

## PETER GRIMES 2009 BACKSTAGE NOTES

Staff/Running crew: (37) stagehands (carpenters, electricians, av tech, prop men, fly men)  
(24) wardrobe (wardrobe mistress, dressers, stitchers, launderers)  
(11) wig and make-up crew  
(3) artistic team (conductor, director, designer)  
(11) music and production staff (incl. asst. designers, titles, stage mgrs, etc.)

Cast: (14) principals;  
(59) chorus (34 m, 25 f);  
(11) supers (all m);

Orchestra: (57) (33 strings, 8 w winds, 11 brass, timpani, percussion, celeste, harp, plus librarian and 2 key boards – organ and bell; several of the players come from the pit to make up the backstage banda -percussion, bass, violin, clarinets)

Total Budget: \$1,889,498 (for artists, orchestra, crews, building scenery and costumes, everything else . . .)

**Orchestra** While the usual complement of strings and winds, as well as the percussion and timpani are in this orchestra, there is also a celeste and harp in the pit. Backstage left there is also a keyboard and an organ. The fog horn sound is a tuba played unamplified backstage. There is also a banda of 5 players (including percussion) backstage left as the dance band.

**Scenery/Props** This production was built in 1973 for Lyric Opera of Chicago and SF Opera and we used this scenery in 1985. The scenery and props ship in 4 trailers. When the storage yard prepared to ship the trailers to us from Chicago in late March, it was discovered that one of the trailers was missing. It has never been found. We had the remaining trailers team driven to SD and immediately inventoried the scenery. In about 10 days our scenic studio rebuilt and painted the portions that were missing (close to 1/3 of the scenery). Our shop built this new scenery by comparing what existed with photos, without any construction drawings. There is very little open space on either side of the stage because the 5 settings include a lot of scenery. The scene changes within the acts are very complicated because while the scenery is moving, costume changes occur backstage, performers are getting in place, AND the banda is setting up. All of this must be done in a certain frame of time to correspond with the “Sea Interludes” between scenes. There is a jump pad behind the hut unit for the apprentice, so he doesn’t get hurt as he “falls off the cliff.” There are 3 stagehands to spot him as he “falls” as well as a stage manager to cue, a singer to scream, and a studio teacher. Partly because there are so many people who need to be behind this unit, we had to build a piece of masking that looks like a rock. The hut unit turns around and serves as a house exterior in other scenes. You may notice that the beams also do double duty as the structure of the tavern and Moot hall. Different walls and panels are replaced to create the two individual settings.

**Lighting** The lighting is designed by Gary Marder who was last here in 2003 to design *Norma*. Gary has been in residence to focus the lights, create the looks of the show, and set cues during the technical rehearsals. Over 400 lighting instruments are used – from the newest and best in modern stage lighting to traditional opera workhorses. If you laid the gel that colors the lights side by side, you could cover a football field. 20 color scrollers that fit on the ends of the instruments to change the color of the light, each with several colors of gel, are used. If all the lights were turned on together it would be 500,000 watts of electricity. That could power approximately 8,300 60watt household light bulbs or toast 17,000 pieces of bread. As usual, the performers are accented with follow spots; we use 3 front of house spots and 1 bridge spot in this production. There are 2 large format 4000 watt Pani projectors that create the rear projected moving clouds for the storm. A tradition in our electrics department is to name each boom (temporary movable pipes to hang lights on). This show's booms have names from the Disney movie *Finding Nemo*, so as to keep with the nautical themes of *Peter Grimes*. These booms have been named: NEMO, DORI, JACQUE, BRUCE, CRUSH, and FLO. While seemingly whimsically irreverent, this technique of naming helps personalize each boom which ensures its specific purpose is known by each electrician on the crew.

**Costumes** The costumes were designed by Tanya Moiseiwitsch for the Met. They have recently built a new production, so this is probably the last time this set of costumes will be used for *Peter Grimes*. These costumes were originally designed for a production with different scenery that was painted mainly blue. Thus, you may notice that blue is a dominant color in these costumes. The period of the costumes is 1830’s which is not a common opera costume period. There are 85 costumes in the show. Sou’esters are worn by several characters during the storm scenes; the older black styles are difficult to find today. Costume personnel need to work closely with the lighting staff because colored stage lighting can make certain fabrics and dyes in the fabrics look very different than under common white light. An example of this is Peter’s black cotton sweater that turned red under certain stage lighting. This black sweater had to be dyed green to cover the red that the lighting brought out. There are a couple of quick changes that take place backstage instead of in dressing rooms. Because the scene changes are very busy, finding places for the costume changes has been a challenge. Act I-1 and Act III-2 (beginning and end of opera) are essentially the same in terms of costumes, scenery, and stage business giving the feel that the town continues on as normal even after the terrible events.

**Wigs/Make-up** Principal makeup and wigs (including facial hair) are applied in a room at the end of the dressing room hallway or in individual dressing rooms by 4 M/U artists including the designer – Steven Bryant. The chorus and supers have their wigs and makeup applied by 7 more artists in the rehearsal hall downstairs. There are 30 sets of facial hair used on principals and chorus. After each performance, each piece needs to be cleaned of the adhesive and prepared to be applied for the next performance. Some of the performers are sprayed with water before they enter the stage so it looks as if they are wet from the storm. During the scene on the dock in which the chorus is “processing the fish,” a gallon of stage blood is used. Each of the prop fish has a “bloody” sponge in it and as they are gutted, you may notice the blood and guts. This is a special effects blood that flakes off when dry making it easy to clean.