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Dear Educator,

Thank you for using a Minnesota Opera Opera Box. This collection of material has been designed to help any educator to teach students about the beauty of opera. This collection of material includes audio and video recordings, scores, reference books and a Teacher's Guide.

The Teacher's Guide includes Lesson Plans that have been designed around the materials found in the box and other easily obtained items. In addition, Lesson Plans have been aligned with State and National Standards. See the Unit Overview for a detailed explanation.

Before returning the box, please fill out the Evaluation Form at the end of the Teacher's Guide. As this project is new, your feedback is imperative. Comments and ideas from you – the educators who actually use it – will help shape the content for future boxes. In addition, you are encouraged to include any original lesson plans. The Teacher's Guide is intended to be a living reference book that will provide inspiration for other teachers. If you feel comfortable, include a name and number for future contact from teachers who might have questions regarding your lessons and to give credit for your original ideas. You may leave lesson plans in the Opera Box or mail them in separately.

Before returning, please double check that everything has been assembled. The deposit money will be held until I personally check that everything has been returned (i.e. CDs having been put back in the cases). Payment may be made to the Minnesota Opera Education Department. All forms of payment are accepted.

Since opera is first and foremost a theatrical experience, it is strongly encouraged that attendance at a performance of an opera be included. The Minnesota Opera offers Student Matinees and discounted group rate tickets to regular performances. It is hoped that the Opera Box will be the first step into exploring opera, and attending will be the next.

I hope you enjoy these materials and find them helpful. If I can be of any assistance, please feel free to call or e-mail me any time.

Sincerely,

Jamie Andrews
Community Education Director
Andrews@mnopera.org
612.342.9573 (phone)
mnopera.org
imagineopera.org
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Title</th>
<th>Minnesota Academic Standards: Arts K–12</th>
<th>National Standards for Music Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – Life and Times of Laurent Petitgirard</td>
<td>Music 9.1.1.3.1&lt;br&gt;Music 9.1.1.3.2&lt;br&gt;Theater 9.1.1.4.2&lt;br&gt;Music 9.4.1.3.1&lt;br&gt;Music 9.4.1.3.2&lt;br&gt;Theater 9.4.1.4.1&lt;br&gt;Theater 9.4.1.4.2</td>
<td>8, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – Life and Times of Joseph Merrick</td>
<td>Music 9.1.1.3.1&lt;br&gt;Music 9.1.1.3.2&lt;br&gt;Theater 9.1.1.4.2&lt;br&gt;Music 9.4.1.3.1&lt;br&gt;Music 9.4.1.3.2&lt;br&gt;Theater 9.4.1.4.1&lt;br&gt;Theater 9.4.1.4.2</td>
<td>6, 7, 8, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – Acting scenes from <em>Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man</em></td>
<td>Music 9.1.3.3.1&lt;br&gt;Music 9.1.3.3.2&lt;br&gt;Theater 9.1.3.4.1&lt;br&gt;Theater 9.1.3.4.2</td>
<td>4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 – Creating a Bio-poem</td>
<td>Music 9.1.1.3.3&lt;br&gt;Theater 9.1.1.4.3</td>
<td>8, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – Translating “The Patient’s Prayer” and/or “The Coloratura’s Aria” into other genres.</td>
<td>Music 9.1.1.3.1&lt;br&gt;Music 9.1.1.3.2&lt;br&gt;Music 9.1.1.3.3&lt;br&gt;Music 9.1.2.3.2</td>
<td>6, 7, 8, 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The lessons in this Teacher Guide are aligned with the current Minnesota Academic Standards, Arts K–12, and the National Standards for Music Education. It is not the intention of these lessons to completely satisfy the standards. This list only suggests how the standards and lesson objectives relate to each other.

**MINNESOTA ACADEMIC STANDARDS, ARTS K–12**

The Minnesota Academic Standards in the Arts set the expectations for achievement in the arts for K–12 students in Minnesota. The standards are organized by grade band (K–3, 4–5, 6–8, 9–12) into four strands that foster the development of students’ artistic literacy.

The strands are as follows:
1. Artistic Foundations
2. Artistic Process: Create or Make
3. Artistic Process: Perform or Present, and

Each strand has one or more standards that can be implemented in the arts areas of dance, media arts, music, theater and/or visual arts. The benchmarks for the standards in each arts area are designated by a five-digit code. In reading the coding, please note that for code 0.3.1.5.2, the 0 refers to refers to the 0–3 (K–3) grade band, the 3 refers to the Artistic Process: Perform or Present strand, the 1 refers to the first (and only) standard for that strand, the 5 refers to the fifth arts area (visual arts), and the 2 refers to the second benchmark for that standard.

See the Minnesota Department of Education website for more information: education.state.mn.us/mde

### Grades 9–12

**Strand:** Artistic Foundations

**Standard 1:** Demonstrate knowledge of the foundations of the arts area.

**Arts Area:** Music

**Code:** 9.1.1.3.1

**Benchmark:** Analyze how the elements of music including melody, rhythm, harmony, dynamics, tone color, texture, form and their related concepts are combined to communicate meaning in the creation of, performance of, or response to music.

**9.1.1.3.2 Benchmark:** Evaluate how the elements of music and related concepts such as repetition, pattern, balance and emphasis are used in the creation of, performance of, or response to music.

**9.1.1.3.3 Benchmark:** Analyze how the characteristics of a variety of genres and styles contribute to the creation of, performance of, or response to music.

**Arts Area:** Theater

**Code:** 9.1.1.4.1

**Benchmark:** Analyze how the elements of theater, including plot, theme, character, language, sound and spectacle are combined to communicate meaning in the creation of, performance of, or response to theater.
9.1.1.4.2
**Benchmark:** Evaluate how forms such as musical theater, opera or melodrama, and structures such as chronological or nonlinear are used in the creation of, performance of, or response to theater.

9.1.1.4.3
**Benchmark:** Evaluate how the characteristics of Western and non-Western styles, such as Kabuki, Noh, Theater of the Absurd or classical contribute to the creation of, performance of, or response to theater.

**Arts area:** Visual Arts  
**Code:** 9.1.1.5.1

**Benchmark:** Analyze how the elements of visual arts such as repetition, pattern, emphasis, contrast and balance are used in the creation of, presentation of, or response to visual artworks.

9.1.1.5.2
**Benchmark:** Evaluate how the principles of visual art such as repetition, pattern, emphasis, contrast and balance are used in the creation of, presentation of, or response to visual artworks.

**Standard 2:** Demonstrate knowledge of and use of the technical skills of the art form, integrating technology when applicable.

**Arts area:** Music  
**Code:** 9.1.2.3.1

**Benchmark:** Read and notate music using standard notation system such as complex meters, extended ranges and expressive symbols, with and without the use of notation software in a variety of styles and contexts.

9.1.2.3.2
**Benchmark:** Sing alone and in small and large groups (multi-part), or play an instrument alone in and in small or large groups, a variety of music using characteristic tone, technique and expression.

9.1.2.3.3
**Benchmark:** Use electronic musical tools to record, mix, play back, accompany, arrange or compose music.

**Arts area:** Theater  
**Code:** 9.1.2.4.1

**Benchmark:** Act by developing, communicating and sustaining character; or design by conceptualizing and realizing artistic interpretations; or direct by interpretations dramatic text and organizing and rehearsing for informal or formal productions.

9.1.2.5.1
**Benchmark:** Use technology for purposes of research, feedback, documentation or production.

**Arts area:** Visual Arts  
**Code:** 9.1.2.5.1

**Benchmark:** Integrate the characteristics of the tools, materials and techniques of a selected media in original artworks to support artistic purposes.
STANDARD 3: Demonstrate understanding of the personal, social, cultural and historical contexts that influence the arts areas.

ARTS AREA: Music
CODE: 9.1.3.3.1
BENCHMARK: Analyze how the personal, social, cultural and historical contexts influence the creation, interpretation or performance of music including the contributions of Minnesota American Indian tribes and communities.

9.1.3.3.2
BENCHMARK: Synthesize and express an individual view of the meanings and functions of music.

ARTS AREA: Theater
CODE: 9.1.3.4.2
BENCHMARK: Analyze how the personal, social, cultural and historical contexts influence the creation, interpretation or performance of music including the contributions of Minnesota American Indian tribes and communities.

9.1.1.4.2
BENCHMARK: Synthesize and express an individual view of the meanings and functions of theater.

ARTS AREA: Visual Arts
CODE: 9.1.3.5.1
BENCHMARK: Analyze how the personal, social, cultural and historical contexts influence the creation, interpretation or performance of music including the contributions of Minnesota American Indian tribes and communities.

9.1.3.5.2
BENCHMARK: Synthesize and express an individual view of the meanings and functions of visual arts.

STRAND 2: Artistic Process: Create or Make
STANDARD 1: Create or make in a variety of contexts in the arts areas using the artistic foundations.

ARTS AREA: Music
CODE: 9.2.1.3.1
BENCHMARK: Improvise, compose or arrange new musical compositions in a variety of styles and contexts using available technology to preserve the creations.

9.2.1.3.2
BENCHMARK: Revise a musical composition or arrangement based on artistic intent and using multiple sources of critique and feedback.

9.2.1.3.3
BENCHMARK: Justify an artistic statement, including how audience and occasion influence creative choices.

ARTS AREA: Theater
CODE: 9.2.1.4.1
BENCHMARK: Create a single, complex work or multiple works in theater such as a script, character or design.
9.2.1.4.2
benchmark: Revise a creation based on artistic intent and using multiple sources of critique and feedback.

9.2.1.4.3
benchmark: Justify an artistic statement, including how audience and occasion influence creative choices.

Strand 4: Artistic Process: Respond or Critique
Standard 1: Respond to or critique a variety of creations and performances using the artistic foundations.
Arts Area: Music
Code: 9.4.1.3.1
benchmark: Analyze, interpret and evaluate a variety of musical works of performances by applying self-selected criteria within the traditions of the art form.

9.4.1.3.2
benchmark: Justify choices of self-selected criteria based on knowledge of how criteria affect criticism.

Arts Area: Theater
Arts Area: Theater
9.4.1.4.1
benchmark: Analyze, interpret and evaluate a variety of works in theater by applying self-selected criteria within the traditions of the art form.

9.4.1.4.2
benchmark: Justify choices of self-selected criteria based on knowledge of how criteria affect criticism.
NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR MUSIC EDUCATION

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.

2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.

3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.

4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.

5. Reading and notating music.

6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
   a. analyze aural examples of a varied repertoire of music, representing diverse genres and cultures, by describing the uses of elements of music and expressive devices
   b. demonstrate extensive knowledge of the technical vocabulary of music
   c. identify and explain compositional devices and techniques used to provide unity, variety, tension and release in a musical work and give examples of other works that make similar uses of these devices and techniques
   d. demonstrate the ability to perceive and remember music events by describing in detail significant events occurring in a given aural example
   e. compare ways in which musical materials are used in a given example relative to ways in which they are used in other works of the same genre or style
   f. analyze and describe uses of the elements of music in a given work that make it unique, interesting, and expressive

7. Evaluating music and music performances.
   a. evolve specific criteria for making informed, critical evaluations of the quality and the effectiveness of performances, compositions, arrangements, and improvisations and apply the criteria in their personal participation in music
   b. evaluate a performance, composition, arrangement, or improvisation by comparing it to similar or exemplary models
   c. evaluate a given musical work in terms of its aesthetic qualities and explain it to similar or exemplary models

8. Understanding relationships between music, the others arts, and disciplines outside the arts.
   a. explain how elements, artistic processes, and organizational principles are used in similar and distinctive ways in the various arts and cite examples
   b. compare characteristics of two or more arts within a particular historical period or style and cite examples from various cultures
   c. explain ways in which the principles and subject matter of various disciplines outside the arts are interrelated with those of music
   d. compare the uses of characteristic elements, artistic processes, and organizational principles among the arts in different historical periods and different cultures
   e. explain how the roles of creators, performers, and others involved in the production and presentation of the arts are similar to and different from one another in the various arts

9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.
# Title of Lesson

Lesson 1: The life and times of Laurent Petitgirard

## Objective(s)

Students will learn about the life of the composer Laurent Petitgirard.

## Material(s)

- *Opera: Composers, Works, Performers* by András Batta
- Internet suggested websites:
  - www.petitgirard.com/uk/bio.html (Petitgirard's homepage)
  - www.operaamerica.org (OPERA America homepage)
  - www.andante.com (Classical music news site)
- Other articles about Laurent Petitgirard (not in Opera Box)

## Procedure(s)

1. Divide class into small groups and assign a research topic for each group.
   
   **Suggested topics:**
   - Political climate during Petitgirard’s life.
   - Popular music and culture during Petitgirard’s childhood
   - Current state of film scoring and other contemporary music
   - Survey of Petitgirard’s other compositions

2. Each group will be given an allotted time to conduct research on their topic. Once the research has been completed, each group is to prepare a presentation based on their research for the rest of the class. The groups should use **Life and Times of Laurent Petitgirard Research Checklist** for guidance.

3. Each presentation is to have participation from every member. Prior to each presentation, each group will submit five questions that they feel are the most important points in their discussion. These questions will be used in a final test assessment after all presentation has been given. Each group will be graded on the **Life and Times of Laurent Petitgirard Presentation Rubric**.

