

ACCOUNTS OF  
MYÉYUS AND THE  
EGO WAR

A Collective Journal  
by  
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# PREFACE

## and Introduction

My family carries a long tradition of having very interesting stories to tell. Artists, adventurers, champions, warriors; individuals who not only overcame challenges, but sought them. Curiously however, it was not until my mother – Alex Pirpin – that any of us thought to write all of it down. Even for her, whose mind is a steel trap for the countless oral traditions she had heard for years, assembling the clearest picture possible from what physical accounts exist is an arduous task that she continues to toil over to this day. Not that she does not find enjoyment in it. In fact, the contrary is true. Her heart is truly that of a storyteller. My earliest memories as a young girl were of her narrating her latest manuscripts to me, and of her emphatic retellings of the tales of the many family artifacts we kept around the house. She inspired me to become the author I am today, but it was her father’s talent that she ultimately took after.

I am told that my grandfather – Felix Pirpin – was a marvelous storyteller as well, although you’d be lucky to experience it firsthand. I was never so lucky, as he passed only a couple of years after I was born. According to my mother, he lived a wonderful life, filled with hijinks and unusual circumstance, but he was humble to a fault. Only on special occasions, after some convincing, would he be compelled to share these stories. My mother compiled all that she was told and remembered, but the chronicle of Felix Pirpin was largely incomplete.

So began my mission. After some digging, I learned that my grandfather lived in Myéyus as part of a disaster relief team after Hurricane Meredith had struck the area, and for quite some time afterwards. If ever there was a place to go to find out more about his past, it was there. And two years ago (at the time of writing) I made that journey, just in time for the 153<sup>rd</sup> Myéyus Grand Showcase. What was supposed to be an insightful adventure to uncover my family’s legacy soon became a battle against a force unlike anyone had ever seen before.

This journal documents the experiences of myself and those artists that I encountered during the Ego War of 2022, as well as short biographies and autobiographies of the same.

# A BRIEF HISTORY

## of the Nation of Myéyus

Before getting into the accounts, I think it's important to provide some context. Please bear in mind that while I have taken care to consult several credible sources for the following information, I am not a historian. Everything I present here has been summarized and many events have been purposefully glossed over or unmentioned for the purposes of this journal. It is intended only to serve as background for the contents of the journal and does not represent a comprehensive history of Myéyus. For further reading, I suggest *Every Street a Gallery: The History of Myéyus* by Lamra Oppenwilde.

The Renaissance had begun in Italy, bringing with it a new resurgence in artistic expression and enlightened thought. So powerful was this wave of inspiration to the famed inventor and avid supporter of the arts Nichaeloti Calcocoti that in 1372, he convinced his brother and mayor of the then city of Myéyus, Onoro Calcocoti, to invest heavily in converting the city into a haven for art and creativity. Working together, they commissioned the building of museums, studios, theaters, parks, and schools dedicated to the teaching of artistic disciplines across Myéyus. Their efforts paid off, attracting creatives from all over Europe, and putting them in direct competition with Rome for who could amass the greatest minds. For this reason, Onoro and Nichaeloti signed the Treaty of Pines in 1399 making Myéyus an independent city-state.

After becoming its own sovereign nation, Myéyus began establishing a new government, one that conformed to their ideals; an inspirocracy, the rule of the artist. The Calcocotis believed that those with the vision and inspiration to create great works should be the ones in power. To decide who would take office, they devised the Myéyus Grand Showcase, in which any artist may submit and show off their latest pieces, similar to a World's Fair. In 1410, the infrastructure had been completed and the 1<sup>st</sup> Myéyus Grand Showcase began. At the end of the seven-day event, one artist of each of the seven recognized disciplines would be selected by all of those in attendance as the individual who produced the greatest work amongst their peers. These individuals served alongside the Calcocotis as their political equals. Since then, a new Grand Showcase has been hosted every 4 years,

drawing in greater and greater numbers from those around Europe and eventually the world. Today, to have your work recognized at a Grand Showcase is the artistic equivalent of winning an Olympic medal, and to be awarded the honor of Best in Discipline is the highest achievement one can hope to earn in their career. These days, however, the opportunity to take office in the Myéyusian senate is not mandatory nor is it offered to every winner automatically, as standards for such have become much stricter over time.

The accounts within this journal take place in 2022, the year of the 153<sup>rd</sup> Myéyus Grand Showcase.

# PERSONAL ACCOUNT

## Part I

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of July, 2022, I arrived in Myéyus by plane, and its wonders were made apparent even from thousands of feet in the air. Architecture of various historical and experimental styles rose into the sky, each spire and rooftop marking the center of a distinct patch of the city. The typical skyscraper-grey you would expect on the modern buildings of such a metropolis was replaced with shades of orange and blue, their national colors. Combine that with the added decoration laid over the city in preparation for the Grand Showcase in only a couple of days, and one may be forgiven for thinking they were touching down in a micronation-sized theme park.

After marveling at this sight for some time, I spotted the talk of that year's festival: the Babelopticon, a complex of enormous, intricate, and interconnected towers that would serve as the arena for the year's events. A central tower linked to six smaller towers radially via huge arches, which contained transport systems that carried people in 30-40 person pods, similar to Ferris wheel cars. The most amazing aspect was that the six smaller towers were able to suspend themselves in the air, with nothing to support them but the central tower and its arches. From the distance I was viewing it, it had the general shape of a palm tree, or perhaps an umbrella. At the time, this was a common criticism against it and garnered some (admittedly humorous) ridicule online, though it was certainly much more impressive in person. Regardless of these voicings, when the plan and proof of concept were displayed at the 149<sup>th</sup> Myéyus Grand Showcase in 2006, it's designer, architect Lacarl Henmor, handedly won Best in Discipline and has served on the Myéyusian senate since, seeing his vision to completion.

I arrived at the airport and met with the people who would be my hosts for the duration of my stay, an elderly man named Vincent and his wife, Harper. Vincent and Harper drove me to their home. It was a very slow trip, since most Myéyusians walk from place to place, and foot traffic increased tenfold on and around the week of the Showcase. I didn't mind, as it was all the better to admire the scenery. On ground level, the city was a marvel. It seemed that on each wall was either a mural or a street performer,

and the dress of the common pedestrian was just as diverse and eccentric as the rest of the city. I had an idea of what I was getting into prior to my visit, but even still it was overwhelming for the first few hours.

Vincent and Harper had lived in Myéyus since being born in the late 1930s, living through 21 separate Showcases as well as the destruction wrought by Hurricane Meredith. When we arrived at their home, I did my best to hold off on asking any of the thousand questions I had circling around in my head. I figured it would be rude for a guest to interrogate their host before even seeing the house, so I bit my tongue. Their home was a cozy space, fit for two people who don't mind being close to each other. The front door opened up into the living room, which flowed uninterrupted into the kitchen that doubled as the dining room. To the right was a short hallway with doors on either side; one for the bedroom, one for the bathroom, and one for a small office space. I would be setting up in the living room and sleeping on the couch. I didn't mind; it was my favorite room in the house. The home felt like a microcosm of the city, speckled with a spectrum of colors and shapes in every direction and crevice. They seemed to possess an artifact or artwork from every conceivable culture, but it was hard to tell if they were well-traveled or if the city was simply that cosmopolitan. But the living room was special. It seemed that it served as their studio of sorts, with many of their own unfinished pieces being strewn about in obscure places.

After receiving the tour, I got my opportunity to speak with the couple about my grandfather. In 1965, Hurricane Meredith reached Myéyus, and although it had lost much of its strength by the time it arrived, it was still able to cause significant damage to the city. At the time, my grandfather was 25 years old, and he was a member of the United Nations Peace Corps. His assignment was to help recover any pieces of artwork that may have survived the storm and submit them to a restoration team. Vincent and Harper met him one day while volunteering to search the rubble of the Graere, a former fine arts museum. They remembered him for the way he immediately began speaking to them as if they were already friends.

