



# THE LIGHTNING THIEF

THE PERCY JACKSON MUSICAL

BOOK BY  
JOE TRACZ

MUSIC & LYRICS BY  
ROB ROKICKI

ADAPTED FROM THE BOOK THE LIGHTNING THIEF BY RICK RIORDAN

STUDY GUIDE



# The Lightning Thief

## The Percy Jackson Musical

Directed by Daniel Kunkel

July 12 – July 28, 2024, in the Gibson Theater

Book by Joe Tracz

Music & Lyrics by Rob Rokicki

Adapted from the book *The Lightning Thief* by Rick Riordan

*The play runs for approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes  
with a 15-minute intermission.*

"It is a great Musical in a great New York Off-Broadway house in a great New York neighborhood. So go and take your child... and feel good that you just saw The Lightning Thief: The Percy Jackson Musical together."

– *New York Theater Guide*

"It's charming, cute, funny, and even able to bring a tear to your eye.... It's very faithful to the books...."

– *Cait Jacobs*

Study Guide compiled for Live Arts by Summer Administrative Intern Maddie Chin



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*Promotional photo by Madison Patterson featuring Ben Lohr.*

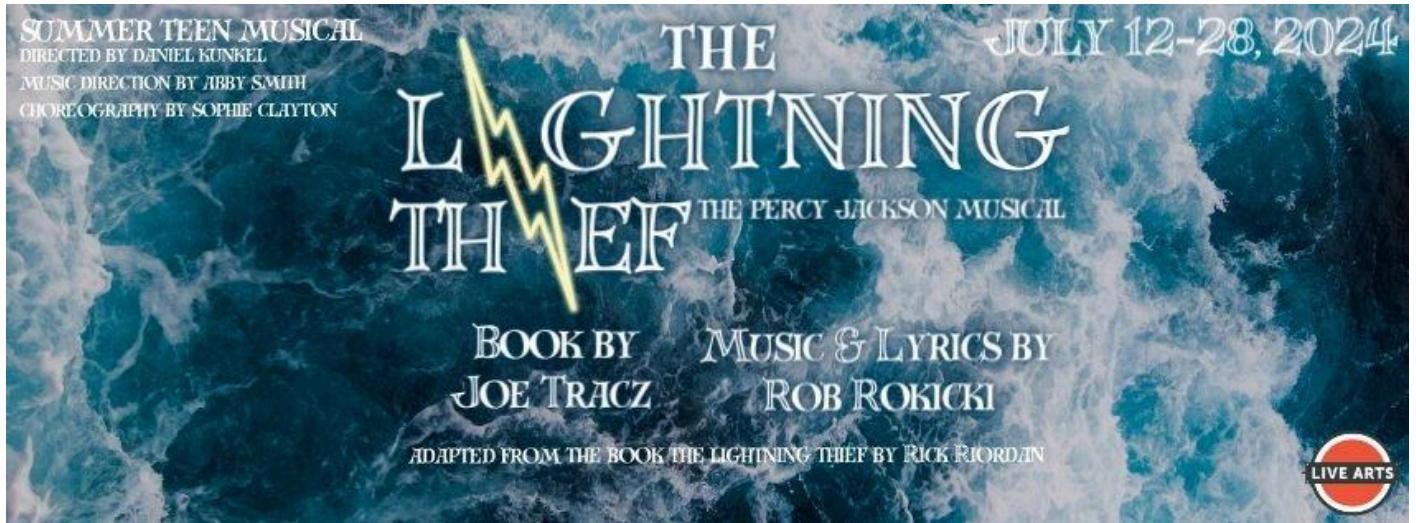
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## Plot Summary

Expelled from school (again) and sent off to the summer camp for half-bloods, troubled teen Percy—aka Perseus—Jackson discovers he's a demigod, with a very powerful father. Before he can catch his breath and explore this newfound identity, he's packed off to the attic, where a riddling oracle delivers a prophecy. And off Percy must go, on a quest with a few of his new half-blood friends, to retrieve Zeus' stolen lightning bolt, prevent an all-out war among their godly parents, and hope to rescue his mom from the Underworld.

## Time & Setting

Summer, 2010.

