

@byalexandrahope
www.alexandrahope.co.nz

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ALEXANDRA HOPE WATSON

*Let your
imagination
run wild!*



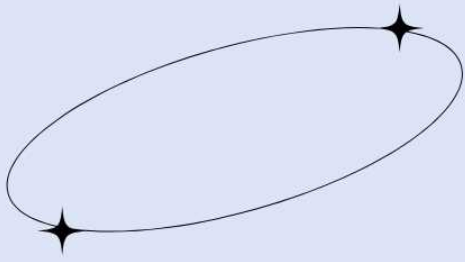
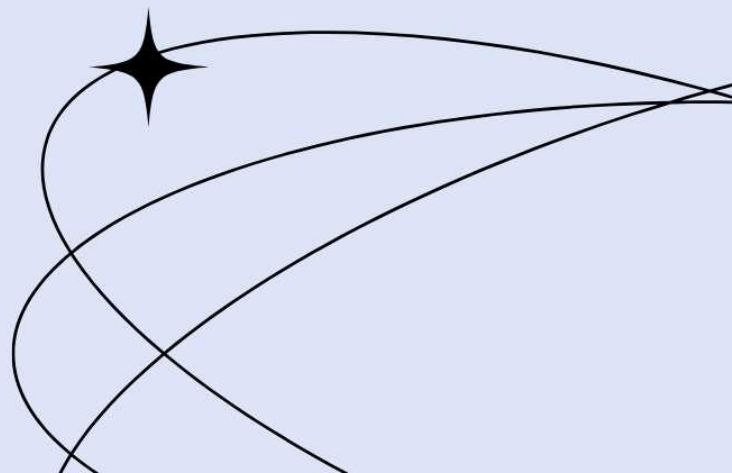


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INTRODUCTION



Alexandra is a performer, composer, and lyricist with a passion for both classical and contemporary music, specialising in composing for theatre, film, and television. She is currently studying towards a Doctor of Musical Arts in Composition at the University of Canterbury, having gained a Master of Arts with Distinction in Performance and Composition and a Bachelor of Music. Alexandra also holds a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics, reflecting her diverse academic interests.

Alexandra recently received funding from Creative New Zealand's Early Career Fund and won the 2023 UC Lilburn Composers Competition with her song 'Tell Me'. Alexandra is currently developing two musicals: *Cleo*, based on the life of Cleopatra, and *Our Nightingale*, which will explore Florence Nightingale's contributions to medicine. Alexandra has completed two musicals: *A Magical Musical Mystery*, based on 'Nonsense Verse' by Lewis Carroll which premiered in Christchurch, NZ with the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra and *The First 8*, which tells the story of the first group of women employed by the Air Transport Auxiliary in World War II. *The First 8* will premiere at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire on 4 March 2025.

A multi-instrumentalist, Alexandra plays piano, violin, cello, flute, harp, and voice, giving her a strong understanding of orchestration across genres. She regularly performs as a soloist and with both CSO Chorus and NZ Opera Chorus, having sung in the mainstage production for Verdi's *Macbeth* and Rossini's *Le Comte Ory*. Alexandra has also participated in masterclasses with Jonathan Lemalu and Amanda Echalaz. As Musical Director of the North Canterbury Academy of Music, Alexandra is passionate about nurturing young talent, while also pursuing her other interests, including national level trampolining and aerobatics having gained her Private Pilots Licence in 2019.

A NEW MUSICAL

The First 8

In Concert

composed by
ALEXANDRA HOPE WATSON

**THE FORGOTTEN STORY OF THE FEMALE PILOTS WHO FLEW FOR
THE AIR TRANSPORT AUXILIARY DURING WORLD WAR II**



NEVER TO BE FORGOTTEN

**WORLD PREMIERE
4 MARCH 2025 AT 7:30PM**

BRADSHAW HALL, ROYAL BIRMINGHAM CONSERVATOIRE

THE ROYAL BIRMINGHAM CONSERVATOIRE PRESENT **THE FIRST 8**
MUSIC, BOOK AND LYRICS **ALEXANDRA HOPE WATSON** PRODUCED BY **AMY HUNT**
WWW.BCU.AC.UK/CONSERVATOIRE/EVENTS

