

Young Patronesses of the Opera

In-School Opera Presents

Hansel and Gretel



A condensed version of the children's opera in one act

Hansel & Gretel

a one act, 30-minute version of the original opera, by Engelbert Humperdinck
Presented by the Young Patronesses of the Opera

STUDY GUIDE

This is a wonderful adaptation of the children's story, *Hansel & Gretel*. It is a 30--minute production with sets, costumes, humor and music. This study guide can be used to help the students prepare for the show beforehand as well as review the show afterwards. There are exercises that can be used if you have just a few minutes or a full class period. It should coincide with the "*Hansel & Gretel*" Workbook.

BEFORE THE SHOW

Depending on the amount of time you have with your students, below is a list of helpful class discussions and activities to do with your students to prepare them for the show.

Class Discussion - (suggested answers are included)

1) Ask your students for their ideas about what an opera is. Write OPERA on the board and list the student's answers. Ask the same question once they have seen the show to see if their answers have changed.

Q1. What is an Opera? How is it different than a play?

A. A play that is set to music, and the actors sing their words.

- Distinguish between singing, speaking and whispering voices

Q2: How is an opera (or any live theater such as a play or musical concert) different than TV or a Movie?

A1: The singers/actors do not stop to fix mistakes or re-shoot a scene.

A2: The singers/actors can hear the audience and can react to them.

2) **Play the overture of *Hansel and Gretel*.** Without telling your students anything about the story or characters of the opera, have them brainstorm how the different sections of the overture made them feel or what it sounded like to them (example: "the music at the beginning sounds serious," "The music in the middle sounds playful," etc.). What is going on in this music? What do you hear that makes you say that? What do they expect to hear in the full performance?

3) **Read the synopsis of the Opera *Hansel and Gretel* to your students.**

Discuss the characters and ask your students how they think these characters will sound, look, behave, etc. What do they think the set will look like? Ask your students to draw what they see during the reading of the synopsis.

*** Discussion questions you can ask your students:**

- Where does the story take place?
- Who are the different characters?
- Which character is your least favorite? Why?
- Which character is your favorite? Why?
- What are the problems Hansel and Gretel face?

- How do they solve the problems? How does the story end?
- What lesson does the story teach you?
- When Hansel and Gretel were alone in the forest, how do you think they felt?
- What was the first thing Hansel and Gretel did when they saw the Gingerbread House? Do you think that was nice?
- What other stories does this remind you of?
- How does this story relate to your own life?
- Write an alternative ending for the story.

FICTION:

- The student identifies, analyzes, and applies knowledge of the elements of a variety of fiction and literary texts to develop a thoughtful response to a literary selection.
- Research Process --- The student uses a systematic process for the collection, processing, and presentation of information.

LISTENING AND SPEAKING:

- Listen attentively to fiction and nonfiction read--alouds and demonstrate understanding;
- Identify the text structures an author uses (e.g., comparison/contrast, cause/effect, and sequence of events)
- Self-monitor comprehension and reread when necessary.

4) What is an audience and what is their job?

A: The audience is the people who are watching the performance; they should listen to the singers and not talk or distract them.

Activity: Review the "Opera Etiquette" poem to help the students understand that they must behave politely. Have them pick out the important things of what to do and not to do during the performance.

- No talking to their neighbors; no eating or drinking; no cell phones (talking or texting); no photography; pay attention to the show and singers; laugh when it's funny; at the end, clap to tell the performers, "thank you."
- Have the students practice being a good audience, (sit up straight, laugh when it's funny, clap at the end, etc.). Then, have them act as a bad audience (talking, getting out of their chairs, etc.). Discuss the difference so they know the best way to act during the show.

- The student understands appropriate audience responses to dramatic presentations.

5) Have the students do an art project and create a hand puppet of one of the characters (from the funtime booklet). Then, have them tell the story from the perspective of the character they created. How would they tell the story if they were Gretel, the Witch or Hansel? How would they change the story? When and where does the fairytale take place? Would they set it in a different time and place? How would the story end for their character that they chose? Other things they can do...

- Discuss the basic parts of the story, (plot, conflict and resolution).
- Decide on the crisis moment in the story. Is it when they got lost? Or when the met

the witch? Why are these actions so important to the story?

- Think about how you would change the crisis moment if you were re-writing the story. Then, what happens next?
- Change the end of the story.

6) Have them do some of the games in the funtime booklet to practice vocabulary words, spelling and more. The Musical Treasure Hunt game works on visual art skills.

7) – Create a Story Pyramid

Story Map / Division of Language Arts/Reading

Story Pyramid

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

Key

1. Name the main character
2. Two words describing the main character
3. Three words describing setting
4. Four words stating the problem
5. Five words describing one event
6. Six words describing second event
7. Seven words describing third event
8. Eight words stating solution

AFTER THE SHOW

1. Use the KWL chart again to complete the chart about what they learned.

KWL Chart

| What I Know | What I Want to Know | What I Learned |
|-------------|---------------------|---|
| | | Use this after they see the show to see what they've learned. |

CRITICAL THINKING AND REFLECTION:

- Identify similarities and/or differences in a performance.

2. Now that they have seen the show, review the story synopsis and characters with the students again.

ACTIVITY: Cut and paste the story poem up then have them arrange it in the proper sequence of the correct story line.

- Listening and Speaking: Arrange events in sequence

3. They can write to the singers.

ACTIVITY: Have the children write thank you notes to the performers. Tell the singers what they liked the most about the show.

DRAFTING / INFORMATIVE:

- Drafting: organizing details into a logical sequence that has a beginning, middle, and end.
- Informative: write basic communications, including friendly letters and thank--you notes;

4. Spelling & cognitive thinking:

ACTIVITY: Have the students do the word search and crossword puzzles to decode words.

