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**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
- [3] Scene III: Entrance to the Foxhole 2:57
- [4] Scene IV: The Foxhole Interior 3:21
- [5] Entracte: Chorus of Trees 2:37

### 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
- [6] Scene VI: The New Foxhole 8:47
- [7] Scene VII: The Devastated Den 3:43

## 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.



TOBIAS PICKER AT THE DRESS REHEARSAL, DECEMBER 2014. KATHY WITTMAN, BALL SQUARE FILMS.

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.

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 recoil 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](http://memeteria.com).





# Fantastic Mr. Fox

Music by Tobias Picker | Libretto by Donald Sturrock

<b>Mr. Fox</b>	<b>John Brancy</b> , baritone
<b>Mrs. Fox</b>	<b>Krista River</b> , mezzo-soprano
<b>Farmer Boggis</b>	<b>Andrew Craig Brown</b> , bass-baritone
<b>Farmer Bunce</b>	<b>Edwin Vega</b> , tenor
<b>Farmer Bean</b>	<b>Gabriel Presser</b> , baritone
<b>Miss Hedgehog</b>	<b>Elizabeth Futral</b> , soprano
<b>Rita the Rat</b>	<b>Tynan Davis</b> , mezzo-soprano
<b>Mr. Porcupine</b>	<b>Theo Lebow</b> , tenor
<b>Agnes the Digger</b>	<b>Andrey Nemzer</b> , countertenor
<b>Mavis the Tractor</b>	<b>Gail Novak Mosites</b> , soprano
<b>Badger the Miner</b>	<b>John Dooley</b> , baritone
<b>Burrowing Mole</b>	<b>Jonathan Blalock</b> , tenor
<b>Bennie Foxcub</b>	<b>Abigail Long</b>
<b>Jennie Foxcub</b>	<b>Abi Tenenbaum</b>
<b>Lennie Foxcub</b>	<b>Zoe Tekeian</b>
<b>Pennie Foxcub</b>	<b>Madeleine Kline</b>

## ACT I

### [11] 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

Yes. Chicken Farmer Boggis was fat. Very fat.  
From eating too many chickens.  
Three for breakfast, five for lunch, and....  
Oh, hush now children, I hear him coming...

*With a crash Farmer Boggis enters, red-faced and grotesquely fat.*

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

You can't?  
That meat is of course a fowl, my friend.  
I said fowl, not an owl, but a fowl, my friend.  
Not fowl, but a beautiful fowl!  
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 obnoxious.  
In a perfect world, you'd ban it!  
And it's a great shame that the only ones who see  
Are 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  
Monsieur Bunce! Monsieur Bunce! Monsieur 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.

BOGGIS, BUNCE AND BEAN  
Lucre, moolah, 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 moolah! To dough!

BEAN  
That's all very well. But there is a hitch.

BOGGIS  
What's that?

BEAN  
Don't you know?

BUNCE  
Don't you know?

BEAN (*to Bunce*)  
Do you know?

BUNCE  
Well,

BOGGIS  
Ha, ha!

BEAN  
Do I have to remind you about that fox?  
That verminous, septic, pestilent, pustulent, 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?

BOGGIS/BUNCE (*together*)  
Oh, please!

*Bean pulls out his shotgun.*

BEAN  
Now he always escapes us.  
Do you know why?  
He can smell us with his sensitive nose.  
One sniff and he knows we are there!  
There's only one way to take him unawares  
And that's when he leaves his warm den.

BOGGIS  
But where's his burrow?

BUNCE  
No-one knows...

BEAN  
That's where you're wrong!  
I have found the entrance right under the tree.  
We will go there tonight and we'll wait for him.  
As soon as he pokes his foul nose outside  
We will blow him away—

*Bean points the gun at Boggis and Bunce who recoil in shock.*

—Just like that!  
And then we can get on with what we like best—  
Making money. Ha, ha!

BOGGIS  
Ha, ha!

BUNCE  
Hahahahahahahahaha!

BOGGIS  
What a wonderful plan!

BEAN  
You're so smart, Farmer Bean!

BEAN (*blushing*)  
Well, I know!

BOGGIS/BUNCE/BEAN  
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 dollars! To pesos! To yen!

*Exeunt Boggis, Bunce and Bean, accompanied by Mavis the Tractor, marching in high spirits. The lights dim and the scene changes.*

## [1|2] Scene II: The Foxhole

*A dark, warm, simply-furnished home, surrounded by the forest over which night falls during the course of this scene. Mr. Fox dozes on the ground. Gradually, sleep loses its hold over him and his nose begins to twitch.*

MR. FOX  
Ah, the smell of night!  
Dark, warm, and full of the promise of adventure!  
Sleep falls away as the night begins to work her spell!  
As men go home, the woods begin to stir!  
In burrows, hollows, cavities, and holes, the animals  
awake!  
This is their hour! My hour!  
It feels so good to be alive!  
Thoughts quicken! Whiskers quiver!