GENERAL ADMISSION £10
STUDENT/CONCESSION £6.50



the First 8



The First 8 tells the inspiring true story of the first eight women who were employed by the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) during the Second World War in the United Kingdom, from 1939 to 1945, under the determined leadership of Pauline Gower. These courageous women not only defied societal expectations by taking to the skies in support of the war effort but also challenged ingrained gender biases within the aviation industry and beyond. Tasked with ferrying military aircraft of all types across the country, often in dangerous conditions and without navigational aids, they proved their skill and resilience continuously. Their fight extended beyond the cockpit, as they campaigned tirelessly for equality in their profession. Their perseverance led to a groundbreaking achievement, making the ATA the first organisation in the United Kingdom to grant equal pay to women, setting a precedent for future generations. *The First 8* is a celebration of their bravery, determination, and the lasting impact they had on both aviation and women's rights. A story that should never be forgotten.


The First 8 will premiere at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire on 4 March 2025.

SYNOPSIS

"Always Terrified Airwomen" introduces Pauline Gower, a woman willing to fight for female pilots and the first eight women that she employed. In September 1939. The Air Transport Auxiliary was created by Gerard d'Erlanger for male pilots who were deemed unfit to fly in the RAF ("Hidden Heros"), however female pilots were not allowed to fly in the ATA. Pauline Gower proposed that a women's section should be established in ATA which Gerard d'Erlanger and, Director General of Civil Aviation Sir Francis Sheldermine approved, with much apprehension.

Gower interviewed 12 women in Whitchurch before selecting Winifred Crossley, Margaret Fairweather, Rosemary Rees, Marion Wilberforce, Margaret Cunnison, Gabrielle Patterson, Mona Friedlander and Joan Hughes ("Under the Radar"). There was no surprise when there were less than favourable responses from the general public, particularly men, when they heard that female pilots would be helping with the war effort. However, Gower only saw this as an audience to stand up to ("Pauline Gower Intro Song"). Gower was not going to allow any man to tell her that she was incapable of doing something she loved ("Not Fading Away"). Eventually, the women were given more tasks, which increased ten-fold during the Battle of Britain ("Evacuate the shores of Dunkirk", "Battle for Britain"). Although the women were continuously undermined and under-appreciated they all understood that this fight for equality was much bigger than them alone. It was their story and fight, and they were not backing down ("You don't know this girl").

Endless work and campaigning eventually saw some progress when Air Marshal Courtney allowed Gower to employ more women due to a low number of male pilots ("Low On Pilots"). These new female pilots, all 18, needed to be given comprehensive teaching ("Eat, learn, fly, sleep, repeat"). Gower was not satisfied with 26 employed female pilots, especially with the limitations that were placed on only the women ("More").




By 1941, the women were constantly pressuring ATA to give them permission to fly Hurricanes and other four-engine bombers, ("Time for us to teach them"). August 1941, the beginning of a new chapter, Margaret Fairweather took the controls of a Supermarine Spitfire ("Our Spitfire Girl"). As more women flew larger twin-engine aircraft, they campaigned to fly operational aircraft ("Frozen In Time"). Due to Gower's consistent commitment to the female division of ATA, Gower was listed in the 1942 New Year's Honours for her work in aviation ("Our New Year Honours Day"). As the division expanded the girls spread across multiple airbases ("From me to you").

Joan Hughes admired Gower and was as equally determined to continue the expansion of the division and their restrictions removed ("What's the Difference?"). Both Margaret Fairweather and her husband, Douglas were pilots and often enjoyed comparing their journeys ("A Fairweather's Day"). Lettice Curtis was the first woman to fly a four-engine bomber at the end of 1941 ("One Heart and Two Eyes").

The New Year's Honours of 1943 saw several of the ATA administration receive CBE's and MBE's ("No more words/New Year Honours Day 1943"). Thanks to Lettice Curtis, more women were given the opportunity to train on the four-engine bombers ("We're The Girls Tonight"). As the women progressed through the ranks and the restrictions were lifted they successfully fought for equal pay ("Look At Us/Equal Pay"). In 1943 the women division of ATA proudly marched behind the RAF through London ("We March Too"). Gower was very pleased to welcome a contingent of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force from the United States ("Welcome, Welcome, Welcome").

