

## **MOBY-DICK 2012 BACKSTAGE INFO**

Staff/Running crew: (30) stagehands (carpenters, electricians, av tech, prop men, fly men)  
(22) wardrobe crew (wardrobe supervisor, dressers, stitchers, launderers)  
(12) wig and make-up crew  
(8) artistic team (conductor, director, designer, choreographer, fight director)  
(16) music and production staff (incl. asst. designers, stage mgrs, digitext staff, etc.)

Cast: (12) principals  
(40) chorus (all male)  
(16) supers (10 profession climbers/acrobats; plus 5 male, 1 female-Pip double)

Orchestra: (66) (36 strings, 12 winds, 10 brass, 1 timpani, 3 percussion, 1 harp, & 1 librarian & 2 personnel managers)

Total Budget: \$2,398,956 (for artists, crews, sets, costumes, everything else . . .)

General Because of the amount of activity and placement of the set on stage right, the usual position for the stage manager had to be altered. She is on a platform above the deck about 8' up. The timing of many cues is critical not only for the look of the show, but also for safety. The stage manager must see all of the stage clearly in order to do this. Therefore, she has an HD monitor with a view of the entire stage for clarity. This required an upgrade of the video camera as well as the monitor. Before each performance, there will be a flying rehearsal, as well as climbing and fight rehearsals to ensure that everyone is reminded of all the safety measures they must take to ensure everyone's safety. Normally, a production is rehearsed on a flat floor that is taped to indicate where scenery pieces are. However, because this show is very vertical, we built a replica wall for the performers to rehearse climbing that we installed in Golden Hall. Performers also climbed ladders and pulled ropes attached to the ceiling in the hall.

Music The bell is an actual ship's bell and is played by the percussion section. You will also hear Ahab's leg sound from the percussion section (large stick knocked on a wooden box). The orchestra is very tightly packed into the pit.

Scenery This production was designed by Robert Brill whose work was last seen at SDO in *Wozzeck*. It was built in Dallas- Dallas Opera is the lead company of the co-commissioners. Before arriving in SD, this production was also seen in Adelaide and Calgary. In fact, Calgary Opera loaded it out only 2 weeks before we opened. Special arrangements had to be made for the 5 53' trucks to swiftly clear customs at the border and arrive in SD less than 2 days later so we could load it onto our stage in time for technical rehearsals. This production includes many challenging scenic items. The set is basically one LARGE curved unit. This unit is constructed of a heavy (estimated 80,000lbs) of steel structure. Because the drawbridge (50,000lbs of that 80,000lbs) lowers and is directly over the traps, we had to build scaffold in the basement below the stage to shore up the upstage traps. This drawbridge is operated manually by eight crew members. The unit is counter balanced with 6000 lbs. of counterweight, four hydraulic rams – giant industrial versions of the pistons commonly used on automobile hatchbacks. The counterweight, rams, eight crew AND six 3:1 block and falls allow us to manually raise and lower the bridge. When Calgary loaded out the show, we asked them not to completely disassemble the drawbridge. It came partially assembled in three units that weighed 8,000 lbs. each and were 8' w x 7' tall x 26' long. In order to get them off the trailers and onto the stage, we cross loaded the pieces in a towing yard to tilting flatbed (tow trucks commonly used to tow semi-tractor trailers). Once on the flatbed, they were transported to the stage dock and winched off the truck to the stage. This process saved about 150 hours of assembly time. The performers climb up the main unit on specially designed rungs that serve as several locations (whale boats, masts, other parts of the ship). In addition to climbing the wall, many performers also climb up the trusses that serve as the ship's masts (up to 40'). Further, we have two automated winches for flying Greenhorn and Ahab up and down. In addition, Pip is flown across the stage; we hired a flying company-ZFX- to provide the flying rig. The table is operated by a hydraulic motor built into the deck. It took 800 personnel hours to load-in and assemble the set.

Props This show requires an average amount of props including harpoons, whale blubber (made of foam), doubloons, etc. However, because many of the performers are barefoot and because the prop crew is responsible for keeping the deck clean and safe, there is a great deal of work keeping the backstage environment safe for bare feet. In addition, the crew regularly will apply "slip-no-more" to the wall so performers can safely maneuver up and down it. Near the beginning of the opera you will see Queequeg light a match and mime lighting his pipe. Even though it is only a couple of matches, we are required to get the fire marshal's approval before using open flame.