"He greeted us like we were old pals who hadn't met in years," Vincent told me. "His Italian wasn't very good, but he sure was confident." Shortly after being introduced, Harper heard a small voice from amongst the rubble. She notes that this was especially alarming since it was known that the museum was closed the day it came down, and no one expected

anyone to have been inside. The trio hurried to the sound's origin to find the smallest glimpse of a young boy underneath the rocks.

"It was miraculous," Harper said. "He was inside a pocket of the rocks. We could only see a portion of his face, but we knew he was terrified." The boy spoke English, but his fear transcended language. My grandfather took the initiative to stay with the boy and comfort him as Vincent and Harper went for help.

"We don't know what they said to each other, but whatever it was it calmed the kid down," Vincent explained.

"Your granddad really seemed to be able to make friends with anyone," Harper added.

After my grandfather left with the rescue team, Vincent and Harper claimed that they never met him again. However, they told me that a friend of theirs named Melven Mondo volunteered on that same rescue team, and that he was participating in the Grand Showcase in a couple of days. With that, we settled in for the rest of the evening, but my relaxed attitude was a façade. Now that I was finally there, my excitement could hardly be contained. Sunday could not come soon enough.

On Saturday, I was treated to a proper tour of the city by my hosts. Although a number of locations were closed in preparation for the Grand Showcase, the three of us managed to cover a lot of ground. We walked through the Graere II, enjoyed a night of music by the scintillating Amavelli Tutlio, and finished off the evening sharing a bottle of Crimette de Raquet. The day was uneventful otherwise but learning the lay of the land would prove to be useful later.

The next morning was the official first day of the Showcase. Normally, it might have been extremely difficult to decide where to start first, but I remembered that I had a goal in mind. I resolved to locate the area dedicated to the School of Crafting where Melven Mondo was likely to be. Vincent and Harper elected to stay home, not wanting to deal with the hustle and bustle, a sentiment that I would come to understand. Driving to the Showcase would have been impossible. From half a mile away, the streets were packed so tightly that one could not see the stones of the road underfoot. The walk up to the Babelopticon was a task, but the final stretch of the journey, during which the complex was dead ahead, was like something from a dream. The scale of the structure is impossible to capture with words or photography; such awe did it inspire that on more than a dozen occasions, I witnessed festivalgoers falling backwards onto the

ground from the combination of attempting to find the top of the building and the dizziness that followed. I tried it myself and had to look away for fear of joining the befallen travelers and embarrassing myself too. It is a sensation that I imagine is similar to what astronauts experience when they see the Earth from orbit, or when explorers discovered the Grand Canyon for the first time.

A map that was provided online indicated that the central tower was the Calcocoti Tower of Craftsmanship and Invention. Once I passed the threshold into the tower, the difficulty of my task became soberingly clear. I was greeted by rows upon rows upon floors upon floors of exhibits and displays, broken up only by staircases, escalators, and elevators. It calls into question how anybody was supposed to be able to see everything within a week, let alone experience it all enough to make a sound judgement as a voter. Consulting the map's directory, Melven was listed as a co-creator assisting a Carmen Haech a couple of floors above me, so I made my way to the closest elevator. In that distance alone my eye was caught by a number of displays that tempted me to stay and browse, but I knew I should focus on my task at hand first or I'd be meandering all day. I entered the lift with a handful of other festivalgoers and pressed the button for the second floor. A man with disheveled hair rambled to himself next to me and I asked him if he was alright. He looked at me and smiled a bit sheepishly, although I could see anxiety in his eyes.

"Thank you, miss, but I'm fine. I thought something felt off, but it was nothing . . . I'm Trajita, nice to meet you." We shook hands and parted ways just as soon as we had met. He continued further up the tower, and I stepped off onto my floor. Another sprawling showroom. My map lead me to a space in the corner of the gallery that had been cleared out to make way for Carmen's piece: some kind of mechanical bull attached to a circular track. When I arrived, Melven was on top of the bull preparing for a test run. Carmen waved me off away from the track and began running the test.

"Prepare yourself, Mondo!" She shouted.

"Hit it Carmen, this is what I was made for!" Melven replied back with vigor that betrayed his age.

The machine roared to life and began traveling around the track, while at the same time gyrating and rocking wildly in an effort to throw Melven off of its back. He held on valiantly and would have likely made a full rotation if

not for a horrible screeching sound that prompted Carmen to deactivate the bull as it went into the third quarter.

“What did you do to it this time, Mondo,” Carmen asked. “I thought you said it was ready?”

“Hold on, let me give it another look.” Melven said as he dismounted. Carmen turned to me now that the test had concluded. She was a younger woman with short, curly hair and a desire to make mistakes. We greeted each other and she was excited to present her piece to me.

“A mechanical bull meets a roller coaster. I call it “The Go-Round!” This is the first prototype but it’s shaping up.” She explains. I asked her what it meant, but she seemed confused. According to her, she built it for fun and nothing else. I figured that was fair enough and didn’t press further. I asked if I could speak to Melven, and she waved him over to me. He was a much older man than Carmen, at least 30 years her senior if I had to make a guess. There was no hair on his head save a finely trimmed goatee. I asked how they knew each other; Melven was a long-time family friend of Carmen’s and since he was a handyman and master tinkerer he agreed to accompany her to the Showcase. I inquired with Melven as to if he ever knew a Felix Pirpin, being sure to recount all of the details that Vincent and Harper had shared with me.

At first he seemed unsure, but after mentioning I was his granddaughter he took a look at me, and something clicked.

“Oh,” Melven exclaimed. “I remember now! He looked just like you! Or you look just like him would be more accurate, right?” He recounted the day that he and my grandfather, along with the rest of the rescue team, found that boy and got him to safety. Melven was the first to check him for injuries and apply first aid.

“When Felix tried to hand him off to us, the kid didn’t want him to leave. He wasn’t his dad or anything, so we thought, “what gives?” But, if it comforted him, and if your granddad was fine with it, we didn’t see any harm.”

Melven went on to explain that my grandfather accompanied them in their vehicle on their way to deliver the boy to his family. After confirming that the boy was okay, he stayed close to Felix the entire way and they spoke to each other quietly. Melven remembers finding this strange but thought it would be rude to say anything. After all, the boy was likely traumatized; who was he to criticize his behavior? All that they were able to

gather about him was his name and address. He had seemed apprehensive to speak about anything else.

“His name was Jadaniel Lifther. I remember because it was a name I never heard before. It’s kind of weird right?” Melven noted. They arrived at a camp where affected families were being helped and where the team was informed that Jadaniel’s family was. They stopped in front of a tent from which a worried woman stepped out. She identified herself as Jadaniel’s mother and my grandfather walked him out to reunite the two. Before parting, they seemed to share one more secret exchange and Jadaniel handed my grandfather something.

“The kid tried to be sneaky about it,” Melven laughed. “But it was pretty obvious.”

My grandfather got back into the vehicle. Melven asked what it was that Jadaniel had given him. Felix half-seriously feigned ignorance and dropped his act after only a second prompting. Still, he was reluctant to reveal exactly what it was, telling Melven and anyone else who was curious that it was a secret.

“I guess the kid asked him to keep it between them. It annoyed the hell out of me, but I could respect it.” Melven said.

After dropping my grandfather off back at the Graere, Melven and his team only saw him a couple of times in passing. Despite Melven’s continued asking, Felix never told him what Jadaniel gave him that day.

Melven and Carmen didn’t have any more to tell me about my grandfather, but I stayed a little while longer to watch them conduct more tests and chat about the festival. Afterwards, we parted ways and I explored the rest of the tower, or at least what I was able to see with the time I had remaining. My plan was to see one tower per day, but that was harder than expected. I’ll spare you the details of everything I was able to see, because attempting to do so would unnecessarily protract this journal. Also, extensive documentation of all of the exhibits at the 153<sup>rd</sup> Myéyus Grand Showcase already exist and cover much more and in much more description than I ever could. If you’re interested in such reading, I would recommend *Wonders of the Babelopticon* by Cortisha Cunningham, A’dez Vaughn, and Yolanda Wilkins. However, I will go over the highlights of each of my days in brief.