## Assessment(s)

For the research portion, each group needs to show completion of the **Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man Research Checklist**. A group assessment will be based on the **Life and Times of Laurent Petitgirard Presentation Rubric**.
**Life and Times of Laurent Petitgirard Research Checklist**

**Group Members**  

**Topic**  

*Each item must be completed to earn full point value.*

**Research Checklist**

- _____ List 20 facts related to the topic and how they relate to Petitgirard.  
  _____ Points Earned

- _____ Organize all facts into chronological order.  
  _____ Points Earned

- _____ Write 3 sentence descriptions of each fact to be put on timeline.  
  _____ Points Earned

- _____ Proofread all sentences prior to putting them on the timeline.  
  _____ Points Earned

- _____ Put each fact on the timeline for public display.  
  _____ Points Earned

**Class Presentation Checklist**

- _____ Prepare an outline of class presentation.  
  _____ Points Earned

- _____ Based on this outline, create 5 questions that your group feels address the most important points of the presentation.  
  _____ Points Earned

- _____ Submit 5 questions to teacher prior to presentation.  
  _____ Points Earned

- _____ Assign speaking parts for each group member.  
  _____ Points Earned

- _____ Practice speech.  
  _____ Points Earned

- _____ Give presentation.  
  _____ Points Earned

- _____ Put piece of timeline on wall.  
  _____ Points Earned

**Total**
**Life and Times of Laurent Petitgirard Presentation Rubric**

**GROUP MEMBERS**

**DIRECTIONS:** As a group, prepare and present a speech on your chosen topic based on the life and times of Laurent Petitgirard (the composer). Each member is to participate in the research and presentation. Include visual aids and other props to enhance the presentation. Prior to giving the talk, submit five questions that reflect the most important points of the topic. These questions will be used as a final test after all group have presented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>4 – ABOVE STANDARDS</th>
<th>3 – MEETS STANDARDS</th>
<th>2 – APPROACHING STANDARDS</th>
<th>1 – BELOW STANDARDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREPAREDNESS</td>
<td>Student is completely prepared and has obviously rehearsed.</td>
<td>Student seems pretty prepared but might have needed a couple more rehearsals.</td>
<td>The student is somewhat prepared, but it is clear that rehearsal was lacking.</td>
<td>Student does not seem at all prepared to present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPEAKING SKILLS</td>
<td>Student is completely prepared and has obviously rehearsed.</td>
<td>Loses eye contact at one or two important moments. Speaks too quickly or softly on occasion.</td>
<td>Relies too much on notes—remember the audience! Difficult to hear or understand in several parts.</td>
<td>Rarely makes eye contact. Most of the presentation was impossible to hear or understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USES PROPER GRAMMAR</td>
<td>Always (99–100% of time) speaks with proper grammar.</td>
<td>Mostly (80–98%) speaks with proper grammar.</td>
<td>Sometimes (60–79%) speaks with proper grammar.</td>
<td>Occasionally speaks with proper grammar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTENT</td>
<td>Shows a full understanding of the topic.</td>
<td>Shows a good understanding of the topic.</td>
<td>Shows a good understanding of parts of the topic.</td>
<td>Does not seem to understand the topic very well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAYS ON TOPIC</td>
<td>Stays on topic all (100%) of the time.</td>
<td>Stays on topic most (99 – 90%) of the time.</td>
<td>Stays on topic some (89 – 75%) of the time.</td>
<td>It was hard to tell what the topic was.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SCORE**

**TOTAL POINTS**

---

**MINNESOTA OPERA**

**OPERA BOX LESSON PLANS**
**Title of Lesson**

Lesson 2: The Life and Times of Joseph Merrick

**Objective(s)**

Students will learn about the life of Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man.

**Material(s)**

- *The Life and Times of Joseph Merrick Worksheet and Rubric*
- Internet access
- Other articles about Joseph Merrick (*not in Opera Box*)

**Procedure(s)**

1. Give one copy of *The Life and Times of Joseph Merrick Worksheet* to each student. Read the directions aloud as the class follows along. (It’s possible to do this lesson with students in small groups.) Allow class time for students to research the questions.

2. Assign students to write a one page essay either for or against the topic: Did Joseph Merrick live a tragic life?

3. After all students have completed the essay, discuss as a class their research findings and essay opinions.

**Assessment(s)**

See the Teacher’s Key for answers for the questions. Use the *Essay Rubric* to assess the essay.
**Life and Times of Joseph Merrick**

**Teacher’s Key**

**Directions**

Research the life and times of Joseph Merrick and answer the questions below. Remember to site each answer. Write a one-page essay either for or against the topic given below. Use examples from your research to support your argument.

**Answer the following questions**

*(Each question is worth ___ points)*

(1) What years and what country did Joseph Merrick live?
   - August 5, 1862 – April 11, 1890, England

(2) What did Joseph Merrick do to earn a living before he went to the hospital?
   - Side show “freak,” an oddity to be looked at.

(3) What was the name of the doctor who brought Joseph Merrick to the hospital?
   - Dr. Fredrick Treves

(4) What is the name of the physical deformity that afflicted Merrick? Describe its symptoms.
   - It is thought that he had Neurofibromatosis.

(5) Once in the hospital, describe what happened to Joseph Merrick’s social life?
   - He became a celebrity among high society. Queen Victoria even visited him.

(6) Describe how (we believe) Joseph Merrick died.
   - He laid his head back as to sleep like normal people.

**Bonus Question**

(7) What modern day celebrity reportedly tried to purchase the skeletal remains of Joseph Merrick?
   - Michael Jackson

**Essay Question**

*(The Joseph Merrick Rubric will be used for assessment.)*

(8) Did Joseph Merrick live a tragic life?
   - Was he treated (un)fairly by society, medical professionals, and others?
   - Did he let his physical deformity direct his life or did he do the best that he could with what he had?
## Essay Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>4 – ABOVE STANDARDS</th>
<th>3 – MEETS STANDARDS</th>
<th>2 – APPROACHING STANDARDS</th>
<th>1 – BELOW STANDARDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Position Statement</strong></td>
<td>The position statement provides a clear, strong statement of the author's position on the topic.</td>
<td>The position statement provides a clear statement of the author's position on the topic.</td>
<td>A position statement is present, but does not make the author's position clear.</td>
<td>There is no position statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support for Position</strong></td>
<td>Includes 3 or more pieces of evidence (facts, statistics, examples, real-life experiences) that support the position statement. The writer anticipates the reader's concerns, biases or arguments and has provided at least 1 counter-argument.</td>
<td>Includes 3 or more pieces of evidence (facts, statistics, examples, real-life experiences) that support the position statement.</td>
<td>Includes 2 pieces of evidence (facts, statistics, examples, real-life experiences) that support the position statement.</td>
<td>Includes 1 or fewer pieces of evidence (facts, statistics, examples, real-life experiences).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evidence and Examples</strong></td>
<td>All of the evidence and examples are specific, relevant and explanations are given that show how each piece of evidence supports the author's position.</td>
<td>Most of the evidence and examples are specific, relevant and explanations are given that show how each piece of evidence supports the author's position.</td>
<td>At least one of the pieces of evidence and examples is relevant and has an explanation that shows how that piece of evidence supports the author's position.</td>
<td>Evidence and examples are NOT relevant AND/OR are not explained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grammar and Spelling</strong></td>
<td>Author makes no errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.</td>
<td>Author makes 1 – 2 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.</td>
<td>Author makes 3 – 4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.</td>
<td>Author makes more than 4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sentence Structure</strong></td>
<td>All sentences are well-constructed with varied structure.</td>
<td>Most sentences are well-constructed and there is some varied sentence structure in the essay.</td>
<td>Most sentences are well constructed, but there is no variation in structure.</td>
<td>Most sentences are not well-constructed or varied.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lesson 3: Acting scenes from *Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man*

**Objective(s)**
Students will act out scenes from *Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man* to demonstrate the importance of acting and how it relates to the libretto and the drama.

**Material(s)**
- LIBRETTO *Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man* (one copy per student)
- ACTING EVALUATION WORKSHEET (one copy per student) (see following page)

**Procedure(s)**
1. Students are to read all or a portion of the *Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man* libretto. Some suggested excerpts for this activity are: (1) Act I, scene five, (2) Act II, scene one, (3) Act IV, scenes three and four.
2. In small groups, students will act out the Act I – Finale excerpt of the opera. Encourage students to pay close attention to the physical gesture that can be added to the text. Exact reading of text must also be included (no ad lib will be acceptable). Students should carefully read each line and attempt to apply physical gestures where ever possible. Allowances may be made for students to use note cards and “props.”
3. Each group will perform their selected scene for the rest of the class serving as an audience. The class should take notes on the effectiveness of each performance. Students should be able to make specific comments regarding physical movement and vocal articulation. Discuss the rubric prior to performances. Remarks should be written on the ACTING EVALUATION WORKSHEET. (see the following page)
4. After all performances are completed, have a class discussion as to the effectiveness of each one.

**Assessment(s)**
Value should be given to quality of the reviews of peers, class participation in discussion and acting performance.

**Additional Comment(s)**
This lesson can be taught following various activities that may involve the study of drama and history of acting. This lesson can be maximized when used as reinforcement of prior activities.

Videotaping the performances and presenting them on a public access or school channel may provide valuable public relations.
**Acting Evaluation Worksheet**

**Lesson 3**

**NAME OF OBSERVER**

**NAME OF PERFORMERS**

**DIRECTIONS**

Closely observe your peers as they perform scenes from *Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man*. Look for the following elements in their performance. Be consistent and fair with each group.

1. What was the single most effective gesture used by the group?

2. Did the group performing “follow” each line of the text? Did they physically reinforce everything they were saying?

3. Did the actors make eye contact with each other and/or audience?

4. Was the voice of the actors used to create variety and emotion in the scene?

5. Give one suggestion to the group to improve their performance.
Lesson 4: Creating a Biopoem

**Objective(s)**
Students will gain an understanding of the words, phrases and imagery used in Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man to create a biographical sketch of the main characters.

**Material(s)**
- Libretto *Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man* (one per student)
- Biopoem Worksheet (one per student) see following page

**Procedure(s)**
1. Give one hand-out of the Biopoem Worksheet per student and the *Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man* libretto per student. Read through the directions and explain that a “biopoem” is a biographical sketch of a real or fictional person.
2. Assign students to complete the worksheet.

**Assessment(s)**
Value will be assigned to the successful completion of the assignment and creativity. Suggested point value is one point per request item (24 total). Two examples are given.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LINE</th>
<th>First name</th>
<th>[1 PT.]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>line 2</td>
<td>Four traits that describe the character</td>
<td>[4 PTS.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line 3</td>
<td>Relative (brother, sister, cousin, etc.) of ________________</td>
<td>[1 PT.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line 4</td>
<td>Who loves ________________</td>
<td>[1 PT.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line 5</td>
<td>Who feels ________________ (three items)</td>
<td>[3 PTS.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line 6</td>
<td>Who needs ________________ (three items)</td>
<td>[3 PTS.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line 7</td>
<td>Who fears ________________ (three items)</td>
<td>[3 PTS.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line 8</td>
<td>Who gives ________________ (three items)</td>
<td>[3 PTS.]</td>
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<tr>
<td>line 9</td>
<td>Who would/would not like to see ________________ (three items)</td>
<td>[3 PTS.]</td>
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<tr>
<td>line 10</td>
<td>Resident of ________________</td>
<td>[1 PTS.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line 11</td>
<td>Last name (think up a last name for your character if there isn’t one)</td>
<td>[1 PT.]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example (on student worksheet)**
Based on Emily Dickinson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LINE</th>
<th>First name</th>
<th>[1 PT.]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>line 2</td>
<td>Untraveled, eccentric, wealthy, recluse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line 3</td>
<td>Lavinia, your younger sister, your refuge.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line 4</td>
<td>A lover of nature, correspondence, words and white dress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line 5</td>
<td>Who feels inner passion, need for solitude and loss.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line 6</td>
<td>Regular rhythm, similar sounds, and dashes are your needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line 7</td>
<td>But disappointment, relationships, and publication your fears.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line 8</td>
<td>You have given your letters, your insights, your love.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line 9</td>
<td>But would you like to see your works published, your public life, your emotions explored?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line 10</td>
<td>Resident of your beloved Amherst, Massachusetts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line 11</td>
<td>Dickinson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXAMPLE – BIOPOEM FOR JOSEPH MERRICK

LINE 1  Joseph
LINE 2  Innocent, caring, simple, sad
LINE 3  Son of his mother
LINE 4  People, beauty, Mary
LINE 5  Pain, sadness, joy
LINE 6  Love, compassion, help
LINE 7  Strangers, his body, loneliness
LINE 8  Himself, his love, his future
LINE 9  Staring people, dishonest people, sideshows
LINE 10 London, England
LINE 11 Merrick

EXAMPLE – BIOPOEM FOR DR. TREVES

LINE 1  Fredrick
LINE 2  Scientific, caring, curious, human
LINE 3  His mother
LINE 4  Medicine and science
LINE 5  Compassion, obligation, humanity
LINE 6  Joseph, acceptance, money
LINE 7  The unknown, bureaucracy, human emotions
LINE 8  Time, compassion, reputation
LINE 9  Understanding, progress, love
LINE 10 London, England
LINE 11 Treves
**Biopoem Instructions**

**Lesson 4**

**Directions**

A Biopoem is a biographical sketch of a person, real or fictional. In this lesson, you are to create three Biopoems based on the three characters in the opera *Joseph Merrick the Elephant Man*. Read through the example below to help guide through the lesson.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line 1</th>
<th>First name</th>
<th>[1 pt.]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Line 2</td>
<td>Four traits that describe the character</td>
<td>[4 pts.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 3</td>
<td>Relative (brother, sister, cousin, etc.) of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>________________</td>
<td>[1 pt.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 4</td>
<td>Who loves ________________</td>
<td>[1 pt.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 5</td>
<td>Who feels _______________ (three items)</td>
<td>[3 pts.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 6</td>
<td>Who needs _______________ (three items)</td>
<td>[3 pts.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 7</td>
<td>Who fears _______________ (three items)</td>
<td>[3 pts.]</td>
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<td>[3 pts.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 10</td>
<td>Resident of ________________</td>
<td>[1 pts.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 11</td>
<td>Last name (think up a last name for your character if there isn’t one)</td>
<td>[1 pt.]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example**

Based on Emily Dickinson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line 1</th>
<th>Emily</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Line 2</td>
<td>Untraveled, eccentric, wealthy, recluse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 3</td>
<td>Lavinia, your younger sister, your refuge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 11</td>
<td>Dickinson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Biopoem Worksheet**

<table>
<thead>
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<td>Line 2</td>
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<td>Line 10</td>
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<td>Line 11</td>
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</table>
Lesson 5: Translating “The Patient's Prayer” and/or “The Coloratura's Aria” into other genres.

Students will understand the characteristics of this duet and translate those characteristics into other genres.

- CD *Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man*
- LIBRETTO (*in Teacher's Guide*)

(1) As a class, listen to a recording of “The Patient’s Prayer” Act II, scene three (CD DISC 1, TRACK 9) and/or “The Coloratura’s Aria” Act IV, scene one (CD DISC 2, TRACK 9) while following a translation of the text.

(2) Discuss the following points:
   - Does the music relate to the text? (Could this music be used for different text?)
   - How does it (not) relate? (What does the music do to relate to the text?)
   - Does the content of the text have meaning in today’s society?
   - Is there a popular song that deals with the same emotions?

(3) Students are to take the text of either excerpt and set it into another musical genre. For example, students may turn the text into a rap, country, or pop song. Encourage the students to modernize the words.

(4) Students are to perform their compositions with the other students serving as the audience.

(5) Discuss as a class which performances were successful, why or why not? Include discussion of the effectiveness of the text separate from the music.

