

GIAN CARLO MENOTTI'S

THE OLD MAID AND THE THIEF

STUDY GUIDE



**ARIZONA OPERA
2006-2007 SCHOOL TOUR**

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A Short Introduction to Opera

An **opera**, like a play, is a dramatic form of theater that includes scenery, **props**, and costumes. In opera, however, the actors are trained singers who sing their lines instead of speaking them. An **orchestra** accompanies the singers. A **conductor** coordinates both the singers on stage and the musicians in the **orchestra pit**.

Opera consists of many dimensions: the human voice, orchestral music, the visual arts (scenery, costumes and special effects), drama (tragedy or comedy), and occasionally dance. The melding of these elements can make you cry tears of joy or sadness, produce laughter or anger, but most importantly transport you to a magical land of music and song.

Opera has its roots in Greek drama and originated in Florence, Italy, in the late 1500's, with a small group of men who were members of a Camerata (Italian for "society"). The intellectuals, poets and musicians of the Camerata decided they wanted words to be a featured aspect of music. They used ancient Greek drama as their inspiration, including the use of a **chorus** to comment on the action. The Camerata laid down three principles for their new art form:

- The text must be understood; the accompaniment must be very simple and should not distract from the words.
- The words must be sung with correct and natural declamation, as if they were spoken, and must avoid the rhythms of songs.
- The melody must interpret the feeling of the text.

The first significant composer to fully develop the ideas of the Camerata was Jacopo Peri (1561-1633), whose opera *Dafne*, based on a Greek myth, was performed in 1594 and is regarded as the first opera. Operas continue to be composed today.

Operas are divided into scenes and **acts** that contain different types of vocal pieces for one or many singers. An **aria** is a vocal solo that focuses on a character's emotions rather than actions. A **recitative** is sung dialogue or speech that occurs between arias and **ensembles**.

Composers write the **score** or the music for the opera. Sometimes the composer will also write the text of the opera, but most often they work with a **librettist**. The story of the opera is written as a libretto, a text that is easily set to music. In the past, the libretto was also bound and sold to the audience. Today, the audience can easily follow the plot with the use of **surtitles**. Surtitles are the English translation of the libretto, which are projected onto a screen above the stage.

There are several differences between opera and musicals like *Phantom of the Opera*. One significant difference is the 'partnership' found between the music and the drama in an opera. While musicals use songs to help tell a story, in an opera, the music contributes to the drama, it does not only accompany it. The musical style is another important difference between the two art forms; opera is usually classical and complex, while musicals feature pop songs and sometimes rock and roll. Also, singers in musicals have microphones hidden in their costumes or wigs to amplify their voices. The voices of opera singers are so strong; no amplification is needed, even in a large venue. Furthermore, operas are almost completely sung, while the use of spoken words are more common to musicals. There are some operas with spoken words and these are called **singspiels** (German) and **opera comique** (French). Examples are Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and Bizet's *Carmen*, respectively.

All terms in **bold** are defined in the Glossary.

Audience Etiquette

The following list will help you (and those around you) enjoy the experience of a night at the opera:

- Dress to be comfortable. Many people enjoy dressing up for formal attire.
- Arrive on time. Latecomers disturb the singers and others in the audience. Late comers will only be seated at suitable breaks- often not until intermission.
- Find your seat with the help of your teacher or an usher.
- Remove your hat. This is customary and is respectful to the artists and to the people sitting behind you.
- Turn off cell phones, pagers, digital watch alarms and all electronic devices.
- Leave your camera at home. Recording devices of any kind are not permitted, not only because a camera flash can break a performer's concentration but because written permission must be sought from the artist to record their images and voices.
- Save all conversations, eating and drinking, and chewing gum, for the intermission. Talking and eating can be disruptive to other audience members and distracts from your ability to be absorbed by the show. The audience is critical to the success of the show- without you, there can be no performance.
- Settle in and get comfortable before the performance begins. Read your program before the performance- rustling through the program during the show can disrupt everyone.
- Clap as the lights are dimmed and the conductor appears and bows to the audience. Watch as the conductor then turns to the orchestra and takes up his or her baton to signal the beginning of the opera.
- Listen to the prelude or overture before the curtain rises. It is part of the performance. It is an opportunity to identify common musical themes that may reoccur during the opera.
- Sit still during the performance. Only whisper when it is absolutely necessary, as a whisper is heard all over the theater and NEVER (except in an emergency) stand during the performance.
- Applaud (or shout Bravo!) at the end of an aria or chorus piece to show your enjoyment. The end of a piece can be identified by a pause in the music.
- Laugh when something is funny- this is a performance and you are expected to respond!
- Read the English surtitles projected above the stage. Most operas are not sung in English. Use the surtitles to understand the story.
- Listen for subtleties in the music. The tempo, volume and complexity of the music and singing often depict the "feeling" or "sense" of the action or character. Also, notice repeated words or phrases; they are usually significant.