I decided to explore the Babelopticon systematically, taking on one of the suspended towers per day in a clockwise order, beginning with the eastern tower on the second day. In order to reach it, I took the transport

pod system officially dubbed as the “Folksway.” Again, much like a Ferris wheel, an array of several large pods moved in a rotation. Two pods at a time would open their doors as they slowly passed the station, and passengers would step on as they glided past. I stepped in with a large group of about 30 other people. The interior of the pod was lightly furnished, simply providing a set of benches on either side. However, small displays were set up even in this fleeting space which presented artworks by students from various schools around the city. The top half of the pod was transparent, allowing us to see the other pods around us and to take in the view of the city through the windows in the tunnel. The ride to the other tower was leisurely, and I likely could have walked there faster, but I could appreciate slowing down the pace.

I stepped off of the Folksway into the Omilietto Tower of Visual Mastery. Unlike the convention halls of the previous tower, this one was set up moreso like a traditional museum. A circular hallway looped around the perimeter of the room, and one could branch off of this hallway into smaller rooms each serving as a vaguely themed exhibit featuring several artist’s works. Many of the artists themselves were not present alongside their pieces and were likely enjoying the other parts of the Babelopticon, but some sat on stools or stood by their artwork to offer some insight to anyone who would ask. One particular stone sculpture of a seahorse caught my eye and I stopped to admire it. A man with a large rectangular mustache sat cross-legged on the floor to my right who was also interested, so I took a seat next to him. The man’s name was Ignal Sedim and was the sculptor himself. He told me of the numerous times that he had attempted to create that sculpture only for it to fall apart before it was done. The point where the tail of the seahorse touches the base was very small and delicate care was taken to balance the weight just right.

“I haven’t stopped marveling at it. For them to get it up here intact . . . it is more impressive than my own work, I think.” He mused.

On the third day I visited the Vivaldi Tower of Music and Sound. The bottom floors resembled huge living rooms, furnished with chairs, couches, ottomans, and side tables arranged into numerous lounge areas. Centered in these lounge areas were kiosks fitted with dozens of pairs of headphones which allowed festivalgoers to listen to music while relaxing. On the penultimate floor were small, soundproofed rooms for live performances, and the top floor was dedicated to a full-scale concert hall. When I got to the top floor, a duet was on stage featuring a man and a woman. They were

performing a song in two separate languages, Japanese and Italian from what I could hear. It was some sort of pop song. Not really my taste, but they were good. They sounded synthetic, which I initially chalked up to autotune or something similar, but when I met them after their song I realized that they were synthetic themselves. The woman was a holographic vocaloid named “Saturn” and the man was a robot named “September.” I had never encountered anything like them before, so being introduced to them both simultaneously was a shock. Despite their artificial origin, they were quite friendly and behaved very naturally. If I didn’t know better, I would have believed they were flesh and blood.

“I hope you enjoyed our performance,” Saturn chirped. “September and I worked hard to get it right. He did great, didn’t he?”

“It was a valuable learning experience; I haven’t done many duets. But, I also had a lot of fun, as well.” September smiled.

On day four, I went to the Alighieri Tower of the Written Word. Each floor featured a regal library that not only served as a fitting and dignified display for the works from the featured artists, but also functioned as a typical fully-stocked library. In fact, plans existed to keep it there indefinitely, which justified its higher degree of design and permanent fixtures. Unfortunately, these plans were disrupted by the Ego War. I did not know this at the time of course, and I elected to obtain a Babelopticon library card. The librarian I spoke to was a dry but courteous man named Werther Moffin. He had a thin head of hair and an even expression that was barely hidden behind his slender reading glasses. To my surprise, he recognized my name when I introduced myself.

“I admire your work, Ms. Pirpin,” he said. “You and your mother both. You have quite the interesting family, if you don’t mind my saying so. Would it be right to assume you didn’t visit simply to see the sights?” I confirmed his suspicions and explained that I was looking for details about my grandfather. In retrospect I find it strange that he would ask a question like that, but at the time the excitement of meeting a fan overrode such thoughts. Moffin listened to me with focused attention. He was busy but took some time to think and recommended me a book.

“Allow me to recommend *The Secrets of the Pendulum and Why I Don’t Need Them* by Pizantz Swirne. For a guide on hypnotism it’s not horribly exciting, but I think it may be useful to you.” Moffin suggested.

He pointed me in the right direction, and I thanked him for his time. Among the featured artist’s books, which were marked with special red

spines, I found the aforementioned title. I intended to leave for the house early in order to read some of it, but predictably got lost exploring the tower. I eventually checked out my copy of *Secrets of the Pendulum* and went on my way.

“I hope you find what you’re looking for, Ms. Pirpin. I’m looking forward to another remarkable story.” Moffin said with a nod.

The fifth day brought me to the Canali Tower of the Performing Arts. Each floor of this tower featured rows of rooms separated by soundproofed walls, and each contained a small stage and a number of chairs. As I ascended up the tower, the rooms became larger and larger until the top floor which featured a fully-sized auditorium. It was on the second floor that I noticed a trio of mimes that had attracted a disproportionately large crowd. I fit myself into their room and watched. The mimes stood side by side. The one in the middle mimed a box around himself. Standard fare, I thought to myself. Then, the two on either side of him began to press themselves up against the box with uncanny realism. They attempted to get the middle mime out by punching and kicking the box, until resorting to tipping the box over. Again, it was unreal how realistic their portrayal was, but it was topped off when the mime on the left threw their hat behind them in frustration and it landed on top of the box, floating in midair. The room gasped, and then applauded. A man with long hair and a smarmy presence came forward from the crowd.

“You mind if I give it a shot?” He asked.

The mimes looked at each other and then back at the man. They nodded and beckoned him onstage. The man knocked on the box, then gave it a gentle kick. Finally, he took a seat on the box. He was shocked and began laughing.

“You gotta be kiddin me,” he exclaimed. “How ‘bout that!”

The man splayed his arms and kicked a leg in the air with a showman’s flare. The audience applauded once again and the mimes took their bows, then stepped offstage to take a break. They communicated to each other in sign language, but when I met the middle mime he introduced himself to me as Chelbi. He said he couldn’t talk for long but thanked me for attending the performance.

Day six was my most anticipated. On that day, I was finally able to visit the di Messisbugo Tower of Cooking and Cuisine. Since my first day at the Babelopticon, the scents wafting from the tower into the central tower tantalized me, but I held steadfast. The entire tower was a multistory world-class restaurant with a menu featuring dishes from the featured culinary

artists. Although the menu items changed each day (so as not to have a menu that folded to the floor) the logistics of such an operation must have been a nightmare, and if I had thought about it for any length of time I may have lost my appetite. However, I did not, and I enjoyed one of the best meals of my life.