Long Island, New York, the Underworld, and everywhere in between.

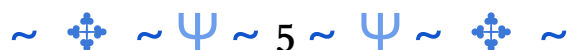
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## Characters

### Principal Roles-

- ❖ **PERCY JACKSON:** A 12 year old boy that lives in the Upper East Side of New York. He lives with **SALLY JACKSON** and his stepfather, **GABE**. He is a half-blood, half-mortal and half-god, and he struggles with ADHD and dyslexia. He is a good kid and means well.
- ❖ **ANNABETH:** A 12 year old girl that lives at Camp Half-Blood year round. As the daughter of Athena, she is witty, determined, and will back up her friends no matter what. She is one of Percy's friends that accompanies him on his quest.
- ❖ **GROVER:** A satyr, a half-goat and half human, who dreams of gaining a searcher's license. He is anxious but has a good heart, and he is Percy's first and best friend. He is the other friend to accompany Percy on his quest.
- ❖ **LUKE:** A 19 year old camp counselor and the son of Hermes, Luke is one of the first people to welcome Percy into Camp Half-Blood. He guides Percy through the discovery of being a half-blood, and he gives Percy advice as he leaves for his quest.
- ❖ **SALLY JACKSON:** Percy's mortal mother. She is married to **GABE**, and she works hard to support Percy. She loves Percy and would protect him, even if it cost her life.
- ❖ **MR. BRUNNER/CHIRON:** An immortal centaur that disguised himself as Percy's Latin teacher, Chiron is a mentor for many Greek heroes, like Heracles (Hercules), Jason, Achilles, and others, now including Percy Jackson. He is wise but kind, and expects the best from all of his students.
- ❖ **CLARISSE:** A teenage girl at Camp Half-Blood. With her father being the God of War, Ares, Clarisse is hot headed and is the first to challenge Percy. She is skilled in battle and tough-as-nails. If you ask me, I wouldn't mess with her.





## Ensemble Roles-

*(Listed in order of appearance)*

- ❖ **MRS. DODDS:** A math teacher that doubles as a Fury, one of Hades' workers.
- ❖ **GABE:** Percy's smelly stepfather.
- ❖ **MINOTAUR:** Half-man, half-bull.
- ❖ **POSEIDON:** God of the Sea.
- ❖ **MR. D:** Dionysus, God of Wine and being a grumpy camp director.
- ❖ **SILENA BEAUREGARD:** Daughter of Aphrodite, Goddess of love and beauty.
- ❖ **KATIE GARDNER:** Daughter of Demeter, Goddess of Agriculture and Harvest.
- ❖ **THE ORACLE:** A fortune telling mummy.
- ❖ **SQUIRREL:** A furry friend.
- ❖ **AUNTY 'M':** A kind lady who makes statues.
- ❖ **ECHIDNA:** The mother of monsters.
- ❖ **ARES:** God of War.
- ❖ **BIANCA:** A resident of the Lotus Hotel. She likes 1930's fashion.
- ❖ **KRONOS:** The Titan father of the Gods, and a voice in the pit.
- ❖ **THALIA:** The only daughter of Zeus, King of the Gods. She is brave.
- ❖ **CHARON:** Ferryman of the Underworld, with a little sparkle.
- ❖ **HADES:** The God of the Underworld. God of the Dead.



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*Promotional Photo by Madison Patterson featuring (l-r): Ben Lohr, Veronica Schoenster, and Connor Michael.*

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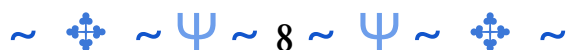


## About the Playwrights

JOE TRACZ (he/him/his) is a writer whose work has been seen on Broadway in *Be More Chill* (with Joe Iconis) and *The Lightning Thief: The Percy Jackson Musical* (with Rob Rokicki; Drama Desk nominee for Outstanding Book). Other credits include the musical *Poster Boy* (with Craig Carnelia, Williamstown Theatre Festival).

TV credits include Netflix's *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events* (Peabody Award recipient; Emmy,

Humanitas Prize, and WGA Award nominee) and *Dash & Lily*, which premiered on Netflix in 2020. Joe is an alumnus of the Ars Nova Play Group and a former Playwrights Realm writing fellow. He earned his BA from Kalamazoo College in Michigan and his MFA from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts.





