

A man in a vibrant blue suit and a bright yellow scarf is captured in a celebratory moment on a stage. He is holding a green champagne bottle in his right hand, with a spray of bubbles erupting from the top. In his left hand, he holds a flute glass filled with champagne. A large, light-colored rose is pinned to his lapel. The background is dark, suggesting an indoor setting like a restaurant or a stage set. In the foreground, a white tablecloth is visible, with a glass of champagne and a plate of food on it.

Don Giovanni

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART
(1756 - 1791)

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Cover: Russell Braun in the title role in *Don Giovanni* (Teatro Real Madrid, 2013). Photo: Javier del Real
Above: A scene from *Don Giovanni* (Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, 2010). Photo: Pascal Victor/Artcomart

Welcome!

Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* is based on the legend of Don Juan, the prolific seducer. One of the most popular subjects in literature, Don Juan first appears in dramatic form in *El Burlador de Sevilla (The Playboy of Seville)* in 1600, in a play by a Spanish monk, Tirso de Molina (1571 – 1648).

The plot of *Don Giovanni* is fairly straightforward: a compulsive and aggressive seducer goes too far and kills the father of one of his victims. Those whom he has hurt seek vengeance, and ultimately the villain gets his comeuppance. More than 200 years after *Don Giovanni's* premiere (Prague, 1787) it remains a masterpiece musically, theatrically and psychologically.

Don Giovanni provides students with a wide array of discussion possibilities including Psychology (compulsion and addiction), English (literary sources, adaptation) and Classical Languages and International Languages (Italian).

Like other great masterpieces that have stood the test of time, *Don Giovanni* still fascinates its audience and provides scope for endless interpretation. Moralists, philosophers, critics, clerics and artists have all chimed in on the drives and meanings behind the story of Don Juan and of Mozart's opera.

Don Giovanni is sung in Italian with English SURTITLES™.



STUDENT DRESS REHEARSALS 2014/2015

\$15 INDIVIDUAL STUDENT RUSH TICKETS*

Falstaff Verdi

Tuesday, September 30, 2014 at 7:30 p.m.

Madama Butterfly Puccini

Wednesday, October 8, 2014 at 7:30 p.m.

Don Giovanni Mozart

Thursday, January 22, 2015 at 7:30 p.m.

Die Walküre Wagner

Wednesday, January 28, 2015 at 7 p.m.**

The Barber of Seville Rossini

Wednesday, April 15, 2015 at 7:30 p.m.

Bluebeard's Castle/Erwartung Bartók/Schoenberg

Monday, May 4, 2015 at 7:30 p.m.

*In-person, day-of sales only. Age and purchasing restrictions apply. All dress rehearsals are approximately three hours with one or two intermissions. Visit coc.ca/Explore for details.

**Please note the earlier start time to accommodate the length of the opera, approx. four hours and 20 minutes with two intermissions.

Opera 101

WHAT IS OPERA?

The term “opera” comes from the Italian word for “work” or “piece,” and is usually applied to the European tradition of grand opera. Opera is a form of storytelling which incorporates music, drama and design.

Though its origins date back to ancient Greece, the form of opera we are familiar with today started in the late 16th century in Florence, Italy. Count Giovanni de’ Bardi was a patron and host to a group of intellectuals, poets, artists, scientists and humanists including Giulio Caccini (composer) and Vincenzo Galilei (father to the astronomer and scientist, Galileo Galilei, who was most famous for his improvements to the telescope). These individuals explored trends in the arts, focusing on music and drama in particular. They were unified in their belief that the arts had become over-embellished and that returning to the transparency of the music of the ancient Greeks, which incorporated both speech and song, and a chorus to further the plot and provide commentary on the action, would present a more pure, natural and powerful way to tell stories and express emotions.

The first opera, *Dafne*, about a nymph who fled from Apollo and was subsequently transformed by the gods into a laurel tree, was composed by Jacopo Peri in 1597. From then on, the early operas recreated Greek tragedies with mythological themes. During the 17th and 18th centuries, topics expanded to include stories about royalty, and everyday or common people. Some operas were of a serious nature (called *opera seria*) and some light-hearted (called *opera buffa*). Since then operas have been written on a wide variety of topics such as cultural clashes (*Madama Butterfly*), comedic farce (*The Barber of Seville*), politicians on foreign visits (*Nixon in China*), the celebration of Canadian heroes (*Louis Riel*), and children’s stories (*The Little Prince*), to name a few.

The COC presents works in the western European tradition but musical equivalents to European opera can be found in Japan, at the Peking Opera in China, and in Africa where it is called Epic Storytelling.

What are the differences between operas, musicals and plays?

Traditionally operas are through-sung, meaning they are sung from beginning to end with no dialogue in between. Singers must have powerful voices in order to be heard over the orchestra (the ensemble of instrumental musicians that accompanies the dramatic action on stage during an opera). Remember: opera singers don’t use microphones!

Musicals are a combination of dialogue and sung pieces and often include choreographed numbers. The singers often use microphones and are accompanied by a pit band which includes more modern instruments like a drum kit, guitar and electronic instruments.

