



## San Francisco Opera's Rossini's *THE BARBER OF SEVILLE*

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

What is a prologue? What is an epilogue? How are they used in Barber of Seville?

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

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

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

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

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

What is bel canto opera? What is its structure? How did opera change after the bel canto period?

Identify different types of bel canto arias.

Define sul ponticello. Find an example of it in the opera.

Define a buffo bass. Who is a buffo bass in *Barber of Seville*?

Define a contralto.

Define a patter aria.

Was the piano developed at the time of the opera, or was the harpsichord still being used?

What is the instrumentation of the onstage serenade band?

The onstage serenade band pretends to play their instruments; how would you do that?

Identify the different vocal styles in *Barber of Seville*. How do they express different emotions?

What is choral singing? What is its purpose in this opera?

How does the music describe different plot points, like the thunderstorm?

What is secco recitative?

What is a round? Can you find one in *Barber of Seville*?

Pick out words that are emphasized by the music.

How does Rossini use ensembles to tell the story?

Did Rossini 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, contralto, tenor, baritone, bass-baritone, countertenor, bass.

Create videos that explain different music vocabulary.

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

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

History of San Francisco Opera, the Adler Fellows program.

Gioachino Rossini: Biography, timeline of works, signature sound within genres Listen to some of his other works.

Examine Rossini's career. What did *Barber of Seville* represent for him?

Research the life and work of Carl Stalling. How is he related to *Barber of Seville*?

### ACTIVITIES

Listen to multiple recordings of *The Barber of Seville* and study different interpretations.

Learn and memorize songs from *The Barber of Seville*.

Create and perform songs for the characters/events of *The Barber of Seville* using instruments and voices.

Pick modern songs that could tell the story of Barber of Seville or describe the characters.

Listen to Barber overture; draw a picture of what you feel while listening to it.

Is there a difference between comedic music and dramatic music? Explain.

Practice "singing-speaking" like there is in the opera.

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 story.

Compare the instrumental music of Barber of Seville to movie music. Who are some well-known movie soundtrack composers?

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 Barber of Seville 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 styles of music in the opera; do different characters sing in different styles?

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?

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## **VISUAL ARTS**

How are line, color, shape, and texture used in costumes and sets of *The Barber of Seville*?

### **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?

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

How is color used in this opera? For which effects?

How are contrasting colors used 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.

How do you create the illusion of perspective onstage vs. on a piece of paper?

## 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 lighting, 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 *The Barber of Seville*. What materials would have been used?

## ACTIVITIES

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

How is this production different from what you expected? Or from other operas you've seen?

Identify leitmotifs that accompany each character. Play the leitmotifs; draw what you think the characters look like based on the music.

In groups, create props for *Barber of Seville*: shaving equipment; harpsichord; seal; ID papers; guns; ladder.

Examine the sets for *Barber of Seville*. How does the design create a setting for comedy?

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

Design sets and costumes for a production of *Barber of Seville* 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.

Create illustrations and storyboards outlining the plot of *The Barber of Seville*.

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

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

Create dioramas of the story of *Barber of Seville*.

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.

Create drawings of the female characters in three parts, head, middle and feet, so their parts can be mixed and matched.

Did the visuals match the music of the opera?

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

Masks: Create commedia masks for *The Barber of Seville* characters.

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.

Create posters and advertisements for the opera, or for a particular character in *The Barber of Seville*.

Design a barber cart for Figaro with a sign.

Design a black and white pattern swatch. Transform it into color; how are the effects different?

Create a logo for Figaro's cart?

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

#### RELATED WORKS OF ART

Illustrated children's books of *The Barber of Seville* and other operas.

Examine the costume design of stock commedia del'arte characters.

Look at the costume designs of Cecil Beaton from *My Fair Lady*.

Explore the art of Louise Nevelson.

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).

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.

Practice slapstick moves from the opera, to the music. Practice doing them in different ways.

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

How would you stage the overture? Would you choose to have the characters onstage or not? Why?

Play theater games around the different power relationships in the opera.

Write stage directions for the scene when Figaro and Almaviva sneak into Rosina's room, or another scene of your choice.

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

Practice walking like the Count, Dr. Bartolo or Rosina or Berta. How are their walks different?

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

How do directors make someone stand out in a crowd scene?

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?

Act out some of the descriptive language in the opera.

Set up your character's personality through gesture before he/she starts singing.

Act out the different ages of the characters in the opera (or the different ages they pretend to be).

Act out the different ages of man along the continuum from baby to elderly person.

Almaviva uses a different voice when he's acting as the music teacher; why? What does that say about the character of the music teacher?

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.

Research physical comedy routines, often called "schtick," a Yiddish term, or "lazzi" in Commedia dell'Arte.

What are some of the slapstick routines used in *The Barber of Seville*?

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

Create props required by the opera.

Find some rhymes in the opera; how do they lend themselves to the comedy?

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

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?

Create movement to react to particular musical moments.

Practice moving as a large ensemble.

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## **DANCE**

Dance and Creative Movement in Stage-Blocking. Ex: tavern 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 Rossini's music? Ex.: NY City Ballet Rossini Quartets

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.

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.

Choose a dance style that best represents each character (or the characters they're pretending to be).  
Choreograph movement in which the characters relate to each other.

Practice slapstick moves to music from the opera.

Create movements that reflect the tempi and the rhythms in the opera.

Play a game in which you dance to the music from the opera, then have to freeze when the music stops.

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.

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## MEDIA ARTS

Watch DVD of *The Barber of Seville* and other operas. Watch different productions and compare.

Research clips of *The Barber of Seville* found on the Internet, including animated versions

Research William Kentridge's version of Rossini's *The Magic Flute*.

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

Watch silent movies; how do they make you pay more attention to the visuals? How do they affect your viewing of operas?

Do the sets in this production of *Barber of Seville* 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 *Barber of Seville*.

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 *The Barber of Seville* and other Rossini operas, related films

Figaro's aria, *Largo al Factotum*, has been featured in many animated cartoons, including those featuring well-known cartoon characters such as Woody Woodpecker, Tom & Jerry, and Bugs Bunny's *The Rabbit of Seville*.

*Mrs. Doubtfire* (1993) - A central scene in the film features the "*Largo al Factotum*"

Recording artist Mika's song "*Grace Kelly*" was inspired by the melody of "*Largo al Factotum*"

*Opera Vox* animated short of the overture from *The Barber of Seville*

*Opera Imaginaire*, a collection of animated interpretations of twelve of opera's most popular arias, features Rossini's "*La Cenerentola*."

## ACTIVITIES

Film and Animation: Explore photographic stop motion techniques. Ex. Use digital media to create 1-minute scenes from *The Barber of Seville*.

Create a poster to advertise a performance of *The Barber of Seville*. What information needs to be included? What typeface would be appropriate?

Use digital audio to record student readings, musical performances.

Create video interviews of various characters.

Create podcasts from the points of view of various characters.

Create a montage for *Barber of Seville*.

Create a 30-second audio spot, a one-minute podcast, and/or a *The Barber of Seville* activities website.

Create a graphic treatment for the opera's title.

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

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

Create Facebook status updates for characters in the opera.

Create YouTube video testimonials for characters in the opera.