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.*

### [13] 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!

BEAN  
Quit complaining, you two. I think we're almost there.

BUNCE  
I bet we won't find it!

BEAN  
Of course we will.

BOGGIS  
What if we don't?

BEAN  
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?

BEAN  
Right here. Can't you see?

BOGGIS  
This hole?

BEAN  
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...

BEAN (*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!

BEAN  
Quiet, you goons! Listen up.  
If you don't shut your faces, we'll lose our prey  
And then for certain we'll have to stay  
In this horrible wood for eternity.  
Now you don't want that, do you?  
So fasten your eyes on that entrance,  
Guns armed and ready to fire.  
And from now on, if you have to talk, whisper!

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.*

**[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.

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!

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*...

## 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 I?  
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 evermore 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 gen'rous 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.  
My magnificent, marvellous, magical scheme  
For revenge on those stupid old men!

FOXUCBS  
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.



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.*

BUNCE  
Bonjour, Monsieur Boggis!

BOGGIS (*threatening*)  
What did you say?

BUNCE  
Bonjour, Monsieur Boggis!

BOGGIS (*threatening*)  
What did you say?

BUNCE  
It's French, monsieur.  
But how would you know?

BOGGIS  
What's that you're holding?

BUNCE  
It's a book, *mon ami*!

BOGGIS  
How boring! How dreary!

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 matière 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!

*Bean 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!

MAVIS  
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!

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!

### [18] Scene III: The Foxhole

*Miss Hedgehog enters with a bag of worms. Mrs. Fox greets her.*

MRS. FOX  
Well, hello, Miss Hedgehog. Hello there, hello!

MISS HEDGEHOG  
But am I disturbing you?

MRS. FOX  
No.

MISS HEDGEHOG  
I heard of the accident. How can I help?  
(*offering Mrs. Fox some writhing worms*)  
Some lovely fresh nibbles perhaps?

*Mrs. Fox declines politely.*

MISS HEDGEHOG  
Mr. Fox is so brave, so brave and strong!  
How we all admire him, you know.  
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 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 spinsterhood 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 then,  
I know solitude is my friend.  
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

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.*

### [19] 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!

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!

BUNCE

Are we here, *mon ami*? 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.

BUNCE

Do we really need to do this?

BEAN

Sure, we do.

BUNCE

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?  
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!

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 gargoyle, 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!

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! Dig! Dig!  
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

### [21] 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

No mistake! This is his hole!

AGNES

Impossible! I am the champion champer!

I am the dynamic digger!

The devious, dreadful, and dastardly delver!

There's no one digs better or quicker than me!

If those foxes are here, I'd have found them, I'm sure of that!

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

She needs rest and attention, you scummy old skinflint!

BEAN

She must work! She must work!

AGNES/MAVIS

My/her fuel tanks are low and my/her flyshaft's exhausted.

I've/She's worked till my/her teeth and my/her jaws ache  
in pain.

My/her spark plugs are spent and my/her battery's  
blasted!

My/her joints are disjointed, my/her brain is in strain!

MAVIS (to Bean)

You are cruel and obnoxious!

You silly old bean-pole!

BEAN

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!

BEAN

Lardball! Punk!

BOGGIS

You yucky!

BEAN

Mucky!

BOGGIS

Poxy!

BEAN

Poopy!

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.



JOHN BRANCY AS MR. FOX, KATHY WITTMAN, BALL SQUARE FILMS.

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] 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  
We must do it quickly, thoroughly, certainly,  
Cunningly plotted and cleverly done,  
I predict that we'll celebrate long tonight.  
So, let's start to build, then let's have fun!

### [2|3] Scene III: A Glade Near the Devastated Den

*Night is falling. Boggis and Bunce appear furtively. They are creeping sneakily through the undergrowth.*

BOGGIS  
Do you think Bean will notice that we've done a bunk?

BUNCE  
He's too busy digging, you stupid punk!

BOGGIS  
Don't call me a punk, you ridiculous skunk!

BUNCE  
Hold onto your knickers! Don't get in a funk!

BOGGIS  
How far is it back to the farm?

BUNCE  
Barely ten minutes, if that.

BOGGIS  
Yeah, Bean won't notice we've gone for a snack.

BUNCE  
He'll still be digging when we get back.

BOGGIS  
I'll eat seven chickens! I'm quite sure I will!

BUNCE  
I'll eat raw goose liver, till I've had my fill!

BOGGIS/BUNCE  
We will stuff ourselves up till we're bloated and then  
We will scuttle right back to that miserable den!

