

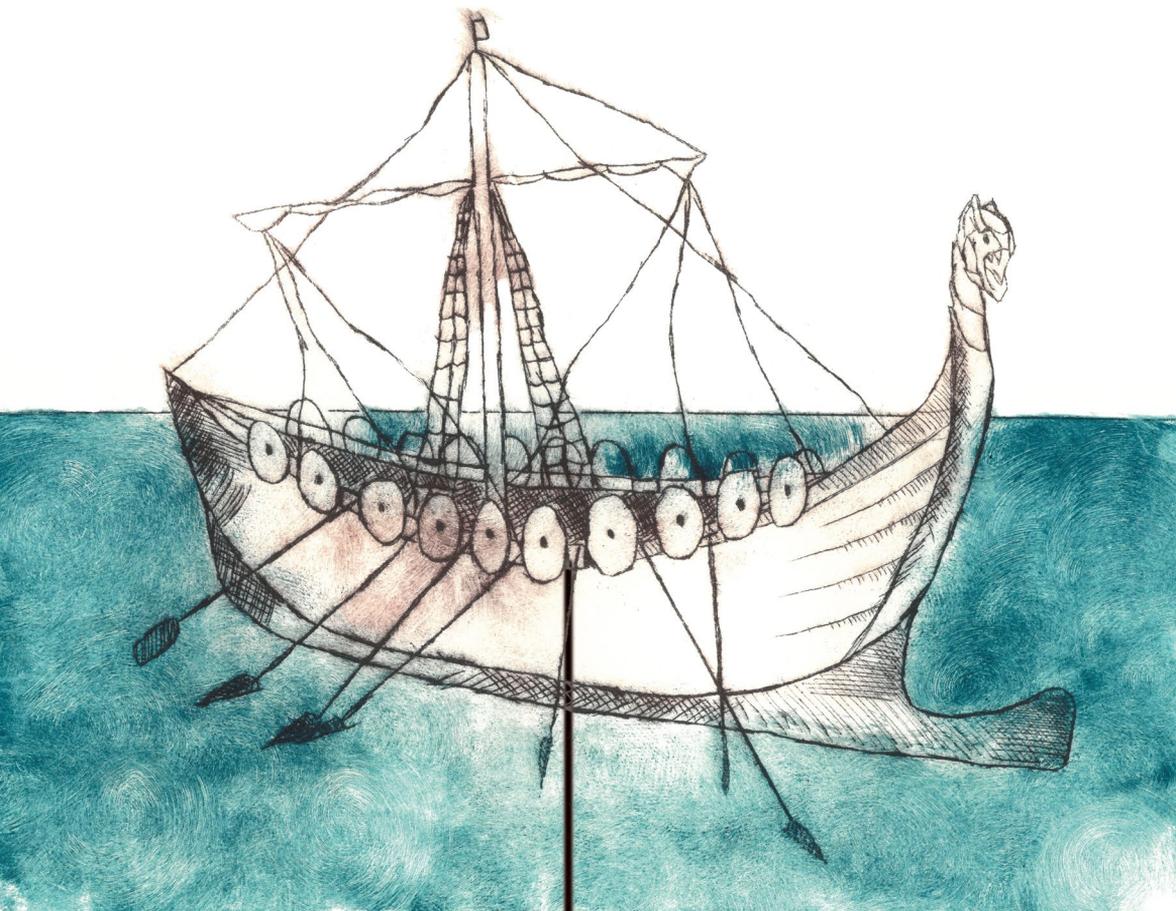
Whole School Concert



TONBRIDGE
SCHOOL

THE ARGO

THURSDAY 16 & FRIDAY 17 MARCH 2023 | 7.30PM
CHAPEL OF ST AUGUSTINE



HEADMASTER'S WELCOME



I am delighted to welcome you to this evening's Whole School Concert, which features the world premiere of the musical work *The Argo*, inspired by the legendary voyage of Jason and the Argonauts.

Jason is set a challenge to prove his worth by bringing back the fleece of the Golden Ram. The School's former Composer-in-Residence, Hywel Davies, and our Director of Music, Mark Forkgen, have set their own creative challenge to the boys and staff and it has been great fun, but no less a feat, to share in the weekly Chapel rehearsals and to see *The Argo* stirring into life as she prepares to set sail this evening.

Music is interwoven into the life of the School. The Chapel of St Augustine plays a significant part in this as a space in which we come together regularly as a School community. It seems entirely appropriate that *The Argo* should be performed in the beautiful nave which, as its name suggests, has its own connotations of ships and journeys by sea.

Of course, this is a voyage that was originally due to set sail exactly three years ago, when the pandemic caused us to postpone all live events. Now that we are ready once more, I'm sure that being part of a Whole School Concert will be a memorable experience for all our boys, especially as it is something they will only take part in once during their entire time at Tonbridge. The sense of anticipation has certainly been much in evidence across the School throughout the Lent Term.

This evening the chorus of boys is joined by the School Symphony Orchestra, soloists, choristers from Hilden Grange and Yardley Court, and the children of The New Beacon School Choir. We are grateful to everyone who has been involved in devising and supporting this creative project. We hope that our audience enjoys the experience as much as we have done in preparing for tonight's premiere.

