

Libretto by John Gay

Music by G. F. Handel

ACIS & GALATEA



I wrote
the words!

John Gay

THE STORY

Acis, a shepherd, and Galatea, a sea nymph, fall in love. Yippee! Things get a bit messy, however, when Polyphemus, a giant cyclops, falls in love with Galatea, too. We're not going to lie, what happens next isn't pretty. In fact, you may want to look away now.

I wrote
the music!



G. F. Handel

SPOILER ALERT!

Still reading? Okay then, here's what happens next: Galatea rejects Polyphemus, and he gets jealous and throws a huge boulder onto Acis. Splat!

As Acis is crushed, he pleads for help; Galatea, after all, is the daughter of two gods, so surely she can do something! So, with encouragement from the Chorus, Galatea transforms Acis into a natural fountain.

'Acis & Galatea' is set in Sicily; it's a myth to explain why the island's volcano Mount Aetna erupts, and how it has shaped the landscape. If you look at a map of Sicily, you will see the River Jaci ('Acis' in modern Sicilian dialect), a town named Acireale and various local landmarks such as Casa Galatea in Acitrezza.

I wrote
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Did You Know...?

Publius Ovidius Naso ('Ovid')

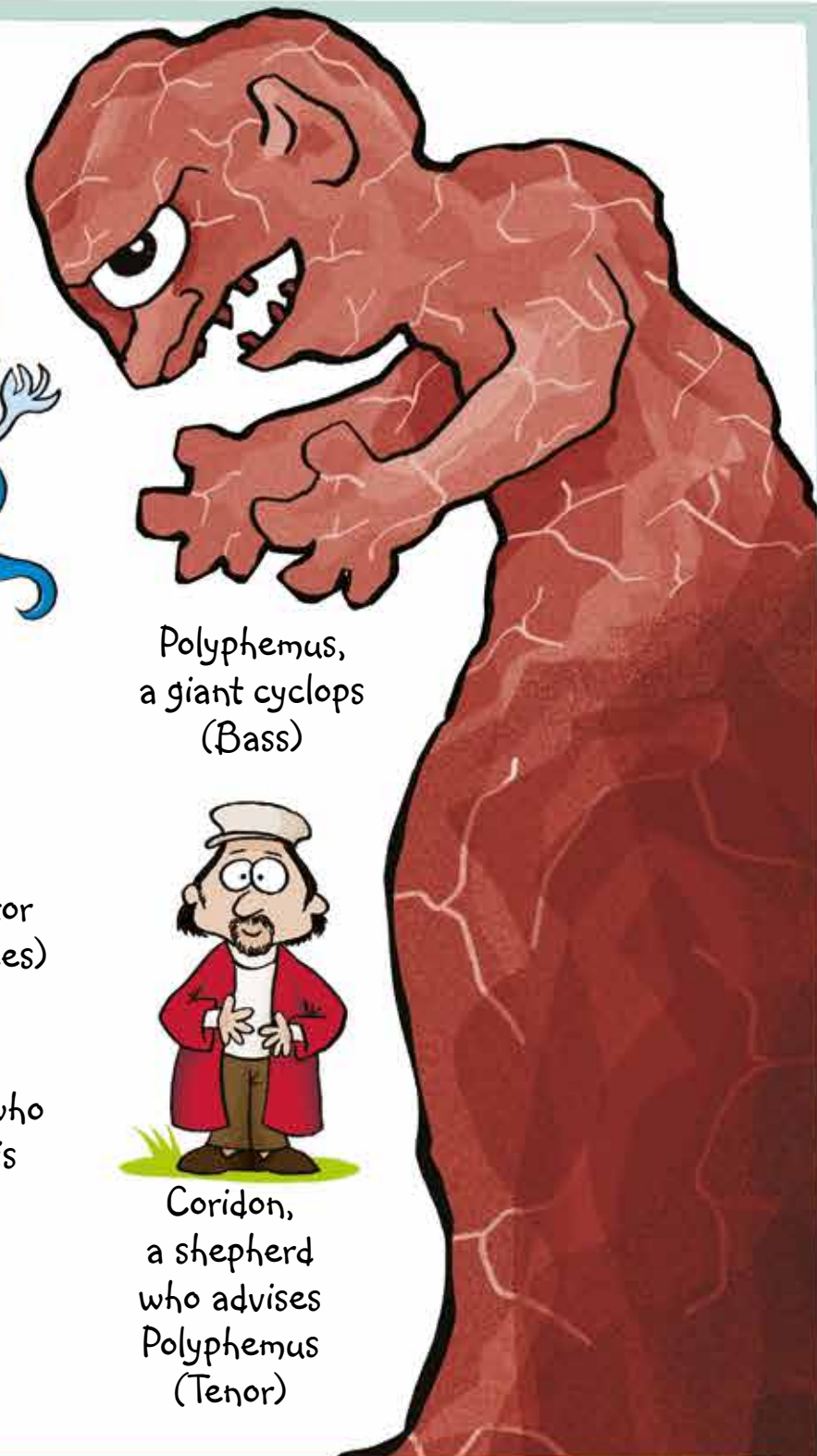
'Acis & Galatea' is a story in *The Metamorphoses*, an epic poem written by Ovid in AD 8. The *Metamorphoses* includes more than 250 myths that tell the story of the world from its creation to the reign of Julius Caesar.

