



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

### Curriculum Connections

California Content Standards  
Kindergarten through Grade 12

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## LANGUAGE ARTS

### WORD ANALYSIS, FLUENCY, AND VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

#### Phonics and Phonemic Awareness:

Letter Recognition: Name the letters in a word. Ex. **Figaro = F-i-g-a-r-o.**

Letter/Sound Association: Name the letters and the beginning and ending sound in a word. **R**-osin-**a**

Match and list words with the same beginning or ending sounds. Ex. **Bartolo** and **Berta** have the same beginning letter "**b**" and sound **/b/**; but end with different letters and ending sounds. Additional examples: Figaro, Basilio, Fiorello; Rosina, Almaviva.

Syllables: Count the syllables in a word. Ex.: Fig-a-ro

Match and list words with the same number of syllables. Clap out syllables as beats. Ex.: 1 syllable 2 syllables 3 syllables **bass = bass tenor = ten-or soprano = so-pra-no**

Phoneme Substitution: Play with the beginning sounds to make silly words. What would a "boprano" sound like? (Also substitute middle and ending sounds.) Ex. **soprano, boprano, toprano, koprano.**

Phoneme Counting: How many sounds in a word? Ex. **sing = 4**

Phoneme Segmentation: Which sounds do you hear in a word? Ex. **sing = s/i/n/g.**

Reading Skills: Build skills using the subtitles on the video and related educator documents.

Concepts of Print: Sentence structure, punctuation, directionality.

Parts of speech: Noun, verb, adjective, adverb, prepositions.

Vocabulary Lists: Ex. *The Barber of Seville*, Opera glossary, Music and Composition terms

Examine contrasting vocabulary.

Find words in *Barber of Seville* that are unfamiliar and find definitions and roots.

Find analogies in *Barber of Seville*.

Examine vocabulary in source material texts: *Barber of Seville* libretto.

Define words in the story that are unfamiliar: notary, barber, factotum.

Opera vocabulary: soprano, mezzo-soprano, bass, contralto.

Visit the website [flocabulary.com](http://flocabulary.com); create a similar rap for opera vocabulary.

Metaphors: Count Almaviva's reputation is described as a natural disaster in the opera. How do metaphors work? What are some other metaphors in the opera? Can you think of any that apply, even though they're not in the opera?

## **Reading Comprehension:**

Story Development (What's the beginning, middle and end?): Character desires and motivation; Cause and effect: What made this happen?

The sequencing of events, climax, and resolution.

Watch different versions of the opera on DVD; how do they differ and why?

Reflect on your viewing of the opera by sharing your questions about it with the other students.

Read:

Opera source material: Source material for *The Barber of Seville*, *The Barber of Seville* libretto, letter from Rossini, biographies, etc.

Types of text: Poetry, fairy tale, song text, libretto, script for media arts, biography, etc.

Creative writing:

Interpret the story and create a new version. Create your own characters or change the opera's time period and setting. Ex. Count = movie star. Create your own characters that are missing from the opera.

Explore different genres of writing: poetry, song text, libretto, script for media arts, biography, autobiography, short story, historical novel, etc.

Explore literary devices such as the use of point of view, internal/external conflict, repetition of phrases and foreshadowing.

## **CREATIVE WRITING**

Reinterpret the story by creating a new version using your own characters, time period and setting.

Explore different genres of writing: poetry, song text, libretto, script for media arts, biography, autobiography, short story, historical novel, etc.

Explore literary devices such as the use of point of view, internal/external conflict, repetition of phrases and foreshadowing.

Analysis and Interpretation: Expository writing, critiques/reviews.

Persuasive Writing: Letter writing, copywriting: advertising, fundraising, press release.

Persuasive writing: create posters, advertisements for one of the characters.

Write about what you would do in Almaviva's place, or in Rosina's place.

Write about what would happen to the characters if the story continued.

Set the story in a different time and place. Update the dialogue.

## **LITERARY RESPONSE AND ANALYSIS**

### **Elements of a Story:**

Character, plot, setting, conflict.

### **Vocabulary:**

Reading for understanding using the subtitles on videos and related educator documents.

### **Genres:**

Comedy: Farce, slapstick. Trace history of Commedia characters to current day.