Finally, have fun and enjoy the show!!!

Vocal Categories

There are six basic vocal categories:

Women:

Soprano: The highest female voice, similar to a flute in range and tone color. Usually plays the heroine in the opera since a high, bright sound can easily suggest youth and innocence.

Mezzo-Soprano: The middle-range female voice, similar to an oboe in range and tone color. Called an alto in choral arrangements, can play a wide variety of characters including gypsies, mothers and even the part of a young man. (trouser role).

Contralto: The lowest female voice, similar to an oboe in range and tone color. Usually plays unique roles including fortune-tellers, witches and older women. Not very common.

Men:

Tenor: The highest male voice, similar to a trumpet in range, tone color and acoustical “ring.” Usually plays the hero or the romantic lead in the opera.

Baritone: The middle-range male voice, similar to a French horn in tone color. Often plays the leader of mischief in comic opera or the villain in tragic opera, sometimes even the hero.

Bass: The lowest male voice, similar to a trombone or bassoon in tone color. Usually portrays old, wise men, or foolish, comic men.

The vocal parts overlap each other. The notes that are high for baritone to sing are low for a tenor. The notes that are low for a baritone to sing are high for a bass. For this reason you may see a high range mezzo-soprano singing a soprano’s role or a low range baritone singing a bass’ role.

The following terms can be used to describe special characteristics in a vocal range:

Coloratura: a light, bright voice that has the ability to sing many notes quickly, usually with an extended upper range.

Lyric: A light to medium weight voice, often singing beautiful sweeping melodies.

Dramatic: Dark, heavy and powerful voice, capable of sustained and forceful singing.

Compiled from the Opera Columbus Study Guide

Glossary: Important Words in Opera

Act- a section of the opera that is then divided into scenes.

Aria- means “air” in Italian. This is a piece of music written for one singer (soloist), usually with instrumental accompaniment.

Aside- a secret comment from an actor directly to the audience that the other characters cannot hear.

Baritone- the middle singing range of the male voice. Bob (*the beggar*) is an example of this vocal range.

Bass- The lowest singing range of the male voice.

Basso buffo (Italian) - a bass singer who specializes in comic characters.

Basso profundo (Italian) - the most serious bass voice.

Baton- a short stick that the conductor uses to lead the orchestra.

Bel Canto- Italian phrase literally meaning “beautiful singing.” A traditional Italian style of singing emphasizing tone, phrasing, coloratura passages, and technique. Also refers to the operas written in this style.

Blocking- directions given to the performers for movement on stage.

Bravo (Italian) - a form of appreciation shouted by audience members at the end of a particularly pleasing performance. Technically, Bravo refers to a male performer, Brava refers to a female performer and Bravi refers to many performers.

Buffo- from the Italian for “buffoon,” A singer of comic roles (basso-buffo) or a comic opera (opera-buffa.)

Cadenza- a passage of singing, often at the end of an aria, which shows off the singer’s vocal ability.

Castrato (Italian) - a castrated male prized for his high singing voice.

Choreographer- the person who designs the steps of a dance.

Chorus- a group of singers of all vocal ranges, singing together to support the vocal leads.

Classical- the period in music which comes after the Baroque and before the Romantic, roughly from the birth of Mozart to shortly after the death of Beethoven. It represents the greatest standardization in orchestral form and tonality.

Coloratura- elaborate ornamentation of music written for a singer using many fast notes and trills. Also used to describe a singer who sings this type of music.

Composer- the individual who writes all the music for both voice and instrument.

Comprimario (Italian)- a nineteenth century term referring to secondary or supporting roles such as confidantes, messengers, and matchmakers.

Contralto- the lowest female voice range.

Conductor- the person responsible for the musical interpretation and coordination of the performance. The conductor controls the tempo, the dynamic level and the balance between singers and orchestra. You will see this person standing in the orchestra pit conducting the musicians and singers.

Countertenor- a male singer with the highest male voice range, generally singing within the female contralto or mezzo-soprano range.

Crescendo- a build in the volume or dynamic of the music.

Cue- a signal to enter or exit from the stage, to move or to change lighting or scenery; or a signal given by the conductor to the musicians.