The final class performance will be evaluated on completeness of text and its understandability. The audience can provide feedback by determining the most creative and the most effective performance. Value will be given placed on class participation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>NAME(s)</strong></th>
<th><strong>SCHOOL</strong></th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PHONE/EMAIL</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TITLE OF LESSON</strong></td>
<td><strong>CLASS AND GRADE LEVEL</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>OBJECTIVE(S)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MATERIAL(S)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>PROCEDURE(S)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ASSESSMENT(S)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ADDITIONAL COMMENT(S)</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Synopsis**

**Act I**

*A fairground in the East End*  Tom Norman and his assistant Jimmy prepare for their next showing. The sideshow features the Elephant Man, so named for a disfiguring illness that covers the body of Joseph Merrick, save one arm and a single delicate hand. Norman discusses with Jimmy the merits of his chosen profession, a presenter of novelties and curiosities.

As Joseph remains in his tent, two boys anticipating the show prod him with insults. Norman chases them off and reassures his charge with the glories and riches that will be gained by his continued performances. Perhaps they will take his act to America or even the Far East. Jimmy draws the crowd and Norman begins his show by priming the audience – it is said that Merrick received his disease when his beautiful mother was thrown to the ground by an
elephant during a parade of circus animals. Jimmy pulls the red curtain and the Elephant Man is revealed to the shocked and disgusted spectators.

After Merrick has retreated, Dr. Frederick Treves arrives and reproaches Norman. The showman counters by asking if the good doctor has yet found a cure. Treves is adamant that Joseph belongs in a hospital, but Norman insists that it is his choice to remain at the fair, where he is well cared for and not the object of medical scrutiny. Treves’s quiet entreaties delivered directly to Merrick prove pointless, but he leaves his card in case he changes his mind.

**ACT II**

*The London Hospital* Treves has found Merrick at the Liverpool railroad station, broken, exhausted and abandoned by Norman. He is brought to the hospital where Eva Lückes, the charge nurse, advises the doctor that there are no beds available, except in the isolation room. As Eva lightly bathes him, another nurse, Mary, enters the room and is shocked by Merrick’s appearance. She apologizes for her reaction, but the Elephant Man just wants to be left alone – he is not a sight for a young girl. Mary tries to comfort him with a lullaby as he falls asleep.

The next morning, after a short conversation with Merrick, Treves is taken aside by the hospital’s director, Carr Gomm, who reminds him that the hospital is only for seriously ill patients. He is not unsympathetic to Merrick’s case and agrees to delay the next meeting of the governance committee so that Treves can find the financial means to maintain the Elephant Man’s stay.

Though Treves still considers Merrick an imbecile, in further conversations Mary learns that he is merely deformed and quite intelligent. For his part, Joseph discovers he is attracted to her.

**ACT III**

*An examination gallery at the hospital* Merrick’s case is presented to a panel of doctors. Treves discounts the theories that his illness was caused by elephantiasis or maternal impression and offers alternate possibilities. A photographer takes pictures.

Mary is horrified by the impersonal examination and the careless disregard of Joseph’s dignity. Eva suggests that the young woman remove herself from her emotions – as nurses they must not get too close to their patients’ problems.
Treves observes Joseph reading a book given to him by Mary and is surprised to discover the depth of his knowledge. They discuss his future and upon further examination, Treves discovers that his patient’s heart is weakening.

Carr Gomm and the hospital committee confirm that an open letter will be published in the *London Times*, alongside a recent photograph of Joseph. The hope is to raise enough money to ensure his continued care. Treves feels a pang of remorse for treating the Elephant Man much like Tom Norman, without regard to his greater intellect. The doctor also reveals that Merrick does not have much longer to live.

Joseph refuses to speak with the journalist and again confides in Mary that he does not want his story to be told. He has little hope, but Mary admits that their friendship has given her something truly meaningful.

**ACT IV**

*An apartment* Thanks to the *Times* article, Joseph is now able to live comfortably in his own home. He has become somewhat of a celebrity and entertains a salon of people, including a famous soprano who monopolizes his attention. Mary takes Treves aside, and begs him not to tell Merrick that he is dying.

Alone with Merrick, Treves listens to his heart and admits he has done all he can. Merrick senses the end is near, but is grateful. After the doctor departs, Joseph sums up his existence and realizes he has never slept soundly, having had to rest in a crouched, upright position as a result of his deformity. Determined to sleep at least once as a normal person, he stretches out on the bed and dies.
Laurent Petitgirard studied the piano with Serge Petitgirard and composition with Alain Kremski. An eclectic musician, his career as a composer of symphonic music (more than 20 works) and of film music (150 scores) is matched by his activity as a guest conductor worldwide, performing with ensembles such as Paris Opera Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo, Orchestre National de France, Orchestre National de Lyon, Bamberg Philharmoniker, Berliner Symphoniker, Orchestras of the Tonhalle, La Fenice and BBC, Utah Symphony Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic, CBS Orchestra, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande and the National Orchestra of Spain. In 1989 Petitgirard founded the Orchestre Symphonique Français, which he conducted until 1996, and from 1986 to 1997, he also directed the Festival and the Academy of Flaine (Haute-Savoie). In December 2004, he was elected music director of the Orchestre Colonne in Paris.

Petitgirard has made some 30 recordings, notably of Honegger’s Jeannne d’Arc au bûcher and several world premiere recordings, including Ravel’s Gaspard de la nuit with orchestration by Marius Constant. For the label Chant du Monde he recorded his Cello Concerto with the cellist Gary Hoffman and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo, and Le légendaire for violin, chorus and orchestra with soloist Augustin Dumay, to whom the work is dedicated.

Petitgirard’s first opera, Joseph Merrick dit Elephant Man, was first performed in February 2002 at the Prague State Opera, in French, conducted by the composer with stage direction by Daniel Mesquich. It has been recorded with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo and with Nathalie Stutzmann in the title role. The opera was restaged at Opéra de Nice later that year and a DVD of those performances, released on Marco Polo label, was broadcast on TF1 and Mezzo French television networks. Petitgirard has just begun work on his second opera, Guru, to a libretto he wrote in collaboration with Xavier Maurel, to be premiered by Opéra de Nice at the end of 2008, with stage direction by Daniel Mesquich.

In April 2003, Petitgirard recorded his Poème for large string orchestra with the Orchestre National de France, which he also conducted in November 2003 as part of a tour in the Netherlands with the Brabant Orchestra. In April 2004, he conducted two concerts at the Opéra Bastille in Paris with the Paris Opera Orchestra (Gance-Honegger-Constant’s Napoléon). Petitgirard also continues to collaborate on a regular basis with the Berliner Symphoniker, which he conducted twice during the 2004–2005 season in concerts of music by Beethoven and Brahms.
In addition to *Le fou d’Elsa*, a cycle of six songs to poems by Aragon for mezzo-soprano and orchestra, Petitgirard’s latest works include *Le plus ardent à vivre* (septet with harp, premiered by soloist Marielle Nordmann), *Poème* for large string orchestra and *Dialogue* for viola and orchestra, which he recorded in September 2005 with soloist Gérard Caussé and the Orchestre National de Bordeaux Aquitaine. The composer just completed a symphonic poem, *Les douze gardiens du temple* (commissioned by Radio-France), which he premiered with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg at the Présences Festival in February 2006 in Paris. Recordings of *Dialogue* and *Les douze gardiens* will follow, to be released on the Naxos label, as well as the complete *Daphnis et Chloé* ballet by Maurice Ravel, both recorded with the Bordeaux National Orchestra.

Petitgirard received the Young Composer’s Prize of the SACD in 1987, the SACEM Prize in 1990, the Grand Prix Lycéen for Composers in 2000 for his *Cello Concerto* and the Prix Musique 2001 of the SACD for his opera *Joseph Merrick dit Elephant Man*. In December 2000 he was elected Member of the French Institute, in the seat of Marcel Landowski at the Académie des Beaux-Arts. Petitgirard is also a Commandeur des Arts et Lettres.
There has been a surprising degree of interest over the past three decades in the plight of Joseph Carey Merrick after a silence of some 40 years. Ashley Montagu’s book, *The Elephant Man: A Study in Human Dignity*, first published in 1971, spawned four plays, one major motion picture, subsequent books and articles, a television special, and most recently, an opera. Laurent Petitgirard’s *Joseph Merrick dit Elephant Man* first premiered in Prague in 2002, was revived in Nice later that year and has since been released on CD and DVD. The Minnesota Opera’s production presents the American premiere of this new work.

Ripe for adaptation in just about any genre, Merrick’s real-life story is especially poignant, shockingly reminiscent of the dark and disturbed tales authored by the Brothers Grimm. According to legend, his pregnant mother was frightened and overrun by an elephant when the circus came to his home town of Leicester. Twenty-one months after his birth on August 5, 1862, symptoms of Joseph’s disfiguring illness had already become apparent. He attended school until the age of 12, but the death of his mother two years earlier put an end to any kindness he would receive, changing his life irrevocably. His father had remarried in 1874, and his new mother, a widow with children of her own, expected her stepson to support himself and contribute to the family income. By this time Merrick had suffered an accident, leaving him lame in one leg – this disability, confounded by his increasingly misshapen appearance, impeded his efforts to sell haberdashery items door-to-door, and employment as a manual laborer also became futile. Several times he entered a workhouse for the poor, but conditions there proved equally as harsh to those he had experienced at home.

Having heard of entertainer/entrepreneur Sam Torr’s intention to create a show of “novelties,” Merrick realized he could earn some degree of independence by exhibiting himself as a “freak.” After several showings in Leicester and its environs, the newly christened Elephant Man was handed over to a promoter in London, Tom Norman. Surprisingly, Merrick embraced the changed lifestyle with grace, now able to generate financial gain in the reasonable comfort Norman provided. It was certainly preferable to being paraded unclothed in front of curious doctors as a unusual specimen of nature. By the early 1880s he had come to the attention of a young surgeon, Dr. Frederick Treves, and had visited the London Hospital several times for examination. Treves’s most recent invitation, however, had been rejected.

Merrick’s fortunes changed with public taste. Victorian consciousness was coming to grips with the display of oddities for the delight of the...
working class that populated the East End’s Whitechapel Road. The police shut down Norman’s enterprise, forcing Merrick to seek his fortunes on the Continent in the hands of another promoter. Unfortunately, sentiment toward such shows proved to be similar in Brussels, and they were banned by the public authority. The backer stole Merrick’s savings, forcing him to pawn his few personal possessions in order to return to London. With Treves’s card in his pocket, he was found exhausted and alone in the Liverpool Station.

Treves was faced with the uneasy predicament of admitting a patient with an incurable illness, which was against hospital policy. The chief administrator, F. C. Carr Gomm, solved the dilemma by posting in the London Times on December 4, 1886, an appeal for charity, drawing a surprising amount of support from society’s upper echelon. Merrick was moved from a small room in the attic used for isolation to a garden level suite with access to an adjoining enclosed terrace.

Merrick began to hold court in his new home, receiving various dignitaries of the royal family, including the Princess of Wales – she would send several Christmas cards and an autographed photograph of herself. Joseph also made the acquaintance of a famous actress, Madge Kendal, who managed to arrange a theater outing, using a baroness’s box with a private entrance and three young nurses to sit in the first row as cover. Another lady of distinction lent her closely guarded home to Merrick, where he could spend six days in the country undisturbed.

This turn of events was by no means a perfect solution. Merrick still felt on display and had mentioned to Treves on at least one occasion that he wouldn’t mind returning to show business. In spite of parading visitors and constant nursing attention, Joseph still felt isolated from the world. And his illness only progressed, putting a strain on his heart and prematurely aging his body. More than once he had expressed a desire to “sleep like a normal person” as his enlarged head forced him to slumber in a crouched position. (Norman had actually tried to create a device that would allow him to lie prostrate, one of his more charitable acts). On April 11, 1890, without warning he was found lying across his bed, his death determined to be caused either by suffocation or spinal injury. No recent change in his behavior indicated that it had been a suicide.
Interest in the Elephant Man’s unfortunate predicament remained dormant after the memoirs of Dr. Treves, Mrs. Kendal and Tom Norman, dating from the early part of the 20th century, faded into oblivion. It was not until the early 1970s that interest was rekindled with Montagu’s book, which begins as a biography, then segues into an exploration into maternal love, the psychology of human nature and our perceptions of people with disabling conditions.

Several interpretations popped up soon afterwards. Thomas Gibbons finished his play *The Exhibition* in February 1977, utilizing only two characters, Merrick and Dr. Treves. His duodrama utilizes the memoirs of Treves (reprinted in the back of Montagu’s book) and Merrick’s own “autobiography,” used as show propaganda back when he was on display. Interspersed is the Elephant Man’s (as he is referred to in the text) wistful realization of his otherness, a loneliness he feels he must share with a select group of human beings unable to find love. For his part, Treves understands his patient’s manly needs and offers to secure the services of a prostitute, sufficiently liquored to endure his grotesque appearance. The fourth and final scene is Treves alone with the death mask of the Elephant Man, reminiscing over his career — he could cure the King of England of appendicitis on the eve of his coronation, but could provide nothing for “John” (he consistently cited Merrick’s first name incorrectly in his memoirs). He picks up the mask to see the world through Joseph’s eyes.

William Turner’s *Elephant Man* premiered on December 16, 1978 in Pittsburgh. Replacing Dr. Treves as confidant is Princess Alexandra, who, afflicted with deafness, syphilis and Victorian-era female repression, poses an equalizing counterpart to Merrick (at least in her own eyes). But Roy Faudree’s *Elephant Man*, first produced in October 1975, introduced the subject into the realm of comedy, turning Joseph Merrick’s widening social circle into a bawdy, cross-dressing romp. [Apparently one of Treves’ medical papers, *The Influence of Clothing on Health* (referenced in the play), had some bearing on a proposed banishment of corsetting.]

The most popular dramatic interpretations of Merrick’s life, however, was a play by Bernard Pomerance, first produced in London on November 7, 1977, and later finding its way to Broadway two years later (the title role eventually being played by pop singer David Bowie). Pomerance indicated in his stage directions that no heavy stage makeup was to be used; rather that Merrick’s deformity should be indicated through movement and emotion. Among other variants and interpolations, Pomerance’s play is an essay in psychology, investigating in particular Merrick’s sublimated sexuality by way of his conversations and encounters with Madge Kendal. Treves had remarked in his memoirs that women were somewhat of a mystery to the Elephant Man, always to be observed from a distance.

Since Pomerance’s play (and David Lynch’s
equally famous film, which in addition to taking other liberties, includes a disturbing opening sequence as to how the Elephant Man came into being), authors Michael Howell and Peter Ford have made a thorough investigation of Merrick's life and published their findings in 1980. In crafting their own story, Petitgirard and librettist Eric Nonn may have had this source at their disposal (as well as the motion picture), and they approach the story with a little more attention to the facts. By shedding the long list of hangers-on, the focus becomes more human, in particular through the three women — the distant head nurse Eva Lückes (reintroduced from history), the flighty and fictive soprano (a tidy operatic replacement for the theatrical, "loosely moraled" Kendal) and the nurse/confidant Mary, who has no direct historical ancestry other than her name (which is the same as Merrick’s beloved mother), serving both as a maternal force and one of emotional, and perhaps even sexual, awakening.

