



# Young Audiences of Massachusetts

## *Educational Materials*

Please forward to teachers

### **ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE:**

**Opera Boston's: Opera Shop**

**Grades: 3 – 8**

Opera's unique joining of words and music creates a powerful form of storytelling that has been popular for over 400 years. In this program, students participate in both scripted and improvisatory activities that explore various elements of opera. The session culminates with rehearsing, performing and critiquing a short skit or scene adapted from an opera or musical.

### **LEARNING GOALS:**

1. To introduce children to opera in a way that is meaningful to them, i.e., as an accessible, powerful form of storytelling
2. To provide children with some exposure and insight into the production process of performing a staged work.
3. To help children discover their own musical and artistic talents through improvisation and performance working with professional artists.

### **PRE-ACTIVITY SUMMARY: Telling a Story**

Ask students for examples of different forms of storytelling. How are these different forms similar and different from each other? How do they think opera is different from other types of storytelling?

### **POST-ACTIVITY SUMMARY: Opera's Power and the Next Step**

Ask students if Opera is similar or different to what they had expected. How did singing change the feeling of the words and the story? How did the piano music change the feelings of the words and the story? What would they need to do to make their skit "performance ready"? Continue to practice the skit and invite another class in to view it.

**CURRICULUM LINKS:** English Language Arts, Foreign Languages, Social Studies, 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: *Opera's Power and the Next Step*

## LEARNING GOAL:

- To appreciate the different ways that music heightens the meaning of a story and feelings of its characters
- To provide children with some exposure and insight into the production process of performing a staged work
- To help children discover their own musical and artistic talents through participating in a musical skit

## MATERIALS/PREPARATION:

None Required

## TIME:

15 minutes – 20 minutes  
Extensions – 1 - 2 hours  
over the course of a few days

## STEP 1:

Ask students if Opera is similar or different to what they had expected. How did singing change the feeling of the words and the story? How did the piano music change the feelings of the words and the story?

## STEP 2:

Was learning the skit harder or easier than they expected? What was the most challenging part of the process? What was the easiest part? What would they need to do to make their skit "performance ready"?

## EXTENSIONS:

1) Continue to practice the skit and invite another class in to view it. Devise simple props and costumes, such as hats or scarves, to differentiate characters.



Young Audiences of Massachusetts  
255 Elm Street, Suite 302, Somerville, MA 02144  
(617) 629-YAMA (9262)  
<http://www.yamass.org>



**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.

**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.