Plays are primarily spoken works of theatre with minimal singing or music.

There are always exceptions to the rule: though *Les Misérables* is through-sung it is still classified as a piece of musical theatre because of its style of music. By the same token, some operas, like Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*, have spoken dialogue in addition to singing.

What does opera feel like?

Take five minutes out of the school day and instead of using regular voices to converse, ask the class to commit to singing everything. Make an agreement with the students that it’s not about judging people’s voices but about freeing our natural sounds. Make up the melodies on the spot and don’t worry about singing “correctly.” Did the musical lines help express or emphasize certain emotions? If so, how?

Attending the Opera: Make the most of your experience

WELCOME TO THE FOUR SEASONS CENTRE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS



Photo: Sam Javanrouh

So you're headed to the opera, and there are a few questions on your mind. Here are some tips on how to get the most out of your opera experience.

First, there's the question of **what to wear**. People wear all sorts of things to the opera—jeans, dress pants, cocktail dresses, suits, etc. The important thing is to be comfortable. Wear something that makes you feel good, whether it be jeans or your nicest tie. But skip that spritz of perfume or cologne before you go out; the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts is scent-free. Many fellow patrons and performers are allergic to strong scents.

Once you're dressed, it's important to **arrive on time** for the show. Late patrons cannot be admitted to the theatre, and you may have to watch the first act on a television screen in the lobby rather than from your seat. If you don't have your ticket yet, arrive as early as possible—the line-up for the box office can often be quite long prior to a performance! The main doors open one hour before the performance. Line up there and have your ticket ready to present to the usher. If you have any questions about

tonight's performance, drop by the Welcome Desk (just inside the main doors) to ask a member of the COC staff, who are full of useful information not only about tonight's opera, but also about COC programs in general. A **pre-performance chat** takes place in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre (Ring 3) about 45 minutes before the show. These chats, given by members of our **COC Volunteer Speakers Bureau**, offer valuable insight into the opera and the specific production that you'll be seeing.

Before the opera starts, take the opportunity to **explore the lobby**, known as the Isadore and Rosalie Sharp City Room. Stop by concessions and **pre-order a beverage for intermission or purchase a snack**. Walk up the stairs, passing a sculpture as you go, and note the floating glass staircase – the longest free-span glass staircase in the world! On the third floor, you'll see the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre, home to our Free Concert Series. You'll also see a mobile by artist Alexander Calder, adding some colour and whimsy to the space.

Chimes will ring throughout the lobby **ten minutes** before the performance, reminding everyone to find their

seats. Head towards the door noted on your ticket, get a program from the usher, and find your designated seat in R. Fraser Elliott Hall. It's best to use this time to open any candies you might have and turn off your cell phone – the hall is built to carry sound, so small sounds travel further than you may think! Photography is not permitted once the show starts. The design and direction of the show is under intellectual property and only the official COC photographer and/or members of the media can take pictures and even then, only under special circumstances that require prior arrangements.

As the lights go down and the audience quiets, **listen carefully**. Remember all of that traffic you heard in the lobby? And now... not a peep! The auditorium is physically separated from the outside and the ground below, making for the best acoustic experience possible.

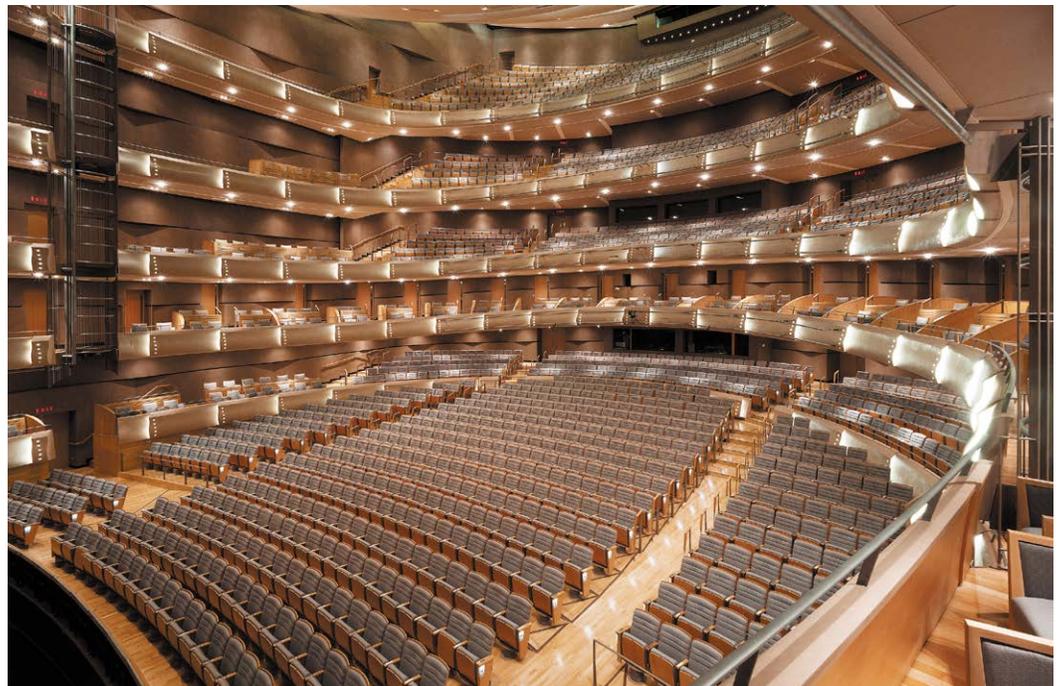
Now it's time to sit back and **enjoy the opera!** **SURTITLES™** will be projected on a horizontal screen above the stage. **SURTITLES™** originate from the idea of