Social Drama examining class structures and the relationship between nobility and servants, as depicted in “Upstairs, Downstairs” or nanny movies.

Romantic comedy highlights the relations between men and women.

**Themes:**

Love and the complexity of the emotion: Happiness/Misery, Jealousy/Trust, Betrayal/Forgiveness

Power struggles and the games people play – gender, age, class

Examine the themes of the opera: the relationships between men and women, the use and abuse of power, jealousy, addiction; appetites; friendship and loyalty, destiny, fate.

**Character Actions and Motives:** How do characters’ actions move story along? What are characters’ real motives? Contrasts of character traits drive story forward. Contrast characters of the Rosina and Berta as different types of women.

**Symbolism/metaphors:**

**Archetypes:** Commedia dell’arte characters such as the trickster, villain, and the young lovers.

**Character Development:** Examine character development: do the characters grow beyond their expected roles? What is status of servants at the end of the opera? What is the status of the women vs. the men?

**Alliteration:** Recognize the similarities of sounds and rhythmic patterns in the libretto.

**Figurative Language: Simile, Metaphor, Hyperbole, Personification, Allegory:**

Language style and music reflects emotion of characters, and instrumental sounds or musical phrases can be used symbolize character.

Play segments of the opera; students journal after listening to the segments.

Compare the format of the libretto to the format of the original book.

Students respond to a letter from Rosina asking them for advice.

Chart out the elements of the plot.

Read a synopsis of Act I; how would you complete this story?

What kind of genre does this story fit into?

Examine the relationships in the opera, i.e. between Almaviva and Rosina, between Figaro and Almaviva. How do they interact? How do they feel about each other?

Watch a scene from the opera and list verbs that describe the action that’s happening.

Examine how conflicts escalate in the opera.

What are some emotions or feelings the characters exhibit in the story? How do you feel about how they act upon or express their emotions?

List some transformations or changes that the characters experience in the story. How do they respond to the changes? How do their characters change?

Analyze the characters in the opera. What motivates their actions? What are their main traits? Do they change over the course of the opera?

Examine the use of farce in the opera.

Who are the characters that drive the action in this opera?

Pick your favorite character in the opera and describe him/her. Write a letter from his/her point of view to another character.

Play a particular passage from the opera; list adjectives that the music makes you think of, instrumental and vocal.

Examine character development: do the characters grow beyond their expected roles?

Compare and contrast the behavior of the different characters in the opera.

How do the different characters speak? What does that say about their social status?

Explore the nuances of the characters in the opera.

How do the characters go about getting what they want in the opera?

### WRITING STRATEGIES

Poetry, fairy tale, song text, libretto, script for media arts, biography, program, program article, synopsis, etc.

Letter writing, copywriting: advertising, fundraising, press release.

#### **Analysis and Interpretation:**

*The Barber of Seville* production materials: artist biographies, program and program notes, synopsis, expository writing, critiques/reviews, etc.

#### **Persuasive Writing:**

Write a “me” poem for each of the characters: begin the poem with “I am” and list the characteristics of each person in separate phrases.

Write parrot poems from the point of view of the characters. Parrot poems are conversational poems in which partners write each line in turn.

Writing exercise in which feelings are expressed like those in *The Barber of Seville* arias.

Write a passage expressing several characters’ inner thoughts at the same time. Use stream of consciousness writing.

Write dialogue for two of the characters in the opera. Each character only says one line, but uses different inflections each time he/she says it.

Write a piece that brags about yourself (like “Largo al factotum”), or create a new one for Figaro.

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

Rewrite a scene from the opera, switching the genders of the characters. How does the scene change? Rewrite a scene, changing the ethnicities. How does it change?

Rewrite libretto using today as a setting. Use contemporary characters: Who would be Almaviva today? Rosina?

Divide into small groups. Each group writes the story from the point of view of a different character.

Imagine what’s in Rosina’s letter to Lindoro and write it.

There are many rhymes in Italian in the opera; write a rhyming couplet in another language.

Write passages describing how different characters in the opera move.

Write a “serenade by proxy” when one person pretends to be another.

Write a patter song, like “Largo al factotum,” for a different part of the opera.

Write a different ending for the opera.

Write or draw a deleted scene for the opera; a scene we hear about, but don't see.