**ROB ROKICKI** (he/him/his) is a composer and lyricist whose work has been recognized worldwide and nominated for Drama Desk, Lortel and Off-Broadway Alliance awards. Rokicki is best known for his music and lyrics in the critically acclaimed Broadway show *The Lightning Thief: The Percy Jackson Musical* for Theatreworks USA.. Other credits include: *Punk Rock Girl!*, a musical he orchestrated and co-arranged with collaborator and friend Joe Iconis; the graphic novel musical *Monstersongs*; his immersive musical about



escaping a cult, *Experience Marianas*; *Uni the Unicorn*, commissioned by Bay Area Children's Theater; and many others. Rokicki's work, which "lives at the perfect intersection of musical theater and radio rock," is regularly featured in cabarets and concerts throughout the world. He is a two-time Larson Award finalist, alum of the BMI writing workshop, and member of the Dramatists Guild.



## Performance History



THE LIGHTNING THIEF first premiered in 2014 off-Broadway at the Lucille Lortel Theatre as a one-hour musical. The show went on to a national tour, with an expanded version returning to New York in 2017, again to the Lucille Lortel Theatre. After another tour, THE LIGHTNING THIEF opened on Broadway at the Longacre Theatre in October 2019.

*Promotional Photo by Madison Patterson featuring (l-r): Connor Michael, Veronica Schoenster, and Ben Lohr.*

## About the Director

**DANIEL KUNKEL** (he/him/his) wears too many hats as an educator, social worker, director, writer, stage combatant, and podcaster. He has taught theater in person and remotely across the country and he has been producing and developing plays, podcasts, and videos since 2016.



*Rehearsal photo by Madison Patterson featuring the cast of THE LIGHTNING THIEF.*



## Book vs. Musical

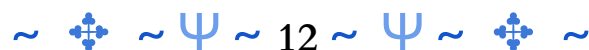
When adapting a written piece of work into something like a musical, it takes a lot of skill to keep the important and fun parts of the source material while creating and adapting the story to fit the medium that it's being produced into, especially when you are adapting a fan favorite book from many people's childhoods into a full, on-stage, musical production.

There are many obvious differences between Rick Riordan's novel and this musical. Some were the added musical numbers, the loss of an internal dialogue, and the quickened pace to fit the time constraint of a 90-minute musical.

One benefit of the novel is that a "time constraint" for the story doesn't realistically exist. The book's main portion takes place over approximately one month, as Percy spends about two weeks in camp and then spends ten days on his actual quest. We get to see more of the camp and spend more time with the campers there, as well as we get more time seeing the three characters' struggle traveling across the United States. We see several challenges that are nodded to in the musical, like Medusa and the Lotus Hotel, but some challenges were cut from the musical like Percy retrieving Ares' shield from an abandoned theme park.

These challenges were not necessary for the plot, which allowed the playwright to remove them from the final script of the musical. On the other side, however, it was intriguing to read in the novel these struggles, especially as they fleshed out the magical world of the novel and allowed us to get to know the characters more intimately.

The musical also added, surprisingly, music. This is a benefit for the musical, as it easily adds emotion and pulls the audience more into the story being told. Company songs like 'The Campfire Song' and D.O.A. are fun to listen to and watch on a stage with beautiful solos and captivating harmonies. There are also solo songs, such as 'My Grand





Plan' and 'The Tree on the Hill' which give us amazing insight into the characters in a heartfelt and theatrical way.

The music also helps the narration, as the musical causes us to lose most of the internal thoughts and narration of the characters. The novel is written in first person from Percy's perspective, which lets us see what he is thinking and why he makes the choices he does. With an on-stage musical, we are unable to read the actor's mind as to why they are making the choices that they are, so it is up to the actor to use body language and line delivery to give the audience the best idea of what is going on in Percy's mind. This is incredibly difficult, but it can help the story by giving us an objective opinion on a situation, which can be difficult when you are reading from within someone's mind.