“subtitles”, which are most commonly used in foreign films to make them more accessible outside of their country of origin. The COC was the first opera company to adapt this concept for the operatic stage. Slides containing the English translation of the *libretto* (text for the opera) are projected in a more visible place for the audience: above the stage. **SURTITLES™** were first used by the COC at the premiere of the opera *Elektra* in 1983. Only the name could be trademarked, as the technology for the projections was already in existence. Opera companies from around the world have adopted this audience initiative under different names, and it has revolutionized opera stages everywhere.

Feel free to show your **appreciation to the performers** by laughing at humorous bits or applauding after a well-performed aria. If a performer has pulled off some particularly impressive vocal fireworks, it's absolutely acceptable to yell out your appreciation in addition to applause. You may hear your fellow audience members shouting “bravo!” for a man, “brava!” for a woman, or “bravi!” for a group of performers. Feel free to join in!

Don Giovanni lasts approximately three hours, 30 minutes, including one intermission. The opera is sung in Italian with English **SURTITLES™**.

R. Fraser Elliott Hall.
Photo: Tim Griffith



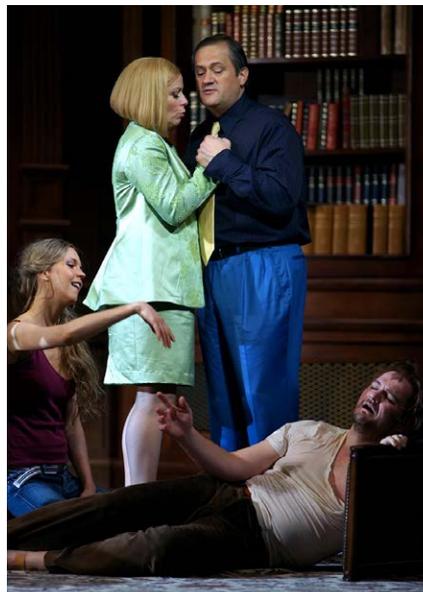
Characters and Synopsis

MAIN CHARACTERS (in order of vocal appearance)

Name	In the original story	In the COC production*
Leporello	Don Giovanni's servant	A relative of the family
Donna Anna	Il Commendatore's daughter	Il Commendatore's daughter
Il Commendatore	Donna Anna's father	Donna Anna's father
Don Giovanni	A young nobleman	A nobleman and Donna Elvira's husband
Don Ottavio	Donna Anna's fiancé	Donna Anna's fiancé
Donna Elvira	A lady of Burgos, abandoned by Don Giovanni	Donna Anna's cousin, Don Giovanni's wife
Zerlina	A country girl	Donna Anna's daughter
Masetto	Zerlina's fiancé	Zerlina's fiancé

*See "What to Look For" on page 17 for more information about this production.

Name	Voice Type	Pronunciation
Leporello	Bass	leh-poh-REH-loh
Donna Anna	Soprano	dohn-nah AHN-nah
Il Commendatore	Bass	eel koh-MEN-dah-TOH-reh
Don Giovanni	baritone	dohn djoh-VAH-nee
Don Ottavio	tenor	dohn oh-TAH-vee-oh
Donna Elvira	soprano	dohn-nah ehl-VEE-rah
Zerlina	soprano	zehr-LEE-nah
Masetto	bass	mah-ZEH-toh



Left: Ainhoa Arteta as Donna Elvira and Kyle Ketelsen as Leporello. Centre: Mojca Erdmann as Zerlina (kneeling), Christine Schäfer as Donna Anna and Paul Groves as Don Ottavio (standing) and Russell Braun as Don Giovanni (lying down). Right: (l-r) Christine Schäfer as Donna Anna, Mojca Erdmann as Zerlina and Ainhoa Arteta as Donna Elvira. All photos from *Don Giovanni* (Teatro Real Madrid, 2013). Photos: Javier del Real

SYNOPSIS

ACT I

Leporello witnesses a nocturnal scandal at the house of the Commendatore. Donna Anna alerts the entire household of an “intruder” (Don Giovanni) who tries to leave the house unseen. Hearing the commotion, the Commendatore comes to defend Donna Anna (his daughter) and in the process, is accidentally killed. Fearing he will be blamed, Don Giovanni runs away. Donna Anna and her fiancé Don Ottavio cannot accept the sudden and horrible death of the Commendatore, and she plots revenge on the “unknown murderer.”