The Minnesota Opera’s production of this new work will feature a few variations from the original operatic staging. Like Pomerance’s drama, heavy makeup will not be employed to portray the Elephant Man’s deformity, which instead will be implied through movement. In a recent interview, Artistic Director Dale Johnson observed, “The moment I heard [the new opera], I felt like it needed to be choreographed. Joseph Merrick was not really able to express himself physically, and yet Petitgirard created this music that is so expressive.” Director and choreographer Doug Varone noted, “The key is obviously the title character, to try to find a movement vocabulary for Merrick that defines his continuing emotional state. I wanted to set that off with a company of dancers that is continually surrounding him, reflective of his situation. . . . There is a beautiful soul inside of this hideous human being. For me, that’s the basis of the entire opera. How do we perceive beauty? How do we see the extraordinary in the ordinary? How do we see the ordinary in the extraordinary?”

Another departure is a casting of the title role as a countertenor rather than a contralto. Conductor Antony Walker explains. “On a purely phonic level, it will help create the individual nature of Joseph Merrick. He won’t sound like anyone else on stage. Joseph needs a great deal of warmth, sincerity and vulnerability, and I think the countertenor voice will help express this.” Countertenor David Walker (no relation) added: “It’s very challenging to do this role and not get overwhelmed. This is a real person, a real man, and the composer and librettist have really captured that. . . . It is a very emotional journey. Joseph Merrick was a deep and sensitive person. The opera shows his decency and kindness, but it also shows him getting angry and frustrated. That’s why it succeeds so well, I think. It doesn’t try to make him anything but human.”

"quotations from "Opera of the Month: Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man" by Kelley Rourke. OPERA America Newsline Volume 15, Number 7 (April 2006), pp. 16–17"
History of Opera

In the beginning …

Jacopo Peri 1561–1633
Claudio Monteverdi 1567–1643

Although often considered an Italian innovation, opera had its debut in Ancient Greece, where drama frequently incorporated singing, declamation and dance to tell a narrative tale. Ecclesiastical music dramas of the Middle Ages were also important precursors. But the operatic art form familiar to us today has its roots in Florence, between 1580 and 1589, where a group of musicians, poets and scholars explored the possibility of reviving tragic drama of the ancients.

The circle was known as the camerata and consisted of writers, theorists and composers, including Giulio Caccini, Ottavio Rinuccini and Vincenzo Galilei (father of the famed astronomer). Their efforts exacted musical compositions that took special care to accentuate the dramatic inflection of their chosen text, to evoke its precise emotional shading and to find the ideal marriage between words and music. Jacopo Peri, a rival of Caccini and a collaborator with Rinuccini, produced the first known (but no longer existing) opera, Dafne, in 1597.

The Camerata met at the home of the nobleman Giovanni de’ Bardi. Thus, no sooner had opera had made its first appearance than it became a court activity, which fit the social and political conditions of the day. As a result of Bardi’s influence, these composers were hired by the Grand Duke of Tuscany Ferdinand I, who gave them their first wide exposure. When his daughter, Marie de’ Medici, married Henry IV of France, Peri’s Euridice was produced at the ceremony, and Italian opera gained its first international premiere. Even though Euridice was a simply staged production accompanied by a small group of strings and flute, in 1600 this type of musical drama was considered revolutionary.

Claudio Monteverdi’s Orfeo (1607) is the most significant opera of this period, more so than those works of the Florentines. The boldness of his harmonies and the richness of his orchestration dramatically developed the art form, and this work, along with L’incoronazione di Poppea (1642) are still popular pieces performed today.

Opera in Venice

Francesco Cavalli 1602–1676
Antonio Cesti 1623–1669

The new art form quickly spread to other Italian cities. By 1636, the first public opera house was opened in Venice and opera became quite popular among the people. Le nozze di Teti e di Pele, the first of Francesco Cavalli’s thirty-plus operas for the Venetian stage, premiered two years later. Competing with Monteverdi and Antonio Cesti (who took a post in Innsbruck after producing only two works for Venice), Cavalli quickly rose to the top.

At the same time, Italian stage designers were fast improving their techniques and were able to produce stupendous special effects, a happy coincidence for the new operatic art form. The use of the proscenium arch allowed the spectator to view the stage from a narrower angle, thus producing a better illusion of perspective. The proscenium also hid elaborate flying apparatus, and allowed for quick and seamless scene changes with drops from the top and flaps from the side wings. Spectacular stage effects became a speciality of French opera, and with the inclusion of ballet, became the part of established style of France by the 18th century.
North of Italy, Hamburg composer Reinhard Keiser (1694 – 1739) became the director of one of the first public opera houses in Germany. He often set libretti by Venetian librettists.

Baroque Opera in France, England and Germany

Jean-Baptiste Lully 1632–1687
Henry Purcell 1658/59–1695
George Frideric Handel 1685–1759
Christoph Willibald Gluck 1714–1787

In 1646, Giovanni Battista Lulli arrived in France from Florence and tried to establish Italian opera in the French Court. He was unsuccessful because the reigning monarch, Louis XIV, preferred dance. Nonetheless, Jean-Baptiste Lully, as he became known, rose in royal favor by composing ballets for the king and eventually gained control of the Académie Royale de Musique, the official musical institution of France. Through Lully’s influence in this important position, and by way of his own compositions, a distinctive French operatic form began to emerge and thrive on its own.

The Italian and French forms of opera were slow to catch on among the English, who preferred spoken theater. A compromise was reached in a form referred to as semi-opera, featuring spoken dialogue alternated with musical masques (which often included dance). Henry Purcell’s The Fairy Queen (1692) is one popular example from this period. Purcell’s first opera, Dido and Aeneas (1689), is his only opera in the Italian style and continues to be occasionally revived in modern times.

A major player in the early part of the 18th century was George Frideric Handel, who began his career in Hamburg. As early as 1711, Handel enjoyed success in England and would remain there for the next forty years. During that time, he wrote 35 operas (many in the Italian style), most of which focused on historical, classical or romantic subjects. His inventive musical style began to set new standards for the art form, and his works redefined the dramatic potential of opera as a vital and vivid experience.

Another German, Christoph Willibald Gluck, arrived in England on the heels of Handel’s last London operas, and later moving to Vienna, he began to see what he found to be flaws in the conventional Italian opera of the day. Singers had taken control of the productions, demanding solo arias and sometimes adding their own pieces to show off their vocal technique. Operas were turning into a collection of individual showpieces at the sacrifice of dramatic integrity. Although Gluck wrote some operas which shared these flaws, one work, Orfeo ed Euridice (1762), reasserted the primacy of drama and music.
by removing the da capo (repeated and embellished) part of the aria, by using chorus and instrumental solos only to reinforce the dramatic action, and by not allowing the singers to insert their own music. Gluck completed his career in Paris, where he became a master of French opera’s serious form, the tragédie lyrique.

During the 18th century, opera began to fall into two distinct categories: opera seria and opera buffa. Opera seria (serious opera) focused on historical, religious or Greco-Roman subjects. The glorification of saints, kings and gods went hand-in-hand with the grandiose baroque style and the spectacular stage effects of court opera. Librettist Pietro Metastasio provided 28 libretti that continued to serve composers again and again well into the 19th century. Opera buffa (comic opera) had its roots with the popular audience, each country specializing in its own distinct form. In France, Charles-Simon Favart’s operas of the 1740s parodied the serious tragédie lyriques of Lully (the Opéra-Comique, the Paris theater for comic opera, would later be named after him). In Naples, Italy, the intermezzi (short comic works inserted in between acts of a serious opera), of Giovanni Battista Pergolesi paved the way to the development of opera buffa in the latter half of the 18th century. His masterpiece, La serva padrona (1733), is considered a milestone in the development of comic opera.

Opera during the Classical Period

GIUSEPPE SARTI 1729–1802
FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN 1732–1809
GIOVANNI PAISIELLO 1740–1816
DOMENICO CIMAROSA 1749–1801
ANTONIO SALieri 1750–1825
VICENTE MARTIN Y SOLER 1754–1806
WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART 1756–1791

Two composers are invariably linked to the Classical Period – Franz Joseph Haydn and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Of the former, few of his operas are produced today even though he wrote over 25, most of which were created and performed for his employer, Prince Nikolaus Esterházy. Mozart’s operas, however, remain in repertory as some of the most frequently produced works. Of the five most favorite – The Abduction from the Seraglio (1782), The Marriage of Figaro (1786), Don Giovanni (1787), Cosi fan tutte (1790), The Magic Flute (1791) – two are singspiefs (a popular German form, replacing sung recitative with spoken dialogue), two opera buffas and one opera “semi-seria.” Two opera serias (the form Mozart preferred, incidently) frame his adult career – Idomeneo (1781) was his first mature opera and La clemenza di Tito (1791) was his last commission.

Lesser composers of this period include Antonio Salieri (born in Legnago, settling later in Vienna), who served the court of Emperor Joseph II. Through the emperor’s influence with his sister, Marie Antoinette, Salieri made headway in Paris as well, establishing himself as a worthy successor of Gluck in the serious vein of his tragédie lyriques. Returning to Vienna in 1784, Salieri found himself in strict
competition with other leading composers of the day, Giovanni Paisiello and Vincente Martín y Soler. These two composers were known partly from their brief service to Catherine the Great of Russia, along with several other advanced Italian composers including Giuseppe Sarti and Domenico Cimarosa.

After the Revolution – French Grand Opera

Luigi Cherubini 1760–1842
Ferdinando Paer 1771–1839
Gaspare Spontini 1774–1851
Daniel-François-Esprit Auber 1782–1871
Giacomo Meyerbeer 1791–1864

In the decades following the French revolution, French grand opera developed extensively, moving from a private entertainment for royalty to an art form eagerly consumed by the upwardly mobile bourgeoisie. Opera in France at the turn of the 19th century was dominated by expatriate Italian composers. First and most notable was Luigi Cherubini, who established residence in Paris in 1785. Eventually rising to the position of director of the national conservatory, he virtually ceased composing operas in 1813. The lastest working in his oeuvre is Médée of 1797.

Ferdinando Paer came to prominence during the first empire of Napoleon I – he was engaged as the Emperor’s maître de chapelle in 1807 and later became the director of the Opéra-Comique. Just before Napoleon’s abdication, Paer assumed directorship of the Théâtre Italien, a post he held until it was yielded to Rossini in 1824. None of his many operas survive in the modern repertory, although the libretto he wrote for one, Leonora (1804), served to inspire Ludwig van Beethoven’s only opera, Fidelio (1805). Gaspare Spontini was another Italian who moved to Paris and eventually ran the Théâtre Italien, a theater devoted to producing Italian works in their native language. Most popular among his repertoire were La Vestale (1807) and Fernand Cortez (1809).

French grand opera came into its own through the efforts of two composers: Daniel-François-Esprit Auber and Giacomo Meyerbeer. Collaborating with Eugène Scribe (whose plays would later serve as inspiration for a number of Verdi operas), Auber produced La muette de Portici (1828), the first definite grand opéra of this period, which proved extremely popular with French audiences. Characteristic of the genre was a five-act framework that incorporated spectacular stage effects, large crowd scenes and a ballet. A specific, mannered formula for the drama’s unfolding was also inherent in the art form.

Meyerbeer brought grand opera to fruition first with Robert le diable (1831), then with Les Huguenots (1836), and with these works, also established a close relationship with Scribe. Two later works of note include La prophète (1849) and L’Africaine (1865), also cast in the grand opera schema.
Early 19th-century Italy – The Bel Canto composers

GIOACHINO ROSSINI 1792–1868
GAETANO DONIZETTI 1797–1848
VINCENZO BELLINI 1801–1835

Back in Italy, opera saw the development of a distinctive style known as Bel Canto. Bel canto (literally “beautiful singing”) was characterized by the smooth emission of tone, beauty of timbre and elegance of phrasing. Music associated with this genre contained many trills, roulades and other embellishments that showed off the particular singer’s technique. Traditionally, a bel canto aria begins with a slow, song-like cantabile section followed by an intermediate mezzo section with a slightly quicker tempo. It ends with a dazzling cabaletta, the fastest section, where the singer shows off his or her talents. Often these were improvised upon, or replaced with “suitcase” arias of the singers’ own choosing, much to the consternation of the composer.

GIOACHINO ROSSINI was the first and perhaps best known of the three composers associated with this style. In his early years, between 1813 and 1820, Rossini composed rapidly, producing two or three operas a year. The pace slowed after he moved to France in 1824 – there he produced five works for the Paris Opéra, several of which show tendencies of the French grand opera style. William Tell was his last opera – Rossini retired at age 37 with 39 more years to live.

GAETANO DONIZETTI and VINCENZO BELLINI were two other Italian Bel Canto composers who premiered operas in both Paris and Italy. A tendency that began with Rossini and continued into their works was the practice of accompanied recitatives. Opera to this point had been organized in a very specific manner with more elongated “numbers” (arias, duets, ensembles) alternated with recitative (essentially dialogue set to music, intended to move the action along). In Mozart’s day, these recitative would be played by a harpsichord or fortepiano (sometimes doubled with cellos and basses) and was known as recitativo secco. As Rossini’s style progressed, the orchestra took over playing the recitatives which became known as recitativo accompagnato. The practice continued into Verdi’s day.
Three Masters of Opera

GIUSEPPE VERDI 1813–1901
RICHARD WAGNER 1813–1883
GIACOMO PUCCINI 1858–1924

GIUSEPPE VERDI’s roots began in bel canto but the composer transformed the Italian style into a more fluid, less structured form. With a legacy of 26 operas, Verdi is never out of the repertory and four of these (Rigoletto, 1851; Il trovatore, 1853; La traviata, 1853; Aida, 1871) are some of the most familiar of the art form.

Verdi’s contemporary, RICHARD WAGNER, is also considered one of the greats. Taking the idea of “fluidity” one step further, Wagner developed his operas into freely flowing music-dramas united by melodic motifs that become associated with persons, places and things. Taking the grandeur of French opera one step further, he crafted his own libretti out of Nordic legends and created spectacular operatic moments. Wagner also greatly expanded the orchestra and developed his own particular brass instruments for greater impact. A Wagnerian singer is one with great stamina – they must sing over a large orchestra in an opera that can be up to four hours long.