There are not many story or plot points that differ between the mediums. The plot has the same peaks and dips, and we see a lot of the same points hit. Some of the characterizations are different, most noticeably Charon, the Ferryman of the underworld. Changes like this become necessary when putting on a performance. Having a character with such an upbeat personality where, in the story, it feels completely out of place, makes a fun watching experience.



## Greek Mythology Crash Course

### Intro

Since the beginning of humans, we have told stories to explain the universe and the world that we live in. Because of our inherent need to understand, Greek mythology was born. Humans created myths to explain everything from how crops grew to where people went when they died, and despite many of these myths being many centuries old, traditions and beliefs from these times continue through today with our modern society.

Please note: the following stories of Greek mythology are based on the information found in as many sources as possible. You may have heard a different story, depending on from whom and from where. There are several variations of each myth, so take each rendition in this study guide with a grain of salt. Personal research is **always** encouraged.

### History

The history of Greek mythology is hard to pinpoint since most of the myths were told through word of mouth, but it is believed that the origin of the myths were centered in Crete, within the Minoan civilization. It is believed to have begun anywhere between 3000 and 1100 BCE, but it is impossible to say exactly when, especially since most of the origins were not precisely documented, as previously mentioned.

### In the Beginning...

We start with a tale as old as time, literally. Before the Gods, Titans ruled the Earth. One Titan, Kronos, ruled over all Titans and was named the King of the Titans. Kronos discovered through prophecy that his children were destined to overthrow his power, so when Rhea, Kronos' wife, gave birth to his sons and daughters, he would swallow them



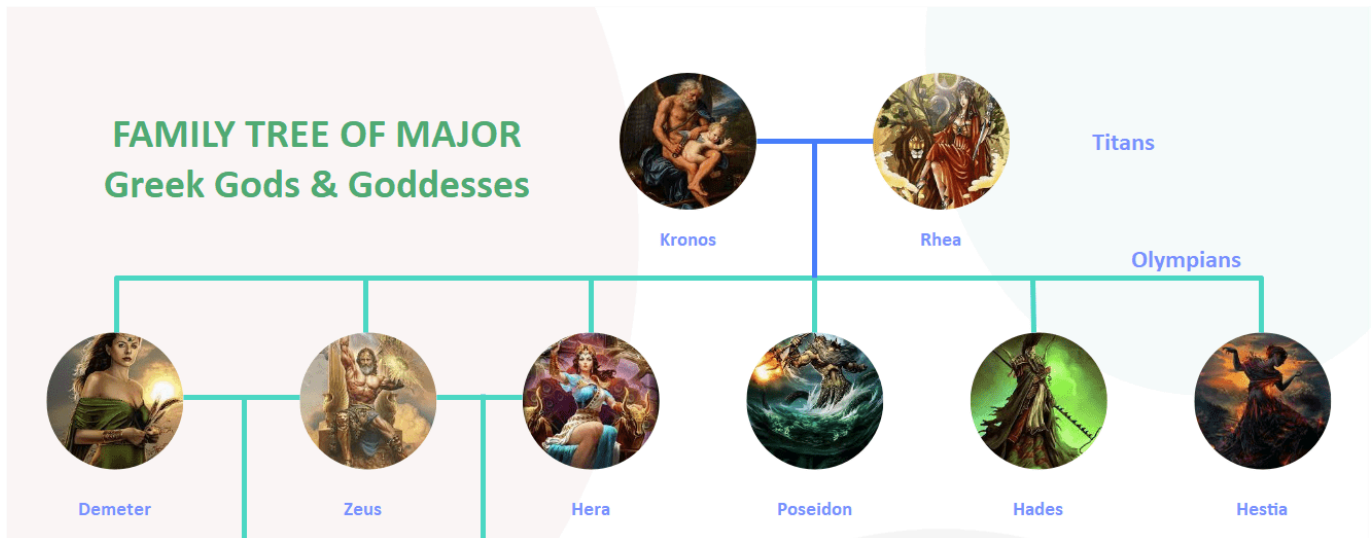
to prevent them from taking over his throne. Eventually, Rhea gave birth to Zeus, who she kept hidden and fed Kronos a rock in his place. Zeus grew up eventually to challenge Kronos' power, while also freeing his brothers and sisters from Kronos' stomach. The Gods and Goddesses stayed alive and grew to age in Kronos, and so there was a war between the Titans and the Gods. The story of the war will vary from myth to myth, but the one thing that is consistent is that the Gods win, and they trap the Titans, while the Gods gain the power they were destined to have.