CHARACTERS

Galatea,
a sea nymph
(Soprano)



Acis,
a shepherd
(Tenor)



Polyphemus,
a giant cyclops
(Bass)

Chorus,
the narrator
(Many voices)



Damon,
a shepherd who
advises Acis
(Tenor)



Coridon,
a shepherd
who advises
Polyphemus
(Tenor)

GUIDE TO THE VOICES



SOPRANO

- Comes from Italian for 'above' (sopra)
- Sings the really high notes
- Typical roles: angel, princess, spirit



TENOR

- Comes from Italian for 'to hold' (tenere)
- The tenor helps to hold the melody
- Typical roles: prince, romantic hero



BASS

- Comes from Old French for 'low' (bas)
- Sings the really low notes
- Typical roles: king, the baddie!

ACIS & GALATEA

George Frideric Handel composed 'Acis & Galatea' in 1718 while living at Cannons, a country estate that belonged to James Brydges. Cannons was being remodeled as an Italian villa, and in its garden, there were ostriches, flamingos, storks, macaws and – most appropriately for the story – a fountain!

George envisioned that this 'little opera' would be performed outdoors. As you listen to the beautiful music, imagine yourself sitting on a hillside in Sicily on a warm summer evening, while birds warble in the trees and a fountain gurgles nearby.

WHAT IS IT, EXACTLY?

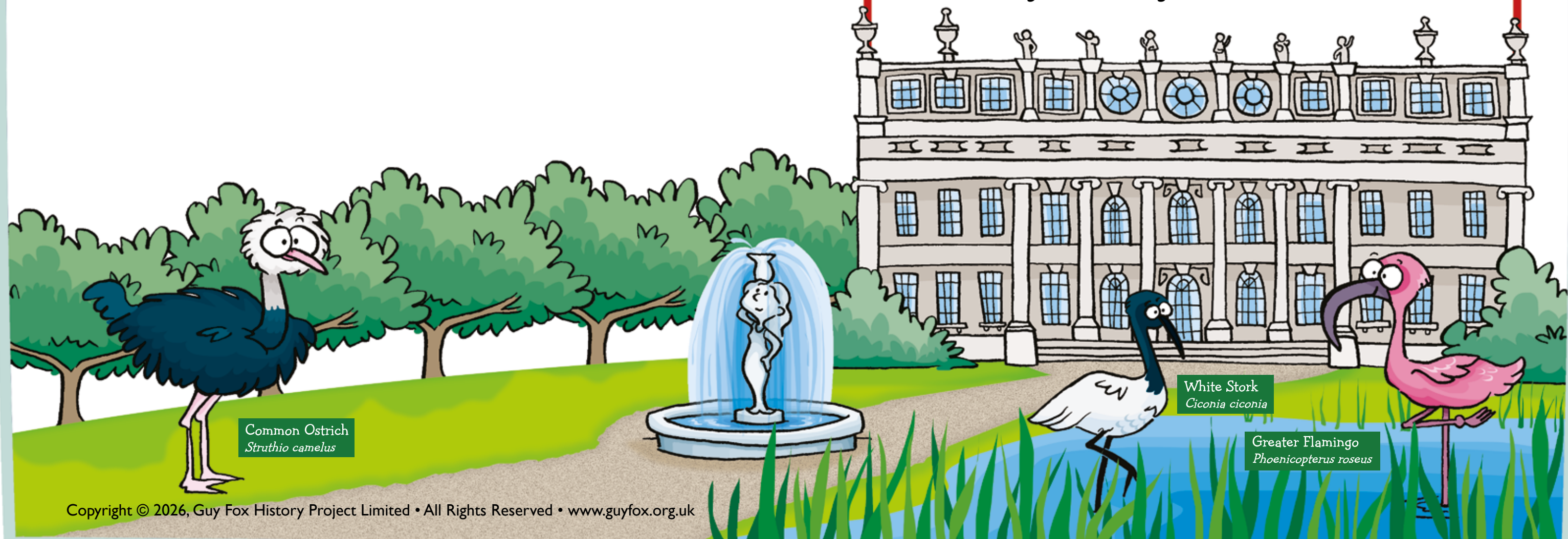
'Acis & Galatea' has been classified as a 'serenata', a 'masque', a 'pastoral' or 'pastoral opera', a 'little opera' and an 'oratorio'. What do YOU think it is?

Serenata: A piece of music written for a special occasion or person; it is shorter than an opera with simple costumes and scenery; 'Serenata' comes from the Italian word 'sera' which means 'evening'; a serenata is usually performed in the evening.

Masque: A lavish theatrical performance that combines acting, dancing, music and special effects.

Pastoral: A creative work that celebrates the beauty and simplicity of the countryside.

Oratorio: A piece of music that tells a story, which is performed by an orchestra and singers without any actors.



Common Ostrich
Struthio camelus

White Stork
Ciconia ciconia

Greater Flamingo
Phoenicopterus roseus