beautiful, luscious baritone,” and “compelling, commanding stage presence” by publications such as Opera News, the Star Tribune, and the Houston Chronicle. He received rave reviews, calling the industry to attention, for his performance of Lt. Gordon in the world-premiere of Kevin Puts’s Pulitzer Prize-winning Silent Night with Minnesota Opera. Other highlighted roles include Figaro in The Barber of Seville and Le Nozze di Figaro, Eisenstein in Die Fledermaus, and Harold Hill in The Music Man, among many more. Mr. Preisser demonstrates comfort and expertise on stages of all types with an expansive repertoire of opera and musical theater roles and regularly garners critical acclaim for his dynamic interpretations of several new works.

Dani Werner. In addition to her professional opera work, Dani serves as a certified Executive Leadership Development Coach and Facilitator and is a proud graduate of Ithaca College and the Chicago College of Performing Arts (CCPA) at Roosevelt University.
Tynan Davis is fortunate to sing all styles of music with all sorts of incredible people. She has toured with Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Orchestra and the North American tour of The Phantom of the Opera. Her debut album TYNAN is a collection of jazz arrangements of favorite tunes from stage, TV, and film. Other favorite performance collaborations include: Grammy-winning ensembles Roomful of Teeth and Conspirare; Heartbeat Opera, Cantata Profana, SOLI Chamber Ensemble, Austin Symphony, San Antonio Symphony, Opera San Antonio, Rockport Music Festival, and Boston Modern Orchestra Project. tynandavis.com

Theo Lebow, currently based at Frankfurt Opera and with an active career in both North America and Europe, continues to solidify his reputation as one of the finest young lyric tenors on international stages. His performances reveal exceptional intelligence and musical understanding along with dramatic skill to complement his technical finesse and beautiful sound. These qualities have enabled him to build a remarkably diverse repertoire from Baroque to contemporary. Following his appearance for Boston Mid-Summer Opera as Almaviva in Il barbiere di Siviglia, Lebow returned to Frankfurt where his 2018-2019 season includes featured roles in Ariadne auf Naxos, Satyricon, The Merry Widow, Dalibor, and Die Zauberflöte. Theo’s repertoire, ranging from Baroque to contemporary, already embraces some 20 roles in operas, and he has sung in six languages.

Andrey Nemzer, countertenor, has become distinguished for the unique size, flexibility, and range of his instrument. A third prize winner of Placido Domingo’s Operalia 2014 and the winner of Metropolitan Opera National Council 2012, Mr. Nemzer has been a soloist with a number of distinguished opera houses. Mr. Nemzer covered the title role of Handel’s Giulio Cesare in Egitto in a new production for the Metropolitan Opera, debuted on Metropolitan Opera stage in the role of The Guardian in R. Strauss’s Die Frau ohne Schatten, and the unusual-for-a-countertenor role of Jezibaba in Dvorak’s Rusalka with Resonance Works Pittsburgh.

Gail Novak Mosites is a passionate artist with interest in new works. Recent performances include a world premiere with Quantum Theatre, Chatham Baroque, and Attack Theatre as Paulina in The Winter’s Tale, and debuts with both Opera San Antonio and Boston Modern Orchestra Project/Odyssey Opera as Mavis in Tobias Picker’s Fantastick Mr. Fox. Other roles include First Lady in The Magic Flute with Erie Chamber Orchestra; Valencienne in Merry Widow with Pittsburgh Festival Opera; Violetta, Micaela, Mimi, Emma in LizBeth by Thomas Albert; Cathleen in Riders to the Sea; and Lady Billows in Albert Herring.
John Dooley has been praised by The Wall Street Journal as “a warm, supple baritone.” He is an outstanding crossover singer whose opera talent equals his flair for musical theater. Career highlights include Emmy-nominated Carousel with the New York Philharmonic Live from Lincoln Center; world premieres of Lysander in Michael Ching’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream and Johnny in Todd Goodman’s Night of the Living Dead; and the American premiere of Ashmodeus in Jonathan Dove’s Tobias and the Angel. He has performed with Portland Opera, Opera San Antonio, Tulsa Opera, Amarillo Opera, Opera Memphis, Opera Roanoke, Chattanooga Symphony & Opera, and Arizona Broadway Theatre. www.johndooleybaritone.com

