

Welcome to Manitoba Opera

This Study Guide has been created to assist you in preparing your students for their visit to the opera. It is our hope that you will be able to add this to your existing curriculum in order to expand your students' understanding of opera, literature, history, and the fine arts. Materials in the Study Guide may be copied and distributed to students. Some students may wish to go over the information at home if there is insufficient time to discuss in class. Make the opera experience more meaningful and enjoyable by sharing with them knowledge and background on opera and *The Elixir of Love* before they attend.

Please Note: The Dress Rehearsal is the last opportunity the singers will have on stage to work with the orchestra before Opening Night. Since vocal demands are so great on opera singers, some singers choose not to sing in full voice during the Dress Rehearsal in order to preserve their energy, before opening night, and avoid unnecessary strain.

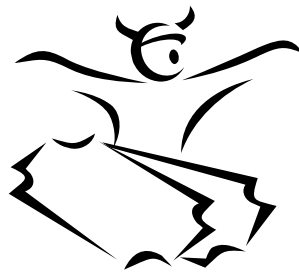


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A Short Introduction to Opera

An **opera**, like a play, is a dramatic form of theatre 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 in 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 in formal attire.
- ◆ **Arrive** on time. Latecomers disturb the singers and others in the audience. Latecomers 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 people sitting behind you.
- ◆ **Turn off** cell phones, pagers, digital watch alarms and all electronic devices.
- ◆ **Leave** your camera at home. A flash can be very disturbing to the artists and audience members alike.
- ◆ **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 theatre, 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 (*The Elixir of Love* is sung in Italian). 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!!!

Manitoba Opera
Presents

The Elixir of Love

April 2005, Manitoba Centennial Concert Hall
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Music by Gaetano Donizetti
Libretto by Felice Romani
Based on the French comedy *Le Philtre*

First Performance: May 12, 1832, Teatro della Canobbiana, Milan, Italy
Sung in Italian with English surtitles

Approximately two and a half hours
with one intermission (20 minutes)

Cast & Crew

Gianetta (a peasant girl)	Soprano	Andriana Chuchman
Nemorino (a young peasant)	Tenor	Stuart Howe
Adina (a wealthy, beautiful landowner)	Soprano	Nikki Einfeld
Dr. Dulcamara (a travelling quack doctor)	Bass	Terry Hodges
Belcore (a sergeant)	Baritone	Gregory Dahl

Conductor	Tadeusz Biernacki
Director	Ann Hodges
Lighting Designer	Bill Williams
Set Design	New Orleans Opera Assoc.
Costumes	Malabar Toronto
Stage Manager	Jacqueline Dawson
Assistant Stage Manager #1	Ha-Neul (Su-In) Kim
Assistant Stage Manager #2	Evan Klassen
Apprentice Stage Manager	Meghan Robert

Pronunciation Guide

Adina	ah-DEE-nah
Belcore	bel-COR-ay
Dulcamara	dool-kah-MAH-rah
Gianetta	jah-NAYT-tah
Nemorino	nem-or-EE-noh
Gaetano Donizetti	gah-ay-TAH-noh dawn-eh-TSET-tee

About the Composer- Gaetano Maria Donizetti



Gaetano Maria Donizetti was born to a poor family in Bergamo, a small town in northern Italy, on November 29, 1797. His musical talent was recognized early in his life. Donizetti had a number of teachers during his early musical education, including the famous opera composer Simon Mayr, and later, in Bologna, the renowned teacher Padre Mattei. Donizetti's father, however, insisted that his son return to Bergamo and support himself by giving music lessons. Donizetti disliked the life of a music teacher and decided to enlist in the army.

While he was stationed in Venice, Donizetti found time for composition. His first opera, *Enrico, Conte di Borgogna*, had a successful premiere in 1818. His second opera, *Zoraide de Granata* (1822), was so well received that Donizetti was discharged from the army and exempted from any further military service so that he could devote himself completely to music.