Donna Elvira is tortured with love for, and craves revenge against her husband Don Giovanni who has abandoned her. She finds him but her grief only arouses indifference in the man. He manages to escape and it is left to Leporello to answer in his stead.

Zerlina celebrates her engagement with Masetto. Don Giovanni cunningly manages to be alone with the young woman, charming and tempting her and almost succeeding in his seduction. Donna Elvira bursts in and warns Zerlina against trusting Don Giovanni.

Donna Anna and Don Ottavio see Don Giovanni and seek his support as they search for the Commendatore’s killer. He gives them his assurances. Donna Elvira re-enters and persuades Donna Anna not to believe in Don Giovanni’s sincerity. Donna Anna is then left alone with Don Ottavio and recounts the events of the night of the “murder,” blaming the death on Don Giovanni himself.

Don Giovanni hosts a party with Zerlina and Masetto in attendance. Donna Anna, Don Ottavio and Donna Elvira join the festivities, planning to reveal Don Giovanni as the Commendatore’s murderer and the root of their collective misfortunes. Eventually, accusations are thrown in Don Giovanni’s face, but he manages to upset their plans for revenge and escapes.

ACT II

Leporello does not want to be involved with the follies and dangers of Don Giovanni’s life anymore, but is nevertheless roped into the Don’s latest plans. Donna Elvira, feeling abandoned and unhappy, once again falls for Don Giovanni but doesn’t realize he has switched places with Leporello, who is in disguise.

Suspicious that Zerlina has been seduced by Don Giovanni, Masetto seeks to injure Don Giovanni, bringing reinforcements to help him. But Don Giovanni, now disguised as Leporello, manages to fool them and to teach Masetto a lesson.

Donna Elvira meets Donna Anna and Don Ottavio by chance. Zerlina and Masetto join them. Still mistaking Leporello for Don Giovanni, they all want to execute him on the spot. Leporello manages to escape. Everybody laments Don Giovanni’s destructive power over their fates.

Don Giovanni hears the voice of the dead Commendatore who accuses him of horrible sins. In response, Don Giovanni provokes the dead man, daring him to come to dinner—an invitation that is accepted!

Don Ottavio tries to persuade Donna Anna they will soon find the way to punish the criminal and that she should agree to marry him as soon as possible.

Don Giovanni organizes a boisterous party to which everybody is invited, including the dead Commendatore. The gathering is in full swing when Don Giovanni “sees” the Commendatore enter. The deceased demands repentance but Don Giovanni refuses to admit his guilt and ends defeated and crushed.

The avengers triumph...

Genesis of the Opera



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (aged 14) in Verona. January 1770. Oil on canvas. Artist possibly Giambettino Cignaroli or Saverio dalla Rosa, or both in collaboration

WHAT MOZART DID FOR OPERA

The legacy of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 – 1791) is legendary. He was a child prodigy whose early promise was fulfilled to an extent no one could have predicted. Over his short life he produced over 600 works including 46 symphonies, 26 piano concertos and 17 operas, six of which remain part of the core repertoire, including the eternally popular *The Magic Flute* (1791). From *opera seria* (the lofty dramas that were commissioned by the nobility of the day) to *opera buffa* (comic works often based on popular plays) and *Singspiel* (the German answer to *opera buffa*, which included spoken dialogue), Mozart mastered the contemporary operatic genres and, in each instance, raised them to new heights, paving the way for future generations of composers. His operatic immortality was set with three masterpieces: *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte* (all to librettos by Lorenzo da Ponte; please see below). In these three works especially, a rich core of comedy reveals veins of tragedy, while an understanding of human frailty lifts the witty storylines into something sublime.

MOZART AND DA PONTE: A BEAUTIFUL COLLABORATION

In 1785 Mozart met librettist Lorenzo da Ponte (1749 – 1838), who had recently been appointed poet of the Viennese court. Their collaboration resulted in three of the greatest operas ever written. First was *The Marriage of Figaro* in 1786. Its weak reception in Vienna turned to triumph in Prague and resulted in the commission for *Don Giovanni*, which was also to premiere in Prague in 1787. Their final collaboration was *Così fan tutte*, which premiered in Vienna in 1790.



Lorenzo da Ponte (1749-1838)
Engraving from the early 19th century
by Michele Pekenino (19th-century) after
Nathaniel Rogers (American, 1788-1844)

DA PONTE IN AMERICA

Fleeing creditors in London, Lorenzo da Ponte went to America in 1805, where he became a U.S. citizen and ran a grocery store and book store before becoming the first professor of Italian literature at Columbia College. He produced a performance of *Don Giovanni* in 1825 and in 1833, at the age of 84, he founded the first opera house in the United States (which later burned down), and the New York Opera Company, which lasted two seasons.



THE SOURCE FOR THE OPERA

The legend of Don Juan, the prolific seducer of anything in a skirt, is one of the most popular subjects in literature. Don Juan first appears in dramatic form in *El Burlador de Sevilla* (*The Playboy of Seville*) in 1600, in a play by a Spanish monk, Tirso de Molina (1571 – 1648). Lorenzo da Ponte based his libretto on *Il Convitato di Pietra* (*The Stone Guest*), a play by Onofrio Giliberti (1652). But he also referenced Molière’s version, *Le Festin de Pierre* (1665) and Goldoni’s *Don Giovanni Tenorio* (1736).