1944 saw the death of Douglas Fairweather, only weeks after the birth of his daughter Elizabeth ("Your Daughter"). June 1944 was D-Day ("Defenceless"). Three months later in August, Margaret Fairweather was involved in a plane crash that left her with fatal injuries. The first eight women were very close and celebrated her life ("Margaret Fairweather"). As a figment of imagination Margaret then talked to her daughter Elizabeth, reassuring her that she will always be there ("Ghost of You").



On 21 February 1945 ATA broke their record for the number of planes ferried in one day ("Just One Kind"). Shortly after this Gower married Douglas Fahie ("Wedding"), a welcome joyous celebration ("Flying High"). 2 September 1945 saw the end of World War 2, celebrated by the whole country ("The End of the War").

After the war the majority of the women found jobs as pilots for smaller private and commercial operations ("More/Never Fading Away"). ATA propelled female aviation forward during the war however, much of this progress was lost after the war and their stories have been forgotten. This musical endeavours to be a memorial for these women, their stories and the battles they fought both on the ground and in the air ("Memorial").

• CHARACTERS


Pauline Gower
Margaret Fairweather
Joan Hughes
Rosemary Rees
Marion Wilberforce
Mona Friedlander
Winifred Crossley-Fair
Gabrielle Patterson
Marion Cunnison
Lettice Curtis
Gerard d'Erlanger
Chief Instructor MacMillan
Air Marshal Courtney
Sir Francis Shelmerdine
Douglas Fahie
Douglas Fairweather
Kitty Fairweather

• ORCHESTRATION

Reed 1: Piccolo, Flute, Clarinet, Alto Sax
Reed 2: Flute, Clarinet, Tenor Sax
Reed 3: Clarinet, Tenor Sax
Reed 4: Clarinet, Baritone Sax
Trumpet in Bb
Trombone
Percussion
Violin 1
Violin 2
Cello
Piano



• SONG LIST



Always Terrified Airwomen
Hidden Heroes
Under the Radar
Pauline Gower Intro Song
Not Fading Away
Evacuate the shores of Dunkirk
Battle for Britain
You don't know this girl
Low On Pilots
Eat, learn, fly, sleep, repeat
More
Time for us to teach them
Our Spitfire Girl
Frozen In Time
Our New Year Honours Day
From me to you
What's the Difference?
A Fairweather's Day
One Heart and Two Eyes
No more words/New Year Honours Day 1943
We're The Girls Tonight
Look At Us/Equal Pay
We March Too
Welcome, Welcome, Welcome
Your Daughter
Defenceless
Margaret Fairweather
Ghost of You
Just One Kind
Wedding
Flying High
The End of the War
More/Not Fading Away
Memorial



THE WORLD PREMIERE OF A

Magical Musical Mystery

THE
PIANO

28 SEPTEMBER
2024, 3 & 7PM

IN CONCERT

BASED ON *NONSENSE VERSE*
BY LEWIS CARROLL
WITH

CHRISTCHURCH SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

COMPOSED BY

ALEXANDRA HOPE WATSON

FEATURING

ALEXANDRA HOPE | NAOMI FERGUSON
JOHN BAYNE | HELEN GROUT

 creative *nz*
ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND / TOI AOTEAROA