Keep journals from the point of view of the characters during the events of the opera.

Write a letter from one character to another.

Create a storyboard of *The Barber of Seville* produced in the style of a sitcom episode (*Glee*) or comic soap opera.

Scenes, letters, diary or blog pages can be written from a particular character's point of view; make sure to take relationships between characters into account. Diary pages could focus on how characters convince themselves to do something — internal debate.

### WRITTEN AND ORAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

Debates between characters. Deliver persuasive speeches, identify tactics used.

Write a monologue with two scenes based on the alternate points of view held by a single character.

Spelling: Spell the names of the characters in *The Barber of Seville*.

Facial cues, expressions, gestures can sometimes amplify message being delivered, or can sometimes run contrary to meaning of words (subtext).

Watch different versions of the opera on DVD and write reviews. Read example reviews first.

Examine the structure of *Barber of Seville*; can you relate it to other stories you've read or seen that have the same character(s) in different stories?

*The Barber of Seville* comes from a trilogy of plays; what are the other ones? Have any of those been made into operas?

Define climax. Define denouement. How are they used in *Barber of Seville*?

### LISTENING AND SPEAKING

**Oral Speaking:** Connection between the written words and oral interpretation (recitative and sung), the phrasing and musicality of speech.

**Reflection:** What did you see, think, hear and feel? Ex. Verbal & written responses to *The Barber of Seville*.

**Persuasive language:** How does Rosina distract Bartolo to protect Lindoro (Count Almaviva)?

Act out main events of the story, in tableaux or longer scenes. Improvise. Give small groups different scenes, and then act out in succession.

Write dialogue for two of the characters in the opera. Each character only says one line, but uses different inflections each time he/she says it.

Separate into small groups; each group researches and comes up with evidence for certain characters' motivations, then defends them in a classroom debate.

Tell the story of the *Barber of Seville* in your own words to other members of your class.

There is a lot of repetition in the *Barber of Seville*; act out a scene with repetitive scenes, in which each character adds a new word to the phrase.

Characters often make “asides” in the *Barber of Seville*. What are asides? Have one character say one phrase and have another respond with an aside.

The opera’s libretto is written with a great deal of rhythm and pattern; have one person start a story with a sentence that begins with “A”; have the next person continue the story with a sentence that begins with “B”, and so on.

Almaviva uses a different voice when he pretends to be a music teacher; how would you change your voice to disguise it?

With their voices, the singers express the characters’ emotions. How would you express love, happiness, exasperation with your speaking voice?

Try reading some lines of recitative; how does it sound without the music? How does the music change it?

Conduct a debate between two characters in the opera.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Gioachino Rossini (composer): biographies, timelines of work.

*The Barber of Seville* comes from a trilogy of plays; what are the other ones? Have any of those been made into operas?

What was the initial reception of the opera?

### ACTIVITIES

Create a character sketch.

Create Reader’s Theater of *Barber of Seville*.

Interview characters in *Barber of Seville*; write a news story based on the interviews.

Create a news report about *Barber of Seville* using HyperStudio.

Write a Dear Abby letter from one of the characters in the opera, and Abby’s response.

Write a letter from one character to another, choosing a moment in the story to write about. Use the “Friendly Letter” format.

Using a letter from one character to another in the opera; edit the letter down to a tweet or Facebook post.

Write a fake twitter feed for Almaviva or Rosina.

Write a scene of conflict between two people who start out as friends, then end up arguing. Compare it with a scene of conflict in the opera.

Play “Hot Seat”: one student acts as one of the characters from the story, and the other students ask him or her questions based on that character.

Write a prequel for the opera about one of the characters’ life.

Write a blog post from the point of view of one character.

Story writing: Adapt existing source material; create story/characters.

Libretto writing: Adapt *The Barber of Seville* (existing source material) or create a new story/characters.

Create written copy: program, poster design, advertising, biography, etc.

Read and report on feature articles from the opera program about *The Barber of Seville*.



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#### MATHEMATICS

##### ATTRIBUTES

*Comparisons in The Barber of Seville*

Sorting and Classifying: What belongs, what does not belong, and why?