James Priory
Headmaster

PROGRAMME

Academic Festival Overture, Op.80
Brahms

The Argo (First Performance)
Hywel Davies

Jason (tenor)
Bradley Smith
Pelias, Heracles, Phineas (baritone)
Toby Stafford-Allen
Narrator (bass-baritone)
Laurence Williams OT
Orpheus (treble)
Christopher Walker (SH)
Solo cello
Ben Michaels OT

Youth Chorus
Tonbridge School Chapel Choir Trebles
(From Hilden Grange Preparatory School and Yardley Court School)
The New Beacon Choir

Whole School Chorus
Thursday 16 March
School, Park, Parkside, Welldon, Smythe, Cowdrey

Friday 17 March
Judde, Hill Side, Ferox, Manor, Whitworth, Oakeshott

Tonbridge School Symphony Orchestra

Conductor
Mark Forkgen

PROGRAMME NOTES

Academic Festival Overture, Op. 80 Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Although not an academic himself, Johannes Brahms received several honours from academic institutions. In 1877 the University of Cambridge offered to award him a Doctorate in Music, which required his presence at the ceremony. However, Brahms had a paralyzing distaste for sea travel and was unwilling to face the Channel crossing, forcing him to relinquish the honour.

When the German University of Breslau offered a similar honour two years later, Brahms sent his thanks - on a postcard. This prompted Berhard Scholz, a long-time friend and director of music in Breslau, to suggest that a musical response would be a more appropriate form of thanks. Brahms responded with *the Academic Festival Overture* - his picture of student life with full symphonic treatment. The first performance, conducted by the composer, was given in Breslau the following January to an audience of town and university dignitaries. The academic community was somewhat taken aback by a work that was certainly more festive than academic, possibly even frivolous. Brahms included nearly half a dozen popular songs of the time, four of which were beer-hall songs that were popular among German college students. He was keen to evoke the full range of students' experiences from academic endeavour to parties and, of course, to have some fun at the professors' expense as well.

The overture begins mysteriously in C minor, with a hint of a march, before building to the first of the student songs, presented majestically by the violas as a German chorale. As the music progresses, the woodwind and brass sing the praises of beauty, *Wir hatten gebaut ein stättliche Haus* (We had built a stately home). The opening theme returns in a triumphant, C major version for the full orchestra, leading to the second student song, *Der Landesvater* (The father of our country), introduced by the second violins in a sweeping, lyrical fashion, accompanied by pizzicato lower strings. *Was kommt dort von der Höh* (The Fox

Song), a song ridiculing freshmen raw from the provinces, appears with great humour on the bassoons, accompanied by off-beat strings, with the full orchestra joining in the fun for its second statement. There then follows a more serious, academic recapitulation in which the themes reappear with further development. However, the seriousness is short-lived, as the entire forces, including percussion and blazing brass, combine for a rendition of the oldest and most popular European student song *Gaudeamus igitur* (While we are young, let us rejoice), bringing the work to a triumphant close.

The Argo Hywel Davies (b. 1962)

The story of Jason's quest for the Golden Fleece, accompanied by a band of heroes, is full of danger, adventure, comradeship and betrayal. It was a favourite of the Greeks - there are many early versions of the story, and no definitive version to follow. Writers cherry-picked from the story to suit their needs, and our approach to this evening's work has been the same. We have mostly stuck to *The Argonautica*, a Greek epic poem from the third century BC by Apollonius of Rhodes - which sounds a bit dry, but is far from it, particularly in its most recent translation by Aaron Poochigian!

Also in my head was the 1963 film, which featured the animation of Ray Harryhausen and the music of Bernard Herrmann - like many, I'm sure, this was my first encounter with the story of Jason and the Argonauts.

Tonight's work is just the first half of the story - it begins with the usurping of Jason's father from the throne of Iolcus and ends with Jason and the Argonauts hearing Phineas' prophecy and heading off for Colchis, where the Golden Fleece, and Medea, await.

A good 'quest' story has for me many similarities with ideas of pilgrimage. There is a goal - a place, a person or an object - but in the end the story is about how those on the

quest (or pilgrims) are transformed by their journey, rather than the attainment of the goal. Jason's 'journey' is from innocence to experience.

In this work Jason first appears as an inexperienced youth who is drawn into a quest, has to get a boat built, amass a crew and voyage to the edge of the known world to get an object guarded by a dragon. Because of the difficulty of the task - the known and suspected dangers en route, and the fact that Colchis is at the edge of the known world - Jason is expected to fail (Pelias agrees to the quest because he is pretty sure that Jason will fail). In addition, Jason has to lead a crew full of characters wiser, stronger and more experienced than he is.

The Whole School Chorus play Heroes and Courtiers. The Youth Choir play the Oracle and Heroes. The narrator (mostly accompanied by a solo cellist) sings independently of all other performers.

* * * * *

The Narrator sets the scene and tells of Pelias' successful usurping of Jason's father from the throne of Iolcus. Pelias thinks he has killed all the heirs to the throne but is unaware that Jason's mother is pregnant. Pelias, although in power, becomes paranoid that he too will be usurped. So he consults the Oracle, who tells him that he should "beware the man with one shoe" but offers no name. To find this man, Pelias decides to hold games at which all sons of Iolcus will compete. Jason, now a youth, returns to Iolcus. On his journey Jason loses a shoe crossing a river and, on his arrival, is recognised by Pelias. Jason then realises that he is face to face with the man who murdered his siblings, and imprisoned his father. He demands the return of the throne - but Pelias says he can't just give up the throne, so asks Jason to suggest something. Jason comes up with the idea of a long, dangerous quest to prove his worth - perhaps to get the Golden Fleece from Colchis. Pelias agrees and the quest is set.