Cso

Christchurch
Symphony
Orchestra

ARCHIBALDS
EST. 1918

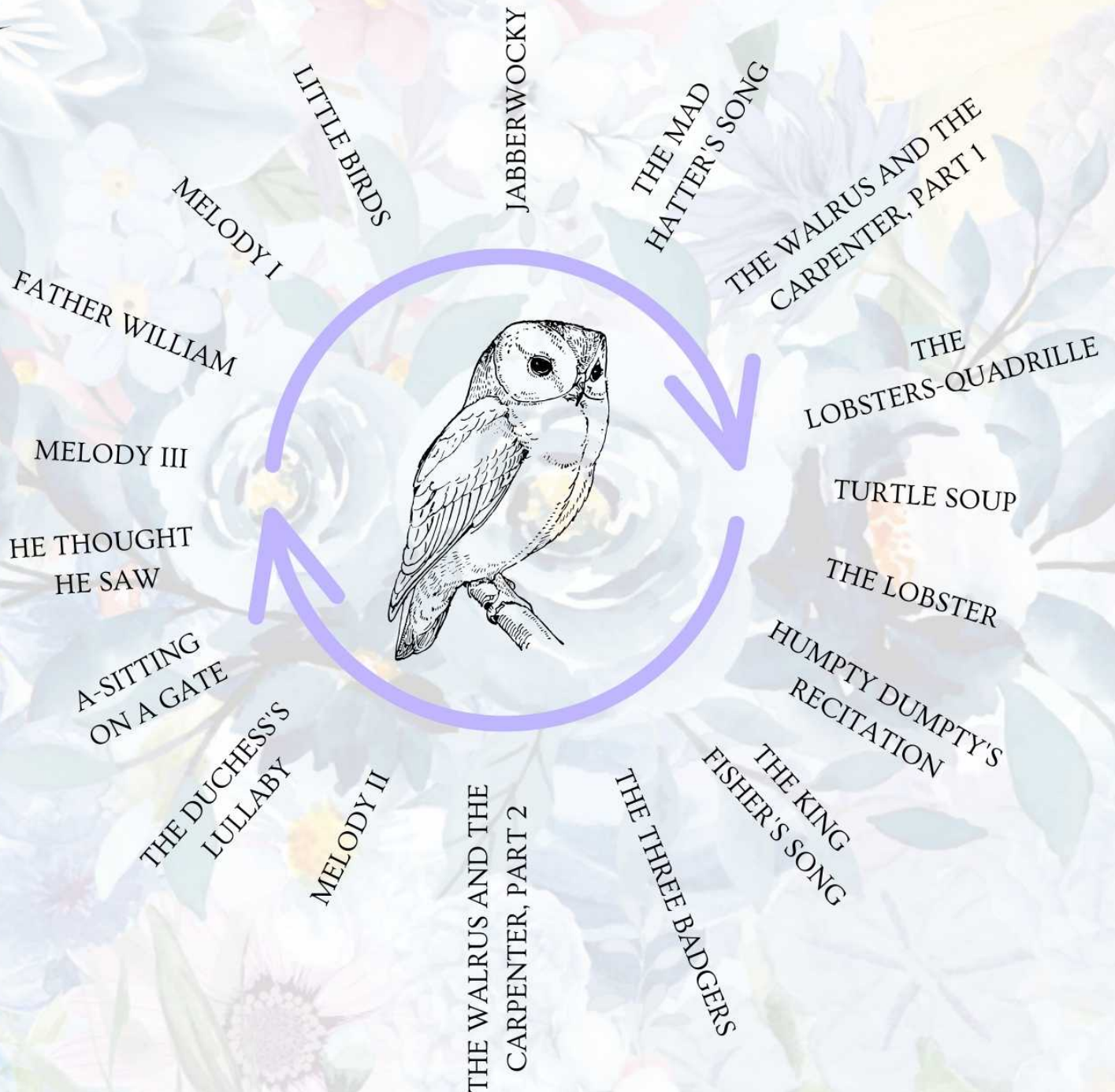


A Magical Musical Mystery

A Magical Musical Mystery is based on poems from Lewis Carroll's Nonsense Verse. I selected nineteen poems and set these to music creating a new magical dream landscape. The musical follows a consciousness as it wanders through its own dream landscape, which manifests as a young girl. Setting the poetry to the music brings the dream landscape to life in a unique way. It draws you into the words and inspires the tone and variety of sounds that reflect the different characters throughout. This musical features a cyclical plot, which allows the musical to start at any song, changing every performance.

A Magical Musical Mystery premiered on 28 September 2024 at The Piano, Christchurch, NZ with the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra.

OVERTURE:
Falling for the Magic



FINALE:
Running Wild



SYNOPSIS

A Magical Musical Mystery follows a consciousness as it wanders through its own dream landscape, which manifests as a young girl. This consciousness creates a landscape in which people and animals co-exist. The musical begins with the overture 'Falling for the Magic' as the person whose dream it is slowly falls asleep and the dream landscape is created. The plot is cyclical and can therefore begin at any song in the inner circle finishing at the one previous.