In order to support himself, Donizetti accepted every commission that came along. He was an extremely hard worker, composing daily from 7 a.m. to late afternoon. He became known for his dependability to produce in a tight schedule. Often completing three or four operas a year, Donizetti was determined to master the many varied types and genres of opera popular in Italy at the time. He aimed to produce spontaneous, interesting new works that would satisfy the audience's demands for freshness and originality without compromising his own artistic ambitions.

Although Donizetti was able to produce quickly, his extreme haste in composing has left some critics suggesting that his work occasionally suffers from inconsistency, feeble orchestration, and superficiality. His melodic genius and bouncy good spirits, however, are always in evidence.

During the years 1822-28, Donizetti produced a string of successful operas, most notably comedies. These works are seldom heard today. The Romantic influence of Bellini is evident in Donizetti's next operas, the most famous of which is *Elisabetta al Castello di Kenilworth* (1829).

In 1830, Donizetti reached his artistic maturity with *Anna Bolena* and his international reputation was established. *Anna*, like a good many of the composer's works, is a romanticized version of English history. Cherished by the world's leading dramatic coloratura sopranos, the opera provides an opportunity for the ultimate display of vocal and histrionic skills.

Two years after *Anna Bolena*, *L'Elisir d'Amore* (*The Elixir of Love*) scored a success in Milan. Donizetti is said to have composed this opera in eight days. This sentimental pastoral comedy contains many beautiful melodies and is one of the composer's most frequently performed works.

In quick succession, Donizetti produced a series of notable operas; *Il Furioso all'Isola di San Domingo* (1833), *Lucrezia Borgia* (1833), and *Maria Stuarda* (1834) are the best known of these. In 1835, Donizetti experienced failure abroad but acclaim at home. While his *Marino Faliero* was not well received by Parisian audiences, Donizetti triumphed in Naples with *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

Another of Donizetti's operas that is still performed today is *Roberto Devereux*, composed in 1837. Its role of Queen Elizabeth is one of the greatest dramatic challenges for a coloratura soprano in all of opera.

Several years later, the composer had a run-in with Italy's political censors, so he travelled to Paris, where *La Fille du Régiment* (*The Daughter of the Regiment*) and *La Favorite* (completed in 1840) were well received. The former, though sung in French, is a thoroughly Italian comedy, while the latter is a typical example of French grand opera. For Vienna, the composer then wrote *Linda di Chamounix* (1842) and *Maria di Rohan* (1843). *Linda*, the better known of the two, is an opera semiseria, combining comedy, romance, and pathos.

Donizetti's early operas were often written to accommodate the talents of a particular singer, with pages of purely vocalistic writing that severely hampered the drama. As he matured, however the composer's dramatic instincts began to take precedence over sheer vocal display. By the time he completed his last well-known opera, *Don Pasquale* (1843), his mastery of the drama was complete and this bubbly, brittle comedy ranks as one of the greatest examples of opera buffa ever written.

Donizetti also played an invaluable role in the development of Italian opera, planting the seeds that enabled opera to flourish in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Donizetti, to a much greater extent than Rossini and Bellini, exerted a tremendous influence on the operas of Giuseppe Verdi. The composer will always be remembered best, however, for the rich musical catalogue of his own works: *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *La Fille du Régiment*, and *Don Pasquale* have never left the repertory. The recently renewed interest in music of the bel canto period has led opera companies to bring new life to many of his other stage works.

While Donizetti's professional life was quite successful, his personal life was filled with tragedy. None of his three children survived more than three or four days after birth, and his beloved wife Virginia died tragically in 1837 at the age of 29 during an outbreak of cholera. It was a blow from which Donizetti never recovered. He battled frequent bouts of depression and insanity, and in 1845 he suffered a stroke that left him completely paralyzed. He died on April 8, 1848. Italy, as well as the entire musical world, mourned the loss of this gentle, even-tempered man and gifted musician.