Left: Tirso de Molina

AN OVERTURE IN A NIGHT!

Mozart typically left the composing of an opera’s overture until he had finished the rest of the score. Legend tells that, in true fashion, he wrote the overture for *Don Giovanni* overnight on October 27, just in time for the dress rehearsal the following evening and the premiere on October 29, 1787.

Below: This British cartoon from 1820 shows a performance of *Don Giovanni* at the King’s Theatre (where the opera had its London premiere in 1816). The cartoon shows King George IV in the title role surprised by the sudden arrival of his wife, Caroline (just returned from Italy) as Donna Anna. On the left, Lord Castlereagh, playing the role of Leporello, holds a long list of the King’s female conquests. Artist unknown. Print published by H. Fores, July 23, 1820. United States Library of Congress’s Prints and Photographs division



DON GIOVANNI: WHAT MAKES IT SO SPECIAL?

The plot of *Don Giovanni* is fairly straightforward: a compulsive and aggressive seducer goes too far and kills the father of one of his victims. Those whom he has hurt seek vengeance. More than 200 years after *Don Giovanni*'s premiere, it remains a masterpiece musically, theatrically and psychologically.

The score is glorious, filled with drama, comedy and irresistible melodies that have inspired other composers (such as Liszt, Chopin, Beethoven and Offenbach) to borrow and arrange them.

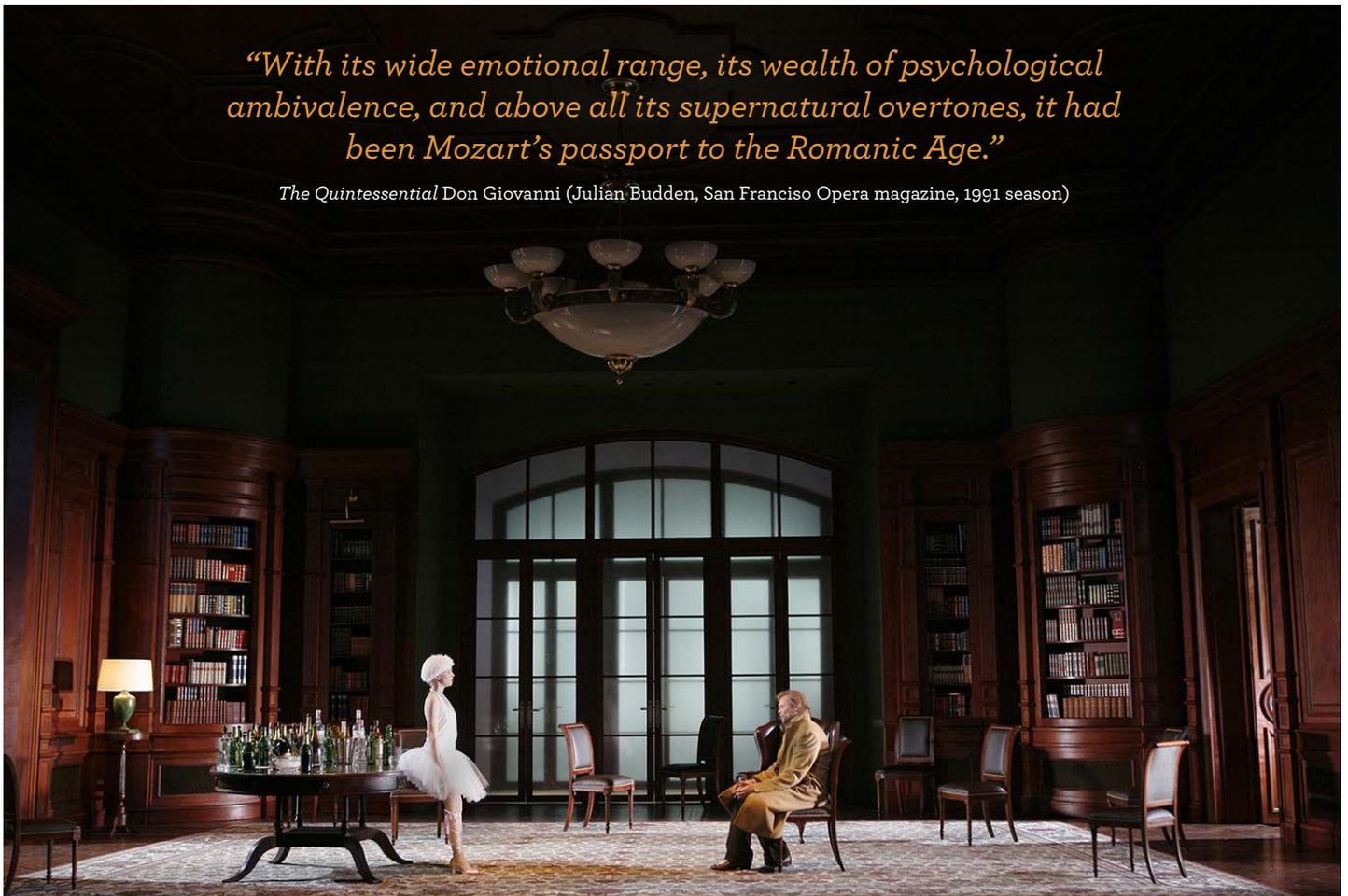
Part of the opera's enduring appeal is that a wide range of possible interpretations of the timeless plot and characters can be taken by the director, designer and performers. The original setting is Spain, but the story could arguably be set anywhere, any time. The opera is defined as a *dramma giocoso*, a comic drama, but it is up to the creative team of any production to decide where the balance will lie between the comedy and drama.

