THE HALLOWEEN TREE

INFORMATION AND MEDIA SAMPLES: https://www.altlyric.org/the-halloween-tree

Composer: THEO POPOV | Librettist: TONY ASARO

The Halloween Tree is a new opera, commissioned by American Lyric Theater in partnership with the Bradbury estate, with music by Theo Popov and libretto by Tony Asaro. Led by a mysterious guide, a group of children undertake an unforgettable journey to find their friend Pipkin, who has disappeared on Halloween night. Through their search, the children learn about the cultural and historical traditions that have led to the contemporary celebration of Halloween today.

“From Egypt to Mexico, from prehistory to modern day, the epic journey the boys in The Halloween Tree undertake in their search for their friend Pipkin manages to combine the light humor of Alice in Wonderland with the adventurous narrative of the Odyssey and the moral underpinning of A Christmas Carol. A spoonful of mystery and a carefully-measured cup of magic are the last ingredients that make this story universally exciting.”
- Theo Popov and Tony Asaro

CAST AND PERFORMANCE FORCES (all roles sung by adult singers)
Pipkin, a boy of 12 or 13. He is everyone’s favorite kid. (Tenor)
Tom, a boy of 12 or 13. Mexican-American. Pipkin’s best friend. (Baritone)
Kelly, athletic and scrappy tomboy. Same age as Tom & Pipkin. (Mezzo-Soprano)
J.J., a timid youth of 12 or 13. He is a mummy for Halloween every year. (Baritone)
Lynn, the brainiac know-it-all of the group. (Coloratura Soprano)
Lenny, Lynn’s brother, is a few years younger than the others. (High Tenor)
Moundshroud, part crypt keeper and part Willy Wonka. He is not human, though not entirely un-human either. The extent of his supernatural abilities is not known, but the laws of physics and time don’t apply to him. (Bass)
SATB CHORUS
ABOUT THE WRITERS

THEO POPOV (Composer) joined the CLDP at American Lyric Theater in 2011, and is currently collaborating with librettist Tony Asaro on an operatic adaptation of Ray Bradbury’s beloved novel, The Halloween Tree. His first opera, Nero Artifex, received a full stage production at Princeton University to enthusiastic acclaim in March 2010. A three-act drama in Classical Latin with libretto by Mariah Min and Veronica Shi, the opera presented one of history’s most notorious emperors as a well-meaning but incapable ruler, a gullible dreamer and unfortunate artist. Since then, Theo has focused primarily on writing for the theater stage. In May 2012, his second opera Once Upon the Wind, based on the Russian folk tale, “The Soldier Who Captured Death,” with libretto by Kate Light, was developed under the auspices of the Composer Librettist Development Program at the ALT during the first year of his residency. The one-act opera was subsequently performed by The Secret Opera in New York City in 2014, after being selected as a winner in the company’s inaugural Composers Competition. Most recently, Theo received the Second Annual UMD Opera Composition Competition Award for his opera Town Hall, libretto by E. M. Lewis, which tackles challenging questions of American politics. The opera was produced at the University of Maryland in 2018, and at Willamette University in 2019. In addition, Theo has written two puppet shows, a number of choral and orchestral pieces, art songs, chamber and electronic music. He completed his composition degree at Princeton University, where he studied with Steve Mackey, Peter Westerberg, Bill Whelan, Barbara White, Paul Muldoon and Kofi Agawu. He has also studied theremin with Lydia Kavina, voice with David Kellett, piano with Edmund Niemann and dramaturgy with Cori Ellison.

TONY ASARO (Librettist) received his undergraduate degree from Santa Clara University in 1998 in Theatre and Music, and later received his Master’s Degree in Musical Theatre Writing from the Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program at NYU, Tisch School of the Arts. In 2008, he was honored with the Anna Sosenko Assist Trust Award for songwriting. In 2011, he was a Resident Artist in American Lyric Theater’s Composer Librettist Development Program. Tony wrote the award-winning musical Our Country, with Dan Collins, which premiered in 2009 in NYC. Our Country was published by NYTE Small Press in the anthology, “2010: Plays and Playwrights”. The hit show then enjoyed a successful run in at the New York Musicals Theatre Festival in 2010. Tony is also co-founder and Artistic Director of FOGG Theatre in San Francisco. For FOGG, Tony has written music and lyrics for the hit musical The Cable Car Nymphomaniac; the children’s show, Flocked Together: The Green Parrots of Telegraph Hill; and the monodrama LifeCycle. An accomplished librettist, Tony has received commissions from choirs and opera companies to pen libretti for multiple operas and oratorios. His oratorio Such Beautiful Things, written with composer Jeff Parola, was commissioned by Choral Chameleon of New York City, and performed by them in 2010. His opera All Wounds Bleed, written with composer Chris Cerrone and commissioned by American Lyric Theatre, was presented in OPERA America’s New Works Forum in 2012, and received its world premiere at Tulsa Opera in 2013. Tony was commissioned to write the libretto for Zheng, an opera based on the life of mezzo-soprano Zheng Cao. Tony is currently collaborating with The Halloween Tree composer Theo Popov and soprano Lydia Lim on a chamber opera adaptation of the short story “City of Specters” by Bandi, a North Korean writer of dissident fiction.

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