Jason reflects on his quest, and asks Argus to build a ship. Then he starts putting together a crew - these are the Heroes (who include Heracles, Orpheus, Castor, Pollux and many others) who are looking for something to do. The Heroes assume that Heracles will lead the quest but Heracles declines, saying that only Jason can lead the quest. The Argo is prepared for the voyage and the Heroes sing a hymn before they embark on their journey.

The Heroes sing as they row - at first all goes well: "Clear skies, gentle swell" reports Lynceus the lookout. However, disagreements start amongst the Heroes. Insults and eventually blows are exchanged and a fight ensues despite Jason's attempt to calm the situation down. Jason looks to Orpheus to resolve the situation. Orpheus does this by pointing out that, although we are individuals, we are "better as one" and although a comrade may "have the breath of a goat", he has "the heart of a brother". The Heroes join in with the refrain and the journey continues. Now Jason fully realises the enormity of his quest.

The next section is taken by the Narrator, who catalogues some of the adventures of the first part of the voyage - the women of Lemnos; the tragedy of the Doliones; the loss of Hylas and then the abandoning of the distraught Heracles; and rude King Amykos. Finally the Argo reaches Thynia, home of blind seer Phineas.

Phineas tells of his blinding by Zeus for being too free with his prophecies and also that Zeus has left him the Harpies. Jason offers to deal with the Harpies and a trap is set. The Harpies are driven away by Calais and Zetes. Phineas then outlines the landmarks that Jason and the Heroes should look out for on their journey to Colchis. This includes how to get past the Dark Rocks which clash together. Finally Phineas makes a deliberately vague prophecy that at an island called Ares "you will find help from the grim sea". Again Jason is struck by the difficulty of his mission, saying "I have no experience" and "Colchis lies pressed against the edge of the earth". A few consoling words from Phineas are followed by a final chorus, a reprise of the hymn - as the Argo sets sail for Colchis.

THE ARGONAUT MYTH

In its earliest form, the myth probably saw the Argonauts journey to a far East beyond the known world; but by the third century BC, Greek sailors had travelled far and wide in journeys of colonisation, conquest and exploration, and Jason's quest could be plotted on a map.

On the outward journey, the Argo stops on the island of Lemnos in the eastern Aegean, then various times in the Propontis (between the Hellespont and the Bosphorus) – most notably when they encounter the blind prophet Phineus, who advises Jason and his crew how to advance into the Black Sea. Hywel Davies' work leaves the Argonauts here, on the threshold of their first great test (negotiating the Clashing Rocks) and with some idea of the 'dangers ahead to the East, where Colchis awaits'.

Much of the story still lies in the future, then – the journey along the south coast of the Black Sea, the Argonauts' encounter with Aeetes (the fearsome king of Colchis), the love-affair of Medea (Aeetes' daughter) and Jason, Medea's magical assistance helping Jason to complete a terrifying challenge set by the king and then to seize the Fleece, the Argonauts' dramatic escape up the Danube with Medea on board, their wanderings in the western and southern Mediterranean, and their final return to Iolcus. Jason will successfully complete his quest – but at no small cost.

A number of the Argonauts are killed or lost en route; the Heroes' arrival brings suffering and unhappiness to many; and the shadow of tragedy looming in the future darkens even some of the happier episodes in the story. For when Jason returns home and takes a grisly revenge on Pelias (whose daughters are persuaded by Medea to murder their father), Jason and Medea are banished.

They settle in Corinth, but there Jason betrays Medea by marrying another woman – only for the sorceress to wreak a horrific revenge (killing her own children by Jason, as well as his new bride). Jason will live in misery for the remainder of his life; in some versions of the story, his death is brought about by the rotten stern of the Argo falling on him when he is asleep beneath it. Clearly, this is not a myth with a Hollywood ending.

James Burbidge
Head of Classics



HYWEL DAVIES



Hywel Davies is a composer, sound artist and installation artist who lives and works in Somerset. He worked as Composer-in-Residence at the School for a number of years, running composition projects, composing a Magnificat and Nunc dimittis for the Chapel Choir and creating a sound installation with Sixth Form musicians for Old Big School.

His wide-ranging output includes concert works, dance scores, electronic and electroacoustic works, ringtones, sound installations and installations that don't involve any sound at all. From 2013 to 2017 he was Composer-in-Residence with Kokoro (Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's New Music Ensemble), which performed his works at the Cheltenham International Festival, Bournemouth Festival by the Sea and at King's Place in London, as well as broadcasting on BBC Radio 3 (all conducted by Mark Forkgen).

MARK FORKGEN



Mark Forkgen has been Director of Music at Tonbridge School since 2006. His previous posts included Conductor of the Scottish Schools' Orchestra for ten years and Music Director of the Ealing Youth Orchestra and Dorset Youth Orchestra for eight years.