Curtain Call- occurs at the end of the performance when all the cast members and the conductor take bows. This can occur in front of the curtain or on the open stage.

Designer- a production can have two or three designers: a lighting designer, a costume designer, a set designer, or someone who is both costume and set designer. They work closely with the stage director to give the production a distinctive look.

Diva- literally, “goddess” in Italian. An important female opera star. The masculine form is divo.

Dress Rehearsal- the final rehearsal before opening night, includes costumes, lights, makeup, etc. Sometimes it is necessary to stop for adjustments, but an attempt is made to make it as much like a regular performance as possible.

Duet- music that is written for two people to sing together.

Encore- a piece that is performed after the last scheduled piece of a concert. An encore is usually performed because the audience wants to hear more music even though the concert is over.

Ensemble- a part of the opera written for a group of two or more singers. This may or may not include the chorus.

Falsetto- the upper part of a voice in which the vocal cords do not vibrate completely. Usually used by males to imitate a female voice.

Finale- the last musical number of an opera or an act.

Grand Opera- spectacular French opera of the Romantic period, lavishly staged, with a historically-based plot, a huge cast, an unusually-large orchestra, and ballet. It also refers to opera without spoken dialogue.

Helden- German prefix meaning “heroic.” Can also apply to other voices, but usually used in “heldentenor.”

House- the auditorium and front of the theater excluding the stage and backstage areas.

Impresario- the proprietor, manager, or conductor of an opera or concert company; one who puts on or sponsors an entertainment; manager, producer.

Intermission- a break between acts of an opera. The lights go on and the audience is free to move around. There is no intermission in *The Old Maid and the Thief* because it's a one-act opera.

Librettist- the writer of the opera's text.

Libretto- Italian for “little book.” It is the text or story of the opera.

Lyric- used to describe a light to medium weight voice with an innocent quality, capable of both sustained, forceful singing and delicate effects.

Maestro-means “master” in Italian. Used as a courtesy title for the conductor (male or female).

Mark- to sing, but not at full voice. A full-length opera is very hard on a singer’s voice so most performers mark during rehearsals. During the Dress Rehearsal singers try to sing at full voice for part if not all of the rehearsal.

Mezzo-soprano- the middle singing range for a female voice.

Motif or Leitmotif- a recurring musical theme used to identify an emotion, person, place, or object.

Opera- a dramatic presentation which is set to music. Almost all of it is sung, and the orchestra is an equal partner with the singers. Like a play, an opera is acted on stage with costumes, scenery, makeup, etc. Opera is the plural form of the Latin word opus, which means “work.”

Opera buffa (Italian) - an opera about ordinary people, usually, but not always comic. First developed in the eighteenth century.

Opera seria (Italian) - a serious style of opera. The usual characters are gods and goddesses, or ancient heroes.

Opera-comique (French) or **Singspiel** (German) - a form of opera which contains spoken dialogue.

Operetta- lighthearted opera with spoken dialogue, such as a musical.

Orchestra- an ensemble, led by a conductor, which is comprised of string, woodwind, brass and percussion instruments.

Orchestra pit- sunken area in front of the stage where the orchestra sits.

Overture- an orchestral introduction to the opera played before the curtain rises. Usually longer than a prelude and can be played as a separate piece.

Pitch- how high or low a note sounds.

Prelude- a short introduction that leads into an act without pause.

Prima Donna- literally, “first lady” in Italian. The leading woman in an opera. Because of the way some of them behaved in the past, it often refers to someone who is acting in a superior and demanding fashion. The term for a leading man is primo uomo.

Principal- a major singing role or the singer who performs such a role.

Production- the combination of sets, costumes, props, and lights, etc.

Props- objects carried or used on stage by the performers.

Proscenium- the front opening of the stage which frames the action.

Quartet- four singers or the music that is written for four singers. Also quintet, sextet, etc.

Raked Stage- a stage that slants downwards toward the audience.

Recitative- lines of dialogue that are sung, usually with no recognizable melody. It is used to advance the plot.

Rehearsal- a working session in which the singers prepare for public performance.

Score- the written music of an opera or other musical work.

Serenade- a piece of music honoring someone or something, and extension of the traditional performance of a lover beneath the window of his mistress.

Soprano- the highest range of the female singing voice.

Soubrette (French) - young female character with a light soprano voice.

Spinto (Italian) - a lyric voice that has the power and incisiveness for dramatic climaxes.

Stage Areas- refers to the various sections of the stage as seen by those on stage. See diagram in Workshop #1.