### The New Era

A new pantheon of Gods rises to power. The three strongest brothers, Zeus, Hades, and Poseidon, divided into the three domains of the world, the sky, the sea, and the underworld, with Olympus and Earth being commonly shared space among the Gods, and Zeus was declared the God of Gods. The other Gods and Goddesses began taking hold of their talents.

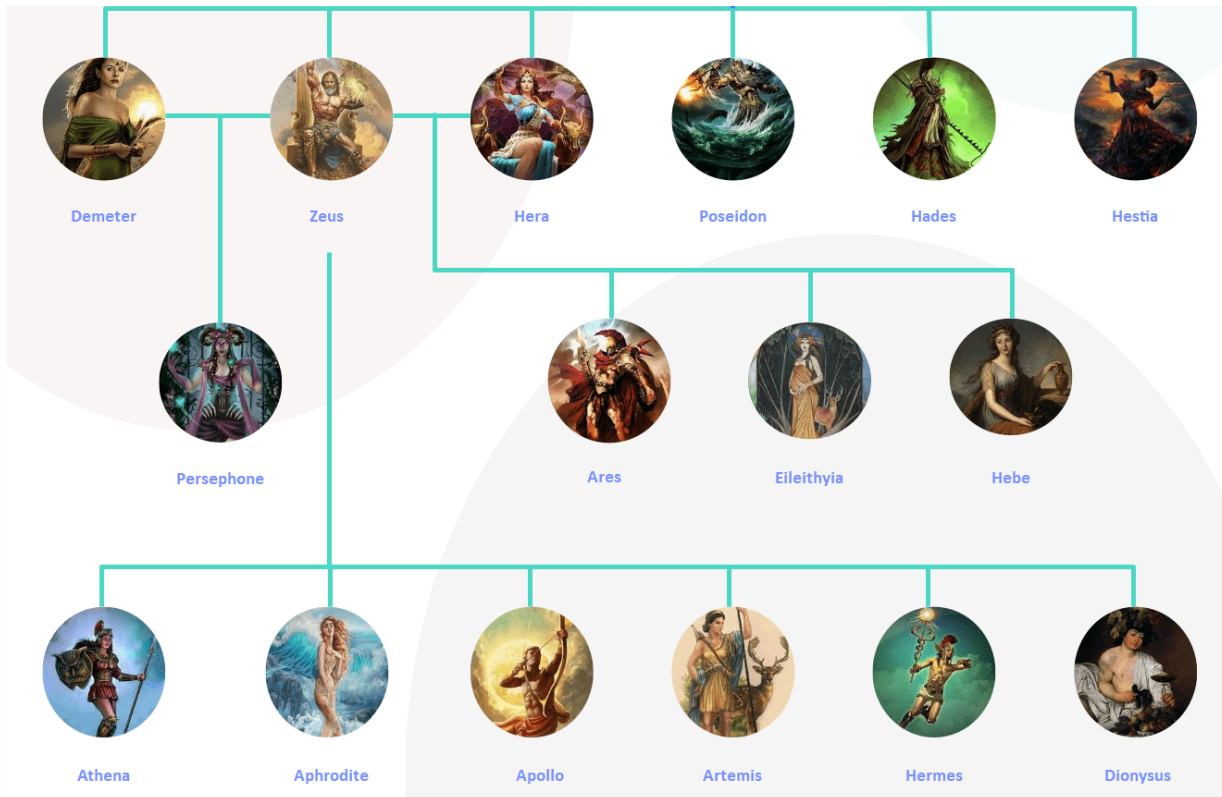
### The Greek Family Tree

This is where Greek myths can be confusing, so buckle up and try not to get lost. We'll start at the top of the tree with the children of Rhea and Kronos, Zeus, Hades, Poseidon, Demeter, Hera, and Hestia. These are the first few Gods that are considered our "Olympians."