Mark is also the Music Director of Canticum and London Concert Choir as well as Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor of Kokoro, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's New Music Ensemble. He has worked with many leading orchestras, including the Royal Philharmonic, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, the City of London Sinfonia, the English Chamber Orchestra, the Orchestra of Opera North and the Composers' Ensemble, appearing at all the major venues including the Royal Festival Hall, the Barbican, the Royal Albert Hall and Royal Opera House, Covent

Hywel is a winner of the George Butterworth Prize for Compositions and a recipient of an Arts Council England International Fellowship and a Muttart Foundation Scholarship. He has a long-standing relationship with musicians in Trondheim (Norway), which has resulted in works for the Trondheim Sinfonietta and Trio Alpaca. He has made sonic installations for Kent County Council, Arts Council England, the National Trust, Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru, b-side Festival and Bath International Festival. His most recent sound work, *Pilgrim* (commissioned by the National Trust) at Mottisfont Abbey (Hampshire) ran from January 2020 to April 2022. This outdoor sound installation featured Japanese percussionist Kuniko Kato and Tonbridge alumni Laurence Williams OT, who sings the role of Narrator in *The Argo*. In 2022 he was the recipient of a DYCP award from the Arts Council to research and trial self-curated sound installations in the home in partnership with QUAD gallery in Derby.

Garden. He has given performances throughout Europe and the USA and has recorded for BBC Radio 3 and Classic FM in this country, as well as broadcasting for national stations in France, Germany, Denmark and Bulgaria.

In contemporary music, Mark has given the first performances of over 150 works, while also acting as artistic advisor for a number of highly acclaimed festivals including *Sir Peter Maxwell Davies' 70th Birthday*, *Stravinsky: Rite On*, *A Festival of Britten*, *Music of the Americas and East meets West*. His wide range of conducting includes performances with Deep Purple and conducting a project for the Chelsea Festival based on Pink Floyd's *Atom Heart Mother* with renowned guitarist David Gilmour.

Mark's recordings with Canticum and Kokoro have been highly recommended on radio and in both musical and national press. He also works outside school as a pianist, specialising in 20th and 21st century repertoire.

BRADLEY SMITH



Bradley studied at St John's College, Cambridge, and the Royal Academy of Music. While at the Academy he was a prize-winning finalist in the Joan Chissel Prize for Schumann Lieder, winner of the Blythe-Buesst Aria Prize, and winner of the Tom Hammond Opera Prize.

In his oratorio work he is regularly engaged to sing the Evangelist and tenor solos in the Bach passions, Handel's *Messiah*, and other repertory staples with major orchestras internationally. Recent performances include Britten's *Serenade for Tenor and Horn*, Schumann's *Liederkreis Op. 39*, Fauré's *La Bonne Chanson*, Britten's *War Requiem*, and Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*.

Operatic highlights include Damon in Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, Mr Denham in Jeffrey Ching's *The True Story of King Kong*, Arsete in Cesti's *La Dori* and Lelio in Cesti's *Le Nozze in Sogno*, Oduardo in Handel's *Ariodante*, Albert Herring

in Britten's *Albert Herring*, le Prince Charmant in Isouard's *Cendrillon*, Tamino in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, and Peter Quint in Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*. With Royal Academy Opera he played Tom Rakewell in Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*, the Male Chorus in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*, le Prince Charmant in Massenet's *Cendrillon*, and le petit vieillard in Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges* (with the BBC Symphony Orchestra).

Recent engagements include concerts in the Netherlands and Scandinavia, as well as UK performances at St John's Smith Square, Bristol St George's, Birmingham Symphony Hall, King's Place, and the Presteigne Festival in North Wales.

Future engagements include song recitals with Angela Hewitt in Italy, Steven Devine in London, as well as concert performances with major orchestras around the UK.

TOBY STAFFORD-ALLEN



Toby Stafford-Allen is one of four singing teachers at Tonbridge School. He studied at the Royal Northern College of Music, with whom he made his international debut singing Guglielmo in *Così fan Tutte* at the Aix-en-Provence Festival. He then joined English National Opera, where his major roles included Guglielmo, Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte*, Schaunard in *La Bohème* and Pish-Tush in *The Mikado*.

In the UK, he has sung Papageno for Glyndebourne Touring Opera, Belcore in *L'Elisir d'amore*, Guglielmo with Opera Holland Park, and First Officer in *The Death of Klinghoffer* with Scottish Opera. International performances include Henry in *The Fairy Queen* in Barcelona, Mars and Euro in Cesti's *Il Pomo d'oro* at the Batignano Festival and Schaunard at the Bregenz Festspiele.

His extensive concert repertoire includes Mozart's *Requiem*, Fauré's *Requiem*, Haydn's *Creation* and Bach's *B Minor Mass*. In 2006-7 he received excellent reviews for the role of

Giuseppi Palmieri in Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Gondoliers* for ENO, and Figaro in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* for Opera Holland Park.

In the 2009 BBC Proms season, he performed the role of Archibald Grosvenor in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience* under Sir Charles Mackerras. In September 2007, Toby made his debut at the Hamburg Staatsoper as Donald in *Billy Budd* and the following year sang *Chao-Sun* in a new production of Judith Weir's *A Night at the Chinese Opera* for Scottish Opera.

His recordings include *Morales* in *Carmen* under David Parry and Journalist in *Lulu* under Paul Daniel (both for Chandos), *Schaunard* under Wolf Schirmer for ORF, and *Trouble in Tahiti* under Paul Daniel for a BBC DVD.

LAURENCE WILLIAMS



Laurence was a music scholar and member of Ferox Hall at Tonbridge School between 2003 and 2008. He spent a year as Organ Scholar at St George's Chapel, Windsor before reading Music at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he was also a choral scholar. He then trained at The Guildhall School of Music and Drama and graduated with distinction and a Concert Recital Diploma.

