



San Francisco Opera's Mozart's *DON GIOVANNI*

Curriculum Connections California Content Standards Kindergarten through Grade 12

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

MUSIC

STORYTELLING & MUSIC: WHAT IS AN OPERA?

Character and plot development through musical themes. What is the difference between major and minor keys and how do changes between keys help tell the story?

How does orchestral music enhance what characters are singing? How does it act as another character?

How does music associated with a particular character enhance their class status?

How does Mozart use ensembles to tell the story?

Did Mozart add coded messages to the opera through the music?

How do instruments represent characters? Identify repetition and variation of themes.

Key plot points: The composer and librettist determine the placement of arias within the libretto to heighten emotion in the story.

Source material for Opera: Novels (Puccini's *La Bohème*, Tan & Wallace's *The Bonesetter's Daughter*); Films (*The Fly*), Real-life events (Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*, Adams' *Nixon in China*); Related genres – Musical Theater (*Sweeney Todd*, *Rent*), Rock Opera (*Tommy*), popular song versions of opera.

VOCABULARY

Musical Structure: Solos, duets, trios, choral numbers.

Composition: Arias, recitative, overture, incidental music. Identify characters who have arias in the opera.

Musical Instructions: Tempo, legato; pianissimo; crescendo, etc.

Voice ranges: Soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, baritone, bass-baritone, countertenor, bass.

Research traditional instruments like a harpsichord that would have been used in Mozart's time.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

History of San Francisco Opera, the Adler Fellows program. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Biography, timeline of works, signature sound within genres: sonatas, symphonies, masses and requiem, operas.

Research other musicians working before or at the same time as Mozart; how was he different from everyone else? What kinds of composers came after Mozart?

What were common topics of operas during Mozart's time?

What was the popular music vs. the music of the aristocracy during Mozart's time?

Mozart called *Don Giovanni* an *opera buffa*. What are other examples of *opera buffa*? Do you think this is a true *opera buffa*?

ACTIVITIES

Listen to multiple recordings of *Don Giovanni* and study different interpretations.

Learn and memorize songs from *Don Giovanni*.

Create and perform songs for the characters/events of *Don Giovanni* using instruments and voices.

Compare music of *Don Giovanni* to music from other Mozart operas. How are characters from different operas characterized in similar ways by the orchestra?

Compare different productions of *Don Giovanni*; how do different singers, orchestras and/or conductors make you see the story in a different way?

Listen to "death music" from various operas; how do composers dramatize those moments?

Play the introductory passages for each character for students before they know the story of the opera; have them respond to each piece of music, then see how it matches up to the story.

Graph out characters in the opera; while watching a clip of the opera, fill out chart describing look, movement, voice of each character. How does the director tell the story through these details?

Research other works of music influenced by *Don Giovanni*.

Research cartoon music, particularly that of Looney Tune composer/arranger Carl Stalling (1891-1972). Many cartoons tell similar stories to the Commedia dell'arte themes used in *Don Giovanni*. (see Long-Haired Hair featuring opera singer Giovanni Jones)

Create your own music inspired by *Don Giovanni*.

VISUAL ARTS

How are line, color, shape, and texture used in costumes and sets of *Don Giovanni*?

LINE

Use of line qualities: soft or hard, wavy or angular, silly spirals.

COLOR

Symbolism of color; color associated with particular characters.

The emotion of color. Ex. red=passionate, blue=calm, yellow=cheerful.

Personal associations with color.

Revealing character traits through the use of color—how do the characters' costumes, including fabrics and colors, reflect their status?

Symmetry/contrast in character pairings: Don Giovanni/Donna Elvira, Musetto/Donna Anna.

SHAPE

The use of shape in character design.

Positive & Negative Space—the stage is a frame.

TEXTURE

Texture: Material use in sets and costumes.

Visual Texture: Pattern and repetition in sets and costumes. How is texture used to convey status?

SPACE

Set design: From 2D plans to 3D construction.

LIGHT

The use of lighting to establish mood and setting.

Examine contrast of light and dark; use of lighting.