Stage Director- the person in charge of the action on stage. He or she shows the singers chorus and cast where and when to move and helps them create their characters. The stage director develops a concept for how the entire performance should look and feel. He or she works closely with the stage managers, lighting designer, set designers, costume designer and wig and make-up artists to make his or her vision into reality.

Stage Manager- the person who coordinates and manages elements of the performance.

Supernumeraries (Supers) - appear on stage in costume in non-singing and usually, non-speaking roles.

Surtitles- the English translations of the opera's language that are projected above the stage during a performance to help the audience follow the story. Much like subtitles in a foreign film.

Synopsis- a short summary of the story of the opera.

Tableau- occurs at the end of a scene or act, when all cast members on stage freeze in position and remain that way until the curtain closes. It looks as though that moment has been captured in a photograph.

Tempo- speed of the music.

Tenor- the highest natural adult male voice.

Trill- a very quick alternation between two adjacent notes. See coloratura.

Trio- an ensemble of three singers or the music that is written for three singers.

Trouser role- the role of an adolescent boy or young man, written for and sung by a woman, often a mezzo-soprano. Also known as a pants role.

Verismo- describes a realistic style of opera that started in Italy at the end of the 19th century.

Giano Carlo Menotti

The sixth of ten children, he was born in a country town on Lake Lugano. His father was a prosperous businessman and his mother a talented amateur musician. He had already written two operas when he entered the Milan Conservatory at the age of 13. In 1928 he began studies with Rosario Scalero at the Curtis Institute, where a close friendship with his fellow student Samuel Barber began.



The two spent several summers in Europe attending opera performances in Vienna and in Italy. It was in Vienna, having received his diploma with honors from the Curtis Institute in 1933, that Menotti began the libretto for a one-act *opera buffa*, *Amelia al ballo*. He completed the orchestration on his return to the USA in 1937; the opera received its première in an English translation by George Mead as *Amelia Goes to the Ball*. A few days later it was performed in New York with such success that the Metropolitan Opera accepted it for the following season.

The success of *Amelia* brought Menotti a commission from NBC for a radio opera. Using the *opera buffa* tradition of set numbers, he wrote his first libretto in English, *The Old Maid and the Thief*. His next opera, *The Island God*, was poorly received. Menotti remained in the USA during World War II but retained his Italian citizenship.

A commission by the Alice M. Ditson Fund led to his first international success: *The Medium*, a tragedy in two acts for five singers, a dance-mime role and a chamber orchestra of 14 players. The work is theatrically effective and the music, often quite dissonant, conveys an eerie, morbid atmosphere. Typical of the Italian operatic tradition, *The Medium* has memorable melodies such as the folk-like 'O, black swan'. The opera had a run of 212 performances during 1947 at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre on Broadway. As a curtain-raiser for these performances (and a striking contrast), Menotti wrote a light one-act comedy, *The Telephone*, sub-titled *L'amour à trois*. The State Department organized a European tour of these works in 1955. In 1951 Menotti directed a film version of *The Medium*, collaborating with the young conductor Thomas Schippers and with Enzo Serafin, the director of photography. It remains one of the finest examples of filmed opera.

Menotti's versatile dramatic skills, as director, librettist and composer, brought him a contract from Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer to write film scripts. Although his scripts were never filmed, one contained the seeds of his first full-length opera, *The Consul*, considered by many to be his greatest work. In keeping with Menotti's preference for contemporary subjects, the opera tells the story of a family trying to obtain a visa to leave a police state. Music and stage techniques combine to communicate strongly and directly. The New York première at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre on 15 March 1950 was a great success and performances continued there for about eight months. The work received the Pulitzer Prize and the Drama Critics' Circle Award. It has been translated into 12 languages and has been performed in over 20 countries. With *The Consul* and his next two operas, Menotti seemed at the height of his powers and of public acclaim.

Amahl and the Night Visitors, commissioned by NBC, was the first opera written expressly for American television. In writing it, Menotti was influenced by *The Adoration of the Magi* of Hieronymus Bosch. The work was first televised on Christmas Eve 1951 and has been broadcast annually. The roles, particularly the main part for boy soprano, are skillfully conceived so that they can be performed by amateurs. The charm and clear diatonicism of the work have helped to make it one of the most frequently performed operas of the 20th century. Menotti's next opera, *The Saint of Bleecker Street* (1954), is a full-length piece in the broad and serious style of *The Consul*.