Acclaimed for his eloquent singing and rich tone, his recent performance highlights include Bach's *Mass in B Minor* with the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra; a live broadcast of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* with Stephen Layton and the Auckland Philharmonia; Adonis in Blow's *Venus and Adonis* for Hampstead Garden Opera; and Duruflé's *Requiem* solos for Windsor and Eton Choral Society.

In his choral career he has sung with such prominent ensembles as Polyphony, Gabrieli Consort and the Monteverdi Choir, performing throughout Europe to sold-out audiences.

As a conductor, he is the Music Director to three choirs, including a children's choir in North London. He is passionate about introducing all voices to choral music and has extensive experience inspiring non-professional musicians. Laurence loves how his work as a conductor helps inform his performing career and vice versa.

BEN MICHAELS



Ben Michaels (FH 2007-2012) is a British cellist based in London. He was first taught by his father, Joel Michaels, and later studied with Felix Schmidt and John Myerscough at the Royal Academy of Music.

Ben is passionate about chamber and contemporary music. As a founding member of the Hill Quartet, with whom he was a Chamber Fellow at the Academy 2020-22, he enjoys a varied chamber recital schedule alongside solo performing; he has a particular interest in commissioning and supporting new works written for solo cello. In 2022 he was awarded the inaugural Keith Harvey Memorial Award by the London Cello Society, which will support the commission of a set of six short solo works written by a selection of cellist-composers. Alongside these projects, he regularly performs with several chamber and symphony orchestras around the UK.

At the Academy, Ben was awarded the Lesley Alexander and Sir John Barbirolli Memorial Awards in recognition of his achievements during his degrees. His studies were made possible by generous support from The Countess of Munster Musical Trust (Derek Butler Award), Help Musicians UK (Ian Fleming Award), The Janatha Stubbs Foundation, The Craxton Memorial Trust, The Emanuel Hurwitz Chamber Music Trust, The VCT Trust, The ACH Crisford Charitable Trust, The Peter Adams Trust and The Tom Cocklin Memorial Trust.

Before exploring his passion for music, Ben studied Biochemistry at Clare College, Cambridge.

SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Violin

Ben Adams (OH)
Johnnie Averdieck (WW)
TK Buristrakul (HS)
Jerry Chen (Sc)
Marcus Chow (PH)
Mackenzie Lai (OH)
Marcus Lai (OH)
Sebastian Lau (MH)
Aaron Lee (PH)
Louis Mok (PS)
Ross Mulley (CH)
Max Mussavian (WW)
David Ng (PH)
Hugh O'Donnell (PH)
Virgile Patricot (WW)
Alastair Wu (MH)
Toby Xu (FH)
Alexander Young (PS)
Jayden Young (PS)

Viola

Ben Kong (Sc)
Oscar McIlwham (PS)
Tristan Peters (MH)
Angus Wong (Sc)

Cello

Thomas Gardner (CH)
Siwei Han (PH)
Alex Percival (CH)
Christopher Robertson (PH)
Thomas Rout (JH)
Nick Samuel (WH)
Alexander Schreurs (FH)
Angus Todd (WW)
Oliver Wilson (MH)

Double Bass

Julian Cheung (MH)
Juliet Burnett
Katy Furmanski

Flute and Piccolo

Isaac King (CH)
Arthur Merriman (WW)
Martin Xu (MH)

Oboe

Calvin Ho (JH)
Conrad Phillpot (JH)
Alexander Rayment (WW)

Clarinet and Bass Clarinet

Ming Chan (PS)
Tom Kwok (MH)
Lucas Mulley (CH)

Bassoon

Isaac Chan (MH)
Kieran McWilliams (SH)
Alex Walker (SH)

Horn

Chung Ho Lam (JH)
Jasper Southgate (MH)
Dominic Thomas (WW)
Sarah Johnson

Trumpet

Sasha Batchelor (OH)
Noah Durling (SH)
James Flint (WW)
Luke Mathew (SH)

Trombone

Sami Barker (OH)
Adrian Pan (JH)
Will Spedding (PS)

Tuba

Dylan Tam (PS)

Timpani

Maxwell Barton (Sc)

Percussion

Alastair Cheuk (Sc)
James Tam (MH)
Brandon Tang (PS)

THE ARGO

Part One

A dramatic oratorio

Music by Hywel Davies, Text by E.H. Davies (except Rowing Song)

PROLOGUE

NARRATOR In Thessaly Iolcus nestles on the shores of Pagasae ruled by good King Aeson; there is peace and justice. But his half brother Pelias, Poseidon's bastard, is hungry for the throne. He plots and schemes, conspires, and throws King Aeson into a dungeon, and kills his heirs.

PELIAS Now I am king,
I have no rivals.
Power is mine,
I have no rivals.

NARRATOR But Pelias was mistaken, there was an heir, hidden in the womb of Queen Alcimede. At the birth her cries were hidden by false wailing of a stillbirth. Aeson sent mother and child away to Mount Pelion and wise centaur Chiron. Years pass, Jason grows, from child to youth, from youth to man, strong, and wise to his birthright. Years pass, Pelias grows uneasy, suspicious, fearful.

PELIAS Everywhere I sense treachery,
In the shadows schemers, plotters,
Maybe a pretender, like me, waits.
Who will it be?
When will they come?