Compiled from New York City Opera www.teachopera.org and Fort Worth Opera 2000 Study Guide

About the Librettist – Felice Romani



Born in Genoa, Italy, in 1788, Felice Romani was a very famous librettist in his day. Although he studied law to make his family happy, his passion was literature and he became friends with important literary figures in Italy in the early 19th century.

Romani was offered the position of court poet in Vienna, but he chose to concentrate on writing librettos. He wrote the librettos for many composers and became the librettist for La Scala, the famous opera house in Milan.

Among the many composers with whom he worked were Vincenzo Bellini, Gioacchino Rossini, and Giuseppe Verdi.

Romani's libretto for the *Elixir of Love* was adapted from the work of another libretto for the opera *Le philtre*. He renamed the characters but his original libretto did not suggest a change of the setting from Spain. Many productions, however, locate the opera in an Italian village.

Romani often adapted other works, keeping up to date with French drama in particular. Despite this 'borrowing' from others, Romani set himself high standards, insisting on making the words as important as the music.

Romani died in 1865.

Compiled from the San Diego Opera 1996 Study Guide and the San Francisco Opera Guide 2000 Study Guide.

Synopsis – *The Elixir of Love*

ACT I. Basque country, c. 1830. Adina, wealthy owner of a local farm, her friend Giannetta, and a group of peasants are resting beneath a shade tree on her estate. At a distance Nemorino, a young villager, laments he has nothing to offer Adina but love. The peasants urge their mistress to tell the story of Tristan and Isolde and how Tristan won Isolde's heart by drinking a magic love potion. As she finishes, Sergeant Belcore swaggers in with his troop. The soldier's conceit amuses her, but he is not dissuaded from asking her hand in marriage. Saying she will think it over, she orders refreshments for his comrades. When Adina and Nemorino are left alone, he awkwardly declares his love. She tells him his time would be better spent looking after his ailing uncle than mooning over her, for she is fickle as a breeze.

In the town piazza, villagers hail the traveling salesman Dr. Dulcamara, who proclaims the virtues of his patent medicine. Since it is inexpensive, the villagers buy eagerly. When they have gone, Nemorino asks Dulcamara if he sells the elixir of love described in Adina's story. Pulling out a bottle of Bordeaux, the charlatan declares this is the very draught. Though it costs him his last cent, Nemorino buys the wine and hastily drinks it. Adina enters to find him tipsy; certain of winning her love, he pretends indifference. To punish him, Adina flirts with Belcore, who, informed that he must return to his garrison, persuades her to marry him at once. Horrified, Nemorino begs Adina to wait one more day, but she ignores him and invites the entire village to her wedding feast. Nemorino rushes away, moaning that he has been ruined by Dulcamara's elixir.

ACT II. At a local tavern, the pre-wedding supper is in progress. Dulcamara, self-appointed master of ceremonies, sits with the bridal couple. Adina's mind is distracted by the doctor, who suggests they blend their voices in a barcarole about a gondoliera and her wealthy suitor. When the duet ends, Adina goes off with Belcore to sign the marriage contract; the guests disperse. Remaining behind, Dulcamara is joined by Nemorino, who begs for another bottle of elixir; his pleas are rejected, because he has no money. Belcore returns, annoyed that Adina has postponed the wedding until nightfall. He spies Nemorino and asks why he is so sad. The youth explains his financial plight, whereupon the sergeant persuades him to join the army and receive a bonus awaiting all volunteers. Belcore leads the perplexed Nemorino off to sign him up, enabling him to buy more elixir.

Peasant girls, gathered in the square, hear from Giannetta that Nemorino's uncle has died and willed him a fortune. When the youth reels in, giddy from a second bottle of wine, they besiege him with attention. Unaware of his new wealth, he believes the elixir finally has taken effect. Adina and Dulcamara arrive in time to see him leave with a bevy of beauties. She is jealous and angry that he has sold his freedom to Belcore. Hoping to sell Adina a bottle of elixir, Dulcamara claims that Nemorino's popularity is due to the magic potion. Adina replies she will win him back through her own charms. Re-entering alone in a pensive mood, Nemorino takes heart because of a tear he has seen on Adina's cheek, but when she appears, he acts disinterested. She confesses she bought back his enlistment papers because she loves him.