The use of lighting to establish mood and setting.

How does time of day affect the lighting and the mood on the stage?

How are shadows and shading used in the opera to convey meaning?

PRODUCTION DESIGN

Listen to the music and read the libretto prior to viewing the opera. Choose design elements based on the music and text.

Design paper dolls of characters. Dress them for different eras.

Design a production: dioramas, scale models, backdrops, props, costumes.

Design character make-up, costume, sets and props for classroom operas.

Study use of lighting in production design.

Study clothing of the time and setting for *Don Giovanni*. What materials would have been used?

ACTIVITIES

Free-association drawing to music. Ex. Maurice Sendak's *Fantasy Sketches*. Research Maurice Sendak's work inspired by Mozart.

Puppetry: Create your own version of *Don Giovanni* using puppets (paper bags, stick puppets, shadow puppets, marionettes, and bunraku).

Masks: Create masks of *Don Giovanni* characters. Learn about masks and the purposes they serve in modern societies. How are masks used as metaphors? Create your own mask that reflects a part of your identity.

Design your own wax seal for sealing letters. What is the equivalent of a seal today?

Draw silhouettes of characters; draw characters in other styles, like anime.

Research how men and women are portrayed in visual art. What are the differences? Compare Thomas Gainsborough's *The Blue Boy* (1770) and Thomas Lawrence's *Pinkie* (1794).

Research landscape design during time of opera. Design a garden as it would have looked during Mozart's time.

Look at designs for the sets of *Don Giovanni*; would you design the sets in the same ways? Why does this production of *Don Giovanni* use mirrors? Design a mirror to reflect a character from *Don Giovanni*.

Design sets and costumes for a production of *Don Giovanni* set in a different time and place of your choosing. Make sure the costumes reflect the characters.

Research clothing at the time of Mozart. How did costume indicate status?

Create illustrations and storyboards outlining the plot of *Don Giovanni*.

Compare two different filmed versions of *Don Giovanni*; which visualization is more effective and why?

Explore the history of typefaces; design the title in an appropriate typeface.

Create posters and advertisements for the opera, or for a particular character in of *Don Giovanni*.

RELATED WORKS OF ART

Illustrated children's books of *Don Giovanni* and other operas.

Study the work of visual artists who have designed performing arts productions: Gerald Scarfe, David Hockney, Julie Taymor, Marc Chagall, Maurice Sendak, Oskar Kokoschka, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, William Kentridge, Gianni Versace, Bill Viola.

THEATRE

STAGING

Stage vocabulary: Upstage, downstage, levels, blocking.

Theater Exercises: Tableaux, pantomime, improvisation, vocal projection.

Examine storyline, character development through theater games (similar to writing exercises in ELA connections).

Practice walking like Don Giovanni or Leporello. How are their walks different?

Practice walking like a member of the opposite sex. How do you carry yourself differently?

How do performers move onstage differently than offstage? How do they have to move so that the audience can translate their movements?

Practice movement required for a party scene or other crowd scenes. How do individuals act like individuals in a crowd scene?

Practice staying still as a statue; who can stay still the longest?

Play “status” games. How do people act differently toward you based on your class or job status? How do the performers act when they’re singing their thoughts vs. singing to each other?

Stage a crowd scene.

Create entrances and exits for different characters in opera; what would their music be?

Stage etiquette & audience behavior.

Opera Production Team: Director, stage manager, choreographer, designer, diction coach, choreographer, lighting, supernumeraries, etc.

In-House Personnel: Marketing, accounting, ticket takers, ushers etc.

ACTIVITIES

Research Commedia dell’Arte characters. Explore the ties to Commedia dell’Arte in Don Giovanni: stock characters such as the servant character, the older woman, etc.

Research physical comedy routines, often called “shtick,” a Yiddish term, or “lazzi” in Commedia dell’Arte. What are some of the slapstick routines used in *Don Giovanni*?

Explore the concept of suspension of disbelief, especially in relation to the statue coming alive at the end of the opera.

Explore other works of theater in which a spirit comes alive.