BUNCE  
Look! I can see the farmyard now!

*Boggis and Bunce disappear offstage and the scene changes.*

### [2|4] Scene IV: The Farmyards of Boggis, Bunce, and Bean

*The yard is deserted at first. Then Rita the Rat enters. She is slightly tipsy and dressed like a cross between an academic and an aging Californian hippie. In one hand she clutches Pascal's Pensées, while in the other she holds a bottle of Bean's most potent cider.*

RITA THE RAT  
What a day! What a day! What an excellent day!  
Those greedy old goofballs have gone away,  
And left me at peace with my books.  
They reckon they own the place, huh?  
Well, they don't!  
Except for that horrible thing in the cellar,  
I run this farm.

There are so many humans alive on the planet  
There are millions and billions and trillions—Oh man,  
It's a shocking amount!

But whatever the total, it is clear to me—  
Through my powers of deductive philosophy—  
There are far, far, far more rats!  
But d'you 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  
What's good for a rat is good for a fox!

MR. FOX  
I don't think so!

RITA THE RAT  
No one understands the rat.  
No one likes us. No one cares.  
You animals are all the same as the humans.

Let me explain. Rats are explorers—  
Eternally seeking for meaning  
And logic in all that we do...

MR. FOX (*interrupting*)  
Cut the philosophy, Rita Rat!  
Perhaps we can do a deal?

RITA THE RAT  
Cut the philosophy? Never.  
My mind is my life. Although...

MR. FOX  
Please, go on...

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.  
And I like my cider. Oh yes, I do!  
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 (*thinking for a moment*)  
It's a deal!

BADGER  
Take care, Mr. Fox, of Rita the Rat.  
It could be a trick. It could be a trap.  
She reads too many books.

MOLE (*to Mr. Fox*)  
We'll come with you.

MR. FOX  
No. I know I'll be back in a weasel's wink,  
In a butterfly's blink, in a foxy twink.  
Spine-oza you say...

*Mr. Fox slides a large barrel off the trapdoor into Bean's cellar and descends into the cellar. He closes the trapdoor after him. Badger and Mole look on with concern.*

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

RITA THE RAT  
You need to develop your powers of abstraction  
Don't you know what it is that controls every action?  
Spinoza knew it. I'll count to five.  
(*counting silently on her claws*)  
Can't you work it out? It's the need to survive.

MOLE  
I've heard you never should trust a rat!  
*Suddenly Mr. Fox reopens the trapdoor and reappears triumphantly. Behind him is a gigantic Porcupine. Rita is terrified.*

RITA THE RAT  
What is it?

MR. FOX  
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  
Foxcubs! Foxcubs!

*The Foxcubs appear as if from nowhere.*

MR. FOX  
Time for fun!  
Up to the Farmyard we'll go!

*Mr. Fox and the Foxcubs scamper out into the farmyard. Badger, Mole, and Porcupine go down into the cellar. Rita follows them nervously.*

## [2|5] Scene V: The Farmyards

*Mr. Fox and the Foxcubs run riot in the farmyard. The chicken coops and geese sheds are opened and chicken and geese run everywhere. The Foxes kill some of them, but others escape. Badger and Mole appear with Rita. Porcupine appears with a large wheelbarrow of cider flagons. They all leave together. Rita alone is left behind. She takes a swig from her bottle.*

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!

BUNCE

Robbed!

BOGGIS

Ransacked!

BUNCE

By whom?

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

BOGGIS

Oh my chickens! My chickens!

They've all escaped!

BUNCE

And my geese! They 'ave all flown away!

BOGGIS

It's those foxes, I bet you!

BUNCE

I want my revenge!

BOGGIS

Let's get back straight away!

BUNCE

There must be no delay!

BOGGIS/ BUNCE

We've got one thing to say:

Those foxes will pay for this!

*Boggis and Bunce scamper off back to the devastated den. Rita the Rat reappears. She takes another swig of cider.*

## [2|6] 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.*

MR. 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!

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

Like an earthworm!

BADGER

A toad!

MOLE

Or a slug!

ALL

No, nothing compares with the life of a miner!

BADGER/ MOLE

Oh, we tell you in our 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!

MR. 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!

ALL

It made cider inside her inside!

RITA THE RAT

'Cos she ate some green apples and died!

ALL

It made cider inside her inside!!

*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

I feel a tingling...

PORCUPINE

...I never felt before.

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,

We will grow old together, always snout to snout!

*Miss Hedgehog and Porcupine embrace and the lights dim. The sound of rain is heard getting closer and closer.*

## [2|7] Scene VII: The Devastated Den

*It is raining. Hard. Boggis and Bunce stand miserably under umbrellas, while beneath them in the crater, are Bean, Agnes, and Mavis, who has gone down to join her new friend. The crater is even deeper than it was in the previous scene. Tree roots are torn up everywhere and Agnes is now surrounded by large boulders. She is exhausted.*

BOGGIS

O when are we going back home?

