

Young Audiences of Massachusetts

255 Elm Street, Suite 302, Somerville, MA 02144

(617) 629-YAMA (9262)

<http://www.yamass.org>

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE:

Opera Boston: "The Telephone" by Gian Carlo Menotti

Grades: 4 – 8

Do modern forms of communication really make it easier for us to understand one another? In Menotti's comic masterpiece, "The Telephone", Ben desperately wants to propose marriage to Lucy, but each time the critical moment arrives she interrupts him to answer her telephone. This program features a complete performance of "The Telephone" plus an introduction to operatic elements including aria, recitative and voice types.

LEARNING GOALS:

1. To introduce children to opera in a way that is meaningful to them, in order to discover that it is an accessible, powerful form of storytelling.
2. To explore how the elements of opera, ie. voice, words and music, come together to create an expressive whole that is larger than its parts.

PRE-ACTIVITY SUMMARY: Telling a Story

Ask students for examples of different forms of storytelling. How are these distinct forms similar and different from each other? In what ways is opera is different from other types of storytelling?

POST-ACTIVITY SUMMARY: What Makes Opera Special?

Ask students if the Opera was similar or different from what they had expected. How might the experience of the story have felt if it had been spoken instead of sung? How did the music and singing change the feeling of the story? How does it feel if they are trying to tell someone something important and they are continually interrupted? What other familiar stories might they imagine being turned into an opera?

CURRICULUM LINKS: English Language Arts, Foreign Languages, Music, Theater

PRE-ACTIVITY: *Telling a Story*

LEARNING GOAL:

To encourage students to recognize the similarities and differences between various forms of story-telling that are most familiar to them.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION:

None Required

TIME:

15 – 20 minutes

STEP 1:

Ask students to name the various forms of story telling that they are familiar with and list them horizontally on the board. This might include books, movies, television shows, plays, musicals, dances, video games, songs etc. Ask students for examples of each type, and list the examples under each genre on the board.

STEP 2:

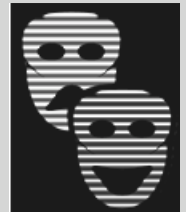
Ask students to identify as many characteristics as they can for each genre. Which story telling forms include words and which do not? Are the words spoken or sung? Which forms with spoken words use music to help tell the story? Are there many characters or just a few? Do many things happen, or just a few? Do we need to imagine a lot or a little to experience the story? How does each form let the audience in on what the characters are thinking and feeling?

STEP 3:

What do they think opera is? What reason or reasons might there be for the words to be sung in an opera? Why do the singers sing so loudly in an opera?

EXTENSIONS:

- 1) Choose a familiar song, and speak the words. Then have the class sing the song. Which version did they prefer, and why?
- 2) Choose a familiar poem and recite it. If the poem were set to music, what mood should the music have? Are there any instruments that would sound best?



POST-ACTIVITY: *What Makes Opera Special?*

LEARNING GOAL:

To appreciate how a story set to music enhances the impact of the story.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION:

None required

TIME:

15 – 20 minutes

STEP 1:

What did students think of the opera, “The Telephone”? Was it different or similar to what they expected?

STEP 2:

Ask students to explain in a few sentences, what actually took place in the story. Ask them to imagine the opera being spoken instead of sung. Would it have been as engaging?

STEP 3:

What were the different emotions that Ben and Lucy each felt during the course of the performance? How could they tell what the characters were feeling?

STEP 4:

Imagine other stories with music, such as films or musicals. How does having the music change how we experience the story? What would Star Wars for example, be like without the music? Which of their favorite TV shows, movies or books could they best imagine being sung and why?

EXTENSIONS:

- 1) List a number of familiar melodies such as folk or pop tunes. Suggest a variety of emotions, tempos, time periods, and instruments
- 2) Choose a story familiar to the students and ask them to identify 4 main characters.
- 3) Choose which melodies might be used to by each character to tell their part of the story.
- 4) Ask students to explain what determined their choices.



VOCABULARY:

Opera - A story set entirely to music. The actors and actresses sing throughout the performance.

Soprano - The highest singing voice of a woman or young boy

Tenor - The highest adult male voice

Alto - A female singing in a low range sometimes called a contralto.

Bass - The lowest adult male voice

Baritone - A male singing voice whose range is higher than a bass and lower than a tenor

Aria - An elaborate song which expresses a character's innermost feeling. It is sung with an orchestral accompaniment.

Recitative - A passage in which the words are sung, but in a manner that is similar to speech. It is typically used for dialogue between characters and has very little accompaniment.

Libretto - The text or script of an opera.

Orchestra - A large group of musicians who play together on various instruments, usually including strings, woodwinds, brass instruments, and percussion instruments.

RESOURCES:

Children Tell Stories: A Teaching Guide by Martha Hamilton and Mitch Weiss, Beauty & the Beast Storytellers.

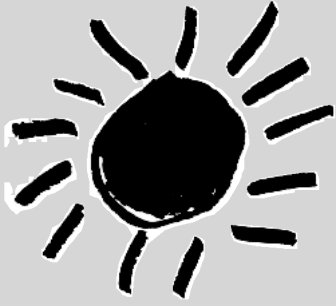
Bravo! Brava! A Night at the Opera: Behind the Scenes with Composers, Cast, and Crew by Anne Siberell

<http://www.operaitaliana.com/start.asp>

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS: Opera Boston is a unique opera company producing staged opera and special events at the Cutler Majestic Theatre in Boston and elsewhere in the city. The company presents new productions of innovative repertoire and rarely-heard works, along with groundbreaking opera education and outreach programs. Opera Boston productions have earned "Best of Boston" honors from the Boston Globe every year for the last eight years.

ABOUT YOUNG AUDIENCES:

Young Audiences of Massachusetts (YA) is the oldest, largest and most utilized arts-in-education organization in the state and one of the largest in a national network of 33 chapters. For 35 years, YA has distinguished itself as the vital link between Massachusetts schoolchildren (K-12) and nearly 120 of the region's most accomplished actors, dancers, singers, instrumentalists, and storytellers. Its 32 ensembles offer over 60 interactive arts programs that represent a range of cultures, historical periods and artistic disciplines. YA is unique in its flexibility to offer interactive performances, tailor-made residencies, workshops, teacher-training, curriculum planning and multi-year projects. All programs come with educational materials and satisfy local, state and/or federal arts education standards.



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MASSACHUSETTS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS CONNECTIONS

Foreign Languages 4 Students will demonstrate an understanding of the traditions, perspectives, practices, and products of the culture studied, including human commonalities as reflected in history, literature, and the visual and performing arts.

Foreign Languages 7 Connections...use target language to reinforce and expand their knowledge of other disciplines.

Language Arts 2 ...pose questions, listen to the ideas of others, and contribute their own information or ideas in group discussions.

Language Arts 9 ...identify the basic facts and essential ideas in what they have read, heard, or viewed.

Arts-Music 1 Singing...sing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.

Arts-Music 5 Critical Response...describe and analyze their own music and the music of others using appropriate music vocabulary.

Arts-Music 6 Purpose and Meaning in the Arts...describe the purpose for which works of dance, music, theatre, visual arts, and architecture were and are created.

Arts-Music 8 Concepts of Style, Stylistic Influence, and Stylistic Change...demonstrate understanding of styles, influence, change.

Arts-Music 10 Interdisciplinary Connections...apply knowledge of the arts to the study of English language arts, foreign languages, health, history, and social science, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering. music.