Lighting Donald Holder is the original lighting designer, though Gavan Swift (who lit the show in Adelaide) is in residence to light the show for us. Many of the lights are "moving lights." As this portion of the lighting is quite complex, we brought in an expert with moving lights to program them in addition to our usual board operator. This show uses more moving lights than we have ever used. The majority of the moving lights also have internal shutters or blades that can shape the light beam. We use them quite often to cut between the sails so that we can light singers without spilling on the sails. We also use a large amount of color scrollers (mounted at the front of instruments allowing us to use up to 16 colors on those light units). There are over 500 lighting fixtures used including over 50 moving lights. Some of the moving lights are 1500 watts and some are 1000 watts. The moving lights are arc sources that have to be dimmed mechanically. The conventional fixtures are either 575 watts or 750 watts and are dimmed with conventional dimmers. The light cues that were created for Dallas were also used in Adelaide and Calgary. Each time the Opera moves, the light cues have to be adjusted, as each theatre has slightly different lighting positions and the moving lights are oriented differently. 3 follow spots from the upper booth are used in this production to highlight the principle singers. The follow spot operators learn the show during the dress rehearsals. Their cues are called by the assistant lighting designer during the first couple of rehearsals and then called by the stage manager in the latter dress rehearsals and during all of the performances.

Projections This production is highly dependent on video projections. In order to aim the projectors at the stage properly at the correct angles, we had to put them at the back of the dress circle. Projectors get very hot and are loud when they run. We built a sound proof, air conditioned booth at the back of the dress circle to house the two projectors which use produce 18k watts of light each. It takes a 2.5 ton AC unit to cool the room. This booth eliminated a few seats. The original designer is Elaine McCarthy; however her associate Shawn Boyle has realized the design in SD. You will see several different types of video projections in this production. All are integral to telling the story. The sails and the main deck serve as the primary “screens” upon which the video is projected.

Costumes Costumes were designed by Jane Greenwood. Because this production closed in Calgary only 2 weeks before we opened the production, our fittings were later than usual. When the first truck arrived from Canada, our crew opened the boxes and organized what had to be sent to the dry cleaners immediately – the first load of cleaned costumes were returned to us that afternoon. Once we had the clean costumes, the shop crew organized everything for fittings which were done 3 at a time because they had to do 66 in 3 days. The look of the show is typical American 1840-50s with only a bit of ethnic influence (Queequeg). While the costumes may appear to be simple, they are carefully designed to illuminate each character. You won’t see zippers as they were not yet invented in this period (instead you’ll see ties and buttons). Nearly everyone wears a hat, especially the men w/modern looking hair – they generally have a knit cap. Sailors in this period often wore short pants called slops. Many of the performers are barefoot, especially while on the wall. The footwear has to be carefully thought out so that the performers can do all of the climbing and fighting the show requires. Most of the shoes have a thin coat of a rubber sealant on the soles to give them more traction. Nearly everyone that climbs the trusses, wears a rock climbing harness (under his pants) so he can hook onto the truss for safety while hanging on the “masts.” Many of the performers who handle the ropes wear a pair of “nippers” that are basically a palm of heavy muslin attached to the hands w/elastic so that the performers can simulate pulling ropes (while actually sliding their hands along them) w/o burning their palms. The artist who sings Pips has a 3 minute change out of one costume into the flying harness and “wet” costume. While she is offstage getting into this costume, there is a super who doubles Pip’s action. 20 choristers do a backstage change into their triworks costume – this includes taking off shirts, putting on oilcloth pants and getting grime/blood makeup applied – all while singing. Though we did not create Mr. Heppner’s peg leg, our costume supervisor organized the building of the peg leg for Jay Hunter Morris who was originally to be our Ahab and who sang the role in Australia. It was quite an involved process which included working with a physical therapist to cast the sling that holds the unused leg back. The peg has a cushioned socket which holds Ahab’s bent knee. The shin sits in a specially cast sling that is held up by a harness worn over his shoulders – all of this is covered by his great coat. It is a very real looking effect.

Wigs/Make-up Steven Bryant is the designer. There are only 3 wigs used in the production (we built the wig for Pip and Queequeg’s topknot). There is very little makeup used. The men who are in the blubber rendering scene (triworks) will have grime and blood applied backstage in the change before the scene. Queequeg has extensive tattoos on much of his body and face. This makeup is sponged and brushed on using stencils by 4 makeup artists (at the same time). After the initial application, the edges are cleaned up. This takes about 35-45 minutes. We have streamlined this process and it takes about a third of the time as the original production. Much research on Islander tattoos was done to create authentic yet theatrical designs. Many of the performers have been growing their own hair and facial hair in order to look naturally like sailors who have been at sea for months. Blood packs (Reel blood is the product used) are palmed and passed to Pip onstage in order for her to have bloody palms after sliding along the ropes.