It is an effective drama set in contemporary New York and concerned with the conflict of the physical and spiritual worlds. The opera received the Drama Critics' Circle Award for the best play, the New York Music Critics' Circle Award for the best opera and the Pulitzer Prize in music for 1955.

Choral music was an important element in *Amahl* and *The Saint of Bleecker Street*; it is basic to the 'madrigal fable' *The Unicorn, the Gorgon and the Manticore*. Commissioned by the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation, it is one of Menotti's most charming works. The model was the late Renaissance madrigal comedy (such as Vecchi's *L'amfiparnaso*), and the work consists of an introduction, 12 madrigals (some *a cappella*) and six instrumental interludes. At about the same time Menotti wrote the text for Barber's opera *Vanessa*.

Menotti's next opera, *Maria Golovin*, was again commissioned by NBC. The première formed part of the 1958 International Exposition in Brussels and, a year later, was broadcast by NBC. From 1958 much of Menotti's time was taken up by the Spoleto Festival of Two Worlds, which he founded and directed; Schippers became music director of this major summer festival in 1967, but Menotti continued as president. From 1963, however, he again found time to compose: *Labyrinth*, written for NBC television, exploits the possibilities of special camera techniques; the cantata *The Death of the Bishop of Brindisi* (concerning the Children's Crusade of 1212) was commissioned by the Cincinnati May Festival; and *Le dernier sauvage* was written for the Paris Opéra. The première of the latter, in 1963, was in fact given by the Opéra-Comique, and the following year it received a lavish production at the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

A CBS commission for the 1964 Bath Festival was fulfilled by a church opera in one act, *Martin's Lie*. Other works of this period include *Canti della lontananza*, a song cycle on Menotti's own texts written for Elisabeth Schwarzkopf; *Help, Help, the Globolinks!*, a 70-minute 'opera in one act for children and those who like children' (commissioned by the Hamburg Staatsoper); and a New York City Opera commission, *The Most Important Man*. A drama without music, *The Leper*, was first performed in Tallahassee, Florida, on 24 April 1970.

In 1973 Menotti and Barber sold their home in Mount Kisco, New York, where they had lived since 1943. Menotti, with his adopted son Francis, moved to Scotland. In 1977 he expanded his Spoleto Festival to Charleston, South Carolina (the other of its Two Worlds). In spite of the festival's claims on his time, which included directing plays as well as operas, he maintained an active artistic career. As an elaborate farewell vehicle for Beverly Sills he wrote the opera *La loca* (1979), which tells the story of the daughter of Isabella and Ferdinand of Spain. His non-operatic works include the symphony 'The Halcyon' – which he has said represents 'the most sincere and optimistic days of my youth, when the horizon [was] unclouded' – and the *Missa O pulchritudo*, a Mass to beauty which replaces the Credo with a setting of a poem by St Augustine. Many of his later operas are directed towards children, both as subjects and as performers. In 1984 Menotti was awarded a Kennedy Center Honor for lifetime achievement in the arts. In 1986 his opera *Goya*, written for Plácido Domingo, was given its première by the Washington Opera. In honor of the 1995 Nobel Peace Prize, the American Choral Directors commissioned *Gloria* as part of the Mass celebrating the occasion. In 1996 Menotti directed his second filmed version of *Amahl*.

The Style of Menotti

Menotti noticeably cares about his audience and about the human voice. He wrote: 'There is a certain indolence towards the use of the voice today, a tendency to treat the voice instrumentally, as if composers feared that its texture is too expressive, too *human*' (1964). He is sensitive to new musical techniques that will serve his dramatic purpose: a high, sustained dissonant chord in *The Consul* as Magda turns on the gas stove to commit suicide; the 12-note music used to parody contemporary civilization (and indirectly the avant-garde composer) in Act 2 of *Le dernier sauvage*; or electronic tape music to represent the invaders from outer space in *Help, Help, the Globolinks!* Menotti's melodies are tonal, sometimes with a modal flavor, and often easily remembered. Sequence and repetition are common, but aria-like passages tend to be brief so as not to interrupt the dramatic flow. The continuous, recitative-like passages set the text with naturalness and clarity. His harmony is tonal, sometimes using parallel chords over a clear and simple tonal basis. Many of his more commanding musical gestures, like the opening of *The Medium*, reflect his avowed fondness for Mussorgsky. His orchestration tends to be light and open and he writes particularly well for small instrumental ensembles. His rhythms, even when metrical irregularities are used, are natural and easily grasped by performer and listener.