This synopsis we will begin by falling into the dream landscape and the consciousness will encounter a father, Fred, and son, James, in the woods preparing for battle with the Jabberwock ('Jabberwocky'). Fred warns his son of the threat of the Jabberwock while James marches into the woods in search of the mighty beast. After some time James finds the Jabberwock and kills the creature with his sword. James returns home and is greeted by his father who celebrates the Jabberwock's demise.

After the confrontation with the Jabberwock the consciousness follows the father, Fred as he wanders towards the beach. While Fred wanders through town you can hear a lullaby sung in the background ("The Mad Hatter's Song"). It is not clear if this is a mother's voice singing to James or perhaps the voice of someone from the "real world" leaking into the dream landscape. This decision is left to the listener. At the beach Fred sees his friend the walrus. Fred and the Walrus go for a walk along the beach where they meet several oysters who join them for the walk, even though the eldest Oyster does not think that the walk is such an innocent proposition. ("The Walrus and the Carpenter Part I").

The consciousness abruptly changes course and heads further along the beach past the eldest Oyster where we meet a group of friends. A whiting, porpoise, lobster and turtle and all looking forward to going for a dance in the sea. The snail however, is not so keen on the idea ("The Lobsters Quadrille"). The consciousness follows the friends into the sea to the turtle's restaurant where the turtle sings about their world-renowned soup ("Turtle Soup").




After the sea friends enjoyed their meal the lobster departs to afternoon tea closer to shore with some animal friends. The lobster is very much the life of the party and laughs and sings with the owl, duck, dodo, lizard, cat and eldest oyster ("The Lobster"). On the way home the lobster tells a story of the time that he sent a message to the fishes of the sea, however the story ends abruptly as he does not recall the ending ("Humpty Dumpty's Recitation").

The consciousness peels away from the lobster as it spots the King Fisher resurfacing. The King Fisher attempts to court the Lady Bird on the shore line however, the Lady Bird has no interest in the King Fisher's advances ("The King Fisher's Song"). The consciousness withdraws from the scene and encounters three young badgers on a mossy stone. The badgers are entitled and wish to be the next king once their father dies. Nearby three young herrings are loitering near the shore making their mother very worried for their safety. The badgers soon catch the three herrings while their parents are searching for their children ("The Three Badgers").

The consciousness returns to the Walrus and Carpenter further up the beach, where the walrus and carpenter taunt the young oysters that have settled at their feet. They soon eat all of the oysters while continuing to talk to them ("The Walrus and the Carpenter Part II"). The consciousness retreats from the murderous scene at the beach back to the nearest town of Oport where we meet an old Draper ("Melody II"). The Draper plays a lullaby from when he was a young boy, to his grandchildren, Sam and Lucy ("The Duchess's Lullaby"). Sam soon leaves and explores Oport. He encounters an aged man, sitting on a gate. Sam enquires about the aged man's life and the aged man happily tells Sam some of his stories. Sam then returns home where he tells his sister of this encounter ("A-Sitting on a Gate").

The consciousness travels downstairs to William, the father of Sam and Lucy. William is currently speaking nonsense ("He thought he saw") and his wife is very concerned. As Sam and Lucy come downstairs we learn more about them and their troubles ("Melody III"). Sam is very inquisitive and starts asking his father many questions which William answers to begin with however, he only has the patience to answer three of his sons questions ("Father William").



As the family go their separate ways the consciousness cautiously moves next door to their neighbour Fred ("Melody I"). The dream falters and the stream of consciousness is broken with a story interlude leaving the dream landscape unhinged ("Little Birds"). We return to Oporta where Fred is talking with his son James before he heads off to slaughter the Jabberwock ("Jabberwocky").

And so the cycle repeats ...

• CHARACTERS

Narrator
James
Fred
William
Lucy
Sam
The Walrus
The Whiting
The Snail
The Porpoise
The Lobster
The Turtle
The Owl
The Oyster
The Duck
The Dodo
The Lizard
The Cat
The Fish
The King Fisher
The Lady Bird
The Badgers
The Herrings
The Drafter
The Aged Man

• ORCHESTRATION

Solo Saxophone and Flute
Flute 1, 2
Oboe 1, 2
Clarinet 1, 2
Bassoon 1, 2
French Horn 1, 2
Trumpet 1, 2
Trombone
Bass Trombone
Percussion 1, 2
Timpani
Violin 1
Violin 2
Viola
Cello
Double Bass



