



San Francisco Opera's Verdi's *DON CARLO*

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?

What kinds of ensembles are possible with this story and these characters?

Which voice types usually portray which types of characters and why?

How is musical pacing different between dramas and comedies?

Pick out moments when Verdi's orchestration indicates certain staging ideas or action.

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

How does orchestral music communicate a character's state of mind? Set a mood?

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

What is "Grand Opera"? How has opera changed over time?

How are operas similar to musicals? How are they different? Watch examples of both.

Compare the musical storytelling in Verdi's opera *Don Carlo* with Lin-Manuel Miranda's musical *Hamilton*.

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, cadenzas, etc.

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

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

History of San Francisco Opera, the Adler Fellows program.

Giuseppe Verdi: Biography, timeline of works, signature sound within genres: sonatas, symphonies, masses and requiem, operas.

Examine Verdi's career. What did *Don Carlo* represent for him?

Compare and contrast operas from Verdi's different periods - later years: longer, larger cast, greater spectacle

Look at Verdi's use of the voice (high baritone and dramatic mezzo development)

Compare *Don Carlo* with other operas that deal with religious wars of the periods, such as Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*, *Dialogues des Carmélites*.

Compare the women in *Don Carlo* with Donizetti queen sequence of operas: Anna Bolena, Maria Stuart, Roberto Devereux.

What were Verdi's personal motivations for writing *Don Carlos*?

How does the opera use engage the audience in the story of individuals within the big spectacle?

Who is Charles V? Character accuracies. Interesting story, political power, personal toll

Compare the characters in *Don Carlo*. Is their complexity of character seen or not seen through their arias?

Role of veil song – foreshadowing technique, connections through entire opera

Friendship duet: what are friendship songs, where do you find them? What do they mean? Find other friendship duets in opera (ex.: *Così* trio “Soave il vento”, The Pearl Fishers); musical expressions of friendship (“Drink with Me” from *Les Misérables* or “The Story of Tonight” from *Hamilton*; What song would you choose to represent a moment when your friend “takes the bullet for you”?

ACTIVITIES

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

Learn and memorize songs from *Don Carlo*.

Pick modern songs that could tell the story of *Don Carlo* or describe the characters.

How does the music for different characters identify their social status?

Write themes, motifs for each character; start by writing themes for things in students' everyday lives.

Create mood music to go along with certain passages of the book.

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.

Create and perform songs for the characters from the opera. Choose design elements based on the music & text.

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

RELATED WORKS OF ART

How do portraits and details in costume indicate time periods. Look at the paintings of Goya, such as *An Inquisition Tribunal*, and other paintings that record historic times. <https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/asset-viewer/escena-de-inquisici%C3%B3n/QAHsJoGPh6kFeQ>

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, events of *Don Carlo* using instruments and voices.

How does the music announce an entrance of a character? What does their entrance music say about them?

After seeing the opera, write a critique of the music. Focus on how the music communicates the mood, the characters, etc.

Listen for the different instruments in the ten-piece orchestra. How big is an orchestra usually?

Listen for the different styles of music in the opera; do different characters sing in different styles?

How is consonance and dissonance used in the opera?

Listen to clips from the opera; what moods do they set?

What did you think about the finale of the opera? Does the music live up to the moment in the story?

Source play by Friedrich Schiller (who wrote many historical/political plays)

Libretto by Joseph Méry and Camille du Locle.

VISUAL ARTS

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

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?

The use of lighting to establish mood and setting.

What colors would you use for different moments in the opera?

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.

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 Carlo*. What materials would have been used?

ACTIVITIES

Free-association drawing to music. Ex. Maurice Sendak's *Fantasy Sketches*.

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

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

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

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

How would you draw Don Carlo in today's clothing?

What is role of disguise in opera? (Princess Eboli)? How are costumes and disguises used to reveal true behaviors/intentions?

Create caricatures of some of the characters in the opera.

In groups, create props for *Don Carlo*.

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

Look at the designs for the sets of *Don Carlo*; would you design the sets in the same way? What do you think their inspiration was?

Create posters and advertisements for the opera, or for a particular character in the opera.

Create dioramas of the story of *Don Carlo*.

Create costumes for the characters true to the time period; clothes that are suitable for different tasks.

Create paper dolls of the characters, with outfits for different scenes.

Design sets and costumes for a production of *Don Carlo* set in a different time and place of your choosing. Or pick a setting out of a hat. Make sure the costumes reflect the characters.

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

Did the visuals match the music of the opera?

How are the projections synchronized with the music?

Listen to audio-only examples prior to viewin improvisation, vocal projection.

Stage etiquette & audience behavior.

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

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

Explore different tones/feelings in monologues vs. dialogues vs. crowd scenes.

Explore soliloquies in theater, movies, etc.

List different emotions that the characters display in the operas; how would you act out the emotions without using words?

How does the opera mark the passage of time? How does the audience know time has passed between acts?

How would you use hair and make-up to age a performer to play the Grand Inquisitor?

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

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?

How would you stage *Don Carlo* in a different culture? Kabuki, etc.

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

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

ACTIVITIES

Act out scenes about the themes from the opera: love and marriage, jealousy and revenge, class and wealth, etc.

What do you think was done to the singer playing Don Carlo to make him look like the character? How could you do the same in your classroom?

Create props required by the opera.

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

Create movement to react to particular musical moments.

Examine different versions of the opera with different casts; how do the different performers make you see the story differently?

Cast the roles in the opera with your classmates. Who plays what role and why?

Cast the opera with current-day pop singers. What would play what roles?

Practice moving as a large ensemble.

DANCE

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

Research dances of the period. How do they relate to the dances of today?

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

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

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

Choreograph a movement sequence for the *Auto de fé*

Investigate stage movement during Verdi's time.

ACTIVITIES

Character Dances: Mirror dancing—partners and symmetry.

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

Interpret emotions through dance. Ex. Joy, fear.

Create movements for characters' emotions.

Interpreting the instruments through dance—improv to music.

Work with media arts students to create a ballet with projected backgrounds.

Create dances to your favorite parts of the opera.

Create a dance for Verdi's music in a different genre.

Choose a dance style that best represents each character. Choreograph movement in which the characters relate to each other.

Create pair dances for the different pairs in the opera.

What is a pas de deux? How could you create pas de deux for the pairs in this opera?

Create a dance that tells the story of the opera in abridged version.

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

Create movements for the themes in the overture.

MEDIA ARTS

Watch DVD of *Don Carlo* and other operas. Watch different productions and compare.

Research clips of *Don Carlo* found on the Internet, including animated versions.

Do the sets in this production of *Don Carlo* remind you of movies? What and why?

Learn about projectors and projections, various ways to project light. Create media that can be projected. Explore how images can influence mood.

Explore ways to explore negative space through media. Create media pieces inspired by *Don Carlo*.

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*).

RELATED WORKS OF ART

Films & DVD of *Don Carlo* and other Verdi operas, related films

ACTIVITIES

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

Create a poster to advertise a performance of *Don Carlo*. What information needs to be included? 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 Carlo* activities website.

Create a montage for *Don Carlo*.

Create podcasts from the points of view of various characters.

Create video interviews of various characters.

Create a fake blog or Facebook page for one of the characters.

Create Facebook status updates for characters in the opera.

Create a fake Twitter feed for one of the characters in the opera.

Create YouTube video testimonials for characters in the opera.

Create a new version of *Don Carlo* for reality TV (ex.: Jerry Springer as Philip, Judge Judy as Inquisitor)

Media Literacy - Learn about online misrepresentation; creating new persona, online masking, online bullying