Italian opera’s successor to Verdi turned out to be GIACOMO PUCCINI. With a gift of popular melody and musical economy, his operas La bohème (1896), Tosca (1900) and Madame Butterfly (1904) remain at the top of the standard repertory.
Later French Opera

HECTOR BERLIOZ 1803–1869
CHARLES-FRANÇOIS GOUNOD 1818–1893
JACQUES OFFENBACH 1819–1880
EDOUARD LALO 1823–1892
CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS 1835–1921
LÉO DELIBES 1836–1891
GEORGES BIZET 1838–1875
JULES MASSNEET 1842–1912
GUSTAVE CHARPENTIER 1860–1956

The grand opera schema continued into the latter half of the 19th century in such works as Hector Berlioz’s Les Troyens (composed 1856–58), and Charles-François Gounod’s Faust (1859) and Roméo et Juliette (1867). An element of realism began to slip into the French repertoire, seen in works by Georges Bizet (Carmen, 1875) and Gustave Charpentier (Louise, 1897). Jacques Offenbach revolutionized the art of comic operetta in such works as Orphée aux enfers (1858), La belle Hélène (1864) and La Périchole (1868). Other composers of this period include Camille Saint-Saëns (Samson et Dalila, 1877), Edouard Lalo (Le Roi d’Ys, 1875) and Jules Massenet (Manon, 1884; Werther, 1892; Cendrillon, 1899).

Verismo in Late 19th-century Italy

RUGGERO LEONCAVALLO 1857–1919
PIETRO MASCAGNI 1863–1945
UMBERTO GIORDANO 1867–1948

A realist vein began to penetrate Italian opera toward the end of the 19th century, influenced in part by naturalism in French literature of the period and by the writings of an Italian literary circle, the Scapigliatura. Translated as the “dishevelled ones,” the Scapigliatura displayed their distaste for bourgeois society in works of gritty realism, often bordering on the morbid and the macabre. Nearly all the members of the group (lead by Giovanni Verga) led tragic lives ending in early death by alcoholism and suicide.
Operas to come out of the resulting verismo school include Pietro Mascagni’s *Cavalleria rusticana* (1890), Ruggero Leoncavallo’s *Pagliacci* (1892) and Umberto Giordano’s *Mala vita* (1892). Other works are attributed to this movement by nature of their rapid action with passionate tension and violence quickly alternating with moments of great sentimentality.

**Opera in Russia**

Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka 1804–1857
Pyotr Il’ich Tchaikovsky 1840–1893
Nikolay Andreyevich Rimsky-Korsakov 1844–1908
Modest Petrovich Musorgsky 1839–1881
Sergei Prokofiev 1891–1953
Dmitri Shostakovich 1906–1975

Opera was introduced in Russia during the succession of powerful czarinas that culminated in the reign of Catherine the Great (ruled 1762 – 1796). She employed a number of important Italian composers (see above) and established St. Petersburg as a major city for the production of new opera, later to be elevated to the same par as London, Paris and Vienna by her descendant, Nicholas I (ruled 1825 – 1855). Of native Russian composers, the first to come to prominence was Mikhail Glinka with *A Life for the Tsar* (1836), and later, *Ruslan and Lyudmila* (1842). Pyotr Tchaikovsky, now known more for his ballets and symphonies, was a prolific composer of opera. His best works include *Eugene Onegin* (1879), *Mazepa* (1884) and *The Queen of Spades* (1890). Other Russian composers of the latter 19th century include Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov (*The Snow Maiden*, 1882; *The Tsar’s Bride*, 1899; *The Golden Cockerel*, 1909) and Modest Musorgsky (*Boris Godunov*, 1874).

Russian opera continued into the 20th century with works by Sergei Prokofiev composed *The Love for Three Oranges* (1921) and *The Gambler* (1929), among others. His crowning achievement, written toward the end of his life, was *War and Peace* (1948), based on the novel by Leo Tolstoy. Dmitri Shostakovich’s most notable work is *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1934). Both artists suffered censure from the Soviet government.

**Into the 20th Century**

Claude Debussy 1862–1918
Richard Strauss 1864–1949
Paul Dukas 1865–1935
Arnold Schoenberg 1874–1951
Igor Stravinsky 1882–1971
Alban Berg 1885–1935
Darius Milhaud 1892–1974
Paul Hindemith 1895–1963
Kurt Weill 1900–1950
Benjamin Britten 1913–1976
Claude Debussy’s impressionist score for Pelléas et Mélisande (1902) paved the way for the radical changes in 20th-century opera. Also based on a Symbolist text by Maurice Maeterlinck was Paul Dukas’ Ariane et Barbe-Bleue (1907), an opera about the notorious Bluebeard and his six wives. But causing the most sensation was Richard Strauss’ Salome (1905), which pushed both tonality and the demands on the singers to the limits. He followed that opera with an even more progressive work, Elektra (1909), drawn from the Greek tragedy by Sophocles.

Important innovations were taking place in Vienna. Arnold Schoenberg made a complete break with tonality in his staged monodrama Erwartung (1909), giving all twelve tones of the chromatic scale equal importance. He codified this approach in his twelve-tone system where a theme is created with a row of notes using all twelve notes of the chromatic scale. This “row” can be played in transposition, in reverse, upside-down, or in any combination of the three. Schoenberg also evolved a particular style of singing, sprechstimme, an intoned speech halfway between singing and speaking.

Sprechstimme was well suited to the expressionist nature of operas being produced at this time. Schoenberg’s student, Alban Berg, employed it in Wozzeck (1925) and used the serialized twelve-tone method in his opera Lulu (1937). Another avant-garde composer, Paul Hindemith, created a series of expressionist one-act operas that shocked audiences of the day: Murder, Hope of Women (1921), Das Nusch-Nuschi (1921) and Sancta Susanna (1922). Two later operas include one based on a short story by E.T.A. Hoffmann (Cardillac, 1926) and a satire on modern social behavior (News of the Day, 1929). At about the same Kurt Weill was causing an uproar with his new works: The Threepenny Opera (1928), The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny (1930) and Der Silbersee (1933). The up-and-coming Nazi party did not favor his works, and he was forced to leave the country, eventually to settle in America.

In Paris, Russian Igor Stravinsky was shocking audiences and causing riots with his ballet music. His early operas include The Nightingale (1914) and Mavra (1922). Oedipus Rex (1927) is representative of his first neoclassical works, using forms from the 18th century with modern tonality and orchestration. His later (and longest) opera, The Rake’s Progress (1951), is a culmination of this neoclassical style. French composer Darius Milhaud was extremely prolific in all genres of music. In opera, he produced the one-act Le pauvre matelot (1927) and a large-scale work in the tradition of grand opera, Christophe Colombe (1930). Later in his life he composed La mère coupable (1966), based on the Beaumarchais Figaro trilogy (which includes The Barber of Seville and The Marriage of Figaro).

In England, Benjamin Britten emerged as one of Britain’s foremost composers of opera since Henry Purcell. Out of his 16 original works for the stage the most popular include Peter Grimes (1945), Billy Budd (1951), Gloriana (1953) and The Turn of the Screw (1954).
20th- and 21st-century American Composers of Opera

Virgil Thomson 1896–1989
George Antheil 1900–1959
Samuel Barber 1910–1981
Gian Carlo Menotti 1911–2007
Carlisle Floyd 1926–
Dominick Argento 1927–
Conrad Susa 1935–
Philip Glass 1937–
John Corigliano 1938–
John Adams 1947–

Paris in the 20s served to inspire the next generation of composers, several of which were expatriates from America. George Antheil was the first American composer to have an opera premiered in Europe – his work, Transatlantic, was written in France but premiered in Frankfurt in 1930. Compatriot Virgil Thomson studied with famed teacher Nadia Boulanger and later produced Four Saints in Three Acts (1934) and The Mother of Us All (1947), both to texts by Gertrude Stein. Samuel Barber stayed on American soil, studying at the newly founded Curtis Institute in 1935. He went on to compose Vanessa (1958), and to open the new Metropolitan Opera House at Lincoln Center, Antony and Cleopatra (1966).

On Vanessa, Barber collaborated with another composer, Gian Carlo Menotti, who wrote the libretto. Also the author of 25 libretti for his own operas, Menotti is best known for The Medium (1946), The Consul (1950), Amahl and the Night Visitors (1951) and The Saint of Bleecker Street (1954). Another American composing at about the same time was Carlisle Floyd, who favored American themes and literature. His most important works include Susannah (1955), Wuthering Heights (1958), The Passion of Jonathan Wade (1962) and Of Mice and Men (1970).

During the sixties and seventies, the Minnesota Opera was the site of many world premieres of lasting significance: Conrad Susa’s Transformations (1973) and Black River (1975), and Dominick Argento’s The Masque of Angels (1964), Postcards from Morocco (1971), The Voyage of Edgar Allen Poe (1976), Miss Havisham’s Wedding Night (1981) and Casanova’s Homecoming (1985; revived in 2009). Other Argento works of merit include Miss Havisham’s Fire (1979) and The Aspern Papers (1988).

Other composers currently at the fore include Philip Glass, John Corigliano and John Adams. The Minimalist music of Philip Glass has won popular acclaim among even non-opera-going audiences – his oeuvre includes Einstein on the Beach (1976), Akhnaten (1984), and most recently, The Voyage (1992), commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Columbus’ discovery of America. The Met also commissioned The Ghosts of Versailles from John Corigliano in 1991 – like Milhaud’s opera of 1966, its text involves Beaumarchais’ third part of the Figaro trilogy with the playwright himself appearing as the lover of 18th-century Queen of France Marie Antoinette.

Opera continues to be a living and vital art form in the revival of many of these works as well as the commissioning of new pieces. Among world premieres in the last two decades include Tobias Picker’s *Emmeline* (1996) by Santa Fe Opera, Daniel Catán’s *Floresia en el Amazonas* (1996) by Houston Grand Opera, Myron Fink’s *The Conquistador* (1997) presented by San Diego Opera, Anthony Davis’ *Amistad* (1997) presented by Lyric Opera of Chicago and *Central Park* (1999) by Glimmerglass Opera, a trilogy of short operas set by three composers. Recent seasons included such new works as Poul Ruders’ *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Royal Danish Opera; 2000), Bright Sheng’s *Madame Mao* (Santa Fe Opera; 2003), Daniel Catán’s *Salsipuedes* (Houston Grand Opera; 2004), Richard Danielpour’s *Margaret Garner* (Michigan Opera Theatre; 2005), Ricky Ian Gordon’s *The Grapes of Wrath* (Minnesota Opera; 2007), Jonathan Dove’s *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (Opera North, Leeds; 2008), Howard Shore’s *The Fly* (Los Angeles Opera; 2009), Jake Heggie’s *Moby Dick* (Dallas Opera; 2010), Kevin Puts’ *Silent Night* (Minnesota Opera; 2011) and Douglas J. Cuomo and John Patrick Shanley’s *Doubt* (Minnesota Opera; 2013).
Minnesota Opera combines a culture of creativity and fiscal responsibility to produce opera and opera education programs that expand the art form, nurture artists, enrich audiences and contribute to the vitality of the community.

Minnesota Opera’s roots were planted in 1963 when the Walker Art Center commissioned Dominick Argento to compose an opera (*The Masque of Angels*) for its performing arts program, Center Opera. Center Opera focused on the composition and performance of new works by American composers, and, under the influence of the Walker Art Center, emphasized visual design. The company grew steadily, and in 1969 became an independent entity, changing its name in 1971 to The Minnesota Opera.

Throughout the first 12 years of its history, The Minnesota Opera was known as a progressive, “alternative” opera production company, a complement to the traditional orientation of the annual Metropolitan Opera tour and the productions of the St. Paul Opera. In 1976, The Minnesota Opera merged with the St. Paul Opera, adding a focus on traditional repertory to its program of contemporary opera.

In January 1985, The Minnesota Opera entered a new era with the opening of the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts in St. Paul, one of the nation’s most respected performance halls. Today, the company presents its entire season at the Ordway.

In September 1990, the company moved its scenic and costume shops, rehearsal facilities and administrative offices to the 51,000 square-feet Minnesota Opera Center, which comprises three renovated warehouses on the Mississippi riverfront in Minneapolis. Winner of a 1990 Preservation Alliance of Minnesota Award, the Minnesota Opera Center is one of the finest opera production facilities in the nation and has served to strengthen the company both artistically and institutionally.

Throughout the 1990s, the company gained a national reputation for its high-quality, innovative productions of standard repertoire operas like *Aida*, *Carmen* and *Turandot*, which were seen on stages across the nation, and firmly established Minnesota Opera’s reputation as a lead coproducer in the industry. In that decade, Minnesota Opera also grew institutionally, launching an artistic development campaign to establish a foundation for the expansion of its season and increased artistic quality.

In 1997, the company launched its Resident Artist Program to bridge the gap between an artist’s academic training and their professional life on the world stage. The RAP is acclaimed for its exceptional, intense and individualized training as well as the elite group of young artists it produces. Alumni have earned engagements at prestigious houses such as the Metropolitan Opera, the Salzburg Festival and Covent Garden.

In 2000, Artistic Director Dale Johnson articulated a new artistic vision for the company inspired by bel canto (“beautiful singing”), the ideal upon which Italian opera is based. Bel canto values, which emphasize intense emotional expression supported by exquisite technique, inform every aspect of the company’s programs, from repertoire selection, casting and visual design to education and artist training. As one manifestation of its philosophy, Minnesota Opera is committed to producing one work from the early 19th-century Bel Canto period each season, attracting luminary singers like Bruce Ford, Vivica Genaux, Brenda Harris and Sumi Jo to its stage.
Minnesota Opera is also recognized for its progressive and far-reaching educational programs. Residencies in schools, opera education classes and pre-performance discussions are building an audience for tomorrow and enhancing the enjoyment of audiences today.

Throughout its history, Minnesota Opera has attracted international attention for its performances of new operas and innovative productions of masterworks. Among its most renowned world and American premieres are: Dominick Argento’s *Postcard from Morocco*, The Voyage of Edgar Allan Poe and Casanova’s Homecoming, William Mayer’s A Death in the Family, Libby Larsen’s Frankenstein, The Modern Prometheus, Oliver Knussen and Maurice Sendak’s Where the Wild Things Are, Conrad Susa’s Transformations and Black River, PDQ Bach’s The Abduction of Figaro, Robert Moran’s From the Towers of the Moon, Gioachino Rossini’s Armida, Evan Chen’s Bok Choy Variations, George Antheil’s Transatlantic, Poul Ruders’ The Handmaid’s Tale, Laurent Petitgirard’s Joseph Merrick dit Elephant Man, Saverio Mercadante’s Orazi e Curiazi, Ricky Ian Gordon’s The Grapes of Wrath, Reinhard Keiser’s The Fortunes of King Croesus, Jonathan Dove’s The Adventures of Pinocchio, Kevin Puts’ Pulitzer Prize-winning Silent Night and Douglas J. Cuomo’s Doubt.