And on the final day - day seven - I entered the Furlano Tower of Combat Technique. Throughout the week, an inter-disciplinary exhibition fighting tournament had been taking place utilizing various arenas of differing shapes and sizes that were spread out across the tower. There were about 6-10 raised arenas set up per floor with room enough for spectators to gather around them. Since I was there on the final day, many of the arenas were empty. However, small stands were set up next to each to allow for visitors to see results of past fights and even watch highlighted clips. All of the action was happening on the top floor. Stepping foot inside was like traveling to a different world; suddenly I was no longer in an art festival, but at the main event of a WrestleMania. After adjusting to the bombastic lighting, I was able to see before me a massive arena. The stands were filled with excited spectators that charged the room with competitive energy. I took a seat just as a match was finishing, and at its conclusion the audience roared. Quite a different experience from the last six days, but I strapped myself in for it. I witnessed the last 5 matches of the single elimination bracket which culminated in a grand finals bout between Lisea II, a tall, muscular woman with dreadlocked hair, and a masked man in layers of regal orange and blue cloaks who went by the stage name "CrVFR," pronounced "Carver." They were seeded in the bracket first and last respectively, owing to Lisea's overwhelmingly ferocious "Id Fist Style" which channeled her fighting spirit into her strikes as blood-red energy, and CrVFR's obscurity. However, CrVFR upset everyone along his way by using a baffling technique that felled his enemies in a single strike. Half of the crowd rallied behind Lisea, wanting to see the mysterious man's reign of terror come to an end, and the other half rooted for the underdog to take it all. They met each other in the center of the arena, and after the countdown the fight began. Lisea's eyes and fists flared with red energy, and she immediately went on the offense with a heavy right hook. CrVFR was ready for it and ducked underneath. He retaliated by striking her in the gut. Lisea reeled backwards. CrVFR, thinking that he had just won, preemptively turned to the audience and took a bow. Lisea recovered from the attack and decked CrVFR in the back of the head whilst he was distracted. It was not an

instant knockout, so she finished him off with a devastating uppercut. She shouted victoriously and her eyes and fists flared once again, expelling excess energy before dissipating. The announcer handed her a microphone.

“My victory speaks for itself. You have witnessed my strength, and now I go. To those who would challenge me, I am ready. The Second Queen reigns!” Lisea exclaimed.

The audience erupted and Lisea exited the arena without another word, leaving CrVFR lying on the floor.

The next day, Sunday, July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022, marked the final day of the Grand Showcase. The Babelopticon had been closed and the displays packed up; the time for viewing and voting was over. Now, it was time to name the Best in Discipline for each of the towers. Vincent and Harper decided to accompany me that day.

“It’s the only part we really care about these days,” Harper explained. “And it’s all outside, so it’s not so claustrophobic.”

And indeed it was. The mayor of Myéyus, Mayor Mozzabigi, stood on a balcony high up on the front of the Babelopticon’s central tower. Projections on the smaller towers and surrounding buildings broadcasted his face and voice over the city. The people were gathered wherever they could fit; in the streets, on rooftops, even in hot air balloons that floated low over the crowd. We had secured a spot on a balcony on the second floor of a nearby inn that a friend of Vincent’s owned. Mozzabigi addressed the people:

“Myéyusians of all persuasions, visitors of all walks, I welcome you. It has filled me with such indescribable pride, joy, and honor for our city to present the 153<sup>rd</sup> Myéyus Grand Showcase! For the last seven days, we have been graced with the greatest artists the world has to offer bringing all of their talents into one place, unified under the awe-inspiring roof of the Babelopticon. We have been blessed to experience one-of-a-kind performances, artwork, music, and technological achievements. You have made your voices heard and voted on the greatest of these experiences, and today we reveal the winners of the Best in Discipline awards!”

Mozzabigi revealed an envelope from his suit jacket, prompting excited applause from the city. The mayor continued his speech, gleefully ignorant of the events that were soon to transpire. About 15 minutes later, he began to open the envelope.

“Now without further ado, it is with great honor and pleasure that I will announce our winners! First up, the Best in Discipline for the School of the Visual Arts is . . .”

He lifted the paper from the envelope and read it over. His expression cycled quickly from excitement, to confusion, to shock, and then finally to dumbfounded amazement. Unbelievably, the winner of Best in Discipline for Visual Arts was also the Best in Discipline for Musical Arts . . . and Literary Arts, and Performing Arts, and Crafting and Culinary and Martial Arts. For the first time in the history of the Grand Showcase, a single artist swept the entire competition. The artist who achieved this feat was none other than CrVFR, the runner-up of the fighting tournament. He emerged onto the balcony to both applause and disbelief. He seized the microphone from the mayor and addressed the audience.

“The adoring populous! I stand before you today not as an artist, but thanks to you, the undeniably greatest artist in all the world!”

The audience applauded again, and glimpses of magenta lighting arced briefly through the air around his head.

“Nay, an achievement like this earns me more than that. Thanks to you, the adoring populous of the entire world I have become the greatest artist of all time!”

Once again, magenta lighting arced around his head, but also into the surrounding area. Even in front of Vincent, Harper, and I, some sparks began to sizzle.

“You have witnessed me as the mysterious CrVFR, and for years uncounted I toiled under that name, perfecting the intricacies of every one of my countless talents until this moment. The world as my witness, domination of all artistic creation . . . is mine. Before you today, I shed this moniker and reveal to you my true name, the name of the man who shall usher in the New Renaissance . . .”

CrVFR removed his mask and unhooded his cloaks, revealing an old man with long, blonde hair and a magnificent mustache that connected to his head at his temples.

“ . . . Creshiwhick vonson fon Renshawnsch!”

The sky began to curdle into dark clouds, in which full bolts of lightning began to crack. The wind suddenly became harsh and blew magenta embers through the city. Mayor Mozzabigi looked as troubled as anyone else, but continued the ceremony as planned.

“Myéyusians of all persuasions, visitors of all walks,” the mayor announced, “join me in congratulations for the only artist to ever achieve all Best in Discipline awards at once, your unprecedented new champion, Creshiwhick vonson fon Renshawnsch!”

With this, Creshiwhick ascended into the air and released a concentrated beam of magenta energy into the dark clouds above. The building tempest erupted into a lightning storm. We ducked into the inn and closed the glass balcony door behind us. We heard chaos outside. Harper turned on the television and flipped to the news coverage. The audience was panicking and doing their best to scurry away or into shelter, but the people were so tightly packed that it quickly devolved into a stampede. Hot air balloons were crashing down into the city one by one, Creshiwhick continued to ascend skyward, and the mayor was missing. Just then, the power in the inn cut out and we were left in the dark. Vincent, Harper, and I sat on the beds and discussed what to do next, ultimately deciding to ride out whatever was happening until things calmed down.

We began to settle in for however long when a peculiar light, the same shade as the lightning, began to creep around the edge of the balcony door. It looked like a shapeless orb of magenta light, like a will o' wisp or ball lightning. It stopped over the balcony in full view of us, as if it spotted us and was sizing us up. Vincent was the first to stand up and get closer to the thing. We all held our breath, each footstep drowning out the muted cacophony of the outside world. Vincent examined it from behind the glass and reached for the drapes. As soon as he looked away from it, it began to change. It morphed itself from a formless orb of light into a solid shape resembling a horned mask. Vincent reeled back, falling backwards onto the bed. In reaction to this, the mask spontaneously formed monstrous facial features that expressed both malevolence and twisted amusement. We screamed, which seemed to either embolden or provoke the creature. In any case, it flew through the balcony door, shattering it. We fell over ourselves trying to flee the room. It was not attacking but instead floating around the room screeching. It was either taunting us or attempting to intimidate us, like a circling predator. Hardly thinking, I grabbed my copy of *Secrets of the Pendulum* and swung as hard as I could. I missed, but it recoiled anyway. I waved it madly around the room in the general direction of the creature like it was a holy book to a demon. I gained ground on it until I threw the book, which finally drove it out of the room. I checked on Vincent and Harper, who were thankfully unharmed but understandably shaken. They locked the room door and took a rest on the beds. The book had landed on the balcony, so I cautiously went to retrieve my weapon. When I stepped outside, things had gotten worse. The streets were a turbulent river of people, lightning damage was leaving gashes and scars on the cityscape, and above me I could

see hundreds of bright magenta orbs descending from the sky, drifting through Myéyus like spores. My grandfather's story would have to wait; I had begun my own, and it wasn't going to write itself.

The Ego War had begun.