The characters are ripe for psychoanalysis. Is Donna Anna a hysteric obsessed with Don Giovanni, or an abused and grief-stricken woman? Is Don Ottavio in extreme denial about a woman who does not seem to love him in the way he hopes? Is Donna Elvira a poster-child for Women-Who-Love-Men-Who-Love-Way-Too-Many-Other-Women? Is Zerlina an innocent girl who is seduced by a rich, experienced older man, or a knowing flirt who is out to use him to get ahead in the world any way she can? And what of Leporello? And Don Giovanni himself? Is he a sex addict with a bad case of narcissism?

Like other great works that have stood the test of time, *Don Giovanni* still fascinates its audience and provides scope for endless interpretation. It is no wonder that its fans attend production after production, seeking more insights with each viewing. Moralists, philosophers, critics, clerics and artists have all chimed in on the drives and meanings behind the story of Don Juan and of Mozart's opera.

“With its wide emotional range, its wealth of psychological ambivalence, and above all its supernatural overtones, it had been Mozart’s passport to the Romantic Age.”

The Quintessential Don Giovanni (Julian Budden, San Francisco Opera magazine, 1991 season)



Kerstin Avemo as Zerlina and Bo Skovhus as Don Giovanni in *Don Giovanni* (Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, 2010). Photo: Pascal Victor/Artcomart

Listening Guide

INTRODUCTION

Our musical point of view of *Don Giovanni* has changed a great deal in the 150-year period spanning the mid-19th century to the present day. In many ways, what we've seen is a return to the manner in which people of Mozart's time would have perceived the piece – that is, much closer to its *opera buffa* (comic opera) roots than did audiences from the mid-19th through the mid-20th centuries.

Beginning in the 1850s, authors such as E.T.A. Hoffmann and philosophers like Kierkegaard turned Don Giovanni into a wicked, sensuously erotic seducer whose ultimate punishment almost elevated him to the status of tragic hero. This was a long way from the other Don Giovanni-themed plays, literary treatments and puppet shows of Mozart's time that focused more on the legend's *buffa*, or comedic elements.

The 19th-century “heroic” point of view resulted in performances and recordings that, from today's point of view, were played and sung too heavily, with slow tempos and too uniform a sound. The end result was to dampen the “*giocoso*” (light-hearted) leaving only the “*dramma*” (serious) in an opera Mozart distinctly labeled as a combination of the two: a *dramma giocoso*. The sometimes confusing, even shocking, blend of tragic and comic elements in *Don Giovanni* make more sense when one sees it emerging from the early Italian Baroque tradition of Francesco Cavalli and Antonio Cesti who regularly combined a strong sense of dramatic effect with grotesque humour. In fact, Giacinto Andrea Cicognini, who wrote the librettos for Cavalli's *Il giasone* and Cesti's *L'Oronte*, also wrote the first Don Giovanni play for the Italian spoken theatre.

Don Giovanni's ties to *opera buffa* and the Italian Baroque tradition are especially important when considering the vocal types required for each of its roles. As we'll explore in this guide, each character can be linked to a particular *opera buffa* antecedent who in turn was associated with a distinctive “sound” – essential in an opera overflowing with busy ensemble numbers in which characters' individualized thoughts would otherwise be buried.

The tracks listed below are excerpted from *Don Giovanni*, Deutsche Grammophon 477 9878. Mahler Chamber Orchestra and Vocalensemble Rastatt, Yannick Nezet-Séguin, conductor. Ildebrando D'Arcangelo, Diana Damrau, Joyce DiDonato, Rolando Villazón, Luca Pisaroni, Mojca Erdmann. You can also experience the Listening Guide online at coc.ca/LookAndListen.



Russell Braun in the title role in *Don Giovanni* (Teatro Real Madrid, 2013). Photo: Javier del Real

**1****MUSICAL EXCERPT**

Act I, aria: “Fin ch’han dal vino calda la testa” (“While their heads are heated with wine”)

CONNECTION TO THE STORY

Don Giovanni instructs his servant Leporello to plan a party so that he can make fresh conquests.