CLEO

Cleo is a compelling and historically grounded musical in development that brings to life the story of Cleopatra VII, the last Queen of Egypt. Blending historical accuracy with artistic interpretation, *Cleo* explores Cleopatra's political challenges, personal relationships, and the lasting impact of her reign. The musical follows her journey as she navigates the complexities of ruling Egypt, forming alliances with Julius Caesar and Mark Antony, and ultimately facing the rising power of Octavian. Through an evocative score and rich storytelling, *Cleo* offers a fresh perspective on Cleopatra's intelligence, resilience, and the legacy she sought to create.

SYNOPSIS

Cleo opens with “Daughter of the Nile”, introducing Cleopatra as a young girl in 69 BCE and summarising her early life and upbringing. Upon her father’s death in 51 BCE, Cleopatra assumes the throne at 18 years old, ruling alongside her younger brother, Ptolemy XIII. However, at just 13 years old, Ptolemy XIII is heavily influenced by his advisors, who manipulate his rule for their own gain (“Puppet”). As tensions rise between Cleopatra and her brother, she flees Egypt and seeks support in Syria (“Night of a Thousand Lives”). Determined to reclaim her throne, Cleopatra returns to Egypt with an army, famously sneaking into the palace to meet Julius Caesar and gain his backing against Ptolemy XIII (“A Taste of Rome”). With Caesar’s support, Cleopatra emerges victorious in the civil war, leading to Ptolemy XIII's death and her restoration to the throne.

Cleopatra and Caesar’s political relationship soon evolves into a romantic entanglement, resulting in the birth of their son, Caesarion, in 47 BCE. However, while visiting Rome, Cleopatra realises she will always remain in its shadow and begins to reflect on her future prospects. During her stay, Caesar is assassinated in 44 BCE, leaving Cleopatra in a vulnerable political position (“The Ides of March”).

Following Caesar’s death, Cleopatra must reassert her authority and aligns politically with Mark Antony. They meet in Tarsus in 41 BCE and soon develop both a strategic and romantic relationship (“The Rebirth of a Queen”). Their alliance creates tensions with Octavian, particularly after Antony publicly declares his intention to divide Roman territories among his children with Cleopatra—Alexander Helios, Cleopatra Selene II, and Ptolemy Philadelphus. After several years without contact, Antony turns to Cleopatra for military support in his conflict with Octavian (“Cleopatra Thea Philopator”).

In 31 BCE, Antony and Cleopatra's forces suffer a crushing defeat at the Battle of Actium, forcing them to retreat to Egypt ("Essence of Banality" & "We March On"). Facing inevitable defeat, they reflect on their impending loss—not only of their reign but, more importantly, their family ("Beauty in the Breaking"), before Antony takes his own life. As the fall of Alexandria marks the end of Cleopatra's world ("World on Fire"), Octavian captures her with the intention of taking her to Rome. However, Cleopatra ultimately takes her own life, determined to leave behind a legacy as a symbol of female power and political acumen ("Legacy").

Cleo concludes with "Wild", an elegy, a reflection on the life of Cleopatra and her enduring legacy.

• CHARACTERS

Cleopatra
Julius Ceasar
Mark Antony
Octavian

• SONG LIST

at this stage of development

Daughter of the Nile
Puppet
Night of a Thousand Lives
A Taste of Rome
The Ides of March
The Rebirth of a Queen
Cleopatra Thea Philopator
Essence of Banality
We March On
Beauty in the Breaking
World On Fire
Legacy
Wild

• ORCHESTRATION

Piccolo
Flute 1, 2
Oboe 1, 2
Clarinet 1, 2
Bassoon 1, 2
French Horn 1, 2
Trumpet 1, 2
Trombone
Bass Trombone
Tuba
Percussion 1, 2
Timpani
Harp
Violin 1
Violin 2
Viola
Cello
Double Bass

OUR NIGHTINGALE

Our Nightingale is a musical in development, that is based on the life of Florence Nightingale. Florence Nightingale was an English statistician and the founder of modern nursing. She became a memorable figure in British history as she led a team of 38 nurses to run an overseas hospital of the British army during the Crimean War in the mid nineteenth century.





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