Back in the piazza, Belcore marches in to find Adina affianced to Nemorino; declaring that thousands of women await him, he accepts the situation philosophically. Attributing Nemorino's happiness and inheritance to the elixir, Dulcamara quickly sells more bottles before making his escape.

from *Opera News*

What To Listen For

Elixir of Love is an opera in the *bel canto* style, a style that was very popular during Donizetti's time. Bel canto requires three major requirements, according to Gioacchino Rossini, a contemporary of Donizetti and famous opera composer. Bel canto requires: 1. a naturally beautiful voice; 2. effortless delivery of highly florid music; and 3. mastery of style which could only be learned by listening to the best.

The following suggests some of the music to listen for in particular during specific scenes.

Act 1, Scene 1

As Nemorino laments he cannot hope to win Adina's love, he sings *Quanto é bella, quanto é cara!* – How beautiful she is, how dear she is!

Adina tells Nemorino she cannot be faithful, Nemorino replies that, like the zephyr roaming from flower to flower, or like the river running to the sea, he sings *Chiedi all'aura* – Ask the zephyr. He would not want to be free from loving her even if he were able.

Act 1, Scene 2

Doctor Dulcamara tells the peasants what wonders he is selling, singing *Uditie, o rustici* – Listen you rustics.

After joining the regiment to make enough money to buy more 'love potion,' Nemorino now is told he must leave with the troop the next day. Adina is angry and decides to marry Belcore right away. Nemorino becomes desperate, begging her to wait one more day because he does love her – *Adina, credemi* – Adina, believe me.

Act 2, Scene 1

Adina discovers Nemorino joined the army to purchase more love potion. She knows a better elixir to win him over, a tender look and a tear. She sings *Una tenera occhiatina* – a tender little look.

Nemorino, alone and thinking he is unheard, sings the famous aria, *Una furtive lagrima* – a furtive tear, referring to the tear he saw in Adina's eye making him believe she does love him after all.

Derived from the San Diego Opera Study Guide (1996)

Sampling of Disc and Video Recordings

CD

1989 DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 429 744-2 (2 CDs)

Metropolitan Opera House Orch., James Levine (cond.)

Kathleen Battle (A), Luciano Pavarotti (N), Leo Nucci (B), Enzo Dara (D), Dawn Upshaw (G)

1992 ERATO WE 848

English Chamber Orch., Marcello Viotti (cond.)

Mariella Devia (A), Roberto Alagna (N), Pietro Spagnoli (B), Bruno Praticoglarve; (D),

Francesca Provvionato (G)

1996 DECCA 455 691-2 (2 CDs)

Orch. Opéra National de Lyon, Evelino Pid=F2 (cond.)

Angela Gheorghiu (A), Roberto Alagna (N), Roberto Scaltriti (B), Simone Alaimo (D), Elena Dan (G)

For additional CD selections, check

<http://opera.stanford.edu/Donizetti/Elisir/disco.html>

VIDEO

L'Elisir d'Amore (Donizetti)

Hardy DVD: cat# HCD 4014, with Renata Scotta and Carlo Bergonzi and Carlo Cava, Giuseppe Taddei

1991 Elisir D'amore, L' Videos

METROPOLITAN OPERA

VHS Video Tape or VHS Video Tape

Stars Pavarotti, Blegen, Bruscantini, Ellis, w/ Rescigno & Met Opera.

Suggested Books

General

Boyden, Matthew. *Opera, The Rough Guide*, The Rough Guides Ltd, 1997.

Brener, Milton. *Opera Offstage*, Walker & Co., 1996.