MUSICAL SIGNIFICANCE

To present a convincing dramatic portrayal of Don Giovanni provides an enormous challenge for any singer given how little his music actually reveals about his character. In contrast to the psychologizing language of arias sung by Donna Anna, Donna Elvira, Zerlina and Don Ottavio, Giovanni has only two short action arias (one of them sung in a disguised voice at that) and a serenade. The latter – though a lovely and memorable tune – is more like a folk song with mandolin accompaniment and is generic enough that it could be sung by any “operatic lover.”

The little aria in this excerpt is arguably the most recognizable tune from the opera and is as frenzied as it is short, clocking in at about one minute! If it does provide any key to Don Giovanni’s character, it is to his unbridled, unedited desire to experience life at its fullest. The technical challenges of the piece are considerable: the text must be delivered at a lightning pace but without rushing ahead of the orchestra – a point on which many a great Don Giovanni and his conductor have not always agreed! *Don Giovanni* is a very text-heavy opera with its reams of *recitativo* (sung dialogue) and patter-style songs (characterized by a moderately fast to very fast tempo in which each syllable of text corresponds to one note) like this one, or, for example, the servant Leporello’s great aria outlining his master’s “mille tre” (Italian for “1003”) conquests. A call-out to this centrality of text in *Don Giovanni* was made by the originator of the title role – Luigi Bassi (only in his 20s when the opera premiered) who emphasized that in *Don Giovanni*, “Everything is *parlando* [conversational]: that is what Mozart wanted.”

FURTHER REFLECTION

Can you think of other characters from opera, literature or film who, despite being less-than-noble, are nevertheless fascinating to the people around them? What is the root of their appeal?

Do you think Mozart purposefully did not give Don Giovanni any grand arias to sing? Why might he have made this musical decision?

**2****MUSICAL EXCERPT**

Act I, duettino: “Là ci darem la mano” (“There we shall take hands”)

CONNECTION TO THE STORY

Don Giovanni tells Zerlina he will make her his wife. Her initial reluctance fades and, charmed, she agrees to go with him to his villa.

MUSICAL SIGNIFICANCE

This little duet is probably the second most-excerpted number from the opera, a staple of countless concerts and recitals when a baritone and soprano need something to sing together! It stands alone as the sole love duet in the opera – somewhat strange considering how central wooing and seduction are to the story. When distinguishing between the three female parts in *Don Giovanni*, Mozart specified that Zerlina should be “entirely *buffa*,” that is, a direct descendant of the simple, peasant type, unconstrained by the

rules of nobility who was a staple of earlier 18th-century comic opera. As such, her music is cast in simple forms, mirroring her ostensible lack of sophistication.

In this duet it's necessary that the aristocratic Don Giovanni enter into Zerlina's less exalted realm, and so, he begins with a very simple folk-like melody. One of the musical cues Mozart uses to signify the peasant world of Zerlina and her fiancé Masetto is the drone – think of the repeated, bass note that initiates any bagpipe tune. It is heard in the celebratory peasant chorus that introduces the couple and a drone also makes up the first four bars of Zerlina's aria "Vedrai carino" ("You'll see, my dear"). In this duet, we get a real bagpipe sound heard as a repeated, sustained chord in the bass on the word "andiam" ("let's go," at 2:16) – the moment Zerlina decides to go off with Don Giovanni. The rustic drone which unites the pair, albeit briefly, seems to foreshadow amorous success for the Don.

FURTHER REFLECTION

In this duet Mozart uses the "drone" motif to represent the lower social rank of Zerlina – think about other instruments of the orchestra (e.g. violins, cellos, French horns, clarinets, etc.) and what types of people, or social status they might be used to signify.

A point of reflection: this is the only "love" duet in the opera and, in the end, Don Giovanni is as unsuccessful at wooing Zerlina as he is with any of the female characters in the opera. Despite his reputation as a great lover, we never see him succeed at love – discuss!



3

MUSICAL EXCERPT

Act I, finale: "Rincominciate il suono! Tu accoppia ballerin!" ("Strike up the music again! Pair off the dancers!")

CONNECTION TO THE STORY

To Masetto's fury, Don Giovanni is flirting with his fiancé, Zerlina. Don Giovanni forces Leoporello to dance with Masetto, while he maneuvers Zerlina towards the door. Soon, her screams are heard and the act ends in confusion with Donna Elvira, Donna Anna and Don Ottavio facing Don Giovanni and calling down vengeance upon him.

MUSICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Central to *Don Giovanni* are its exhilarating ensembles in which individual characters express their thoughts and reactions simultaneously within a complex framework of constantly changing rhythms and *tempi* (the speed of the music). Primary among these is the extended Act I finale, traditionally set in a hall at Don Giovanni's castle where all the characters have been invited to a grand *fiesta di ballo* (dance party). As we join the action in this excerpt, our host has carefully manipulated the dance pairs in order to achieve his own devices – principally, to whisk away the peasant girl Zerlina to his bedroom! This plot device is mirrored by a brilliant musical construction – a "triple dance" featuring three different onstage bands all playing at the same time, with different rhythms, and yet harmonizing together accurately. But the three dances are also part of the story. Aristocrats Donna Anna and Don Ottavio move to an appropriately upper-class minuet (at 0:06); Don Giovanni partners the upwardly mobile peasant girl Zerlina in a *contre danse* (closely linked with the bourgeoisie, added in at 1:07) while the peasants are given a German *Teitsch* (at 1:37), a forerunner of that most democratic of all dances, the waltz. As the triple dance devolves into chaos, Giovanni forces Zerlina offstage and attempts to have his way with her (1:43).