# BIOGRAPHIES

## Part I

This section of the journal is dedicated to recognizing each of the artists that I met or fought alongside us during my time in Myéyus. Myéyus as a nation is a melting pot of wildly diverse backgrounds, and this cast of brave creatives is a testament to that fact. Everything shared here is done so with express permission and does not in the slightest represent the individuals in totality, but only a snapshot. A number of them are even written by the artists themselves. Ideally, it is enough for you get an idea of who they are, or in some cases, were, because each of them deserves to be known and remembered.

### September

No School Affiliation | Nationality: Myéyusian by Proxy | Processor: Multi-core

A stunningly realistic android build by roboticist Arty Sin. September was designed to learn various art forms via observation and algorithmic analysis, eventually being able to mimic and creatively iterate on what he had learned. Over the course of his “life,” he was able to develop an inquisitive yet reserved personality of his own, leading some to question how human he truly is.

Dr. Sin decided to enter September into the Grand Showcase in order to legitimize his humanity as well as demonstrate that the art of a computer is just as valuable as the art of a person.

## Adrian O'Right

School: Crafting | Nationality: Irish | Preferred Wood: Yew

O'Right has been dedicated to the creation of high-quality wooden chests ever since he was a young boy. At the age of 10, while exploring an abandoned warehouse on the outskirts of his hometown, a dangerous storm suddenly began. A powerful twister just as suddenly touched down and quickly made its way towards the young Adrian. Knowing he had no way to make it home in time, he hid inside of a wooden chest that was inside the warehouse. Although he was picked up and thrashed about, the box remained intact and likely saved his life that day, inspiring his infatuation with the craft.

He came to the Grand Showcase to reveal his latest shock-absorbing chest design.

## Carmen Haech

School: Crafting | Nationality: Mexican | Prefers sprockets to gears

Carmen's father was an aspiring inventor, but his family's means limited his ability to ever follow through on any of his ideas. Oftentimes, his inventions never left the pages of his journal. This obviously frustrated him, but it bothered Carmen even more so. She loved her father and hated to see him not reach his potential. She knew that he could do great things, if only the money were there. Determined to see her father succeed, she would take daily trips to the local scrapyard and fabricate things from the odds and ends she would find, selling them to the locals. Eventually, she tried her hand at creating one of the blueprints in her father's journal, which produced a working prototype. From there, things changed in her family's life for the better.

She was convinced to show off her latest invention at the Grand Showcase by her family. After some reluctance, she agreed, taking family friend Melven Mondo with her.

## Gerald Busch

School: Crafting | Nationality: German | “No one bears their teeth like me!”

Punishment for misbehaving was not taken lightly in the Busch household. Although Gerald and his brothers were well-behaved most days, an uncharacteristic bout of foolishness on his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday landed him a transformative sentence: to chop a weeks-worth of wood with the bluntest axe in the shed. Gerald was fed up after only a couple of minutes and decided to make his job easier by modifying his father’s beloved zweihander into a serrated saw. It certainly got the job done but came with obvious consequences.

“That week was the hardest I’ve ever been worked, but the discipline was good. Plus, he let me keep the sword. I guess he didn’t want it anymore.”

Gerald was in Myéyus to make a trade for an antique (unmodified) zweihander of his own when the Ego War began.

## Melven Mondo

School: Crafting | Nationality: Mexican | Favorite Holiday: Locomotive Day

Melven discovered that he had a passion for creating things when one year, he decided to make his kids their Christmas gifts instead of buying them from the store. They began small, starting with ornaments and baubles, but across the years became more and more involved. He and his family made a tradition of making each other at least one gift each year, and Melven even extended his giving to other children in the neighborhood.

Melven accompanied Carmen Haech at the Grand Showcase as her co-creator.

## Uzel Shamato

School: Crafting | Nationality: Japanese | Favorite Fork: Salad

On a cold winter night, Uzel and his girlfriend were walking in the park alone, enjoying each other's company, when out of nowhere they were attacked by a mugger. Uzel had been gifted a handgun from his grandmother only a few months prior, and thankfully he had thought to take it with him. Thinking quickly, he drew it and warded off the attacker. He grew closely attached to his weapon, naming it Jiji in honor of his grandma, and going to great lengths to care for it. He learned how to elegantly plate and engrave Jiji and sought from then on to provide ornate self-defense to any who would desire it.

Uzel accepted a position on the Grand Showcase security team on the promise of free travel to Myéyus, where he hoped to purchase a limited-edition silverware set at auction.

## Victoria Parks

School: Crafting | Nationality: British | Queen of her own castle

Victoria formerly served the Royal Family of Great Britain as their in-house tailor. Unfortunately, after a major misunderstanding caused a rift in their professional relationship, she was kicked out of Buckingham Palace and started her own private practice, where she thrives today. Despite negative coverage from the press, the public rallied behind her. Many have expressed their joy at her talent being put to use where it is properly appreciated. Her suits are cited as some of the finest in UK, sporting high quality, excellent fit, and her own subtly regal flare.

She came to Myéyus to create the suit worn by Mayor Mozzabigi at the ill-fated awards ceremony.

## Bellhest Flake

School: Culinary | Nationality: Canadian | Eats waffles cold

Bellhest would often visit a diner in his hometown for breakfast. He loved everything on their menu but noticed a void in their options for breakfast appetizers. Wanting only to see his favorite restaurant be the best it could be, he went home and experimented with some ideas. After presenting his results to the chefs, he was asked to leave; they were insulted and appalled by the notion of breakfast appetizers altogether. Bellhest was crushed but resolved to prove them wrong by becoming a pioneer in bringing the breakfast appetizer to the mainstream.

He participated in the Grand Showcase with his latest innovation: small balls of pancake that he calls “Pint-O-Cake.”

## Crimette Raquet

School: Culinary | Nationality: French | Would prefer to be cremated

A vintner relatively new to the industry who has quickly drawn the attention of wine connoisseurs within Europe. Her claim to fame is an antique recipe located by her family deep within the catacombs of Paris. These dark origins are leaned into within their branding, giving it a unique edge. Though some find this too macabre or even suspicious for their liking, many enjoy the taste, describing it as both sweet and smoky.

Crimette was in Myéyus attending a wine reception for the opening of her friend’s new restaurant when the egos began to attack.

## Gi Lin

School: Culinary | Nationality: Thai | Favorite Pizza Topping: Mushroom

One warm summer day as a teenager, Gi was spending time with friends and was about to enjoy a slice of pizza when he became distracted. In that time, the chocolate he had set aside on his plate for desert melted onto the pizza. Initially he was upset that his meal was ruined, but not wanting to waste his food, he tried it anyway. Astonished by the taste, he became fascinated with what combinations he could create with melted chocolate and drizzled a bit onto every meal he had for the next couple of months. Dissatisfied with melting chocolate bars from the store, he set out to learn the intricacies of making his own chocolate.

Gi was invited to assist in the kitchen at the di Messisbugo Tower of Cooking and Cuisine in the Babelopticon during the Showcase.

## Ratleen Didinri

School: Culinary | Nationality: American | Sweats caffeine

“I met a man one day as I was walking home. He offered me a thermos for a couple of bucks, and I was thirsty at the time, so I took it off his hands. I drank some and couldn’t stop; it was the greatest coffee – no, greatest beverage – I’ve ever had. Something changed in me that day. I had visions. The voices told me, “you’re Ratleen now, Samantha.” I’ve tried for years, but I haven’t recreated that coffee yet. One day it will be done, and when it is, the world will thank me.”

Ratleen attended the Showcase as a festivalgoer and reportedly spent the entire week in the di Messisbugo Tower of Cooking and Cuisine, trying every available drink option and interrogating staff for ingredient information.

## Reed Whinchester

School: Culinary | Nationality: American | Favorite Chef: Gasch Liberman

From humble beginnings as the host of his from-home local cooking show *Eatin' With Reed* to the star of *Whin or Lose* on the Eating Channel, Reed has built for himself a respectable career in televised food programming. He is most commonly known for his trademark ability to efficiently mix the contents of several bowls at the same time. According to him, he was born with an unusual bone structure in his hands that allows for the multi-mixing action.

