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## ***Hercules vs. Vampires: Technicolor opera slays bloodsuckers with song Nine mighty operatic wailers and a 14-piece orchestra rattle Hollywood Theater, giving voice to a big, gaudy 1961 screen classic that pits mythology's greatest hero against legions of Hell fiends!***

**PORTLAND** – Opera Theater Oregon and Filmusik have hatched a two-headed mythological monster, soon to claw its way, amid a clamor of horns and operatic wailings, into the main auditorium at Hollywood Theater May 14-21. "Hercules Vs. Vampires" syncs a Technicolor cult classic with live performance of a new opera by Patrick Morganelli. Picture 'Clash of the Titans' with a singing Kraken, and you've got the idea.

"Hercules' is OTO and Filmusik's love child – a big, freaky combination of the best of both of us," says OTO Artistic Director Katie Taylor. "Working together, we've managed to create something grander and more thrilling than either of us could have done on our own."

OTO and Filmusik both hit the scene with ambitious live performance/film projects back in 2007. Filmusik's 'Superman Orchestra' paired up old Superman cartoons from the '40s with new scores by a brace of talented local composers and live voiceover by Willamette Radio Workshop. OTO came out the same year with 'Opera Cinema: Carmen,' a screening of Cecil B. DeMille's 1915 'Carmen' with live performance of the Bizet opera and live sound effects.

Five teams submitted proposals to compose the new opera that soundtracks 'Hercules.' The winner was LA's Patrick Morganelli, a seasoned film composer whose resume includes work with Oscar-nominated screenwriter, director and producer Randall Wallace (BRAVEHEART, PEARL HARBOR, WE WERE SOLDIERS) and producer Stephen Zapotoczny (WE WERE SOLDIERS, FIGHT OR DIE), and with composers Christopher Young (SPIDERMAN 3) and Michael Giacchino (LOST, STAR TREK).

"This is a labor of love for Patrick," says Taylor. Morganelli is, as it turns out, a huge fan of director Mario Bava and was very excited to resoundtrack one of his films.

The project, one of the most ambitious ever attempted by OTO or Filmusik, was made possible by a grant from REGIONAL ARTS AND CULTURE COUNCIL and WORK FOR ART.

**ABOUT THE FILM:** "Hercules Vs. Vampires" was one of many American titles given to the 1961 Italian sword and sandals epic, "*Ercole al Centro della Terra*" ('Hercules at the Center of the Earth'), directed by horror legend Mario Bava (BLACK SUNDAY, FASHION HOUSE OF DEATH) and starring horror legend Christopher Lee (LORD OF THE RINGS, STAR WARS EPISODES II and III, DRACULA HAS RISEN FROM THE GRAVE). This gorgeously-produced Technicolor gem is action-packed and wildly operatic in scope. The film follows a quest through hell by Hercules (*Mr. Universe 1958, Reg Park*) and Theseus (*George Ardisson*) - the object to rescue the beautiful Dianara (*Leonara Ruffo*) from eternal enslavement by the vampire-master, Lyco (*Christopher Lee*).

“I get to be the voice of Christopher Lee??? Freaking awesome!”  
—baritone Bobby Ray of Electric Opera Company, on tap to sing vampire master Lyco

Director, screenwriter and cinematographer Mario Bava was one of the greatest names from the “golden age” of Italian horror films, known for his stunning, sometimes unsettling visuals. His work influenced an entire generation of directors and cinematographers, including Martin Scorsese, Tim Burton and Frances Ford Coppola. ‘Hercules’ represents a slight departure from the horror genre for Bava. It is widely recognized as the best of the popular and prolific ‘Hercules’ series that poured out of Italy in the ‘60s.

**WHAT IS ‘SWORD AND SANDALS?’:** Italian-made adventure or fantasy films dating from about 1957-64 with contrived plots based very loosely on Greek and Roman mythology, legions of lumbering papier mache monsters, and stars drawn from a seemingly bottomless pool of doe-eyed pageant winners and body building superstars.