Jonathan Blalock is an American tenor specializing in twenty-first century repertoire, creating over a dozen roles in world premieres with companies including the Dallas Opera, Washington National Opera, the Center for Contemporary Opera, Fort Worth Opera, the Armel Festival (in Szeged, Hungary), Opéra Théâtre d’Avignon, the PROTOTYPE Festival, Fargo Moorhead Opera, and Urban Arias. Other recent notable performances include Opera Hong Kong, the Santa Fe Opera, the Atlanta Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, Nashville Opera, Boston Modern Orchestra Project/Odyssey Opera, Pacific Symphony, Winston-Salem Symphony, Memphis Symphony, Portland Symphony, Arizona MusicFest, Syracuse Symphoria, and the Oakland Symphony.

**The Boston Children’s Chorus** is a creative social integration organization that unites area children ages 7-18 across differences of race, religion, and socioeconomic status to discover the power of singing and transcend social barriers in a celebration of shared humanity and love of music. Our focus is not on one specific community but the energy of the intersection of all our communities. We bridge Greater Boston’s many diverse groups and foster a sense of belonging and inclusion. Through intensive choral training and once-in-a-lifetime performing experiences locally, nationally, and around the world, BCC enhances the education and social development of youth as future leaders and global citizens in the 21st century. See more at bostonchildrenschorus.org.
Dr. Anthony Trecek-King is the president and artistic director of the award winning Boston Children’s Chorus (BCC). Under his direction, the chorus has earned a reputation as an ensemble of high distinction and, in 2013 received the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award from the White House. Trecek-King’s performances have been heralded as possessing a “surprising range of dynamics and depth of expression.” He has collaborated on performances with Keith Lockhart, John Williams, Simon Halsey, Yo-Yo Ma, and Roomful of Teeth and has led BCC in performances at Boston Symphony Hall, the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., Carnegie Hall in New York City, and Royal Albert Hall in London. He is a frequent guest conductor for All State, Festival, and Honor Choirs. In addition to Trecek-King’s conducting work, he can be seen on air and online on the Emmy Nominated WGBH television series Sing That Thing and two TEDx Boston talks. He holds a B.M. in Cello Performance from the University of Nebraska at Omaha, an M.M. in Orchestral Conducting from the Florida State University, and a D.M.A. in Choral Conducting from the Boston University.

Gil Rose is a musician helping to shape the future of classical music. Acknowledged for his “sense of style and sophistication” by Opera News, noted as “an amazingly versatile conductor” by The Boston Globe, and praised for conducting with “admiral command” by The New York Times, over the past two decades Mr. Rose has built a reputation as one of the country’s most inventive and versatile conductors. His dynamic performances on both the symphonic and operatic stages as well as over 75 recordings have garnered international critical praise.

In 1996, Mr. Rose founded the Boston Modern Orchestra Project (BMOP), the foremost professional orchestra dedicated exclusively to performing and recording symphonic music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Under his leadership, BMOP has won fourteen ASCAP awards for adventurous programming and was selected as Musical America’s 2016 Ensemble of the Year, the first symphony orchestra to receive this distinction. Mr. Rose serves as the executive producer of the BMOP/sound recording label. His extensive discography includes world premiere recordings of music by John Cage, Lukas Foss, Charles Fussell, Michael Gandolfi, Tod Machover, Steven Mackey, Evan Ziporyn, and many others on such labels as Albany, Arsis, Chandos, Cantaloupe, ECM, Naxos, New World, and BMOP/sound.

In September 2013, he introduced a new company to the Boston opera scene, Odyssey Opera, dedicated to eclectic and underperformed operatic repertoire. Since the company’s inaugural performance of Wagner’s Rienzi, which took the Boston scene by storm, Odyssey Opera has continued to receive universal acclaim for its annual festivals with compelling themes and unique programs, presenting fully staged operatic works and concert performances of overlooked grand opera masterpieces. In its first five years, Mr. Rose has brought 22 operas to Boston, and introduced the city to some important new artists. In 2016 Mr. Rose founded Odyssey Opera’s in-house recording label with its first release, Pietro Mascagni’s
Zanetto, followed by a double disc of one act operas by notable American composer Dominick Argento in 2018. Future projects include the world premiere recording of Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco’s The Importance of Being Earnest.