- Phonics/Word Analysis

More information for additional sources

WHAT IS OPERA?

Text from BACKSTAGE AT THE OPERA

- **Opera** is a story told in music combining the text (*libretto*) with a musical score. Opera performances are typically given in **opera houses** and the singers are accompanied by an **orchestra**. The lead characters in an opera are sung by individuals of different vocal ranges and there is often an opera **chorus**. Operas also feature beautiful scenery and costumes.
- **Opera stories** are told in several musical ways. Main characters sing arias which have beautiful melodies. Sometimes groups of three, four, or more singers (**ensembles**) sing at the same time. And the **chorus** often comments on the action of the plot.
- **Opera** singers sound really different from pop singers because they are trained to use their voices **without microphones!**

LINKS

www.metoperafamily.org/metopera
www.santafeopera.org
www.lyricopera.org
www.sfopera.com
www.losangelesopera.com

BOOKS

Sing Me a Story: The Metropolitan Opera's Book of Opera Stories for Children: Jane Rosenberg

Pavarotti's Opera Made Easy: Luciano Pavarotti

The Classical Child at the Opera: Anastasi Mavrides

The Dog Who Sang at the Opera: Jim West and Marshall Izen

Opera Cat: Tess Weaver

Bravo! Brava! A Night at the Opera: Anne Siberell

Additional Background Information for Teachers/Parents:

Behind the Scenes at the Opera: The production crew is made up of a stage manager, stage hands, prop manager, wardrobe supervisor, and wig and make up supervisor. In addition, there is a sound engineer, master electrician, master carpenter and technical/lighting supervisor. Rehearsal pianists and vocal coaches complete the group that is responsible for all the backstage activities at the opera.

About the Orchestra: The Orchestra is the group of instrumental musicians who accompany the singers in an opera. The orchestra performs in the "pit" or the sunken area in front of the stage. The conductor, often the Music Director of the Opera, directs all the musicians. With the use of a "baton" he/she provides the tempo for the music, volume, and all other expressive elements of the orchestra.

VOICE STUDIO

Text from BACKSTAGE AT THE OPERA

- **Good singing is made by a steady flow of breath** that produces vibrations on the vocal cords. The breath sends those vibrations to all the spaces in the throat and head where the voice picks up a quality called **resonance**.
- Singers are born into a vocal range. For women, the highest voice is the **soprano**, followed by the lower **mezzo soprano**. For men, the highest voice is the **tenor**, followed by the lower **baritone** or **bass**.
- There is nothing like a truly beautiful voice to inspire us. Listen below to some of the greatest singers of our time.

VIDEO

Soprano: Renee Fleming sings "When I Have Sung My Songs For You"

Mezzo Soprano: Marilyn Horne sings "Cruda Sorte" from Rosini's opera "Italian Girl in Algiers"

Tenor: Luciano Pavarotti sings "Che Gelida Manina" from Puccini's opera "La Boheme"

Baritone: Thomas Hampson sings "Largo al Factotum" from Rosini's opera "Barber of Seville"

Visit a Master Class: a lesson for advanced singers usually attended by an audience [Placido Domingo teaches a soprano]

LINKS

www.sethriggs.com

www.thevoiceplace.com/

www.findingyourvoice.com/

FAMOUS OPERA SINGERS

Luciano Pavarotti in Vélodrome Stadium

Maria Callas

Joan Sutherland as Haydn's *Euridice*

Plácido Domingo as *Otello*

Leontyne Price

Enrico Caruso

Marilyn Horne as Amneris in *Aida*

Additional Background Information for Teachers/Parents:

About Opera Singers: Opera singers are trained to sing in a big theater without microphones! They work on controlling the flow of breath which uses a lot of stomach muscles and good lung capacity. Opera singers must have a voice teacher and a voice coach, they have to learn languages, stage movement, and of course learn to read music! Sopranos are the female singers with the highest vocal range. Mezzo sopranos are female singers with a voice slightly lower than sopranos (in choral music, the term alto is also used for this voice type). Tenors are male singers with the highest range, baritones are mid range male voices, and a bass is a male singer with the lowest vocal range.

GLOSSARY

Aria = A beautiful song for one singer

Backdrop = A curtain that displays scenery hung at the back of the stage

Backstage = The area behind the curtain and around the performing stage where all the technical things happen

Blocking = How the performers are placed and moved around the stage

Choreographer = The person who creates and arranges dances or ballets

Chorus = A group of singers

Chorus Master = The person who directs and rehearses the chorus

Conductor = The person who directs the orchestra, and is usually the music director of the Opera

Costume and Wig Designer = The person responsible for designing the wardrobe and wigs for the actors

Diva = A female singing star

Dressing Room = The place where the singers put on their makeup and costumes

Duet = A beautiful song for two singers

Footlights = Theater lights at the front of a stage

General Director = The person who is responsible for being in charge of the Opera (this is YOU!)

Libretto = The text, or words that are sung in an opera

Lighting Technician = The person that plans all aspects of lighting a production

Orchestra Pit = The area where the instrumental musicians sit, in front and below the stage

Overture = The music that is played by an orchestra before the opera begins

Prompter = A person who sits in a little booth at the foot of the stage and helps the singers with their words

Props = Objects used on stage

Proscenium = The area at the front of the stage

Quartet = A piece of music for four voices

Raked stage = The stage is slanted, higher in the back, lower in the front to give dimension to the stage

Rehearsal = The music and staging is practiced before performance

Score = The words and music of an opera

Set Designer = A Set Designer creates the set with furnishings, wallpaper, and built set pieces

Spotlight = A strong beam of light that illuminates only a small area

Technical Effects = The art of creating illusions on stage

Tempo = The speed of the music