Reed was one of the several personalities to co-host the televised coverage of the Grand Showcase.

## Wendolyn Smith

School: Culinary | Nationality: British | Loaves Donated: Over 100,000

Wendolyn's son was diagnosed with celiac disease (a condition that causes various gastrointestinal problems when consuming gluten) at the age of 4. Gluten-free foods became an understandably important part of their diet, but she found that her son was unhappy with the options available to them. Wendolyn took up the task of creating her own gluten-free goods that would not only be safe for her son but also delicious. She eventually formulated her special bread recipe, which was a hit with not only her son but with her friends as well. Today, Wendolyn works closely with charity groups to provide bread and other baked goods to gluten-sensitive individuals in need.

She was in Myéyus to assist with one such charity event.

## Fuego Zipper-Saddle

School: Literature | Nationality: Portuguese | Favorite Saying: "Fight fire with fire"

It may seem obvious, but "Fuego Zipper-Saddle" is not his real name. Rather, it is a pen name that he adopted in order to remain anonymous. He is famous (and to some, infamous) for his short stories which feature satirical parodies and allegories of current political events, especially those in his home country of Portugal. Despite his desire to stay unknown, he has occasionally made appearances to sign copies of his anthologies whilst wearing outrageous masks and putting on equally absurd character voices.

Fuego lead a protest against a protest against the Grand Showcase on it's opening day, which lead to its dissipation less than 20 minutes after it began.

## Hegemony Hark

School: Literature | Nationality: Belgian | Favorite Insect: Ant

Whilst attending secondary school, Hegemony bore witness to gross mismanagement and poor conduct amongst the teachers and staff; ignoring lab safety protocol, foul language, and failure to observe proper procedure whilst preparing food, to name a few. However, she knew that she was not the first to notice these things, and that those who tried to blow the whistle before her had failed. Hegemony therefore bided her time and drafted a comprehensive exposé to present to the superintendent. When that time came, the superintendent was impressed, but change came slowly. Still, she had seen that her words were capable of making a difference, which set her down her current path as an investigative journalist.

Hegemony came to Myéyus to follow up on a tip regarding allegations of fraud against a certain artist.

## Janet Dosen

School: Literature | Nationality: Croatian | Favorite Subject: Astronomy

“What is it you would like to know about me? I can give you the page number, ha-ha! I love learning, both the act of doing so and the act of enabling it. This is why I have such a passion for the encyclopedia; a vertical slice of the world’s collective knowledge that can fit in your hands! I recognize the beauty of the internet that we have now, but there is a special quality to wisdom that is read from a tome. There is a . . . sense of adventure when a page is turned. What new information lies just ahead? What secrets are contained here in this book right underneath my nose? It is thrilling! I have contributed to encyclopedias on all manner of subjects, from botany to writers of foreign lands, from mysticism to rare collectables and beyond. There is nothing not worth learning about, and no limit to the depth of any subject. That is what I believe!”

Janet attended the Grand Showcase with her colleagues as festivalgoers.

## Tom J.J. Thomas

School: Literature | Nationality: British | Favorite *Sailseeker Saga*  
Character: Ronauld XI

A contentious author who penned the critically acclaimed fantasy novel *Ballads of Ranguvenvek* in which the reader witnesses the fall of a nation to an overwhelming dark force through the perspective of a sapient horse named Kirkutha. While many praise Tom’s prose and call *Ranguvenvek* a masterpiece, others deride his work for overly flowery language, excessive description of the smallest details, and his habit to flippantly kill off principal characters on a whim. Debate only escalated when *Ranguvenvek* was adapted into a television anthology series titled *The Sailseeker Saga* which inherited Tom’s proclivity for killing it’s protagonists at random. He takes this criticism in stride, even playing up the unhinged persona that his fans and detractors have put upon him. His most recent works have more or less been parodies of his own writing, becoming more and more exaggerated and absurd with each entry.

Tom was in Myéyus for a *Sailseeker Saga* fan event, hosting a Q&A and offering autographs.

## Trajita Triste

School: Literature | Nationality: Spanish | Hates horoscopes but loves fortune cookies

At the age of 17, Trajita had his first (what he calls) premonition. He claimed that he had a daydream about a classmate falling down the stairs a day before it happened. He convinced himself that it was nothing but a coincidence, but premonitions continued to come to him sporadically over the next year. He never acted upon them as he denied their legitimacy. Instead, he wrote down each of these experiences in a personal journal. As the years went on, the premonitions continued, and the journal grew, each entry becoming more and more abstracted and poetic; an outward display of his desire to fictionize this phenomenon. He released the best of these entries in an anthology titled *I See* which launched his career as a poet.

Trajita attended the Grand Showcase as a festivalgoer.

## Werther Moffin

School: Literature | Nationality: British | Favorite Word: Chagrin

In primary school, Werther was not known for his creative writing skills. He was, however, renowned for his uncanny mastery of spelling and grammar. He would often be compelled to analyze his peers' work and make corrections for them, to his instructor's annoyance. Werther was asked repeatedly to stop helping the other students and allow them to succeed or fail on their own, but he persisted. Werther and his instructor eventually made a compromise: he would assist them in grading the students' papers up until secondary school, where he began to offer services as a grammar tutor, at which he excelled. He would ultimately translate his passion for grammar into a career as a professional textbook editor.

A friend of Werther's was offered the position of librarian in the Babelopticon's library but was unable to accept. They extended the opportunity to Werther, who gladly obliged.

## Cash "Money" Rogadeux

School: Martial | Nationality: American | Favorite Color: Green

Rogadeux is a bare-knuckle boxer infamous for his brutality. Since the legalization of the sport in his home state of Wyoming in 2018, he has become feared amongst his competitors.

"My secret is that I got no secret. I just get mad. You gotta get angry to fight bare-knuckle, but no one does it better than me."

He claims his anger stems from when he was growing up. He was called "Money" by his classmates, which irritated him greatly. At one point, it drove him to punch a boy who had uttered the moniker one too many times.

"I didn't have money growing up. I took it as an insult. It wasn't me. It is now, but it wasn't then. I still hate it though; everyone thinks they're so damn clever. You're not!"

Rogadeux entered the inter-disciplinary tournament at the Grand Showcase but canceled on arrival after being told he had to wear gloves.

## Lisea II

School: Martial | Nationality: Australia | Wandering warrior

Not much is known of Lisea outside of her country of origin, and even that is dubious. Reportedly, she has been spotted wandering all over the world "seeking challengers" but claims that the outback is her home. She calls herself "The Second Queen" and wields a terrifying power with which she fights, dubbed by her as the "Id Fist Style."

She entered the inter-disciplinary tournament at the Grand Showcase and won very convincingly before leaving without another word. She was offered Best in Discipline for Martial Arts but declined.

## Master O

School: Martial | Nationality: Emirati | Favorite Shoe: None

For the first half of his adult life Master O was a humble shoe merchant. Desperate to drum up publicity for his business, he attempted to break the world record for most kicks against a brick wall in one minute whilst wearing steel-toed shoes from his store. He succeeded with a whopping 193 kicks, but his steel toe failed him and all but his big toe were severed from his left foot. His business was devastated, and he sought revenge on the manufacturer of the shoe that ruined him. In so doing, he trained his newfound kicking skills and became the master kicker he is today, despite his single toe. He gave up his quest for revenge, but still channels that fury into his fierce signature move, the “Twinkletoe Roundhouse.”

Master O volunteered as a judge for the inter-disciplinary tournament at the Grand Showcase.