Building on the legacy of its commitment to new work and following the overwhelming success of its commission of *The Grapes of Wrath* in 2007, Minnesota Opera launched the New Works Initiative, a landmark program designed to invigorate the operatic repertoire through the production and dissemination of new commissions and revivals of contemporary American works. The seven-year, $7 million program includes an international coproduction (*The Adventures of Pinocchio*, 2009), three revivals (*Casanova’s Homecoming* in 2010; *Wuthering Heights* in 2011 and *The Dream of Valentino* in 2013) and three commissions (*Silent Night* in 2011; *Doubt* in 2013 and *The Manchurian Candidate* in 2015).

On the Minnesota Opera stage, talented national and internationally known artists are brought together to create productions of the highest artistic integrity, emphasizing the balance and total integration of theatrical and musical values. Throughout the past five decades, the company has presented such artists as Tim Albery, Isabel Bayrakdarian, John Lee Beatty, Harry Bicket, Richard Bonynge, William Burden, John Conklin, Roxana Constantinescu, David Daniels, Bruce Ford, Elizabeth Futral, Vivica Genaux, Colin Graham, Denyce Graves, Greer Grimsley, Nancy Gustafson, Brenda Harris, Jason Howard, Judith Howarth, Robert Indiana, Robert Israel, Sumi Jo, Kelly Kaduce, Antony McDonald, Catherine Malfitano, Daniel Massey, Johanna Meier, Suzanne Mentrzer, Erie Mills, Sherrill Milnes, Julia Migenes, Fernando de la Mora, James Morris, Suzanne Murphy, Maureen O’Flynn, Susanna Phillips, Ashley Putnam, Patricia Racette, James Robinson, Neil Rosenshein, William Shimell, James Valenti, David Walker and Keith Warner.

Minnesota Opera, now the 13th largest opera company in the nation with an annual budget of $10.2 million (Fiscal Year 2012), is guided by President and General Director Kevin Ramch and Artistic Director Dale Johnson.

Today Minnesota Opera is enjoying unprecedented stability and unity of mission, working toward its vision to create a new, dynamic opera company model based upon innovation, world-class artistic quality and strong community service.
2013–2014
Manon Lescaut (Puccini)
Arabella (Strauss)
Machet (Verdi)
The Dream of Valentino (Argento)
Die Zauberflöte (Mozart)

2012–2013
50th ANNIVERSARY SEASON
Nabucco (Verdi)
Anna Bolena (Donizetti)
§ Doubt (Cuomo)
Hamlet (Thomas)
Turanádot (Puccini)

2011–2012
Così fan tutte (Mozart)
Silent Night (Puts)
Werther (Massenet)
Lucia di Lammermoor (Donizetti)
Madame Butterfly (Puccini)

2010–2011
Orfeo ed Euridice (Gluck)
La Cenerentola (Rossini)
Maria Stuarda (Donizetti)
Salome (R. Strauss)

2009–2010
Les pêcheurs de perles (Bizet)
Casanova’s Homecoming (Argento)
Roberto Devereux (Donizetti)
La bohème (Puccini)

2008–2009
Il trovatore (Verdi)
Die Entführung aus dem Serail (Mozart)
Faust (Gounod)
* The Adventures of Pinocchio (Dove)

2007–2008
Un ballo in maschera (Verdi)
L’italiana in Algeri (Rossini)
Roméo et Juliette (Gounod)
* Croesus (Keiser)
Rusalka (Dvořák)

2006–2007
La donna del lago (Rossini)
Les contes d’Hoffmann (Offenbach)
§ The Gospels of Wrath (Gordon)
Lakmé (Delibes)
La nozze di Figaro (Mozart)

2005–2006
Tosca (Puccini)
Don Giovanni (Mozart)
* Orazii et Curiazi (Mercadante)
* Joseph Merrick dit Elephant Man (Petitgirard)

2004–2005
Madama Butterfly (Puccini)
Maria Padilla (Donizetti)
Carmen (Bizet)
Nixon in China (Adams)

2003–2004
Rigoletto (Verdi)
Lucrezia Borgia (Donizetti)
Passion (Sondheim)
Die Zauberflöte (Mozart)

2002–2003
Die lustige Witwe (Lehár)
Norma (Bellini)
Der fliegende Holländer (Wagner)
La traviata (Verdi)
* The Handmaid’s Tale (Ruders)

2001–2002
Lucia di Lammermoor (Donizetti)
La clemenza di Tito (Mozart)
La bohème (Puccini)
Little Women (Adamo)
Don Carlo (Verdi)

2000–2001
Turanád (Puccini)
I Capuleti ed i Montecchi (Bellini)
Street Scene (Weill)
Il barbiere di Siviglia (Rossini)
Pagliacci/Carmen bavaro (Leoncavallo/Orff)
* The Barber of Seville (Rossini)

1999–2000
Der Rosenkavalier (R. Strauss)
Macbeth (Verdi)
Semiramide (Rossini)
Le nozze di Figaro (Mozart)
* The Marriage of Figaro (Mozart)

1998–1999
Otello (Verdi)
Madama Butterfly (Puccini)
The Turn of the Screw (Britten)
Faust (Gounod)
* Madame Butterfly (Puccini)

1997–1998
Aida (Verdi)
La Cenerentola (Rossini)
* Transatlantic (Antheil)
Tosca (Puccini)
* Cinderella (Rossini, Massenet)

1996–1997
La traviata (Verdi)
Die Zauberflöte (Mozart)
The Rake’s Progress (Stravinsky)
Carmen (Bizet)
* Carmen (Bizet)

1995–1996
La bohème (Puccini)
Don Giovanni (Mozart)
Pelléas et Mélisande (Debussy)
Les contes d’Hoffmann (Offenbach)
* The Bohemians (Puccini)

1994–1995
Turanád (Puccini)
Il barbiere di Siviglia (Rossini)
Rigoletto (Verdi)
§ Bok Choy Variations (Chen and Simonson)
* Figaro’s Revenge (Rossini, Paisiello)


§ World Premiere
* American Premiere
† Commissioned by The Minnesota Opera
- by The Minnesota Opera Midwest Tour
▲ Tour production
• Outreach/Education tour
• New Music-Theater Ensemble production
1993–1994
Julius Caesar (Handel)
* Diary of an African American (Peterson)
II trovatore (Verdi)
§ The Merry Widow and The Hollywood Tycoon (Lehár)
▲ Don Giovanni (Mozart)
1992–1993
Der fliegende Holländer (Wagner)
* Armida (Rossini)
Madama Butterfly (Puccini)
The Pirates of Penzance (Gilbert & Sullivan)
1991–1992
Tosca (Puccini)
Les pêcheurs de perles (Bizet)
Le nozze di Figaro (Mozart)
§ From the Towers of the Moon (Moran & La Chiusa)
▲ The Magic Flute (Mozart)
Carrousel (Rodgers & Hammerstein)
1990–1991
Norma (Bellini)
The Aspera Papers (Argento)
Carmen (Bizet)
Coi fan tutte (Mozart)
▲ Coi fan tutte (Mozart)
▲ Swing on a Star (Winkler)
1989–1990
La bohème (Puccini)
A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Britten)
Roméo et Juliette (Gounod)
§ Frankenstein, The Modern Prometheus (Larsen)
My Fair Lady (Lerner & Loewe)
* § Snow Leopard (Harper & Nieboer)
▲ Madame Butterfly (Puccini)
Where the Wild Things Are (Sendak/Knussen)
1988–1989
Don Giovanni (Mozart)
Salome (R. Strauss)
The Mikado (Gilbert & Sullivan)
The Jupiter Tree (Glass & Moran)
Show Boat (Kern & Hammerstein)
§ • Without Colors (Wellman & Shiflett)
§ • Red Tide (Selig & Sherman)
§ • Newest Little Opera in the World (ensemble)
▲ Cinderella (Rossini)
▲ Tintypes (Kyte, Marvin, Pearle)
1987–1988
Die Fledermaus (J. Strauss)
Rigoletto (Verdi)
Rusalka (Dvorak)
• Cowboy Lilt (Greene & Madsen)
§ • Fly Away ALL (Hutchinson & Shank)
• Book of Days (Monk)
Oklahoma! (Rodgers & Hammerstein)
▲ Carmen (Bizet)
▲ Jargonauts, Ahoy! (McKeel)
1986–1987
Les pêcheurs de perles (Bizet)
The Postman Always Rings Twice (Paulus)
Artfacthe auf Narv (R. Strauss)
South Pacific (Rodgers & Hammerstein)
▲ Hansel and Gretel (Humperdinck)
§ • Jargonauts, Ahoy! (McKeel)
1985–1986
* Where the Wild Things Are/Higgity Piggy Pig (Knussen/ Sendak)
La traviata (Verdi)
L’elisir d’amore (Donizetti)
The King and I (Rodgers & Hammerstein)
§ • Opera Tomorrow
▲ The Fantasticks (Schmidt)
▲ The Magic Flute (Mozart)
§ • The Music Shop (Wargo)
1984–1985
* Animalen (Werle)
§ • Casanova’s Homecoming (Argento)
The Magic Flute (Mozart)
▲ La bohème (Puccini)
▲ Mournable, back at Cinderella’s (Arlan)
1983–1984
Hansel and Gretel (Humperdinck)
Madama Butterfly (Puccini)
La Cenerentola (Rossini)
§ The Abduction of Figaro (PDQ Bach)
▲ The Bow (Argento)
▲ Chantickey (Barab)
▲ Don Pasquale (Donizetti)
1982–1983
Hansel and Gretel (Humperdinck)
Lucia di Lammermoor (Donizetti)
§ A Death in the Family (Mayer)
Kiss Me, Kate (Porter)
▲ The Barber of Seville (Rossini)
▲ The Frog Who Became a Prince (Barnes)
▲ Zatavett (Barnes)
1981–1982
Hansel and Gretel (Humperdinck)
The Village Singer (Paulus)
Gianni Schicchi (Puccini)
The Barber of Seville (Rossini)
§ Faustertop (Barnes)
§ The Mask of Evil (Mollicone)
▲ Hansel and Gretel (Humperdinck)
▲ Rossina (Titus)
The Merry Widow (Lheár)
Black River (Susa)
Carmen (Bizet)
A Water Bird Talk (Argento)
§ Miss Havisham’s Wedding Night (Argento)
▲ The Marriage of Figaro (Mozart)
▲ The Threepenny Opera (Weill)
1979–1980
The Abduction from the Seraglio (Mozart)
The Pirates of Penzance (Gilbert & Sullivan)
La bohème (Puccini)
§ • Rosina (Titus)
▲ A Christmas Carol (Sandow)
1978–1979
The Love for Three Oranges (Prokofiev)
• The Jealous Cellist
The Passion According to St. Matthew (J.S. Bach)
La traviata (Verdi)
The Consul (Menotti)
▲ Viva la Mamma (Donizetti)
1977–1978
* Christopher Columbus (Offenbach)
The Muter of U! All (Thomson)
The Marriage of Figaro (Mozart)
§ Claudia Legare (Ward)
1976–1977
The Bartered Bride (Smetana)
The Passion According to St. Matthew (J.S. Bach)
Candide (Bernstein)
Mahagonny (Weill)
1975–1976
* • Black River (Susa)
El Capitan (Sousa)
Coi fan tutte (Mozart)
§ • The Voyage of Edgar Allan Poe (Argento)
1974–1975
* • Gallmanufy (Minnesota Opera)
* Galliterer (Blackwood, Kaplan, Lewin)
The Magic Flute (Mozart)
Albert Herrng (Britten)
1973–1974
El Capitan (Sousa)
Transformations (Susa)
Don Giovanni (Mozart)
§ • The Newest Opera in the World (Minnesota Opera)
1972–1973
The Threepenny Opera (Weill)
Postcard from Morocco (Argento)
The Barber of Seville (Rossini)
§ • Transformations (Susa)
1971–1972
§ • Postcard from Morocco (Argento)
§ • The Business of Good Government (Marshall)
The Good Soldier Schweik (Kurka)
The Marriage of Figaro (Mozart)
1970–1971
§ • Christmas Mammaries & Good Government (Marshall)
§ • Faust Counter Faust (Gessner)
The Coronation of Poppea (Monteverdi)
The Mother of Us All (Thomson)
1969–1970
§ • Oedipus and the Sphinx (Marshall)
* Punch and Judy (Birtwistle)
* • 17 Days and 4 Minutes (Egk)
* • The Wanderer (Paul and Martha Boesing)
1968–1969
Coi fan tutte (Mozart)
§ • Horsipal (Stokes)
The Wise Woman and the King (Orff)
1967–1968
The Man in the Moon (Haydn)
A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Britten)
1966–1967
The Mother of Us All (Thomson)
The Sorrows of Orphee (Milhaud)
* The Harpies (Blitzstein)
Socrates (Satie)
Three Minute Operas (Milhaud)
1965–1966
The Abduction from the Seraglio (Mozart)
The Good Soldier Schweik (Kurka)
1964–1965
The Rape of Lucretia (Britten)
The Wise Woman and the King (Orff)
1963–1964
§ • The Mascque of Angels (Argento)
The Masque of Venus and Adonis (Blow)
Albert Herrng (Britten)
§ • The Business of Good Government (Marshall)
* Punch and Judy (Birtwistle)
* • 17 Days and 4 Minutes (Egk)
* • The Wanderer (Paul and Martha Boesing)
Coi fan tutte (Mozart)
§ • Horsipal (Stokes)
The Wise Woman and the King (Orff)
1967–1968
The Man in the Moon (Haydn)
A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Britten)
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The Mother of Us All (Thomson)
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1965–1966
The Abduction from the Seraglio (Mozart)
The Good Soldier Schweik (Kurka)
1964–1965
The Rape of Lucretia (Britten)
The Wise Woman and the King (Orff)
1963–1964
§ • The Mascque of Angels (Argento)
The Masque of Venus and Adonis (Blow)
Albert Herrng (Britten)
The Standard Repertory

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart 1756–1791
- The Abduction from the Seraglio 1782
- The Marriage of Figaro 1786
- Don Giovanni 1787
- Cosi fan tutte 1790
- The Magic Flute 1791

NINETEENTH CENTURY

Ludwig van Beethoven 1770–1827
- Fidelio 1805

Gioachino Rossini 1792–1868
- The Barber of Seville 1816
- La Cenerentola 1817

Gaetano Donizetti 1797–1848
- The Elixir of Love 1832
- Lucia di Lammermoor 1835
- Don Pasquale 1843

