

# Production Design Adaptation

Enriching the Humanities Through Opera

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# *How does production and visual design aid in storytelling?*

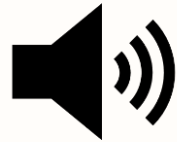
## **Today's Objectives:**

- Respond to the musical and storytelling elements of opera to develop criteria for visual artistic choices.
- Refine an adaptation pitch to demonstrate critical understanding of the visual elements of production design and opera to tell a story.
- Create visual representations of set and costume designs based on opera adaptation pitches.

# Listening Activity



As you listen to the music, write down any colors, mood, spaces/places, textures, foods, etc. you can associate with the music.



# Scene 1. Prologue: 'Is this how it ends?'

*On the heights of Mt. Everest, the lights come up on a dark mist enveloping the mountain. As the chorus and orchestra establish the mystical, mysterious sound world of Everest, the first dimly illuminated outlines of the mountain slowly emerge. From this shadowy opening, we see the chorus-- the spirits of all those who have died on Everest-- singing to Beck Weathers. Beck is seen lying in a fetal position, unconscious on the South Col of Everest.*

## CHORUS

Ah!

Is this how it ends?

How many steps... How many breaths  
will you take in your life?

Will you only count the last ones you take?

The last ones you take...

The last ones you take...

Ah!

Is this how it ends?

Is this how it begins?

A wisp of cloud  
in a clear blue sky?

It is something no one ever sees:  
Dreams and contingencies

Spun into elegies.

One more step...

That is all there is...

It feels pure and beautiful.

Beyond answers...

Beyond questions...

Beyond...Is this how it begins?

*The lights fade on Beck. Slowly the choral sound blooms into an entirely new texture. As this happens, we slowly see the chorus of spirits of the dead, scattered over the surface of Everest, turn and watch Rob Hall as he makes the final steps to the summit of Everest. He is alone. It is a beautiful day. There's just a wisp of cloud in the bright blue sky.*

# ***Everest* Synopsis**

The opera *Everest* follows the harrowing true stories of climbers Rob Hall, Doug Hansen, and Beck Weathers during their 1996 attempt to summit Mount Everest. It shifts between the climbers' present struggles on the mountain, their past memories, and the perspectives of their loved ones, including Rob's wife, Jan, who is contacted in New Zealand about his perilous situation. As Beck battles delirium and Rob tries to save Doug during a fierce storm, the climbers confront haunting realizations and their deep connections to those they love.

# Key Scene #1

## Scene 4. Doug's Ascent

Doug, nearing exhaustion, struggles to complete his ascent to the summit with Rob's encouragement. The chorus underscores the dangerous passage of time as Doug rests frequently, each pause marked by labored exclamations. In a climactic moment, Doug reflects on his arduous journey and determination before finally reaching the peak, only to realize the emotional toll of his quest.



Everest, Opera Parallèle (images: courtesy of Opera Parallèle)



# Key Scene #1 continued



Everest, Opera Parallèle (video: courtesy of Opera Parallèle)



# Key Scene #2

## Scene 9. The Storm Hits

As a storm approaches, Jan anxiously receives troubling news about her husband, Rob, who is stranded on the mountain with Doug. Rob, desperate for help, radios for oxygen and assistance but is advised by Guy to abandon Doug and save himself. Despite the dire situation and Doug hearing the conversation, Rob resolves to stay and help his friend.



Everest, Opera Parallèle (images: courtesy of Opera Parallèle)





# Key Scene #2 continued



Everest, Opera Parallèle (video: courtesy of Opera Parallèle)

# Key Scene #3

## Scene 12. The Phone Call

As the chorus counts the agonizing hours, Jan, at home in New Zealand, receives a phone call from her husband, Rob, who is stranded on the mountain. Despite their dire situation, they share a tender conversation about their love and the future, contemplating the name Sarah for their child. Rob reassures Jan, asking her not to worry, while Jan expresses her deep concern and affection, trying to comfort him from afar.

Additional Reference: [Phone Call Scene from 'Everest' \(film 2015\)](#)



Everest, Opera Parallèle (images: courtesy of Opera Parallèle)



# Key Scene #3 continued



Everest, Opera Parallèle (video: courtesy of Opera Parallèle)

# Production Design Definitions

**Production Design:** The process of creating the visual aesthetic and environment for a film, television show, commercial, or other forms of media. It involves creating sets, props, as well as costumes, projections, and other visual elements that help bring the story to life and immerse the audience in the narrative. The Production Designer is responsible for overseeing the creation of these elements, working closely with the director, producers, and other key creatives to ensure that the visual style of the production aligns with the overall vision and tone of the project.

# Production Design Definitions

**Stage/Set Design:** The art and practice of creating the physical environment in a theatrical production, film, television show, or other visual medium. This includes scenic elements and design layout for sets, lighting, props, and furniture to bring the story or concept to life. It involves arranging these elements in a way that enhances the audience's visual and aesthetic experience. Stage design may also involve creating technical elements such as sound systems, special effects, and rigging to support the production. Stage designers work closely with other production team members to create a cohesive and visually appealing environment complementing the production's overall vision.