He has led the longstanding Monadnock Music Festival in historic Peterborough, New Hampshire. Since his appointment as Artistic Director in 2012, Mr. Rose has conducted several premieres as well as cycles of the symphonies of Beethoven and Mendelssohn. He made his opera stage directing debut in two revivals of operas by Dominick Argento as well as conducting, directing, and producing a production and world premiere recording of Ned Rorem’s opera Our Town in the historic Peterborough Townhouse.

Mr. Rose maintains a busy schedule as a guest conductor on both the opera and symphonic platforms. He made his Tanglewood debut in 2002 and in 2003 he debuted with the Netherlands Radio Symphony at the Holland Festival. He has led the American Composers Orchestra, Warsaw Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra of the Ukraine, Cleveland Chamber Symphony, Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana, and National Orchestra of Porto. In 2015, he made his Japanese debut substituting for Seiji Ozawa at the Matsumoto Festival conducting Berlioz’s Béatrice et Bénédict, and in March 2016 made his debut with New York City Opera at the Appel Room at Jazz at Lincoln Center. He has since returned to City Opera in 2017 (as Conductor and Director) in Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall and 2018 conducting a double bill of Rameau & Donizetti’s settings of Pigmalione. In 2019, he will make his debut conducting the Juilliard Symphony in works of Ligeti and Tippett.

As an educator, he has served on the faculty of Tufts University and Northeastern University, and has worked with students at a wide range of colleges such as Harvard, MIT, New England Conservatory, Carnegie Mellon University, and the University of California at San Diego, among others.

In 2007, Mr. Rose was awarded Columbia University’s prestigious Ditson Award as well as an ASCAP Concert Music Award for his exemplary commitment to new American music. He is a four-time Grammy Award nominee.

The Boston Modern Orchestra Project is the premier orchestra in the United States dedicated exclusively to commissioning, performing, and recording music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. A unique institution of crucial artistic importance to today’s musical world, the Boston Modern Orchestra Project (BMOP) exists to disseminate exceptional orchestral music of the present and recent past via performances and recordings of the highest caliber.

Founded by Artistic Director Gil Rose in 1996, BMOP has championed composers whose careers span nine decades. Each season, Rose brings BMOP’s award-winning orchestra, renowned soloists, and influential composers to the stage of New England Conservatory’s historic Jordan Hall in a series that offers the most diverse orchestral programming in the city. The musicians of BMOP are consistently lauded for the energy, imagination, and passion with which they infuse the music of the present era.

BMOP’s distinguished and adventurous track record includes premieres and recordings of monumental and provocative new works such as John Harbison’s ballet Ulysses, Louis Andriessen’s Trilogy of the Last Day, and Tod Machover’s Death and the Powers. A perennial winner of the ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming, the orchestra has been featured...
at festivals including Opera Unlimited, the Ditson Festival of Contemporary Music with the ICA/Boston, Tanglewood, the Boston Cyberarts Festival, the Festival of New American Music (Sacramento, CA), Music on the Edge (Pittsburgh, PA), and the MATA Festival in New York. During its 20th anniversary season, BMOP was named Musical America’s 2016 Ensemble of the Year, the first symphony orchestra in the organization’s history to receive this distinction.

BMOP has actively pursued a role in music education through composer residencies, collaborations with colleges, and an ongoing relationship with the New England Conservatory, where it is Affiliate Orchestra for New Music. The musicians of BMOP are equally at home in Symphony Hall, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, and in Cambridge’s Club Oberon and Boston’s Club Café, where they pursued a popular, composer-led Club Concert series from 2004 to 2012.