Critical appraisal of Menotti's works has ranged from sincere appreciation (Sargeant) to bitter denunciation, later retracted (Kerman). There are signs that Menotti's legacy in future will be more complex and wide-ranging than anticipated. In deftly side-stepping the Second Viennese School he has provided an alternative model, that of the rigorously trained classical musician whose prime motivation has been to communicate with his audience. To that end, he invented both the first opera for radio and for television and has hopes for composing an opera expressly for film. Like Gershwin before him and Lloyd Webber after, he has fused together music and theatre. Whether we decide to define the results as opera, music theatre or musical does not detract from the achievement of creating new audiences for one of the oldest of genres.

Workshop #1- Stage Business

Objectives:

Students will be able to express and apply their knowledge of the areas of the stage through writing and movement.

Students will investigate the historical background of stage positioning.

Pre-class:

Tape a massive grid to the floor of the space you are working in. This can be used to physically point out the areas of the stage as well as be used for the game ("Director Says").

Activity #1: Group Discussion

Have a group discussion with your class regarding why individuals might need to assign names for the different areas of the theater, questioning the purpose that it serves.

Activity #2: Historical Significance of the Stage

Explain briefly the historical significance of the set-up of the theater. Include such points as how the stage was originally raked so that the back portion of the stage was higher than the front portion. This was done because the audience's seats were not raised as they usually are today. It enabled those individuals sitting in the back row of the theater to see the players clearly. As a result the back of the stage is called up and the front of the stage is referred to as down stage.

You may also choose to discuss which areas of the stage are most important. For example, the strongest entrance is from stage left.

Distribute the "Stage Facts" on the next page, so that students can refer to it as you physically got to the taped area that you are explaining. You may choose to have them draw and copy the areas of the stage for themselves.

Activity #3: "Director Says" Game

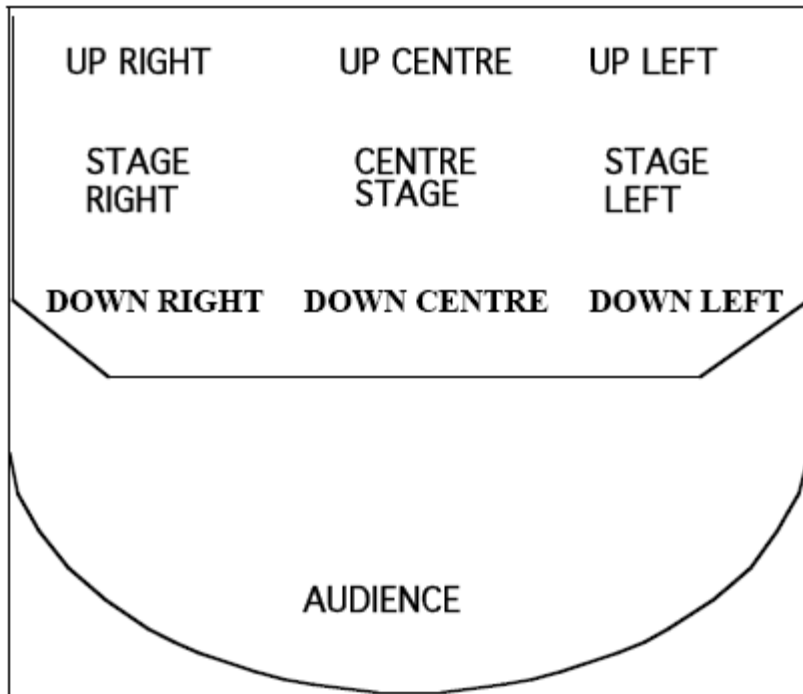
The teacher designates one of the students as the director, or for the first round you can be the director. The remaining students are the performers.

The director gives out the directions: "Move upstage", "Move stage right," "Move to up center," etc. The director may give out directions to the entire group at once, small groups, or individuals e.g.: "All performers with red socks go stage left."

Students are out if they move in any direction other than the one the director gives. The director gives out directions more rapidly, and any performer who moves in the wrong direction or hesitates is out. You may need to have a judge.

Stage Facts

Opera singers are required to act as well as sing and therefore they must understand the stage set-up. In rehearsals, the director will indicate to the singers what they should be doing and where they should do it. To do this they use a special vocabulary. Take a look at the diagram below in order to understand the different areas of the stage.



Workshop #2- *The Old Maid and the Thief*

Objectives:

Student will be able to express their knowledge of the storyline of *The Old Maid and the Thief* through verbal and written expression. Students will be able to express their knowledge of character through writing a character sketch.