- ❖ Zeus: The God of Gods, the Sky, Thunder.
- ❖ Poseidon: The God of the Sea, Storms, Horses.
- ❖ Hades: The God of the Underworld, the Dead.
- ❖ Demeter: The Goddess of Agriculture, Harvest.
- ❖ Hera: The Goddess of Motherhood, Marriage, Women.
- ❖ Hestia: The Goddess of Hearth, Home.

Zeus goes on to have several children. One with Demeter, Three with Hera, and five with various other mythological figures.



- ❖ Persephone: Daughter of Demeter and Zeus, Hades' Wife, Queen of the Underworld
- ❖ Ares: Son of Zeus and Hera, God of War, Courage.
- ❖ Eileithyia: Daughter of Zeus and Hera, Goddess of Birth.
- ❖ Hebe: Daughter of Zeus and Hera, Goddess of Eternal Youth, Old Age, Forgiveness.
- ❖ Athena: Daughter of Zeus, Goddess of Wisdom, Battle.
- ❖ Apollo: Son of Zeus, the Twin of Artemis, God of the Sun, Medicine, Music, Poetry, Bachelors, Archery.
- ❖ Artemis: Daughter of Zeus, the Twin of Apollo, Goddess of the Moon, Maiden Girls, Hunting, Wilderness, Animals.
- ❖ Hermes: Son of Zeus, God of Travelers. Merchants, Thieves. Messengers.
- ❖ Dionysus: Son of Zeus, God of Wine, Theater, Insanity, Religious Ecstasy, Fruits, Vegetation, Fertility, Festivity.



Aphrodite has many myths regarding her birth, but she is one of the oldest Goddesses of the Olympians. One of her common stories is that she was made from the severed body of Uranus, one of Titans, and was created with the sea foam from the ocean. She is commonly grouped in with Zeus' children.

Chiron is not one of the Greek children, but he is still very important to overall Greek mythology. He is a centaur, half-human and half-horse, and he is the mentor for many demigods, such as Heracles (Hercules), Achilles, and Jason. He is known for being one of the most educated centaurs among his kind. He taught them battle, medicine, and many other practical skills for the Greek heroes to accomplish their quests.

### The Troublesome Truth about Myths

Much of Greek, and almost any, mythology is rooted in misogyny and sexism, with the idea that "men were created better and so they must be stronger." We see this repeatedly within myths where the Gods and men of the stories take precedence over the Goddesses or the women. Many arguments for this are that in myths it is a common theme of "men are stupid but they face little to no consequences to their actions," such as Hera taking her anger for Zeus out on her children. This is something to keep in mind when researching and studying myths.



## Interviews

Below are interviews with THE LIGHTNING THIEF's director Daniel Kunkel, Technical Director (TD) Jeremy Pape, and Assistant Technical Director (ATD) Annie Temmink.

### Director Daniel Kunkel:

Q: Did you read the Percy Jackson books when you were younger? If so, did that influence how you directed the musical? How did you feel about working on the musical version of a children's novel that most audience members grew up reading?

A: I did read the books when I was younger! I don't know if I finished the series, but I remembered the first two pretty clearly. **It's a big responsibility to do a show based on another piece of media. People have very specific ideas about this element or that character. That's ultimately a plus,** because you can lean a bit more on the audience knowing the show and characters and can leave in specific moments or add moments that book readers may get a kick out of. It also means you have to consider the show from the perspective of someone who's never heard of these characters. **Balancing those is always a challenge,** but even more so when it's a property like this.

Q: What scenes/songs initially stuck out in the script as something you were excited to work on? Any scenes/songs that you were nervous to work on?

A: I had been listening to parts of this soundtrack since the musical came out. Good Kid was my first real exposure to the show and I loved how much it felt like how teens talk or feel. It's not the most beautiful or always clear what the problem is, and I think that difficulty in communicating is shown really well in the rest of the show. **Once I knew we were moving forward with this show I became enamored with Tree on the Hill.** I made it very clear that this is one of the most difficult songs in the show, not because of the vocal range or speed or anything like that, but the story that Grover is sharing and the emotion behind it is difficult to tap into and effectively use. I



was very nervous about the monsters and magic of this show. Special effects in theatre are a blast, but also incredibly tricky, and need lots of people's input and scheming to make them effective.