BMOPsound, BMOP’s independent record label, was created in 2008 to provide a platform for BMOP’s extensive archive of music, as well as to provide widespread, top-quality, permanent access to both classics of the 20th century and the music of today’s most innovative composers. BMOPsound has garnered praise from the national and international press; it is the recipient of five Grammy Award nominations and its releases have appeared on the year-end “Best of” lists of The New York Times, The Boston Globe, National Public Radio, Time Out New York, American Record Guide, Downbeat Magazine, WBUR, NewMusicBox, and others.

BMOP expands the horizon of a typical “night at the symphony.” Admired, praised, and sought after by artists, presenters, critics, and audiophiles, BMOP and BMOPsound are uniquely positioned to redefine the new music concert and recording experience.

**FLUTE**
Sarah Brady* (alto flute)
Rachel Braude (piccolo)

**OBEE**
Jennifer Slowik*
Laura Pardee Schaefer (English horn)

**CLARINET**
Michael Norrisworth*
Amy Advocat (bass clarinet)

**BASS**
Ronald Haroutunian*
Margaret Phillips (contrabass)

**HORN**
Whitacre Hill*
Kevin Owen
Alyssa Daly
Lee Wardenpful

**TRUMPET**
Terry Everson*
Richard Watson

**TROMBONE**
Hans Bohn*
Alexis Dooovskoy

**TUBA**
Takatsugu Hagiwara

**PERCUSSION**
Robert Schulz*
Craig McNut (timpani)
Nicholas Tolle

**PIANO**
Linda Osborn

**HARP**
Amanda Romano

**VIOLIN I**
Charles Dinnick*
Megumi Stohs
Katherine Winterstein
Piotr Buczek
Gabriel Boyers
Shaw Pong Liu
Heather Braun
Colin Davis

**VIOLIN II**
Heidi Braun–Hill*
Colleen Brannon
Sasha Callahan
Lana Lacatus
Sarat Uranovsky
Edward Wu
Anna Korinsky

**CELLO**
Rafael Popper-Kiezer*
Holgen Gjoni
Katherine Kayaian
Miriam Bolkosky
Amy Wensink

**BASS**
Anthony D’Amico*
Scott Fitzsimmons
Bebo Shi*

* Principals
Tobias Picker
Fantastic Mr. Fox
Producer: Gil Rose
Recording: Joel Gordon and Antonio Oliart
Mixing and postproduction: Joel Gordon
Fantastic Mr. Fox is published by Schott Helicon Music Corporation.
Fantastic Mr. Fox was recorded on December 8, 2014, in Fraser Hall at WGBH studios, Boston, MA.
This recording was made possible in part by The Perkin Fund, the Ellis L. Phillips Foundation, Anonymous, Henry & Sue Bass, Randolph J. Fuller, John & Elizabeth Loder, Carolyn & Preston Reed, Dongsup & Bonghee Ro, Joanne Sattley, Campbell Steward, Charles & Theresa Stone, and Marilyn Zacharis.
Fantastic Mr. Fox would not have been possible without the generosity of Felicity Dahl, widow of Roald to whom the opera is dedicated in Roald’s memory. I am also grateful to my librettist, Donald Sturrock, for his witty libretto and friendship. And I am deeply indebted to Gil Rose, BMOP, and Odyssey Opera for making this beautiful premiere recording.
— Tobias Picker

BOSTON CHILDREN’S CHOIR PREMIER CHOIR

Audrey Balan
Hanifah Bostic
Mara Breen
Madeline Carboneau
Liliana Costa-Smith
Jessica Dalrymple
Chloe DeMello
Emmaline Dillon
Olivia Dundon-Duvall
Chloe Duval
Ifeyinwa Egbonike
Stella Fisher

Liana Garrett
Frances Garrett
Isabella Keefe
Robin Kerr
Grace Kromm
Gabrielle Mathews
Ana Mejia
Kyra Merisier
Zariya Miller
Zoe Papastoaitsis
Britta Purcell

Marisa Rafal
Naomi Rafal
Abigail Robinson
Jessie Rubin
Jesse Simmon
Gabrielle Sinclair
Gabrielle Stanfield
Laura Strasner
Demetra Vernet
Nafisa Wara
Victoria Wu
Baiyu Zh