Oracle! Oracle!, Oracle! Oracle!

ORACLE Pelias, King Pelias, King of Iolcus.

PELIAS Oracle, all seeing Oracle,
Who should I fear?

ORACLE Pelias, King Pelias, King of Iolcus,
Only one man can take your throne.

PELIAS Who? Who? Who is this man?

ORACLE Beware! Beware!
Beware the man with one shoe!

PELIAS What? What? What is his name?

ORACLE One shoe, one shoe, beware the man with one shoe! . . .

NARRATOR Torment for Pelias.
There is someone,
He watches and waits
For the man with one shoe.

PELIAS I must find him,
Before he finds me!
I shall hold games
To honour Poseidon.
All sons of Iolcus must come,
And he, One Shoe,
Will be among them.

SONS OF IOLCUS We have come for the games at Iolcus . . .
Long we have travelled
From lands far away

We have come for the games at Iolcus

The air is sweet here,
Trees like old friends
Wait by the roadside
To greet us.

(+Jason)
JASON We have come for the games at Iolcus.
I have come for the games at Iolcus.
I have travelled from Mount Pelion.
I seem to have lost a shoe

PELIAS What? You only have one shoe?

JASON Just one shoe, just one shoe.

PELIAS I am King Pelias,
I've been waiting for you!

JASON Pelias, Pelias,
You murdered my sisters, my brothers,
Where is my father?

The throne is my birthright;
Step aside! Step aside! . . .

PELIAS Jason, Jason,
What would you do if you were in my shoes?
I cannot just step aside,
Step aside,
What of my honour?
So what would you do if you were in my shoes?

JASON I would send you on a quest,
To prove your worthiness,
Something dangerous,
And far, far away,
Such as get the Golden Fleece from Colchis
And in return I would relinquish the throne.

PELIAS Interesting . . .
Then that is your fate, that is your fate.
Fleece for throne, fleece for throne.
Fleece for throne, fleece for throne.

+COURTIERS Fleece for throne, fleece for throne.

JASON If this is the only way, then it must be my way.

JASON So my fate lies to the east at Colchis.
Each day the sun will trace my path across the water:
Follow that light to reach the fleece,
Follow that light for my father's honour.

I will need a ship for my journey.
Fit for the trials I will face on my voyage.
Argus, only you could build this ship.
Argus, will you build me this ship?

Give me a prow that will cleave the waves,
And oars like wings of a bird
So it can fly through the water.
Make it strong and proud on the sea.
Make it a haven, far from home.

NARRATOR On the beach, at high water mark,
Argus gathered his goods around him:
Cedar plank, twisted hemp, pine tar,
And linen for a sail.
Athene gives a timber from the seeing oak of Dodona,
And guides Argus as he builds.

JASON The ship is built,
I have a ship!
I will call it the Argo.

I have a ship,
But no crew,
A ship but no crew.

I'll need the strong, the quick,
The keen and the loyal.
I'll need the brave and the wise
In equal measure.

Who will join me on my quest to Colchis?

HEROES Did he say 'quest'?
Did he say 'wise'?
Did he say 'brave'?

JASON Who will join me on my quest to Colchis?
I'll need the brave and the wise in equal measure.

HEROES He did say 'quest!
He did say 'wise!
He did say 'brave!
He did say 'quest!
He did say 'wise!
He did say 'brave!
He did say 'strong!
He did say 'keen!
That's us!
We are your crew!

JASON Who is in your number?
Who is among you?
Is wise Orpheus with his lyre?

ORPHEUS Here I am!
With my lyre in my hand!

JASON And mighty Heracles with his club?

HERACLES Here, I'm here!
With my club,
I'm here,
With my beard,
I'm here!

JASON What of those twins,
Castor and Pollux?

CASTOR Here!

POLLUX Here!

JASON Wingèd Zetes and Calais?

ZETES / CALAIS Here we are!

JASON Admetus fair and kind?

ADMETUS I'm here good Sir!

JASON Strong men Polyphemus and Telemon?

POLYPHEMUS Here!

TELEMON Here!

JASON Lynceus the lookout?

LYNCEUS Here!

JASON And Tiphys the Helmsman?
Wisest of all sailors,
Tiphys are you there?

TIPHYS I was roused by Athene,
To guide you on your course to Colchis.

HEROES Only one can lead us—
Heracles!
You must take command of our quest.
Heracles!

HERACLES I shall not accept this honour,
Only he that brought us together can lead us.
Jason, Jason.

JASON Brothers, our ship awaits us.
Brothers, our fate awaits us.

NARRATOR And so Jason told of his quest,
Of his father and Pelias.
His new companions made their preparations:
Lots were drawn for the rowing benches,
An altar was built at the water's edge.
Prayers and sacrifices were made,
Grains of barley thrown.

HYMN TO THE ARGO

HEROES Now begins our quest to Colchis,
From the strand at Pagasae,
Great Apollo guard and guide us
Through our many trials ahead.

Climb aboard and take our places,
Raise the sail and catch the breeze,
Draw the keel into the water,
Dip the oars into the sea.

To the East we make our journey,
Bright-eyed with the light of dawn.
Side-by-side with brother Jason,
For the throne to which he's born.

Time to leave familiar coastlines,
To the edge of our known world.
Great Apollo guard and guide us
Safely home across the sea.