##### MEASUREMENT

*Use of Standard Units of Measurement in Story & Set Design.*

2D & 3D Dimensions: Area, Perimeter, Volume, Scale, Proportion, Ratio.

- Create a set for *The Barber of Seville* to scale.

Weight: Physical, Metaphorical, Balance.

Time: Passage of time (real & theatrical time), times of day (morning, afternoon and night; yesterday, today, tomorrow; time of everyday events such as dinner & bed time), estimation, reading time, age of characters.

Estimate how many people are in large ensemble scenes.

Count the number of people who need to be paid when putting on an opera; use cast and company listings in the program to calculate.

Create a budget for a production of the opera. Students are responsible for accomplishing production and staying within budget.

Create timelines for Rossini's life, what's happening in other places at the same time.

##### GEOMETRY

*As found The Barber of Seville's character, costume & set design.*

Identification of Shapes, Repetition & Pattern, Rhythm & Symmetry.

Planes (Square, Rectangle, Triangle, Circle) & 3D (Cube, Pyramid, Sphere).

Positive & Negative Space, Interior & Exterior Space.

Calculate area of opera stages today vs. opera stages during Rossini's time.

Build a scale model of a set for *Barber of Seville*. What materials and what quantities of them would you need to build it?

Look at architecture in Seville; build your models to scale.

Create analogies between polygons and different ensembles in the opera (i.e. a trio is a triangle, a quintet is a pentagon).

Create triangles with different sets of characters in the opera.

## NUMBER SENSE

*Counting using the production elements and music of Barber of Seville.*

Formulas & calculations: Addition, subtraction, multiplication, division.

More, less, or same as.

Concept of zero (absences, disappearances. Ex. rests/silence in music.

Ordering & sequencing.

Recognizing and creating numerical patterns. Ex. beats, ABA pattern in music.

Survey taking: tallying and graphing.

Predictions.

How many people are in an opera chorus? How much space do you need for them onstage?

Add the number of band members onstage to the number of people in the orchestra; how many musicians are there total?

What are the names for the different ensembles? Quartet, quintet, etc.? Try them out in your classroom.

Try to count the 6/8 time in "Largo al factotum". Count the syllables and time the aria, then figure out how many syllables he says a second, on average.

*Barber of Seville* is being performed with double casts; how many performers do you need altogether for the two casts.

## ACTIVITIES

Design a deck of trading cards based on the characters of the *Barber of Seville*.

Research remonetizing formula; how do economists determine how much money was worth then vs. now?

Design ambigrams for the names in *Barber of Seville*.

Create costume patterns for *Barber of Seville*. Use yourself as a size model and design the patterns to fit you.

Build a scale model of a set for *Barber of Seville*. What, and what quantities of, materials would you need to build it? Think about much of the stage will be the courtyard and how much will be the house; how you will you divide the space? What are the percentages? What is usable stage vs. non-usable stage?



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#### SCIENCE

*The principals of science used in The Barber of Seville.*

##### THE FIVE SENSES:

Sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell.

What are senses involved in experiencing opera?

How do senses develop and decline as you get older?

The loss of what sense would most diminish experience of opera.

##### PARTS OF THE BODY:

Identification of body parts important to performing. Ex. Diaphragm, larynx, throat, mouth, etc.

Identification of body parts associated with hearing music, how ears work.

Identification of body parts associated with viewing opera, how eyes work.

Examine the science of men and women and psychological and physical differences.

Manuel García, the first person to sing Count Almaviva, also created the laryngeal mirror; what is a laryngeal mirror? What is it for? How does it work?

How do you care for your vocal cords?

##### LIFE SCIENCE

How does the body react in times of stress like those that occur in the opera?

List the ailments listed in the opera.

Tobacco, snuff and alcohol are all mentioned in the opera; how do they affect the human body?

What is mob mentality? How does it work in this opera?

Dr. Bartolo and Figaro are both doctors, of a kind; how has the practice of medicine changed since the opera was written?

## THE ELEMENTS

Fire, Water, Earth, Metal, Air, Wood.

Weather.

Sun, Moon, Stars.

There is a thunderstorm in the opera; why do thunderstorms happen? How does lightning work?

Is there a specific kind of thunderstorm that happens in Seville? What time of year do thunderstorms usually happen there?