BUNCE

We'll be stuck here forever!

BOGGIS and BUNCE

O let's go home now, let's go home!

Let's go now, let's go home!

BEAN

There's no way we leave without that fox!

MAVIS (*to Agnes*)

Let's call it a day dear! You've worked so long!

AGNES

I could go on forever, my jaws are so strong!

BOGGIS, BUNCE, BEAN, MAVIS

She could go on forever, her jaws are so strong!

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!

BUNCE

We will?

BOGGIS, BEAN, MAVIS, AGNES

Yeah, we will!

BUNCE

'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.*



ELIZABETH FUTRAL AS MISS HEDGEHOG AND KRISTA RIVER AS MRS. FOX. KATHY WITTMAN, BALL SQUARE FILMS





**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, Wergo 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 Montréal, 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 Châtelet, 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 clemenzza 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 *Xerxes* with Arcadia Players. Ms. River made her Tanglewood debut in the role of Jordan Baker in John Harbison's *The Great Gatsby*.

Ms. River's orchestral engagements have included appearances with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Handel & Haydn Society, Kansas City Chamber Orchestra, Harrisburg Symphony, Charlotte Symphony, Florida Orchestra, the Cape Cod Symphony, and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra.

A contemporary music advocate, 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.



**Andrew 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 Bohème*, 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.



**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-première 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.

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 Plácido 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 Euphorbia Records.



**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](http://tynandavis.com)

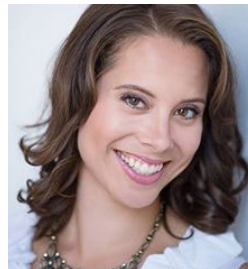


**Theo Lebow**, currently based at Frankfurt Opera and with an active career in both North America and Europe, continues to solidify his reputation as one of the finest young lyric tenors on international stages. His performances reveal exceptional intelligence and musical understanding along with dramatic 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 Plácido 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 *Fantastic 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](http://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 CHORUS OF TREES, KATH WITTMAN, BALL SQUARE FILMS

**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](http://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.



LIZ LINDER

**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 Bénédicte*, 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.

BMOP/sound, 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. BMOP/sound 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 BMOP/sound are uniquely positioned to redefine the new music concert and recording experience.

#### **FLUTE**

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

#### **OBOE**

Jennifer Slowik\*  
Laura Pardee Schaefer  
(English horn)

#### **CLARINET**

Michael Norsworthy\*  
Amy Advocat (bass clarinet)

#### **BASSOON**

Ronald Haroutunian\*  
Margaret Phillips  
(contrabassoon)

#### **HORN**

Whitacre Hill\*  
Kevin Owen  
Alyssa Daly  
Lee Wadenpfuhl

#### **TRUMPET**

Terry Everson\*  
Richard Watson

#### **TROMBONE**

Hans Bohn\*  
Alexis Doohovskoy

#### **TUBA**

Takatsugu Hagiwara

#### **PERCUSSION**

Robert Schulz\*  
Craig McNutt (timpani)  
Nicholas Tolle

#### **PIANO**

Linda Osborn

#### **HARP**

Amanda Romano

#### **VIOLIN I**

Charles Dimmick\*  
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  
Sarita Uranovsky  
Edward Wu  
Anna Korsunsky

#### **VIOLA**

Joan Ellersick\*  
Kate Vincent  
Noriko Futagami  
Nathaniel Farny  
Abigail Cross  
Emily Rideout

#### **CELLO**

Rafael Popper-Keizer\*  
Holgen Gjoni  
Katherine Kayaian  
Miriam Bolkosky  
Amy Wensink

#### **BASS**

Anthony D'Amico\*  
Scot Fitzsimmons  
Bebo Shiu

\*Principals

## BOSTON CHILDREN'S CHORUS PREMIER CHOIR

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Mara Breen	Nazeli Hagen
Madeleine Carbonneau	Isabella Keefe
Liliana Costa-Smith	Robin Kerr
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Chloe DeMello	Gabrielle Mathews
Emmaline Dillon	Ana Mejia
Olivia Dundon-Duvall	Kyra Merisier
Chloe Duval	Zariya Miller
Ifeyinwa Egbunike	Zoe Papastoitsis
Stella Fisher	Britta Purcell

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Jessie Rubin  
Jesse Simmon  
Gabiella Sinclair  
Gabrielle Stanfield  
Laura Strasner  
Demetra Vernet  
Nafisa Wara  
Victoria Wu  
Baiyu Zh

## 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



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