Act out scenes about the themes from the opera: revenge, jealousy, friendship and loyalty, etc.

Create movement and gestures to react to particular lines of the libretto and to particular musical moments.

Practice moving as a large ensemble.

RELATED WORKS OF ART

Research additional theatrical works based on the Don Juan story, such as Moliere’s *Don Juan* or George Bernard Shaw’s *Don Juan in Hell*.

DANCE

Dance and Creative Movement in Stage-Blocking. Ex: wedding scene.

Research dances of Mozart's time: minuets, contradances, wedding dances, promenades.

How is dance incorporated into the opera, into the music of the opera?

Study the dance forms listed by Don Giovanni in Act II, as he dines and tells the orchestra to play a "litiganti."

How is age and gender communicated through the way performers move in a dance?

How have modern choreographers used Mozart's music?

What are the roles of choreographers, dance captains and dancers?

ACTIVITIES

Character Dances: Mirror dancing—partners and symmetry.

Match movement with vocabulary. Ex. glide, slither, leap, tremble.

Interpret emotions through dance. Ex. Joy, fear.

Interpreting the instruments through dance—improv to music.

Create a dance for Mozart's music in a different genre. Watch Mark Morris Dance Group's *Mozart Dances* to see how choreographers have used Mozart's music for dance.

Choose a dance style that best represents each character. Ex. Don Giovanni and Leporello. Choreograph movement in which the characters relate to each other.

Show how characters' movements change when they're in different situations.

Learn how to bow, as in a courtly situation.

MEDIA ARTS

Watch DVD of *Don Giovanni* and other operas. Watch different productions and compare. Ex.: Peter Sellar's version is set on a Harlem street corner.

Research clips of *Don Juan* found on the Internet, including animated versions such as Mr. Peabody's version of *Don Juan* from *Rocky and Bullwinkle*.

Watch selections from the movie *Amadeus*.

Watch films version of the Don Juan story: *Don Juan* (1926), *The Adventures of Don Juan* (1949), *Don Juan Demarco* (1995)

Research how innovations in technology have influenced the development of Opera: Acoustics and Lighting, Audio Recording, Film and Video, the development of Supertitles, Internet.

Learn about technology currently used by SF Opera: technology used in staging, SFO's Media Suite, podcasts, cinemacasts, simulcasts, opera vision, etc.

Learn about experiments in future technology use involving opera, such as the development of Personal Opera @ MIT Media Lab, *Death and the Powers*.

Use television, films, web content to teach media literacy.

How is opera advertised? Research San Francisco Opera's advertising and media efforts.

Opera & Popular Culture: Cartoons (Bugs Bunny in *What's Opera, Doc?*, *The Rabbit of Seville*); Television (*Sesame Street*); Movies (*Pretty Woman*); Commercials (Nike's 1993 ad *Charles Barkley of Seville*); Event themes (*Nessun Dorma - 1994 World Cup*).

Opera Imaginaire, a collection of animated interpretations of twelve of opera's most popular arias, features Mozart's "Voi Che Sapete" from *The Marriage of Figaro*, as animated by artist Susanne Danco.

RELATED WORKS OF ART

Films & DVD of *Don Giovanni* and other Mozart operas, related films

Frank Sinatra sings *La ci darem la mano* in *It Happened in Brooklyn* (1947). *Il mio Tesoro* is the main theme used in *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (1950). *Babette's Feast* features the aria *Là ci darem la mano* (1994)

ACTIVITIES

Film and Animation: Explore photographic stop motion techniques. Ex. Use digital media to create 1-minute scenes from *Don Giovanni*.

Research films with seduction scenes; compare to seduction scenes in *Don Giovanni*.

Create a poster to advertise a performance of *Don Giovanni*. What information needs to be included? Create a graphic treatment for the opera's title. What typeface would be appropriate?

Use digital audio to record student readings, musical performances.

Create a 30-second audio spot, a one-minute podcast, and/or a *Don Giovanni* activities website.

Create a fake blog or Facebook page for one of the characters. What would Don Giovanni's username be?

Create YouTube video testimonials for characters in the opera.