Q: If you were to cast yourself in the show, regardless of age or gender, which role would you MOST want to play? Which role would you least want to play?

A: **I would love to play the Oracle at some point.** There's something so fun about a character that shows up, gets to kick the quest off, and then vanishes. Ares would also be fun. **I think the role I'd be most nervous about playing would be Charon.** DOA is a rollercoaster of a song and needs a lot of energy that I think would overwhelm me.

Q: How did you feel about coming into such a magically complicated world, especially with so many complicated technical elements?

A: I was very excited to play in a more magical space. **You have to be really precise and clearish about the rules of your world, but once you're past that, it's a blast.** Magic and fantasy give such a great way for audiences and performers to tackle bigger emotional issues in a way that feels more accessible. **From a development perspective, theatre is always built by a team, so the magic and monsters were a great chance to involve more people and let them add their unique spins to characters.** We've got one group of designers, then builders to put them together, then finally the performers to bring them to life. That opens up the world of theatre making for way more people, and **that's always something I strive for when I'm working on a show.**

Q: What scene are you the most proud of the way it turned out?

A: One of my biggest goals in working on a show with this age range is to encourage younger performers to not be afraid to make big, bold choices. **Finding a way to live authentically onstage is one of the hardest things you can do as an**





actor, and so giving these performers a chance to work on that skill always brings me joy. All of the camp scenes, Another Terrible Day, Campfire Song, and the ending of Acts 1 and 2 have turned into such living moments where the cast is finding a different way of doing them each night, and I hope the audience really feels that sense of life in those larger groups scenes.

### Technical Director and Assistant Technical Director:

Q: Did you read the Percy Jackson books when they came out? If so, did it influence how you worked on the show? If not, how did it affect you coming into a production with source material that is loved by a younger audience?

TD: I had not read them. For me, the excitement of the people involved, particularly young people, is a huge part of the reason to do what we do.

ATD: I haven't read them, though I'd like to and wish I had before the show.

Q: With how technically complicated the show can be, what was the scene you were most excited to work on? What were you least excited to work on?

TD: I was most excited to work on the swords. I can't say that there was a "least exciting" element. Challenges are fun.

ATD: I love the monsters and puppets :)

Q: What element of the show are you the most proud of?

TD: The swords and the experience we were able to provide the actors around them. They were each able to personalize their weapons to the personality of their character.

ATD: I like how the cyclops came together – it was a creative collaboration between several volunteers of all ages and it made me proud to see everyone's creativity shine together



Q: For our production of the Lightning Thief, we are incorporating puppets on stage. What was the thought process behind this? Who designed and made them? What was the process like behind their creation?

ATD: Daniel had the idea and I love making cool things that move so we decided to give it a try. The Minotaur is built on a metal backpack frame with pvc pipe arms and supports with cardboard and fabric muscles/ skin. Josh also 3D printed the nose ring and ear tag. It was fun to build



with again a wide range of volunteers making each part- from the support to the hands to the decorative finish. The Medusa mask was made out of hot glue and pipe insulation foam and mesh. It was again a nice creative process with several different folks.

*US Photo taken by Madison Patterson featuring (l-r) Morgan Geissman, Gian Serrano.*



*Rehearsal Photo by Madison Patterson featuring the cast of THE LIGHTNING THIEF.*

### Talkback Information

The audience talkback with members of the cast and crew of THE LIGHTNING THIEF is scheduled for 9:30pm on Thursday, July 25th, in the Founders Theater (123 E. Water Street, 3rd floor), facilitated by Education Director Ti Ames. You do not need to purchase a ticket to the April 11 show to attend the talkback. This program is provided free of charge to the Charlottesville community. Please email [ti@livearts.org](mailto:ti@livearts.org) with questions about the event.

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*Rehearsal photo by Madison Patterson featuring Connor Michael and Ben Lohr.*

## Works Cited

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- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cronus>
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*Rehearsal Photo by Madison Patterson featuring Connor Michael and Ben Lohr.*

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