## Omar Uldi

School: Martial | Nationality: Latvian | The Lich of Pokaini

Omar is a man of advanced yet indeterminate age for whom official records don't seem to exist. He was discovered one day in the Pokaini Forest when he attacked a hiker for “trespassing.” In the years since, many other encounters have been recorded by various witnesses, each being pursued or attacked by Omar on sight, but never being able to track him down on their terms. The Pokaini Forest is notorious for its connection to spirits and otherworldly happenings, so some say that Omar is a guardian of the forest who has revealed himself in the modern age. Others believe he is simply a strange old man. However, no one can doubt his skill as a fighter. Those who encounter and fall into his grasp are washed with an unexplainable exhaustion, after which Omar releases them and bids them exit the forest. No one is sure what would happen should they refuse.

Omar was not sighted in Pokaini for a year before inexplicably appearing in Myéyus during the Grand Showcase.

## Sgt. Malaney

School: Martial | Nationality: American | Favorite Flavor of Gum:  
Wintergreen

Sergeant Michael Malaney is a sergeant in the United States army who is notable for developing a unique fighting style called “tuyo mío mata.” This style emphasizes using your opponent’s strikes, momentum, and weapons against them using a combination of deflection, grabs, throws, disarmament, and precise retaliating attacks.

“I decided to develop tuyo mío mata after a protracted encounter I had with an aggressive young man and his friends late one night. I came out on top but not in good shape; I had been tired prior, and it took all my remaining energy to defend myself. The goal of tuyo mío mata is to provide the practitioner with the means to defend oneself as efficiently as possible while conserving as much energy as possible, so as to be effective even at high levels of exhaustion.”

Sgt. Malaney and members of his unit participated in the Grand Showcase in order to demonstrate his new fighting style to the public.

## Zegeiss Esasts

School: Martial | Nationality: Russian | Favorite Animal: Seal

Zegeiss began training in the art of sambo at the age of 17 when a schoolmate agreed that she’d date him when he could lift and throw a tiger. He dedicated himself totally to this goal, and eight years later he recorded himself wrestling and successfully suplexing a Siberian tiger. By then, he was a borderline master of sambo and had forgotten why he had sought to suplex a tiger, but he felt accomplished nonetheless. He was subsequently arrested for wrestling a member of an endangered species, but by a stroke of luck the officer who reprimanded him was his old schoolmate. She let

Zegeiss off with a warning, and they remain friends to this day. He has since become a sambo master and fights for sport.

Zegeiss entered the inter-disciplinary tournament at the Grand Showcase only to throw his second match for his opponent because “[he] was hungry and it was going to take too long.”

## Amavelli Tutlio

School: Musical | Nationality: Myéyusian | The King of String

A master violinist who is renowned for his trademark style in which he tunes his instrument whilst playing. This produces a distinct sound, but predictably leads to many broken strings in the heat of the performance. So adept is he that he is able to adapt a piece around a missing string anyway, only adding to the unorthodox sound of his music. He has formed a close relationship with many of the luthiers in Myéyus. Some think that a player of his caliber would not make so many mistakes; they posit that he breaks his strings on purpose in order to visit these friends, therefore giving them extra business.

Amavelli was relaxing in his home when the Ego War began.

## Brent Kirrenoep

School: Musical | Nationality: Irish | Favorite Console: the Noe-Idten ‘96

Brent’s career in composing music began with short films that he and his friends would put together on weekends. They would randomly draw names from a hat to choose production roles on a per-project basis. Brent was decent at all of them but took a liking to music making. His first works were created with a game called *Mateo Composer Studio* for the Super Noe-Idten console, and then recorded off of his television. Over time, he became more ambitious until the composer role became permanently his. His breakout project was a college film called *NAME OF FILM*. Since then he has provided his talent to independent films, games, and even some local television programming.

Brent attended the Grand Showcase to see the first screening of *Alarming the Willows*, his latest scored film.

## Emmie Warble

School: Musical | Nationality: British | Favorite Time of Day: Sunset

Emmie, short for Emanuelina, is the worship leader at her local church. She was suddenly thrust into the public spotlight when a video of her singing, posted to the internet by a church visitor, gained tens of thousands of views within the week. Emmie opened a social media account for the first time in years in order to respond to her new fans, who were eager to hear more. She didn't care for the attention and did her best to curb the expectations of the people; she simply wished to sing for her church and nothing more. However, when the next Sunday came around, hundreds of fans showed up at the church to hear her sing which left the building in bad shape. This devastated Emmie who disappeared from the public eye until her relevancy faded. When she eventually returned to her church she was welcomed back with open arms, although she still expresses guilt over the incident.

Emmie and members of her church came to Myéyus to sing in various places around the city and profess their faith.

## Ottawa Stephane

School: Musical | Nationality: Canadian | Favorite Horror Movie:  
*Bloodcurdle*

A composer and conductor whose specialty lies in writing for horror films.

"The greatest tool a filmmaker has for setting the tone of a scene is the score, especially in horror. The key to making a scene scary is obscuration, revealing as little as possible to the viewer. Music is the perfect way to communicate a lot about the feelings the director wants to convey without putting anything on screen. I am particularly partial to the technique known as the "sting." It is too antiquated for some, but I have yet

to find a musical expression that is more fun to conduct— I mean, more effective at punctuating a crucial moment.”

Ottawa participated in the Grand Showcase with her orchestra on the top floor of the Vivaldi Tower of Music and Sound.

## Ray-Mack Roads

School: Musical | Nationality: American | Girl next door

Ray-Mack Roads is your typical country girl born and raised in Tennessee who learned how to play guitar and write music from a young age. She was born to loving parents Jared and Quandra Roads and excelled in school. She began her successful career in country music at 18 and has toured around the world for her adoring fans. She was recently involved in a controversy in which she was alleged to be an industry plant and undercover government agent, but these claims can be confidently ignored as tabloid nonsense. It would be a waste of time to look into it further.

Ray-Mack was in Myéyus to play her latest concert in the Babelopticon.

## The Ostentatious Rib

School: Musical | Nationality: American | Favorite Interjection: “Burr”

George “The Ostentatious Rib” Banks is a rapper who rose to prominence after his diss track of notable rapper Spokane Devil went viral online for its perceived low quality. The internet ridiculed Rib, the diss track, and its accompanying music video for about a month, after which one would expect the talk to die down. Instead, Rib embraced the “so bad it’s good” persona and went all in, producing numerous other diss tracks against the likes of Casey Lamb Chop, DJ Blunder, and even Lil’ Lit. Public perception has shifted over time, and listeners have begun to respect Rib’s work more legitimately, albeit as a form of satire.

Rib came to the Grand Showcase in order to film his latest music video inside the Babelopticon, in which he would freestyle-diss pieces of art as he saw them.

## Ghersheck Bloom

School: Performing | Nationality: South African | Unapologetic momma's boy

Ghersheck was born to British parents during a mission trip to South Africa. Shortly afterwards, their time there was finished, and they left Ghersheck behind with a member of the church named Bandile. She raised him as if he was her own child, and he grew up fascinated by South African culture. The only thing that he knew about his parents was that they were dancers, so he asked Bandile if he could learn. She sympathized with him and signed him up for classes, in which he excelled. As he grew older, he desired to incorporate the culture that raised him into his dancing. Today, his style is a distinct blend between contemporary ballroom and traditional Zulu folk dance.

Ghersheck performed in the Grand Showcase with Bandile watching proudly in the audience.

## Matt Cross

School: Performing | Nationality: American | Quick wits and luscious locks

Matt is an improv comedian who got his start in his high school drama club. During improvisation exercises, he and a handful of other students noticed that they had a particularly good chemistry with each other on stage. Within the club, this group became known as "The Bozo Bunch," and later simply "The Bozos." The Bozos were approached by their drama teacher who asked them if they wanted to do an improv show for the community during the local founder's day festival, and they agreed. This show was a hit and is notable for being the origin of Matt's famous "Jangles the Skeleton" character. After the founder's day festival The Bozos continued to pursue improv, with a few sticking together and carrying the act into college and onto a television variety program titled *Bunch of Bozos* which continues to run today.