How does the music express the thunderstorm? How would you portray a thunderstorm on stage?

## PHYSICS

Sound: Voice, Instruments, Acoustics, Amplification, Recording.

Concepts of Gravity, Time & Space.

Chaos theory: how to organize chaos? It can be done in science and in art. How does Rossini organize chaos?

What support needs to be in place for a stage to hold the amount of people in the opera's crowd scenes?

## ACTIVITIES

Research the sources of light during Rossini's time. How would a theater have been illuminated?

List references to nature in *The Barber of Seville*.

Explore the characters' psychological motivations.

Explore how spinning works. What is spinning used for? What has replaced spinning wheels today? What kind of fabrics can be made by spinning?

What kind of animals spin fibers?

Research the development of spinning technology and how weaving is related to the development of computers.



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#### **SOCIAL STUDIES**

##### PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

Self-Identity.

Family: Immediate & Extended. Caring brother and sister relationship.

Roles of family members in your life and the choices you make.

Time: Past, Present, Future.

Place: Neighborhood, City, State, Continent, World, Universe.

What are the men's relationships like in *Barber of Seville*? The women's? How are they different? What does that say about gender stereotypes then and now?

##### CIVICS

Social Hierarchy: Class, Status. Ex. royalty, servants. How is class indicated by the music, the costumes and other elements in *The Barber of Seville*?

What are the relationships between the servants and the nobility in this story? Is there such a class system now?

Examine the power relationships in the opera. What is the position or status of Count Almaviva? Trace how his status changes through the Beaumarchais trilogy? Why? What was happening in the world that was reflected by the plays?

Examine the position of the military at the time of the opera. How is Almaviva able to insist to be bivouacked in Bartolo's house? How has the position of the military changed today?

What is a notary? What would a lawyer's job have been at the time of the opera?

What is a ward? What is a guardian?

What are the different views of marriage in the opera?

##### GEOGRAPHY

The Opera's setting: Where is this place? What is this culture?

Map the settings of the opera.

Location of Rossini's birth. Where else did he live?

Based on the story, pick a new setting for the opera. How would the story change, if at all?

Review the cast list for this production of the opera; where do the singers come from?

## HISTORY

Research when Rossini was born and the time period when Rossini lived.

Research Beaumarchais; what other careers did he have beside playwright?

During what time period was *Barber of Seville* written? What was the government of Italy at the time?

What was happening in Italy when the opera was written? What were the social structures in Italy at the time?

Examine class system during Rossini's time.

Research the development of *The Barber of Seville*. Why would an artist be commissioned to write an opera?

How do new operas get made today?

Research reception of *Barber of Seville*, the play and the opera.

What would the audience during Rossini's time have known about these characters before seeing the opera?

What would they be expecting from characters like the Count and Figaro?

Dr. Bartolo and Figaro are both doctors, of a kind; how has the practice of medicine changed since the opera was written?

How has the status of women changed from when the opera was written?

Many of the characters and plot points in *Barber* come from Commedia dell'Arte. What is the history of Commedia? What is the history of comedy in theater?

Create a Venn diagram: what was true about the time of *Barber of Seville*, what is true about our time, and what overlaps?

How is historical information reflected in the viewpoints of the characters?

How does news travel in the opera? How is that different today? How does that change the pace of our life?

History of Opera: How Opera began, history of San Francisco Opera, history of the Adler Fellow Program.

## ACTIVITIES

Assign different topics from the time of the opera to small groups, and have them present to each other: money and trade, social structures, military, the arts, etc.

Research the stories of *Barber of Seville*; what were the stories based on?

Create a timeline of the story of *Barber of Seville*; include events that were happening elsewhere in the world at the same time.

Map settings in which play and opera take place.

Create a board game or card game that would have been typical of the era involving the characters from *The Barber of Seville*.

Pick another time period in which to set *The Barber of Seville*. Research and design costumes and sets to reflect trends, society at that time.

Write a letter from one character to another using the writing materials used at the time of *The Barber of Seville* (quill pens, wax seals, parchment).

Create timelines of events in opera; Rossini's operas.

Create an organizational chart of the character relationships in *The Barber of Seville*.

Researching the backstory or the story that comes after *The Barber of Seville*.