**THE CREATIVE TEAM:** OTO and Filmusik’s ‘Hercules vs. Vampires’ stars baritone Michael Miersma (Hercules), soprano Camelia Nine (Dianara), tenor David Simmons (Theseus), mezzo soprano Claire Craig Sheets (Persephone), baritone Bobby Ray (Lyco), soprano Helen Funston, tenor Ian Timmons (Keros), bass Paul Sadilek (Procrustes, the Rock Monster) and OTO Artistic Director Katie Taylor (Medea, the Oracle)...and features the glamorous girls and boys of the Opera Theater Oregon-Filmusik Technicolor Orchestra.

New operatic soundtrack composed/text adapted by Patrick Morganelli. Music direction by OTO Musical Director Erica Melton. Technical direction by Filmusik Artistic Director Galen Huckins. Produced and directed by OTO Artistic Director Katie Taylor.

**THE NUTS AND BOLTS:** Tickets, \$15 general admission, \$12 students and seniors, are available by calling PDXTix at 503-205-0715, or online at [www.operatheateroregon.com](http://www.operatheateroregon.com). All shows are all ages. Concessions are allowed in the auditorium and available throughout the evening. Group rates are available. Call 503-234-4515 for details. This world premiere production of “Hercules vs. Vampires” is generously supported by a grant from REGIONAL ARTS AND CULTURE COUNCIL and WORK FOR ART, and by the support of individual donors. Special thanks to BetaFilms, for the use of ‘Ercole al Centro della Terra.’

### **ABOUT Opera Theater Oregon**

Opera Theater Oregon's mission is to bring opera back into pop culture through creative editing and adaptation. Affordable, entertaining, and commonly available (bars, movie theaters, online), OTO helps more people connect with classical music in a way that feels relevant to their lives. OTO is a 501c(3) tax exempt organization, IRS Section 170b(2)iii for both federal and state tax purposes.

### **ABOUT Filmusik**

Based out of Portland, Oregon. Filmusik is a collaborative performance group of musicians, composers and actors creating a unique movie experience by performing a new soundtrack for classic films live in the pit.

## **Calendar Listing**

**WHAT:** Opera Theater Oregon and Filmusik present "Hercules vs. Vampires," a 1960s cult classic brought back to the big screen with all the dialogue turned into opera by composer Patrick Morganelli and performed live by nine glorious voices and a 14-piece chamber orchestra.

**WHEN/WHERE:** May 14, 18, 20 and 21 at 7:30pm/May 16, 2:00pm (matinee). ALL SHOWS ALL AGES (run time 90 minutes). Hollywood Theater, 4122 Northeast Sandy Boulevard, Portland, OR.

**WHO:** Produced by Opera Theater Oregon and Filmusik; new commissioned opera and adaptation of libretto by composer Patrick Morganelli; original 1961 film directed by Mario Bava (*Black Sunday*, *Fashion House of Death*); musical direction by OTO Musical Director Erica Melton; produced and directed by OTO Artistic Director Katie Taylor; technical direction by Filmusik Artistic Director Galen Huckins.

Starring a cast of rising operatic talent, including baritone Michael Miersma (Hercules), soprano Camelia Nine (Dianara), tenor David Simmons (Theseus), mezzo soprano Claire Craig Sheets (Persephone), and baritone Bobby Ray (Lyco). Made possible by a grant from REGIONAL ARTS AND CULTURE COUNCIL and WORK FOR ART.

**TICKETS:** \$15 (general admission). Call PDXtix at 503-205-0715, or go online to [operatheateroregon.com](http://operatheateroregon.com). Group rates available. Contact Katie at Opera Theater Oregon for details: 503-234-4515, [kt@operatheateroregon.com](mailto:kt@operatheateroregon.com).

**WHY:** Because it is awesome to watch Mr. Universe 1958 crush boulders on the big screen while appearing to sing beautiful music.

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 Regional Arts &  
Culture Council