Matt and the Bozos came to Myéyus to perform a live charity show in the Babelopticon in honor of their high school drama teacher who had recently passed away.

## Orville McOrville

School: Performing | Nationality: American | Middle Name: Danger

A daredevil of great renown from the midwestern United States. His acts almost always end in catastrophic disaster, followed by him walking out of the fire to uproarious applause. How he is so adept at cheating death has eluded both fans and critics alike, although Orville himself claims that he has met death in person and punched it in the face. For most, it's a good enough explanation as any.

Rumors of his involvement in occult practices drove him to go on an extended tour outside of the US, which eventually lead him to Myéyus. He seemingly joined the fight against the egos simply for the thrill of it.

## Pizantz Swirne

School: Performing | Nationality: Austrian | Favorite Memory: Someone else's

Supposedly, Pizantz became an expert hypnotist by hypnotizing herself every day for 3 years using a homemade pendulum. This pendulum was constructed partially from the remains of a broken mirror, which she believed would imbue the object with supernatural qualities. Her first known subject fell into a trance so deep that their leg had to be broken to snap them out of it. Pizantz has since discarded the pendulum, but had it tattooed under her left eye as a substitute. It only takes focused eye contact for her suggestion to take hold.

Pizantz was flown into Myéyus to assist in the questioning of a witness whom the MPD believed was key to solving a kidnapping case.

## Premier Chelbi

School: Performing | Nationality: French | Man of some words

A mime who seems to have the ability to make the objects he suggests have a real, physical presence. Whether this is an illusion or not is unclear. He is a leader of a large troupe of mimes that have sworn themselves to silence, although he seems to insist on slowly weening them off of this behavior, occasionally speaking in short phrases around them and encouraging them to do the same.

He and his troupe came to Myéyus with the knowledge of its reputation as a haven for artists such as them. When they arrived, it was recommended to them that they should enter into the Grand Showcase. Chelbi agreed, seeing it as a great opportunity for his people to integrate into the city.

## Waimlyn Wohwa

School: Performing | Nationality: German | Leading lady of the law

“I’m a lawyer by trade, but dance is what keeps me going. I think I gravitate to tango the most because . . . well, how do you put this . . . I’m a prosecuting attorney, so my livelihood is based on opposing people; being on the offense and taking apart their defense. It’s adversarial by nature. But, when I’m dancing with someone else, it’s the opposite. On the dance floor, you and your partner are working together very closely. You need each other, you rely on each other. I am very good at being a lawyer, and dance is what I love, but just like a tango I need them both in equal parts, or else I’d get very dull or very tired!”

Waimlyn was sent to Myéyus on vacation after a particularly stressful case put a toll on her mental health.

## Bjonnevi Årud

School: Visual | Nationality: Swedish | Favorite Blunt Knives Song: *You Got My Good Side, Right?*

Bjonnevi has always possessed captivating natural beauty. Her parents testify that even as a baby, it was impossible to take a bad picture of her. When she turned 16, she began a respectable venture into fashion modeling, but she wouldn't get her big break until two years later. At 18, Bjonnevi was featured on the album art of Blunt Knives' *The Road on Fire* which went on to launch the careers of both parties. Her countenance caught the eye of magazines around the world, and she enjoyed great success. At 22, she was commissioned by a painter named Holvester Martczh to allow him to paint a portrait of her. When they met, their chemistry was immediate. They would be married soon after and Bjonnevi took an interest in Holvester's work and learned quickly. As of recent, her modeling career has begun to slow down, so she dedicates much of her time to creating portraits for friends, family, and strangers alike.

Holvester brought Bjonnevi to Myéyus to celebrate their 8<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary as well as Bjonnevi's 30<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## Carrie Glifford

School: Visual | Nationality: American | Favorite Flower: Rose

“My family lived on a ranch when I was growing up. I went into the barn one morning to do my usual ritual of preparing the cows' feed, but I stumbled and fell into the wall. The shelves got jostled and everything fell on top of me. That included a spool of barbed wire that was unfurled into a tangled mess. I was wrapped up in it, and it was around my neck. I couldn't reach my phone and I was scared to move, so I sat there for an hour trying to be as still as possible. My mom eventually found me and got me out of there, but that experience stuck with me. I got my neck tattoo to immortalize it; I was wrapped up in thorns, but at the end was a beautiful flower that made everything alright. Sounds cheesy, but whatever, it means a lot to me.”

Carrie entered the Grand Showcase as a participant, showing off a tattoo that covered a man's body from head to toe.

## Ignal Sedim

School: Visual | Nationality: Israeli | A chunk off the old block

The Sedim family is a long and proud lineage of sculptors whose reputation proceeds them. When a child in the Sedim family turns 16, it is tradition to give them a gift that is encased in stone so that they must chisel through it in order to receive its contents; a personalized hammer and chisel for them to keep as their own. Much like his forebears, he completed this ritual and received his tools, but he would veer off into a path unlike anyone else in his family. The subjects he chose for his sculptures were totally bizarre; instead of the typical human or animal forms, he created washing machines, sausage links, and upside-down people. Fearing that he would hurt the family's reputation as distinguished artists, Ignal was disowned by them and ordered to change his name, which he never did. He was homeless for some time until being hired as a full-time sculptor for an eccentric dignitary.

Ignal participated in the Grand Showcase with a relatively normal sculpture of a seahorse.

## Lumnum Chickeroo

School: Visual | Nationality: Egyptian | Favorite Prank: Money on a string

In his youth, Lumnum's mother worked as a tour guide around Cairo and would bring him along on occasion. During these trips, Lumnum would make a game of pranking the tourists and then taking unflattering photos of them with his mother's old polaroid camera. He would compete with himself to get the funniest shot possible, which he would then keep and post on his bedroom wall for his friends to laugh at. One day, one of the tourists asked Lumnum to take a proper picture of him with his family, to which he agreed. He found a special kind of gratitude in it. After that, he began to ask tourists if they wanted a photo taken for a few pounds, which helped support his

family and sharpen his skills. He is a professional photographer today but doesn't shy away from some mischief every now and then.

Lumnum participated in the Grand Showcase with a display featuring many of his first photos which he called *Lumnum on Tour*.

## Roe Waker

School: Visual | Nationality: Scottish | Favorite Prop: a grenade with the phrase "Yo mama" painted on it

Roe's first experience in film was as an extra in a soda commercial after he stumbled onto the set by accident. He had so much fun that he began to seek out projects to sign on to as an extra, just to see what he could get away with in the background. It was on the set of a certain disaster movie that he began his tradition of taking a piece of the set with him in his trademark backpack, starting with a piece of prop magma. He continued to do this off and on for a couple of years until he performed on the set of a big-budget action film, and he was noticed by the director. The director wanted a scene shot from the perspective of a hapless bystander and wanted it done by a genuine amateur. Roe jumped at the opportunity. Unfortunately, the footage he shot never made it into the film, but it sparked his desire to be on the other side of the camera.

Roe participated in the Grand Showcase as a part of the Amateur Filmmakers' Exhibit.

## Samuel Bristo

School: Visual | Nationality: Israeli | Favorite Shape: Square

"My greatest artistic inspiration is Markus Yakovlevich Rothkowitz, although most know him as Mark Rothko. I learned of his work when I was a boy. He was accused of pretention; that all he was doing was painting rectangles and calling it art, but those accusers had it wrong. It *is* art. You just have to look a little deeper. Rothko showed me that art can emerge from the simplest of shapes, the most basic of patterns. I think of it this way: greater complexity leaves less to the imagination, and it's in the imagination

that greater, personal concepts are able to manifest and confront us. That is what I strive for; to create doors to the imagination with simple, broad strokes.”

Samuel participated in the Grand Showcase with a piece that consisting simply of a single stroke of red paint.