Cross, Milton. *The Complete Stories of the Great Operas*, Doubleday, 1952.

Earl of Harewood, ed. *The New Kobbe's Complete Opera Book*, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1976.

Forman, Sir Denis. *A Night at the Opera*, Random House Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1994.

Jellinek, George. *History Through the Opera Glass*, Pro. Am Music Resources, 1994.

Orrey, Leslie (Rodney Milnes ed.). *A Concise History of Opera*, Thames and Hudson, 1987.

Plotkin, Fred. *Opera 101: A Complete Guide to Learning & Loving Opera*, Hyperion, 1994.

Pogue, David Speck, Scott. *Opera for Dummies*, John Wiley & Sons, 1997.

Sadie, Stanley, ed. *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, Macmillan Press Ltd., 1992.

Simon, Henry. *One Hundred Great Operas and Their Stories*, Doubleday, 1989.

Walsh, Michael. *Who's Afraid of Opera?* Fireside, 1994.

The Elixir of Love and Donizetti

Ashbrook, Willima. *Donizetti and his Operas*. Cambridge University Press (1982)

John Black, *Donizetti's Operas in Naples 1822-1848*, London: The Donizetti Society, 1982

James P. Cassaro, *Gaetano Donizetti - A Guide to Research*, New York: Garland Publishing. 2000

For additional selections, check:

<http://www.donizettisociety.com/publications.htm>

The Operatic Voice

Operatic singing developed in Europe during the 17th century. The vocal demands are far greater on an opera singer than on any other singer. Opera singers rarely use microphones, and therefore must develop their voices to make a sound that will project and be heard above an orchestra and be heard throughout a large theatre.

After years of practice and study, an opera singer learns to use his or her body as an amplification device. By controlling the muscles of the diaphragm (a muscle beneath the lungs and above the stomach) the singer can regulate the amount of breath used. By tightening the diaphragm the singer can push out the right amount of air to make the vocal cords vibrate. The speed at which the cords vibrate determines the pitch. As the sound passes through the mouth it resonates in the upper chest cavities and the sinus cavities of the face and head. These cavities act as small echo chambers and help amplify the sound. The shape of the mouth and the placement of the tongue near the lips contribute to the tone and sound of the words.

Many singers begin their operatic training in university. Opera students study singing, music history, composition and vocal pedagogy (voice teaching). In addition to music classes, they study diction and often study at least one foreign language. After university, singers begin to work in the professional world. Their first roles are usually small parts, but if they continue to study and train, they may move on to the bigger principal roles.

Professional singers develop a number of roles in their repertoire. Since the principal artists are required to have their parts memorized before rehearsals begin, singers must prepare well in advance of each contract. Singers have voice teachers who help them refine their singing techniques and many will also have an acting coach. Even a well-established singer will have a vocal coach to teach singing and acting techniques for specific roles.

Each person's vocal tract is constructed differently. The roles that a singer performs are dependent mostly upon their vocal range, but within the vocal ranges, there are many colours and weights of voice that further determine which roles he or she can sing safely. Vocal colour refers to the richness of the sound and vocal weight refers to how powerful a voice sounds.

After the role has been studied intensely and the singer is hired to perform, they arrive at the opera company for the rehearsals. This time is spent refining the music with the conductor and staging the action with the stage director. Each director has a different idea of how the character should be played, and each conductor has a different idea of how the character should sound, therefore the singer must modify his or her techniques to reach the desired result.

Physical health is a major priority to a singer. Contrary to popular belief not all opera singers are overweight. Conventional wisdom used to state that excessive weight gave added volume and richness to the voice however, in recent years, people have discovered that physical fitness can give similar benefits to a voice. Plus, the overall health benefits of being in shape overshadow any loss of vocal power. Most singers, like professional athletes try to avoid such substances as tobacco, alcohol and caffeine.

There are six basic vocal categories:

Women:

Soprano: The highest female voice, similar to a flute in range and tone colour. 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 colour. 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 English horn in range and tone colour. 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.



