



## San Francisco Opera's Wagner's *DIE MEISTERSINGER VON NÜRNBERG* Curriculum Connections

California Content Standards  
Kindergarten through Grade 12

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### 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?

Music as another character in the opera. Compare to film scores that foreshadow or illustrate the action. John Williams, composer of well-known film themes such as *Star Wars*, was influenced by Wagner.

Examine the prelude; how does it foreshadow the story that we will soon see?

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

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

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 Wagner's time.

What is a prelude?

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

History of San Francisco Opera, the Adler Fellows program.

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

Research other musicians working earlier or at the same time as Wagner; how is he different from everyone else? How does his music fit into the history of music?

How are Wagner's operas similar and different from operas written in earlier times?

Explore music notation and how it's created – rhythm, melodies, 'tick marks', etc.

Research the works of Hans Sachs and the mastersingers of Nuremberg.

Research the works of German lyric poet Walther von der Vogelweide, named by Walter von Stolzing as his teacher in poetry.

## ACTIVITIES

Listen to multiple recordings of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and study different interpretations.

Learn and memorize songs from *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

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

Choose a piece of music from the opera; write a story for that music. (Show a clip of Disney's *Fantasia* first.)

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

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/events of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* using instruments and voices.

Hold your own Meistersinger Competition. Determine the criteria for judging. Who will get to vote?

Compose your own "Prize Song."

Walther says that his teacher in music were the birds and nature itself. Write a song inspired by bird song.

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

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?

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\*Example: Applying the Visual & Performing Arts (VAPA)  
Music Content Standards to Wagner's *DIE MEISTERSINGER*

**GRADE 6**

**Music 4.0 Aesthetic Valuing**

*Analyze and Critically Assess*

4.1 Develop criteria for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of musical performances and compositions, including arrangements and improvisations, and apply the criteria in personal listening and performing.

*Derive Meaning*

4.2 Explain how various aesthetic qualities convey images, feeling, or emotion.

4.3 Identify aesthetic qualities in a specific musical work.

**Connections and Applications**

**5.0 CONNECTIONS, RELATIONSHIPS, APPLICATIONS**

*Connecting and Applying What Is Learned in Music to Learning in Other Art Forms and Subject Areas and to Careers*

*Students apply what they learn in music across subject areas. They develop competencies and creative skills in problem solving, communication, and management of time and resources that contribute to lifelong learning and career skills. They also learn about careers in and related to music.*

5.1 Describe how knowledge of music connects to learning in other subject areas.

Lesson: Watch parts of a DVD of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and pay close attention to the credits given for singers, conductor, orchestral musicians, designer, director, stage crew, etc. Discuss the many careers that are cross-overs between music and related fields.

**GRADE 7**

1.6 Describe larger musical forms (e.g. canon, fugue, suite, ballet, opera, oratorio).

**4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING**

*Responding to, Analyzing, and Making Judgments About Works of Music*

*Students critically assess and derive meaning from works of music and the performance of musicians according to the elements of music, aesthetic qualities, and human responses.*

*Analyze and Critically Assess*

4.1 Use criteria to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of musical performances and compositions.

4.2 Apply criteria appropriate for the style or genre of music to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of performances, compositions, arrangements, and improvisations by oneself and others.

*Derive Meaning*

4.3 Compare and contrast the differences between one performance of a specific musical work and another performance of the same work.

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## **VISUAL ARTS**

How are line, color, shape, and texture used in costumes and sets of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*?

### **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.

Symmetry/contrast in character pairings: Walther/Eva, David/Magdalena.

### **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 *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. What materials would have been used?

## ACTIVITIES

Look at the designs for the sets of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*; would you design the sets in the same ways?

Design sets and costumes for a production of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* set in a different time and place of your choosing. Make sure the costumes reflect the characters.

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

Create dioramas of the story of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

Create portraits of the characters based on portraiture of the period. Research portraiture of the period.

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

Create illustrations and storyboards outlining the plot of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

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

After seeing the opera, come up with your design for a production of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. Pitch it to the class; class votes on whether to give you the money for the production. Budget. Based on social studies lessons for the year (i.e. groups could set opera in different time periods/location).

Costume design:

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

Puppetry: Create your own version of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* using puppets (paper bags, stick puppets, shadow puppets, marionettes, and bunraku).

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

Listen to audio-only examples prior to viewing the opera. Choose design elements based on the music and text.

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

Compare two different filmed versions of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*; which visualization is more effective and why?

## RELATED WORKS OF ART

Seeing Titian's 'Assumption of the Virgin' (1516-1518) Wagner was inspired... "*the extraordinary loftiness gave me an aesthetic thrill ... so I decided to compose Meistersinger ... in music there is nothing so accomplished.*"

Illustrated children's books of Wagner's operas 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.

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## 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).

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

Explore soliloquies in theater, movies, etc.

Explore mad scenes in theater, movies, etc.

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

How has *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* been portrayed in other theatrical works?

How would you tell the story of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* in a different theatrical style, like slapstick?

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 crowd scenes. How do individuals act like individuals in a crowd scene?

How do the performers act when they're singing their thoughts vs. singing to each other?

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

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

Create props required by the opera.

Write a soliloquy for Hans Sachs.

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

Create movement to react to particular musical moments.

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

Practice moving as a large ensemble.

Practice acting a convincing death scene.

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## **DANCE**

Dance and Creative Movement in Stage-Blocking. Ex: wedding 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 are dances used in operas?

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

How have modern choreographers used stories such as *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*?

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.

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

Create dances to your favorite parts of the opera.

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

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

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## MEDIA ARTS

Watch DVD of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and other operas. Watch different productions and compare.

Watch television programs (*American Idol*, *The Voice*) documentaries (Singing the Story: The Lotte Lenya Competition) and movies about singing competitions. (*Pitch Perfect*) What is the appeal of singing competitions?

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 *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

Research clips of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* found on the Internet.

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*).

## ACTIVITIES

Film and Animation: Explore photographic stopmotion techniques. Ex. Use digital media to create 1-minute scenes from *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

Create video interviews of various characters.

Create podcasts from the points of view of various characters.

Create a poster to advertise a performance of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. What information needs to be included? What typeface would be appropriate?

Create a montage for *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

Use digital audio to record student readings, musical performances.

Create a 30-second audio spot, a one-minute podcast, and/or a *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* activities website.

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

Create YouTube video testimonials for characters in the opera.