Activity #1: Story of *The Old Maid and the Thief*

Have the students read the libretto of *The Old Maid and the Thief*. You can choose to read it aloud to the students or have them read it silently. Have the students discuss what happens to the characters and why they think each character behaved the way they did. Do they think a similar story could be told in modern times or can they think of contemporary stories that have a similar theme?

For a more dramatic approach, read the libretto as a reader's theater, having students take turns speaking the different roles. If done in this manner, ask the students to put emotion into their voices and encourage exaggeration. You might have to start them off, but this will provide an interesting way of reading the story.

Another approach is to adapt the story into an improvised play. Have students create the dialogue between characters at key points in the story.

Activity #2: Sharing with a group

After watching the production, have the students discuss what they saw. To help focus conversations, get the students to create a list of qualities that they feel are key to understanding *The Old Maid and the Thief* and its characters.

Activity #3: Creating a journal from point of view of a character

Allow students to pick a specific moment in the opera, preferably a point of conflict for the character. Have the students write a journal of those events from the point of view of their character. Explain to the students that they are to take on the persona of that character and should refer to the character through personal pronouns. Also, remind students that they are only to express information that their character would know.

Character Profile

Name and Role

Physical Characteristics (their style and physical attributes)

Psychological Characteristics (mental aspects of character, how do they think about things?)

Emotional Characteristics (are they generally cheerful, sad, snobby, "off-balance" etc.?)

Career/Income

Interests and Hobbies

Other interesting facts

Workshop #3- Writing a Review of *The Old Maid and the Thief*

Objectives:

Students will be able to write clear and well-supported expository essays.

Students will utilize observation and critical thinking skills based on real-life, real-time experiences.

Students can submit their writing for publication (school newspaper) or you can send the review to Arizona Opera. We would love to hear what the students thought.

Activity #1- Think-Group-Share

Individually students will write, in point form, the answers to the following questions:

1. What did you like about the opera? What did you dislike?
2. What did you think about the sets, props and costumes?
3. Would you have done something differently? Why?
4. What were you expecting? Did it live up to your expectations?
5. What did you think of the singers' portrayal of their characters?

Break the students into groups to discuss their feelings and reactions to the production. Have the students write on poster papers their answers or important points of their discussion. Encourage the students to go beyond the questions posed. Place their poster papers on the walls.

Activity #2- Gallery Walk

Have the groups travel around the room to examine the discussion poster papers. During the walk, students must write down one thing that surprised them, one thing they didn't think of, and one thing that they would like explained. Once this is done, have a large group discussion about the different ideas that they encountered on their walk.

Activity #3- Outlining your review

Go over the essential aspects of a review including:

- A clearly stated purpose
- A coherent comparison/contrast organizational pattern
- A summary paragraph
- Capturing the interest of the reader
- Precise nouns
- Revision for consistency of ideas

You might give your students a few samples of reviews for fine arts events from the newspaper as examples- or ask them to bring in some reviews they find themselves. Have the students fill out the "Review Outline" worksheet. Once this has been completed, students may write their rough draft.

Activity #4- Conferencing

Students will exchange reviews to critique and edit. Have the students use the "Peer Evaluation" worksheet to help guide them. Encourage the students to focus on effective coordination of ideas in sentences and the correct use of grammar and punctuation.

Activity #5- Creating the final draft

Have students make the appropriate adjustments to their reviews. You could also have the students type the pieces up and organize them into a newspaper. Also have the students complete their "Self-evaluation" worksheet. Include this in the total mark.

Review Outline

Purpose (why are you writing this and who is your audience?)

Plot Synopsis (Including who sang what role, etc.)

Paragraph #1 (Compare and contrast, things you liked or didn't like)

Paragraph #2 (Compare and contrast, things you like or didn't like)

Paragraph #3 (Compare and contrast, things you like or didn't like)

Summary/Closing Paragraph

Optional Activity/Approach

Be a music critic in the 1930's. Students imagine they are living at the time of the first performance of *The Old Made and the Thief* in 1939.

Activity #1- Historical Research

Students will need to learn about the historical context in America in the 1930's. This will include understanding the political situation and social norms, including the differences among classes.

Activity #2- Writing the review

Students may want to create a periodical from the time in which their review will be published. The review itself could incorporate quotes and/or headlines from actual historical reviews. The students' reviews can follow a similar outline to that for the activity above, but they must remember the time period in which they are pretending to write.

As with the previous activity, peer and self-evaluations of the reviews can be completed, using the outlines in the following pages.

The Arizona Opera would love to receive a copy of any reviews or newspapers produced by the students.