Vincenzo Bellini 1801–1835
- Norma 1831

Richard Wagner 1813–1883
- The Flying Dutchman 1843
- Tannhäuser 1845
- Lohengrin 1850
- Tristan und Isolde 1865
- Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg 1868
- The Ring Cycle 1876
- — Das Rheingold, Die Walküre, Siegfried and Götterdämmerung
- Parsifal 1882

Giuseppe Verdi 1813–1901
- Rigoletto 1851
- Il trovatore 1853
- La traviata 1853
- La forza del destino 1862
- Don Carlos 1867
- Aida 1871
- Otello 1887
- Falstaff 1893

Charles-François Gounod 1818–1893
- Faust 1859
- Roméo et Juliette 1867

NINETEENTH CENTURY (CONTINUED)

Jacques Offenbach 1819–1880
- Les contes d’Hoffmann 1881

Georges Bizet 1838–1875
- Carmen 1875

Modest Musorgsky 1839–1881
- Boris Godunov 1874

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky 1840–1893
- Eugene Onegin 1879

Engelbert Humperdinck 1854–1921
- Hänsel und Gretel 1893

Ruggero Leoncavallo 1857–1919
- Pagliacci 1892

Pietro Mascagni 1863–1945
- Cavalleria rusticana 1890

TWENTIETH CENTURY

Giacomo Puccini 1858–1924
- Manon Lescaut 1893
- La bohème 1896
- Tosca 1900
- Madama Butterfly 1904
- Turandot 1926

Claude Debussy 1862–1918
- Pelléas et Mélisande 1902

Richard Strauss 1864–1949
- Salome 1905
- Elektra 1909
- Der Rosenkavalier 1911
- Ariadne auf Naxos 1912

Alban Berg 1885–1935
- Wozzeck 1925
- Lulu 1937

Benjamin Britten 1913–1976
- Peter Grimes 1945
- Albert Herring 1947
- Billy Budd 1951
- The Turn of the Screw 1954
The Elements of Opera

Often called “all the arts in one” opera includes the Aristotelian elements of drama: theme, spectacle, plot, diction, movement and music. A production is truly successful only when these components work together. Many individuals are engaged to accomplish this purpose.

IN THE BEGINNING
A subject is selected by a composer. It may be mythical, biblical, historical, literary or based on current events. A librettist is employed to adapt the story into poetic verse and the composer then writes the music (or score).

THE OPERA COMPANY
An opera company’s artistic director agrees to stage the work. In many cases, an opera has already been written and staged many times.

ADMINISTRATION
The company’s marketing department sells tickets and the development department raises funds through donations to cover the costs of the production. The finance department controls costs and balances the production’s budget. The education department prepares the audience for what they are going to see on stage.

CASTING
The opera company’s artistic director selects performers from auditions. These performers are divided into principals, comprimarios (singers in secondary roles), choristers, and players for the orchestra. Often in a production, supernumeraries are employed (people who act but do not sing). Sometimes the opera has a ballet which requires dancers, or a banda which requires orchestra members to play on stage.

SETS AND COSTUMES
A design team is assembled consisting of a stage director, set designer and costume designer. They agree on a visual concept for the opera and sets and costumes are created.

REHEARSAL
The production goes into rehearsal. Principals, choristers and the orchestra often rehearse separately until the director begins staging. The conductor of the orchestra attends staging rehearsals which are accompanied by a répétiteur, or rehearsal pianist. The orchestra joins the singers for the first time at the sitzprobe. During tech week, sets and lighting are put into place at the theater. Several dress rehearsals (with the performers in costume and the orchestra in the pit) occur before the first performance of the opera. Sometimes these rehearsals are attended by a select audience.
### The Premiere

The first presentation of the opera to the general public is known as the **premiere**. Long before the curtain goes up, preparations are being made.

**6:00 PM  Continuity**
Stagehands (1) set the scenery for the first act of the production.

**6:15 PM  Makeup calls**
Principals and comprimarios (2) begin to arrive at the theater to be put into costume by dressers, then are wigged by the wigmaster (1a) and made up with theatrical makeup.

**6:30 PM  House opens**
Opera patrons are admitted to the auditorium (4) and seated by ushers (5). The house manager (6) oversees the activities in the front of the house, including the ushers and concession sales. The box office manager (7) takes care of any last minute ticket purchases. Patrons may remain in the lobby (8) to attend an informational session of Opera Insights, led by the Opera's music staff.

**6:45 PM  Notes**
The stage director may give last minute instructions to the cast before the performance begins.

**7:00 PM  Warm-ups**
Principals and comprimarios (2) warm-up in their dressing rooms.

**7:15 PM  Chorus and orchestra warm-ups**
The chorus (10), who have already put on their costumes, warms up with the chorusmaster. The orchestra warms up in the orchestra pit (11).

**7:25 PM  Places**
The production stage manager (12) calls places. Two other stage managers (13) are posted stage left and stage right to cue the entrances of the singers and choristers.

**7:28 PM  Orchestra tune**
The principal oboe gives a concert “a” to which the orchestra tunes. The surtitle prompter (15) cues the preshow titles. The conductor shakes the concertmaster’s hand and mounts the podium.

**7:30 PM  Curtain**
The house lights go out, and the flyman (1a) raises the curtain (16). The show begins.

**8:25 PM  Intermission**
The audience returns to the lobby (8) for refreshments while the stagehands (1) reset the stage (14) for the next act.

**10:15 PM  Curtain calls**
The performance ends, and the stage director, designers, conductor and singers get to take a bow for all their hard work.
The most important part of the opera is the singers. They are categorized into six different voice types.

**THE SOPRANO**
High-voiced woman. Voted “Most Likely to Die Before the Curtain Goes Down.” Putty in the hands of the tenor, baritone and occasionally even the mezzo (especially if she is in pants).

**THE MEZZO-SOPRANO**
Middle- to lower-voiced woman. Nobody’s pawn. May hook up with the baritone, unless she’s playing a young man, in which case she usually gets the soprano.

**THE CONTRALTO**
Lowest-voiced woman. Usually the mother, maid or duenna (an older woman charged with monitoring the virtue of the impressionable soprano). Generally the contralto calls herself a mezzo in order to get more work.

**THE TENOR**
High-voiced man. Whether comic or tragic, most often the misunderstood romantic role. Often kill themselves; almost always get the girl.

**THE BASS AND BARITONE**
Middle- to lowest-voiced man. Usually the bad guy, the father or guardian, or the hero’s best friend. If he hooks up with another singer, it’s usually a mezzo.

**THE FAT LADY**
There is no fat lady in helmet and horns—that is a myth. It ain’t over till the curtain goes down for the last time and everyone around you is clapping.
Glossary of Opera Terms

ACOUSTICS
The science of sound; qualities which determine hearing facilities in an auditorium, concert hall, opera house, theater, etc.

ACT
A section of the opera, play, etc. usually followed by an intermission.

AREA LIGHTS
Provide general illumination.

ARIA
(*air, English and French; ariette, French). A formal song sung by a single vocalist. It may be in two parts (binary form), or in three parts (see da capo) with the third part almost a repetition of the first. A short aria is an arietta in Italian, ariette or petit air in French.

ARIOSO
Adjectival description of a passage less formal and complete than a fully written aria, but sounding like one. Much recitative has arioso, or songlike, passages.

AZIONE TEATRALE
(It.: ‘theatrical action’, ‘theatrical plot’). A species of Serenata that, unlike many works in this genre, contained a definite plot and envisioned some form of staging.

ATONALITY
Lack of a definite tonal focus, all sharps and flats being applied in the score when necessary. With no key and therefore no sense of finality, such music sounds odd to the conservative ear, but with practice the listener can find pleasure in it.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
The person responsible for the artistic concept of the opera – the overall look and “feel” of the production.

BACKDROP
A large, painted surface at the rear of the stage, associated with old-fashioned stage settings, two-dimensional, but often striving with painted shadows and perspective to suggest a third dimension.

BACKSTAGE
The area of the stage not visible to the audience, usually where the dressing rooms are located.

BALLAD OPERA
A play with many songs; the number has ranged from fifteen to seventy-five. In the early eighteenth century its music was drawn from popular folk song or quite sophisticated songs appropriated from successful operas.

BANDA
A group of musicians who perform onstage or slightly offstage.

BARITONE
The male singing voice which is higher than a bass but lower than a tenor.

BAROQUE
A style of art and music characteristic in particular of the Louis XIV period in France and the Charles II period and after in England. Baroque pictorial art is associated with theatrical energy and much decoration but nevertheless respects classical principles. The music theater of the Baroque, highly pictorial, developed the opera seria, with comic intermezzi between the acts.

BASS
The lowest male singing voice.

BEL CANTO
Although meaning simply “beautiful song,” the term is usually applied to the school of singing prevalent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Baroque and Romantic) which gave much attention to vocal purity, control, and dexterity in ornamentation.

BRAVO (A) (I)
An acknowledgement of a good performance shouted during moments of applause (the ending is determined by the gender and the number of performers).

BRAVURA
Implying brilliance and dexterity (bravura singing, a bravura aria, etc.). Intended for display and the technical execution of difficult passages.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cabaletta</td>
<td>A fast, contrasting short aria sung at the close of or shortly following a slower aria (called a cantabile, often for vocal effect only but sometimes dramatically motivated).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadence</td>
<td>A resting place or close of a passage of music, clearly establishing tonality.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cadenzza</td>
<td>An elaborate passage near the end of an aria, which shows off the singer’s vocal ability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camerata</td>
<td>A group of musicians, poets and scholars who met in Florence in 1600 and created opera.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantilena</td>
<td>Originally a little song, but now generally referring to smooth cantabile (It: ‘singable,’ or ‘singing’) passages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavatina</td>
<td>Originally an aria without a repeated section. Later used casually in place of aria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus</td>
<td>A group of singers (called choristers) who portray townspeople, guests or other unnamed characters; also refers to the music written for these people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus Master</td>
<td>Person who prepares the chorus musically (which includes rehearsing and directing them).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claque</td>
<td>A group attending performances in the larger opera houses and paid by leading singers to encourage and direct applause (a member of which is a claqueur).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloratura</td>
<td>A voice that can sing music with many rapid notes, or the music written for such a voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commedia dell’arte</td>
<td>Masked comedy or improvised Italian comedy of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. A popular theatrical form with a sketched-out plot and stock characters, a pair of lovers without masks surrounded by comedians—Arlecchino, Brighella, Pantalone, Dottore, etc. Some of Mozart’s and Rossini’s operas retain the vestiges of these characters. Strauss, Busoni, and other recent composers have deliberately used them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprimario</td>
<td>A small singing role, often a servant or other minor character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conductor</td>
<td>The person who supervises all musical detail, rehearsals and leads the orchestra and advises the artistic director about the hiring of singers and musical staff (also called the music director).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contralto</td>
<td>The lowest female singing voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counter Tenor</td>
<td>The highest natural male voice, not a castrato. True male altos may be heard in choirs. The term falsettist is sometimes used but disputed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyclorama</td>
<td>A curved curtain or wall enclosing the playing area of the stage and hiding the work areas behind it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Da Capo</td>
<td>(It: ‘from the top, or back to the beginning’). A familiar direction in music. A da capo aria of the Baroque period repeats the first part of the aria, with different embellishments, after the singing of a contrasting second part.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designer</td>
<td>The person who creates the lighting, costumes or sets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diaphragm</td>
<td>The muscle which separates the chest cavity from the abdominal cavity. It is used by singers for breath control and it allows them to “project” their voices to the back of the auditorium.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>The person who instructs the singer/actors in their movements on stage and in the interpretation of their roles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downstage</td>
<td>The front of the stage nearest the audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dramma Lirico</td>
<td>(It: dramma lirico). Modern term for opera, not necessarily of a lyrical character. The English term “lyrical drama” is used in the same way.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Dramma per musica**

A term that refers to text expressly written to be set by a composer and by extension also to the composition. The term was the one most commonly used for serious Italian opera in the eighteenth century (as opposed to the modern term opera seria, with which it is in effect interchangeable).

**Duet**

Music written for two people to play or sing together.

**Embellishment**

Decoration or ornament. A grace-note addition to the vocal line (also instrumental) of any kind, a four-note turn, or a trill.

**Ensemble**

Three or more people singing at the same time, or the music written for such a group.

**Falsetto**

The falsetto voice is of high pitch and produced by the vibrations of only one part of the vocal folds. The normal male voice sounds strained and effeminate in falsetto, but a natural alto or high tenor can produce effective vocal sound by this method. It is a singing mannerism to produce high tenor notes in falsetto.

**Festa teatrale**

(It.: ‘theatrical celebration’). A title applied to a dramatic work. Feste teatrali fall into two quite distinct classes: opera and serenatas.

**Finale**

The last musical number of an opera, or of an act of an opera.

**Fioritura**

(It: ‘flowering’, ‘flourish’; plural fioriture). When a composition for the voice contains decorative writing such as scales, arpeggios, trills and gruppetti (the groups of notes sometimes known in English as ‘turns’), it is described as ‘florid’ and the decorations themselves will be described collectively as ‘fioritura’. It is a more accurate term than ‘coloratura’, which is frequently used as an alternative.

**Flats**

Stretched canvas and wood panels on which scenery is painted.

**Flies**

The space above a stage where scenery is “flown” when not in use. A counterweight system simplifies raising and lowering flats, larger set pieces, and back drops.

**Full dress rehearsal**

The final rehearsal before opening night with all singers present in full costume.

**Grand opera**

Traditionally, a serious epic or historical work in four or five acts which makes extensive use of the chorus and also includes a ballet. Also contains magnificent special effects.

**Grid**

Gridiron. Framework from which lines are hung and battens attached for the “flying” of scenery. The grid is situated high in the flies just beneath the ceiling of the fly loft.

**Handlung für Musik**

(Ger: ‘action in music’). Term used by Wagner to describe the libretto for Lohengrin and Tristan und Isolde; it has occasionally been used since.

**Interlude**

A short piece of instrumental music played between scenes or acts to fill in delays brought about by scenery changes.

**Intermezzo**

An instrumental interlude played between acts, or short two-act comic opera played between the acts of an opera seria.

**Leitmotiv**

A recurring musical figure used to identify a person, event or idea.

**Legato**

A smooth, flowing line. In vocal music it demands steadiness of emission and a sensitivity to phrasing.

**Libretto**

The words of an opera.
MASKING  A scenic frame or device to prevent the audience from seeing into the wings of the stage. Door and window openings are usually masked, often with realistic backings.