# Production Design Definitions

**Props:** A term commonly used in live performance and film production to refer to objects or items used on stage or on set to enhance the performance or scene. Props can include anything from furniture, decorations, weapons, hand-held objects, and more. Props are used to add realism and detail to a production and help bring the world of the play or film to life for the audience.



# Production Design Definitions

**Lighting Design:** Refers to the art and practice of creating and controlling the lighting for a performance. This includes designing the placement and intensity of the lights and using different colors and effects to enhance the performance's mood and atmosphere. Lighting designers play a crucial role in enhancing the storytelling and emotional impact of the production, helping to set the stage, highlight performers, create a sense of place and time, and evoke different emotions in the audience. It is an integral part of the overall visual and artistic design of the production.

# Production Design Definitions

**Projection Design:** The art of creating and manipulating projected images and videos to enhance the visual elements of a live event, such as a concert, theater production, dance performance, or installation. It involves using specialized software and hardware to project images, videos, or other visual content onto a surface, such as a screen, wall, or even the audience itself.

# Production Design Definitions

**Costume Design:** The process of creating costumes and outfits for characters in theatre, film, television, or other visual media. It involves researching the time-period, setting, and character traits to develop pieces that help bring the character to life. Costume designers work closely with directors, actors, and other production team members to ensure that the costumes accurately reflect the vision of the production. This can involve sourcing or creating garments, accessories, and props, as well as coordinating fittings and alterations. Costume design plays a crucial role in storytelling and character development, helping to enhance the overall visual and emotional impact of a production.

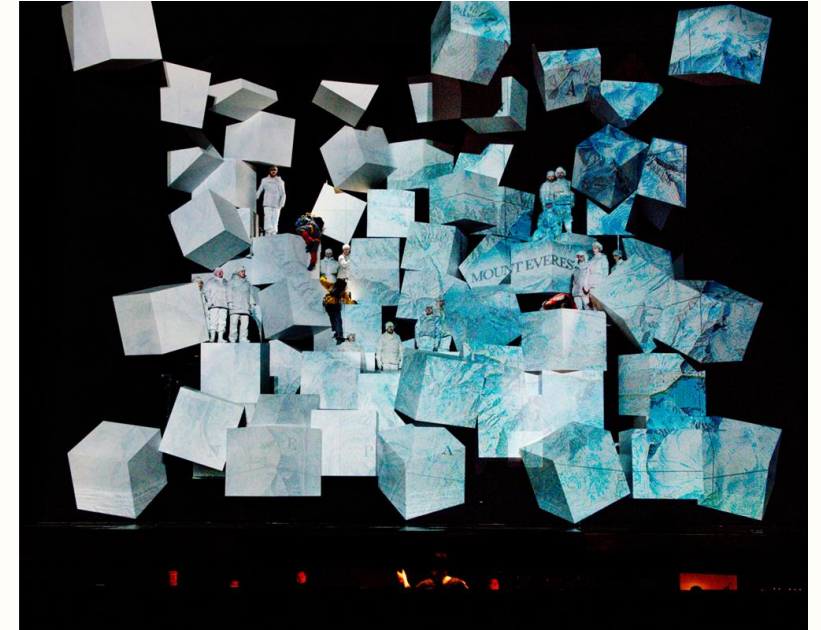
# Production Design Definitions

**Hair and Makeup Design:** Refers to the planning and execution of hairstyles and makeup looks for performers and actors. This creative process involves analyzing the characters or themes in the performance, researching historical or cultural references, and designing hair and makeup that enhances the overall aesthetic and storytelling of the production. Hair and makeup designers work closely with directors, costume designers, and performers to create a cohesive and visually impactful presentation on stage or screen.

# Production Design



Everest, The Dallas Opera (photos: Karen Almond)



# Elements of Design

○ Color 


○ Line 

○ Shape 

○ Texture 

○ Form 

○ Space 

○ Value 

○ Pattern 



# Elements of Design



Everest, The Dallas Opera (photo: Karen Almond)

**Form and Shape:** Three-dimensional cubic forms are prominently featured, creating a complex, layered structure. The cubes provide a sense of depth and spatial complexity.

**Color:** Primary colors are shades of blue and white, with significant contrast provided by the red and black of the central figure's clothing. These colors evoke a cold, icy environment, suitable for the theme of Mount Everest.

**Texture:** Surfaces of the cubes are textured with what appears to be snowy or icy landscapes, enhancing the visual interest and reinforcing the theme of the harsh, mountainous environment.

# Production Design Guidelines



Consider all that was discussed when designing your production: color, mood, textures, spaces/places, etc.

Production design should include:

- Set and costume designs based on your opera adaptation pitch
- At least 3 elements of design in your work





# Production Design Questionnaire



What are the reasons behind your choices? Are your choices based on the music, story, or libretto, and/or a combination of these?

How are you visually representing the time and location?

How are you visually communicating mood and emotion?

**Present** 

# Reflection

Share thoughts on the production design process.

How has your experience with adapting a story visually change your perspective on storytelling or your approach to developing ideas?



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