Opera Comprehension Test

General Opera

1. _____ A theatrical production incorporating both vocal and instrumental music, drama, and sometimes dance.
2. _____ The lowest male vocal range.
3. _____ An instrumental introduction to an opera.
4. _____ The area where the orchestra is seated.
5. _____ The female vocal range lying between soprano and contralto.
6. _____ A song for solo voice in an opera.
7. _____ The highest female vocal range.
8. _____ A song for two voices.
9. _____ The lowest female vocal range.
10. _____ The Italian work meaning “little book.”
11. _____ The middle male vocal range.
12. _____ He/she has the artistic view for the performance of the opera.

The Old Maid and the Thief

1. The opera *The Old Maid and the Thief* takes place in _____. (Give the location and approximate date).
2. Bob is a _____. (Name his “profession”).
3. In the first scene, Laetitia lies to Miss Todd about the person at the door because she’s excited to see a _____.
4. Miss Todd and Laetitia are convinced that Bob is a thief because _____ showed Miss Todd a newspaper article about an escaped thief.
5. *The Old Maid and the Thief* was composed by _____.
6. The role of Laetitia is sung by a _____ (highest female voice).
7. The written words to the opera are found in a small book called a _____.

Answers

General Opera

1. opera
2. bass
3. overture
4. pit
5. mezzo-soprano
6. aria
7. soprano
8. duet
9. contralto
10. libretto
11. baritone
12. director

The Old Maid and the Thief

1. small town, mid 1950's (also acceptable, 1939 which was the original date)
2. Beggar
3. man
4. Miss Pinkerton
5. Menotti
6. soprano
7. libretto

Process & Product Assessment

Peer Evaluation

Date: _____

2006

Name of Peer Evaluator: _____

Name of Reviewer: _____

Review Title: _____

Please use scale to evaluate the following:

- ____ Purpose of the piece clearly identified
- ____ Reader clearly taken into account (background, word choice)
- ____ Engaging to the reader (was it interesting to read?)
- ____ Complete sentence structure (grammar, spelling and punctuation)
- ____ Varied length and types of sentences used
- ____ Strong word choices (adjectives, adverbs and nouns)
- ____ Originality and creativity
- ____ Attention to detail and support of beliefs with examples

<p>Scale:</p> <p>5- Outstanding 4- Above Average 3- Average 2- Needs Improvement 1- Unclear 0- Has not been done</p>
--

Total: /40

Comments and Questions:

Process & Product Assessment

Self-Evaluation

Date: _____

2006

Name of Reviewer: _____

Review Title: _____

Please use scale to evaluate the following:

- ____ Purpose of the piece clearly identified
- ____ Reader clearly taken into account (background, word choice)
- ____ Engaging to the reader (was it interesting to read?)
- ____ Complete sentence structure (grammar, spelling and punctuation)
- ____ Varied length and types of sentences used
- ____ Strong word choices (adjectives, adverbs and nouns)
- ____ Originality and creativity
- ____ Attention to detail and support of beliefs with examples

Scale: 5- Outstanding 4- Above Average 3- Average 2- Needs Improvement 1- Unclear 0- Has not been done
--

Total: /40

Comments:

Teacher's Evaluation Sheet

2006

Your comments and suggestions are greatly appreciated. Please take a few minutes to fill out this questionnaire and return it to the address below. Thank you for your comments and suggestions.

Name: _____

School: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Fax: _____

Email: _____

Grades you teach: _____

Subjects: _____

Have you attended other performing arts events with your students in the past year?

Yes

No

If yes, what were they? _____

How did you find out about Arizona Opera's School Tour? _____

Were you able to apply the Teacher's Study Guide in your classroom activities prior to coming to the opera?

Yes

No

If not, please elaborate: _____

If so, which sections of the Study Guide did you find most useful? _____

How appropriate was the information provided in the Study Guide? _____

What would you add/omit? _____

Did you spend classroom time discussing the performance after your student watched the opera? Yes No

Do you have any comments about the performance itself? _____

Would you like to receive information on future education opportunities? _____

Further comments and suggestions _____

Please use the scale to evaluate the following:

_____ I would like to work with Arizona Opera in the future

_____ I would recommend this experience to others

In general, I found the opera experience:

_____ Valuable

_____ Interesting

_____ Appropriate

_____ Stimulating

_____ Well Executed

Scale:

6- strongly agree

5- agree

4- not sure but probably agree

3- not sure but probably disagree

2- disagree

1- strongly disagree

Please return this form to:

Director of Education, 3501 N Mountain Ave, Tucson, AZ 85719