ROWING SONG

HEROES Heave! Heave!
Heave! Heave!
Pull from bow,
Pull astern,
Move your oars,
Pull from port,
Pull from starboard,
Move your oars,
Keep your strokes and posture strong

For we have a journey long.
Keep good rhythm and good rate,
Work in tandem with your mate.

JASON Lynceus, what do you see?

LYNCEUS Clear sea, clear sky, gentle swell.

JASON Tiphys, Tiphys,
Steer us well,
Steer us safe.

TYPHYS Our course is true,
Our course is true,
I steer into the morning sun,
I steer into the morning sun,
All's well!

JASON All's well!

HEROES Hey!
Hey you!
Fool!
Get that oar out of my face!
Move it!
Pull your weight! Now!
Hey watch out!
Oh go to the crows!
Moros
Ei! Gràson, kunops Hey!

JASON Brothers, stop, don't fight, embrace!

Orpheus, wise Orpheus, help me.

ORPHEUS (Treble) Be calm, Jason, be calm.
Be calm, brothers, be calm.
Remember our mission, and Jason,
We are bound by one ambition.
Listen, brothers, listen my new brothers.
We are as the many stones that make a great wall;
As the grains that make a harvest;
And grapes that make our wine –
Better as one,
Better as one,
Better as one, we are better as one.
He knows that he has the face of a dog,
But he has the heart of a brother.
He knows that he stinks like a goat,
But he has the heart of a brother.
We are as the many trees that make the Argo.
Better as one,
We are better as one.
(HEROES join) Better as one,
We are better as one.

JASON Apollo, how can I be worthy or fit
To lead those wiser and stronger than me?
Apollo, Apollo!

Ἄνθρωπος ἐὼν μήποτε φάσηις
ὄ,τι γίνεται αὔριον,
μηδ' ἄνδρα ἰδὼν ὄλβιον,
ὅσον χρόνον ἔσσεται
ὠκεῖα γὰρ οὐδέ ταυνοπτερύγου μυίας
οὕτως ἅ μεταστάσις

Simon of Simonides of Ceos (556-468 BC)

[You are a human, therefore seek not to foretell what tomorrow may bring, nor how long one's happiness may last. For not even the flutter of the fly's wing is as fast as change.]

NARRATOR By oar they went,
And when Apollo set the wind fair,
They raised the sail and rested.
The Argo spread the waves,
Anointing the crew with spume.

NARRATOR First port of call is Lemnos, a land without men, the Lemnian women slaughtered them in revenge for being abandoned by their husbands. When the Argo arrives the Lemnian women encourage Jason and his crew to stay. The welcoming of the visitors goes on for many days and nights. Finally Heracles, who has stayed aloof with the ship, reminds his crewmates that the fleece will not be found in the beds of the Lemnian women. Sheepishly, they return to the ship, and the Argo pulls away.

Next the Argonauts are welcomed by the Doliones. In return Jason and the Heroes deal with the neighbours – Earth-bound men, savages with six arms. Then Hosts and Heroes feast, before the Argo makes sail and runs east 'til dusk. But as night enfolds them, the Argo is blown back on to an unknown shore, and the Heroes are attacked. Only at dawn do they see that their foes are the Doliones. Their king and many others lay dead. For three days, Jason and the Heroes mourn. The winds hold them for twelve more, before they can leave that dreadful shore.

The Argo draws across the water, oars rising and falling like the wings of a bird. They stop off at Kios to replace a broken oar. But young Hylas is taken by a nymph, and Heracles mourns the loss of his beloved squire. Tiphys sets the Argo on the morning breeze, but mourning Heracles is left behind. On board, Telamon accuses Jason of arranging to abandon Heracles. But Glaukos rises from the deep to explain it is the will of Zeus that Heracles goes no further with the quest.

Next to Bithynia, where the Argonauts are met by rude King Amykos. "Any stranger that comes here must fight me – choose your best fighter and let's get on with it" are his first words. The crew are angry, but young Polydeukes steps forward, all calm, bright eyed, with his first soft beard still on his chin and announces "I am your man".

He easily dodges the king's wild lunges, then blow meets blow, until agile Polydeukes lands a mighty punch above the king's ear, and he is dead before he hits the ground. Then others join in the fight, but the Argonauts drive them away. Wounds are dressed, sacrifices made, a feast set out and around the fire the Argonauts sing a soft hymn.

And then to Thynia. Beaching in a quiet cove, they scramble up to a lonely house surrounded by filth and feathers. First to greet them is the stench, and then a thin old man draws into the sun.

HEROES Hey, old man, who are you?
What is your name?
What is that stench?

PHINEAS Ah! you've come,
I knew you would, you're here,
You're here, I knew you'd come.

HEROES Old man, who are you?
What is your name?

PHINEAS I am Phineas, blind Phineas,
the seer, the prophet, the oracle,
And I don't care what the gods think,
I just say what I see.
But Zeus didn't like this,
So Zeus, in his infinite wisdom,
Offered me death or blindness,
So I chose life without sight.
Still Zeus, in his infinite wisdom,
Also left me the Harpies.
Great birds with the heads of women,
Their faces haggard with insatiable hunger.

My dear neighbours,
They bring me food.
But when I sit to eat the Harpies swoop
And take the best of it,
And then shit on the rest of it.
So I have withered away, withered away.
But Zeus in his infinite wisdom,
Knows, I knew that you would come and save me.