MASCONE  An entertainment popular in the late sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth. A form of “total theater,” it combined music, scenic splendor, poetry, and some drama. Milton’s Comus, with music by Henry Lawes, is the most celebrated.

MELODRAMA  A basically serious play, frequently using comedy for relief, it only outwardly resembles tragedy. The conflicts and calamities are more interesting in themselves than are the characters, who tend to be stereotyped, good and bad. Passion, excitement, and action, often unmotivated, are emphasized. Intended for undiscriminating audiences, it uses much music to stimulate the emotions and much scenic effect to please the eye.

MÉLODrame  In addition to being the French word for melodrama, this term refers to a technique, which became popular during the eighteenth century, of playing orchestral music under or between the phrases of spoken dialogue.

MELODRAMMA  Dramma per musica (drama for music) and Melodramma (sung drama) antedate by many years the term opera, now in general use for works of this kind.

MEZZA VOCE  Half-voice, with reference to a passage required to be sung softly throughout. A similar term, messa di voce, has the different meaning of beginning a tone softly, swelling it gradually, and then softening it again.

MEZZO-SOPRANO  The middle female singing voice, lower than soprano but higher than contralto.

MOTIVE  A short musical idea on which a melody is based.

MUSICAL PLAY  A convenient but inexact designation which has become popular in English-speaking countries to distinguish the more ambitious works in the popular field of lyric theater from (a) European operetta or imitations thereof, (b) musical comedy of the vaudevillian sort, and (c) opera, especially in New York where the form is supposed to belong to the Metropolitan and the New York City Opera Company and is somewhat provincially considered “poison at the box office.” David Ewen regards Show Boat, 1927, as the first work of the new genre, the musical play. By the 1930s, this term had become a catchall.

OPERA  A term now used to cover musical-dramatic pieces of all kinds except musical comedy and operetta, although comic opera comes very close to these forms. The seventeenth-century Italian term for opera was Dramma per musica or Melodramma.

OPERA BUFFA  A precise Italian definition, meaning Italian comic opera of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Musical numbers are strung along a continuum of dry recitative.

OPÉRA COMIQUE  French light opera of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Strictly speaking, any theater piece written with spoken dialogue between the musical numbers (Faust, Carmen, and Manon) whether a comedy or not. The Paris Opéra Comique is also called the Salle Favart and was originally the home of all works using spoken dialogue, while the Opéra confined itself to through-composed works.

OPERA SERIA  Literally “serious opera.” An opera form of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries which uses historical, biblical or mythological subjects with a focus on revenge, danger and death.
**Operetta**

A loosely used term, often used interchangeably with comic opera, opéra bouffe, and musical comedy. In Italian it originally meant “little opera,” a short, light musical work. It has come to mean a full-length piece on a light subject, with musical numbers and spoken dialogue, and characterized by ingratiating tunes, decorative dances, colorful settings, social irresponsibility, a slender dramatic line, and the requirement of at least two well-trained voices.

**Oratorio**

A musical-dramatic work originating in the twelfth century, now generally performed, in contradistinction to opera, without action, costumes, and scenery. They are invariably associated with sacred subjects.

**Orchestra Pit**

The sunken area in front of the stage where the orchestra sits.

**Overture**

An orchestral introduction to the opera, usually played before the acting begins.

**Parlando**

(It: ‘in speaking style’). An informal and realistic technique occasionally used in Italian opera, bringing singing close to speaking.

**Portamento**

An Italian singing term, asking the voice to glide from one note to another at some distance. An authentic and effective device, to be distinguished from the mannerism of scooping.

**Principal**

A major singing role, or the singer who performs such a role.

**Proscenium**

The stage opening, resembling a three-sided picture frame. Immediately behind it and concealing the acting areas is the curtain. The proscenium arch was originally created in the 1700s to conceal the machinery used to create special stage effects.

**Quartet**

Four singers, or the music written for that group.

**Recitative**

Musical singing in the rhythm of speech.

**Recitativo**

A sung passage with orchestral accompaniment, lacking the formality of an aria, yet more declamatory and agitated than recitativo secco.

**Recitativo secco**

Dry recitative. A sung passage so close to everyday speech that although the pitches and time values are respected, a conversational quality prevails. A keyboard instrument generally supplies the sketchy accompaniment. Commonly used in Italian opera seria and opera buffa.

**Repertory**

A system of stage production in which a number of works are played, virtually in rotation, by a resident company throughout a season.

**Répétition**

French term for “rehearsal.” A répétition générale is a dress rehearsal to which critics and guests are invited.

**Revolve**

Revolving stage. Turntable. A section of the stage floor (permanently established) or a circular construction on a central pivot which revolves, to change scenery or supply movement of objects as well as people.

**Ritornello**

A short instrumental piece, literally meaning repetition or refrain. In Monteverdi’s works it usually consists of a few bars played between the verses of a strophic song.

**Rococo**

In art, associated with the late Baroque period and the late eighteenth century. In contrast to the dignity, heaviness, and occasional pomposity of Baroque, Rococo art is playful, lighter in tone and color, and adorned with scrolls, acorns, and shells.

**Role**

The character that a singer portrays.
ROMANTICISM The movement strongly associated with nineteenth-century Germany, but felt through all Europe and responsible for far-reaching changes in all forms of art. Rebels against the establishment (which was founded on a deep respect for the classics), the romanticists opposed authority and advocated freedom from formal regulations. They encouraged a subjective, strongly emotional approach as an antidote to classical decorum.

SCORE The music of an opera or other musical work in which the parts for different performers appear vertically above one another.

SCRIM A thin curtain, often painted. When lit from behind, one can see through it.

SERENATA A dramatic cantata, normally celebratory or eulogistic in intent, for two or more singers with orchestral accompaniment. In dramaturgical respects the serenata most closely resembles the Baroque oratorio.

SINFONIA A symphonic work the precedes an opera (English: overture); a shorter version is referred to as a prelude.

SINGSPIEL A German form of comic opera with spoken dialogue.

SITZPROBE A sit-down rehearsal where the performers sing with the orchestra for the first time.

SOPRANO The highest female singing voice.

SPRECHSTIMME A form of declamation halfway between speech and song. Instead of exactly notated pitch an approximation is given. The time, however, is given exactly and the singer is not allowed absolute license. Notations up and down are also meant to be respected. This style of singing is found in the works of Schoenberg and Berg.

STAGE LEFT The left side of the stage from the performer’s perspective as s/he faces the audience.

STAGE RIGHT The right side of the stage from the performer’s perspective as s/he faces the audience.

STRETTA An accelerated passage at the end of an aria, scene, or act.

TENOR The highest male singing voice.

TESSITURA Literally “texture.” The approximate range of a role or an aria.

THROUGH-COMPOSED Through-composed opera is a continuous music drama uninterrupted by spoken dialogue or obviously recognizable recitative.

TRAGÉDIE LYRIQUE A French term associated mainly with Lully and Rameau. Tragédie lyrique comes somewhat closer to the spoken play in dramatic expressiveness than does the Italian opera seria of the same period, which may exceed it in vocal expressiveness.

TRILL A musical ornament requiring the rapid alternation of two adjacent notes.

TROUSSEUR ROLE Also called “pants role.” The part of a male character sung by a woman, usually a mezzo-soprano.

UNDERSTUDY A replacement for a particular role in case of illness or emergency (also called a “cover”).

VERISMO A type of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Italian opera that emphasized realistic subjects.

WANDELPROBE Musical rehearsal which allows the conductor to hear what the singers sound like when they perform on the set.

WINGS The sides of the stage where the performers wait before making their entrances.

Sources:
New York City Opera Education Department, Edmonton Opera.
Glossary of Musical Terms

adagio
Slowly and smoothly.

ad libitum
As you please; freely.

affectuoso
Expressively; tenderly; lovingly.

agitato
Agitated.

alberti bass
Stereotyped figures of accompaniment, consisting of broken chords.

allargando
Slowing and broadening.

allegretto
Fairly lively; not as fast as allegro.

allegro
Lively; fast.

a mezzo voce
With half the voice.

andante
Going; moving; at a moderate rate.

andantino
Slightly faster than andante.

animato
With spirit; animated.

appoggiatura
An extra or embellishing note preceding a main melodic note or tone. Usually written as a note of smaller size, it shares the time value of the main note.

arpeggio
Producing the tones of a chord in succession but not simultaneously.

assai
Very; very much.

a tempo
At the preceding rate of speed.

atonal
Music that is not anchored in traditional musical tonality; it uses the chromatic scale impartially, does not use the diatonic scale and has no keynote or tonal center.

augmentation
The presentation of a melody in doubled values so that, e.g. the quarter notes become half notes.

bar
A vertical line across the stave that divides the music into units.

buffo, buffa
Comic.

cadenza
A flourish or brilliant part of an aria commonly inserted just before a finale.

cantabile
Songlike; singingly.

cantata
A choral piece generally containing scriptural narrative texts.

con brio
With spirit.

continuo
A bass part (as for a keyboard or stringed instrument) that was used especially in baroque ensemble music; it consists of a succession of bass notes with figures that indicate the required chords. Also called figured bass, thoroughbass.

counterpoint
Music consisting of two or more lines that sound simultaneously.

crescendo
Gradually getting louder.

diatonic
Relating to a major or minor musical scale that comprises intervals of five whole steps and two half steps.

diminuendo
Gradually getting softer.

dimination
The presentation of a melody in halved values so that, e.g. the quarter notes become eighth notes.

dissonance
A mingling of discordant sounds that do not harmonize within the diatonic scale.

dolorosamente
Sadly; grievingly.
DOMINANT

The fifth tone of the diatonic scale: in the key of C, the dominant is G.

FERMATA

Pause sign; prolonged time value of note so marked.

FORTE  f

Loud.

FORTISSIMO  ff

Very loud.

FURIOUSO

Furious; violent.

GIACOSO

Playfully.

GIUSTO

Strict; exact.

GLISSANDO

A rapid sliding up or down the scale.

GRANDIOSO

With grandeur; majestically.

GRAVE

Slow; heavy; solemn.

GRAZIOSO

Elegantly; gracefully.

LAMENTOSO

Mournfully.

LAGHETTO

Somewhat less slowly than largo.

LARGO

Broadly and slowly.

LEGATO

Smoothly and connectedly.

LEGGIERO

Light; airy; graceful.

LENTO

Slow.

MAESTOSO

Majestic; stately; grand.

MAESTRO

From the Italian “master”: a term of respect to conductors, composers, directors, and great musicians.

MARCATO

Marked.

MEZZO

Half; middle; medium.

MISTERIOSO

With mystery.

MODERATO

Moderately; at a moderate rate.

MOLTO

Much; very.

MORENDO

Dying away.

MOSSO

Moved; agitated; lively.

MOTO

Motion; movement.

OBBLIGATO

An elaborate accompaniment to a solo or principal melody that is usually played by a single instrument.

OCTAVE

A musical interval embracing eight diatonic degrees: therefore, from C₁ to C₂ is an octave.

ORNAMENTATION

Extra embellishing notes—appoggiaturas, trills, roulades, or cadenzas—that enhance a melodic line.

OVERTURE

An orchestral introduction to an act or the whole opera. An overture can appear only at the beginning of an opera.

OSSIA

Or; or else; an alternate reading.

PENTATONIC

A five-note scale, like the black notes within an octave on the piano.

PIACERE

To please.

PIANO  p

Soft.

PIANISSIMO  pp

Very soft.

PITCH

The property of a musical tone that is determined by the frequency of the waves producing it.

PIÙ

More.

PIZZICATO

For bowed stringed instruments, an indication that the string is to be plucked with a finger.

POCO

Little.

POLYPHONY

Literally “many voices.” A style of musical composition in which two or more independent melodies are juxtaposed in harmony; counterpoint.
| **POLYTONAL** | The use of several tonal schemes simultaneously. |
| **PORTAMENTO** | A continuous gliding movement from one tone to another. |
| **PRESTO** | Very fast; lively; quick. |
| **QUAVER** | An eighth note. |
| **RALLENTANDO** | Gradually slower. |
| **RITARDANDO** | Gradually slower. |
| **RITENUTO** | Held back; slower. |
| **RITORNELLO** | A short recurrent instrumental passage between elements of a vocal composition. |
| **ROMANZA** | A solo song that is usually sentimental; it is usually shorter and less complex than an aria and rarely deals with terror, rage and anger. |
| **ROULADE** | A florid vocal embellishment sung to one syllable. |
| **RUBATO** | A way of playing or singing with regulated rhythmic freedom. |
| **SEMITONE** | One half of a whole tone, the smallest distance between two notes in Western music. In the key of C, the notes are E and F, and B and C. |
| **SEMPLICE** | Simply. |
| **SEMPRE** | Always. |
| **SENZA** | Without. |
| **SERIAL MUSIC** | Music based on a series of tones in a chosen pattern without regard for traditional tonality. |
| **SPORZANDO** | With accent. |
| **SORDINO** | Muted. |
| **SOSTENUTO** | Sustained. |
| **SOTTO** | Under; beneath. |
| **STACCATO** | Detached; separated. |
| **STRINGENDO** | Hurried; accelerated. |
| **STROFHE** | Music repeated for each verse of an aria. |
| **SYNCOPATION** | Shifting the beat forward or back from its usual place in the bar; it is a temporary displacement of the regularmetrical accent in music caused typically by stressing the weak beat. |
| **TACET** | Silent. |
| **TEMPO** | Rate of speed. |
| **TONALITY** | The organization of all the tones and harmonies of a piece of music in relation to a tonic (the first tone of its scale). |
| **TRISTE** | Sad. |
| **TWINELVE-TONE** | The 12 chromatic tones of the octave placed in a chosen fixed order and constituting with some permitted permutations and derivations the melodic and harmonic material of a serial musical piece. Each note of the chromatic scale is used as part of the melody before any other note gets repeated. |
| **VELOCE** | Rapid. |
| **VIBRATO** | A “vibration”; a slightly tremulous effect imparted to vocal or instrumental tone for added warmth and expressiveness by slight and rapid variations in pitch. |
| **VIVACE** | Brisk; lively. |
### Bibliography — Joseph Merrick

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**DISCOGRAPHY**

**NAXOS**

8.557608-09 Stutzmann, Rivenq, Breault, Devellereau, Koch, Courjal, Nelson-Shafer; Petitgirard, Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo and the Choeur Francaise d’Opera (DVD)

**VIDEOGRAPHY**

**MARCO POLO**

Sykorova, Rivenq, Breault, Conoluci, Maurus, Courjal, Leger; Petitgirard, Nice Opera Orchestra and Chorus

**PARAMOUNT**

Hopkins, Hurt, Bancroft, Gielgud; motion picture directed by David Lynch
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