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 a 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. **Gregory Dahl** (Belcore) is an example of this vocal range.

Bass- the lowest singing range of the male voice. **Terry Hodges** (Dr. Dulcamara) is an example of this vocal range.

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

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

Baton- 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 the singers. The conductor for *Elixir of Love* is **Tadeusz Biernacki**.

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 theatre 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.

Interlude- a short piece of instrumental music played between scenes and acts.

Intermission- a break between acts of an opera. The lights go on and the audience is free to move around. *Elixir of Love* has two intermissions of 20 and 15 minutes respectively.

Librettist- the writer of the opera's text. The librettist for *Elixir of Love* is Felice Romani.

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 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, that 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 towards 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 honouring someone or something, an extension of the traditional performance of a lover beneath the window of his mistress.

Soprano- the highest range of the female singing voice. **Nikki Einfeld** (Adina) is an example of this vocal range.

Soubrette (French)- pert 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. The stage manager for *Elixir of Love* is Jacqueline Dawson.

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

Surtitles- the English translations of the opera’s language, in this production Italian, 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.

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 theatre, questioning the purpose that it serves.

Activity #2: Historical Significance of the Stage

Explain briefly the historical significance for the set-up of the theatre. 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 theatre to see the players clearly. As a result the back of the stage is called up stage 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 go 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

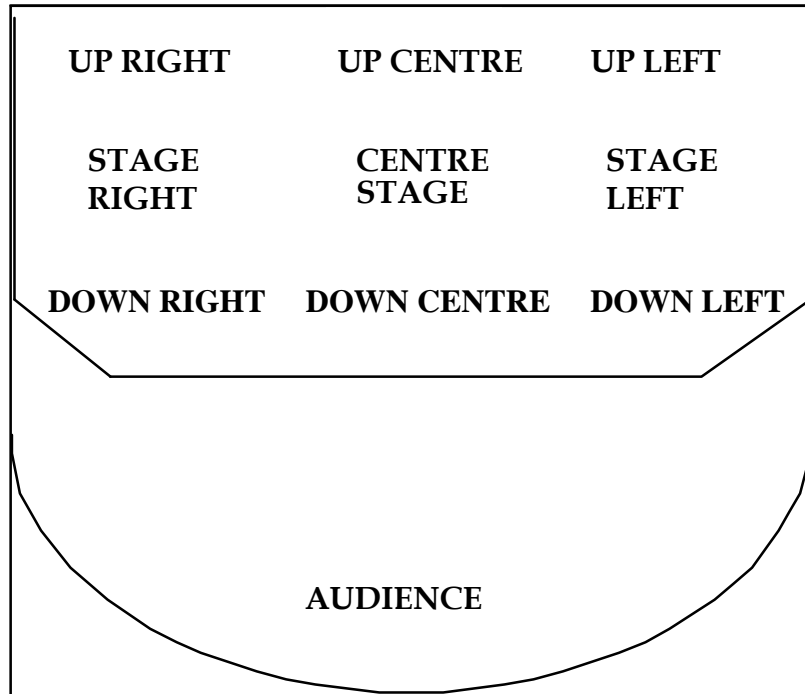
The teacher designates one of the students as the director, or for the first round you can be the director. The remaining students are the performers.

The director gives out the directions: “Move upstage”, “Move stage right,” “Move to up centre,” 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 to 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 – *Elixir of Love*

Objectives:

Student will be able to express their knowledge of the storyline of *Elixir of Love* through verbal and written expression. Students will be able to express their knowledge of character through writing a character sketch

Activity #1: Story of *Elixir of Love*

Have the students read a version of *Elixir of Love*. You can use the synopsis found in the Study Guide or most CD versions include a synopsis and often the libretto. You can choose to read it aloud to the students or have them read it silently. They also could read a version of the story of Tristan and Isolde. 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 theatre, 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 convert the synopsis into an improvised play. Have students create the dialogue between characters at key points in the story.