JASON Old man, you have suffered long,
Serving mortals and we owe you much,
We cannot let you wither away, wither away.
Let us make a plan to save our brother Phineas.

PHINEAS One moment, Sir, if I may speak.
It is foretold to me,
The sons of Boreas will chase the birds away.

JASON Winged Zetes, Calais,
Your time has come.
Let us lay out a feast
As bait for those dreadful birds.
Sons of Boreas you will lie in wait.

HEROES Wait, wait for the birds . . .

(Heroes continue)

JASON ...and when they swoop on the feast,
you will chase them away.
Just chase, don't kill,
We need the gods on our side.
Set out the food.
Brother Phineas, sit here.
Zetes, Calais.
Quiet! Brothers!
Let us keep ourselves well hidden.

(Heroes continue)

Phineas, where are those birds?

PHINEAS They will come, they will come.

JASON Harpies, where are you?

(Heroes continue)

PHINEAS Listen hard, here they come.

JASON I see them,
Get ready,
Now!

HEROES Chase, chase them away!

Just chase, don't kill.
Just chase, don't kill.

JASON Now, Phineas, let's eat!

PHINEAS Enough! I can eat no more.
Let us sit by the embers.
Listen to me now,
I can tell you some,
But if I tell you all
You would discover nothing.

After our farewells your first test is the Dark Rocks that clash together.
Don't rush in!
But let a dove fly from your ship.
If the bird passes safely
Grab your oars and

Row hard! Row hard!
 Follow its path and
 Row hard! Row hard!
 Forget everything else and
 Row hard! Row hard!
 But if the dove is crushed,
 You must turn back.
 But if you pass,
 Keep the land on your right,
 Watch for the reefs lying hidden.
 Pass the mouth of the Rhebus,
 And the Black Headland.

NARRATOR So Phineas mapped out their route,
 Jason and the crew listened closely.

PHINEAS Pass the Mariandynoi
 Where a path leads down to Hades.
 Along the great shore,
 Past the cities of the Amazons.

NARRATOR Phineas catalogued the trustworthy and the dangerous
 And then:

PHINEAS After the wooden towers of the Mossynoikoi
 You must land at a rugged island,
 Ares, the haunt of thousands of noisy birds.
 Here you will find help from the grim sea.
 I can tell you no more.

And when there is no more sea,
 You will be in Colchis,
 Where the Golden Fleece awaits you
 Guarded by a dragon that never sleeps.

JASON How can we make such a journey?
 I have no experience.
 Colchis lays pressed against the edge of the earth,
 Even if we get there,
 How will we ever return?

PHINEAS You will have many escorts,
 Aphrodite will help.

HEROES Now begins our quest to Colchis.
 Prove out worth on this quest, sail far, far away.
 Now begins our quest to Colchis.
 Dangers ahead to the East where Colchis awaits
 Great Apollo guard and guide us.
 Brothers at heart, for Jason we stand at his side.

Time to leave familiar coastlines,
 To the edge of our known world,
 Great Apollo guard and guide us
 Safely home across the sea.

TIM SEVERIN AND THE JASON VOYAGE



Legend or fact? Myth or reality? Many centuries ago Jason set sail in a galley with a band of Heroes in search of the Golden Fleece. The boat was named Argo, after its builder, and the sailors were known as the Argonauts. But did they exist? And what was the Golden Fleece?

Their journey took them from present-day Greece, across the Aegean Sea, through the Dardanelles and the Sea of Marmara, through the much-feared Bosphorus into the Black Sea and along the entire north coast of Turkey, ending up in the state of Georgia in the Soviet Union. It was there, in ancient Colchis, that Jason found not only the Golden Fleece but also his bride, Medea, after taming the wild bulls, killing the serpent, and planting its teeth in the soil. Or so the legend has it.

Author and explorer Tim Severin, an Old Tonbridgian, decided to investigate the story of Jason back in the 1980s. He had a twenty-oar galley built in the Aegean to the exact specifications of a Bronze Age boat and, with his crew of new Argonauts, made the same perilous 1,500-mile journey. The oarsmen were aided by Greek, Turkish and Soviet volunteers as they passed through each country's territorial waters.

Tim and his crew proved that, in spite of the dangers and discomfort, Jason could have made the journey in an oared galley, which many experts had considered impossible.

Along the route, Tim also investigated many of the adventures that legend attributed to the Argonauts, from the clashing rocks in the Bosphorus to the bulls and serpent at the end of the voyage.

His conclusions were published in his book, *The Jason Voyage* (1985). One critic wrote: "Tim Severin occupies a unique place as an author who bridges the world of mythology and archaeology. *The Jason Voyage* has an irresistible appeal to scholars, to lovers of adventure, travel and mystery, to sailing men who want to know about the ancient techniques of seamanship – in fact, to every reader interested in our cultural heritage."

Born in India in 1940, Tim went to Oxford University to read Geography after leaving Tonbridge. He was a Harkness Fellow at the universities of California, Minnesota and Harvard, and held a B. Litt. from Oxford in Medieval Asian Exploration.

His books have won the Thomas Cook Travel Book Award, The Book Of The Sea Award, a Christopher Prize and the literary medal of the Academie de la Marine. He was awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Geographical Society and the Livingstone Medal of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society.

Tim Severin OT, British explorer, historian and writer: 25 September 1940 – 18 December 2020 (MH 1954-57)

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