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#### PHYSICAL EDUCATION

##### MOVEMENT

Walking, dancing, jumping, balancing, leaping, lifting, etc. Ex. Move your body in different ways using the example of each character.

Choreograph dances for selected scenes in *The Barber of Seville*.

What would dances of the period have looked like?

Practice dancing to music from the opera. What music selections lend themselves to dancing?

What dances could you do to music from the different scenes?

What kinds of dances would you use to represent different characters?

How do you move differently when you're young and old?

##### PHYSICALITY OF PERFORMING

Endurance & strength, posture, breathing techniques.

Act out the physical gestures of certain characters of the opera; how are they different? How do their differences indicate their personality traits?

Practice some physical comedy moves from the opera; how does timing play an important role?

Practice your balance, which is very important for physical comedy.

Try doing different moves with different parts of your body to practice coordination.

Move at different speeds to different passages of music from the opera.

Create gestures that express opera vocabulary.

##### TEAM-BUILDING

Cooperative games encourage collaboration and build trust.

Play number games, where students have to gather in groups of two, three, and so on. The object is to get together as quickly as possible. They can also be instructed to create pictures with their bodies, or move in unison.

Construct relays around relationships between characters, particularly to passages from the overture.

Exercises to move together as a group. Building the ensemble.

Partner dancing, changing partners, partnering exercises, mirroring activities.

Practice the scene in which Almaviva is dressed by other characters.

Teamwork is very important for physical comedy; practice slapstick in pairs.

Pretend you're shaving someone to Figaro's aria; how fast can you do it?



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### HEALTH EDUCATION

The unifying ideas of health literacy are as follows:

- Acceptance of personal responsibility for lifelong health
- Respect for and promotion of the health of others
- An understanding of the process of growth and development
- Informed use of health-related information, products, and services

### MENTAL & PHYSICAL HEALTH

Taking care of your body. Ex. What do performers have to do to prepare their body for performing?

Conflict resolution. Ex. How do the characters resolve all their problems with each other? How don't they?

Dealing with emotions, stress. Ex. Explore from the point of view of each character.

Family issues.

Gender roles & body image.

Examine the scenarios in the opera where people have choices; what kinds of decisions do they make and could they have been better?

How do the characters in the opera communicate with each other? Could they have improved their relationships through empathy?

How do the characters in the opera try to influence each other? Are they experiencing peer pressure?

What pressures act on the characters in the opera? How do they respond?

What kinds of love are depicted by the different characters in the opera?

What are the effects of tobacco and alcohol on the body?

What role does Figaro play in the health of his community? What can you compare him to in today's world?

How do the characters in the opera relieve their stress? What is Figaro's role in that?

How does news travel in the opera? How is that different today? How does that change the pace of our life?



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#### CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Assign jobs from the opera to students in the classroom. Who would be the Count? Who would be Figaro? What would be the most coveted jobs? What would be the most important jobs? How are jobs different now from then?

What jobs would people have had at the time of the story? What would their education have been?

How would people do work differently in Rossini's time? How would they be limited by available technology?

Examine the position of the military at the time of the opera. How is Almaviva able to insist to be bivouacked (encamped) in Bartolo's house? How has the position of the military changed today?

What is a notary? What would a lawyer's job have been at the time of the opera?

Dr. Bartolo and Figaro are both doctors, of a kind; how has the practice of medicine changed since the opera was written?

Basilio is a music teacher; what was the role of the music teacher? Why were they allowed to be alone with women when no other men were?

How are comedians trained?

Assign jobs for the production of the opera to different students; each has to present a concept for their part of the design. Create an evaluation rubric for their job performance, including creativity, presentation skills, budget management.

Research the careers of opera singers who have played the roles in *The Barber of Seville*.

Explore backgrounds and training of people who work at the Opera.

What are unions? What is their role in the arts?

What would it be like to be a stagehand in Barber of Seville with the storms, etc.?

What are the jobs of a set designer vs. a carpenter?

Why do artists pursue careers in the arts? What are the benefits of a career in the arts?

Jobs at the Opera. What are the professionals outside the opera who make the opera happen? Police, fire, caterers, etc. What is their education, training? How do the people at the opera collaborate to make performances happen?

Organizational chart of San Francisco Opera.



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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.