Incorporate the music. Have the students discuss what they hear. Some discussion topics include:

- What mood does the music create?
- What does the music say about the character?
- How does it say it?
- What emotions are conveyed through the music?

Activity #2: Sharing with a group

After viewing the Dress Rehearsal, 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 *Elixir of Love* and its characters.

Activity #3: Quackery and Snake Oil Salesmen

Quackery and 'snake oil salesman' have been around for centuries. Have the students look at modern-day advertising to see if they think there are examples of people selling 'quack' medicine, in other words, 'quick fixes' to problems that may require longer term solutions (e.g., life-long healthy living versus fad diets).

The students also could investigate historic examples of quackery. They could describe the nature of the 'elixir' or 'magic potion' being sold, what its alleged benefits were, and discuss some of the social circumstances of the time that made the elixir believable or popular.

Activity #4: 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 _____

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.?)

Family

Career/Income (if applicable)

Interests and Hobbies

Other interesting facts

Workshop #3 - Writing a Review of *Elixir of Love*

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 reviews to Manitoba 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:

What did you like about the opera? What did you dislike?

What did you think about the sets, props and costumes?

Would you have done something differently? Why?

What were you expecting? Did it live up to your expectations?

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 that 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. Have the students fill out the "Review Outline" worksheet. Once this has been completed, students may write their rough draft.

Activity #4- Peer 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 the "Self-evaluation" worksheet. Include this in the total mark.

Optional Activity/Approach

Be a music critic in the 1830s. Students imagine they are living at the time of the first performance of *Elixir of Love*, in 1832.

Activity #1 – Historical Research

Students will need to learn about the historical context in Italy and Europe in the 1830s. They could include research into the play *Le Philtre*, on which Romani based his libretto.

Activity #2 – Writing the review

Students may want to create a newspaper from the 1830s, in which their review is included. 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.

If they design a newspaper, they can try to use similar type styles (font) and page layout as were used in the 1830s.

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

Other Activities

- Study the history and politics of Donizetti's time, particularly the year when *Elixir of Love* premiered (1832); what authors were popular, what scientific discoveries were being made; what was the social and political life in Canada at the time
- Research Donizetti's or Romani's life, especially looking at their impact on music and opera and what influenced them.
- Write a story about your visit to the Manitoba Opera, write us a letter, or draw a picture to illustrate your memories from the experience.

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 word meaning "little book."
11. _____ The middle male vocal range.
12. _____ He/she has the artistic view for the performance of the opera.

Elixir of Love

1. The opera *Elixir of Love* takes place in _____ (give the approximate date).
2. Dr. Dulcamara is a _____ (profession).
3. In the opening scene, Nemorino gazes adoringly at _____.
4. The character who openly declares his love for Adina is _____.
5. The 'elixir' Dr. Dulcamara sells to Nemorino actually is _____.
6. *Elixir of Love* was composed by _____.
7. The libretto (words) for *Elixir of Love* were written by _____.
8. The role of Dr. Dulcamara is sung by a _____ (vocal category).
9. The role of Adina is sung by a _____ (vocal category).

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

Elixir of Love

1. 1830
2. quack doctor
3. Adina
4. Sergeant Belcore
5. wine (Bordeaux)
6. Gaetano Donizetti
7. Felice Romani
8. bass
9. soprano

Teacher's Evaluation Sheet

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: _____ Grade(s) 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 Manitoba Opera's Student Dress Rehearsal? _____

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/delete? _____

Did you spend classroom time discussing the performance after your students attended the opera?
 Yes No

Do you have any comments about the performance itself? _____

Would you like to receive information on our future Student Dress Rehearsals? Yes No

How would you like to receive information:

Fax Email Letters Other _____

Further comments and suggestions _____

Please return this form to: **Education Coordinator, 380 Graham Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R3C 4K2**
Fax: (204) 949-0377