Another striking feature of this ensemble is Mozart’s use of the fugue: a musical form in which the same melody is sung successively by different voices, each starting on a different note. As with the “triple dance,” Mozart brilliantly utilizes what could be a mere technical trick to enhance character, situation and text. Believing he has finally found the scoundrel who attempted to rape his fiancée, Don Ottavio pulls his weapon on Don Giovanni and one by one he, Donna Anna and Donna Elvira each sing in turn, “L’empio crede con tal frode di nascondere l’empietà” (“The villain thinks his play-acting can conceal his crime,” at 3:02). The fugue is used again a few seconds later when the original trio are joined by the similarly aggrieved Zerlina and Masetto, each one singing in turn: “Tutto, tutto già si sa” (“All, all has come to light,” starting at 3:27). Don Giovanni is cornered, and this second fugue makes it feel as if the world is swirling around him; everywhere he turns someone he has harmed is coming for vengeance.

FURTHER REFLECTION

Think of some contemporary styles of dance or popular music. What types of people seem to enjoy them the most? Can you think of any connections between these styles of music and the socio-economic status of the groups with which they might be most closely associated?

Opera is famous for letting several characters sing and express their thoughts at the same time. After listening to this excerpt, how does Mozart ensure that, despite the potential for aural chaos, each character gets his or her point across?



4

MUSICAL EXCERPT

Act II, aria: “Mi tradì quell’alma ingrata” (“He deceived me without pity”)

CONNECTION TO THE STORY

Once again having been made a fool of and deserted by Don Giovanni, Donna Elvira still cannot banish a semblance of pity for him.

MUSICAL SIGNIFICANCE

In a letter written during the early planning stages for *Don Giovanni*, Mozart made reference to the standard vocal types used in 18th-century opera. For the women specifically, he wanted to “include two equally good female roles; one would have to be a *Seria* [serious], the other a *Mezzo Carattere* [literally, “half character” that is, half-serious, half-comic] – but in quality – both roles would have to be absolutely equal. The third female character can be entirely *buffa* [comic].” In order, these types were manifested as the heroic, vengeful Donna Anna; the betrayed, yet still Don Giovanni-obsessed Donna Elvira; and the conflicted-in-love, yet ultimately loyal peasant girl, Zerlina.

The evolution of the role of Donna Elvira is especially fascinating. At the 1787 Prague premiere, it was probably sung by a lighter voiced “soubrette” soprano which might explain why the role lacked any “big” arias in the original version. When the opera was reprised a year later in Vienna, Katharina Cavalieri took over the role. She was famous for creating the virtuoso role of Konstanze in Mozart’s *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, and accordingly, was awarded the very florid aria, “Mi tradi.”

This aria provides many vocal challenges for the performer: Mozart sends the voice soaring and leaping over almost two octaves throughout the piece – listen starting at 0:50 to the way the melody constantly jumps from low to high. By directing Elvira’s vocal line to the upper reaches of the singer’s range, Mozart accentuates the extremes of her feelings – for example, from 1:22-1:33 the constant upward, leaping gesture to the top note occurs just as she sings of the misery Don Giovanni has caused her. Then, at 2:58

on the word “abbandonata” (“deserted”) a long *coloratura* (stretching out one word over many notes) passage begins, signifying that her feelings of abandonment are far from resolved as she sings “I still feel pity for him” to a meandering, indecisive vocal line.

FURTHER REFLECTION

Coloratura (one syllable sung over many notes) serves many expressive functions in opera. Think about this excerpt, or other operas you might have heard (*Lucia di Lamermoor*, *The Magic Flute*, *Roberto Devereux*) and describe how *coloratura* is used to telegraph different types of emotions in each case. Donna Elvira is often portrayed as a figure of ridicule in stagings of *Don Giovanni*. How was she presented in the COC production you’ve just seen? What other possible ways could you portray this character?

What to Look for

The legend of Don Juan has been interpreted and reinterpreted many different ways by many different artists in a wide range of art forms. One of the most rewarding aspects of dealing with a masterpiece such as Mozart's opera, *Don Giovanni*, is that there are depths to it that even its creator wasn't aware of. Often, a truly great piece of art resonates with us differently each time we experience it, especially if we return to it at different times of our life, as life – and its experiences – changes us. It is not only intriguing for audiences, but also for directors and designers, who bring their own perspective to bear as they explore the work.

After World War II, there was a distinct shift in directorial approach in Western theatre and opera. Much of this was to do with a need to reimagine and explain a world that was forever changed by the horrors of war. Another reason was believability. In earlier decades, before the rise of photography and film, it was possible to represent the most epic notions in what was considered a realistic fashion, as few in the audience would know what was truly realistic and what wasn't. For example, most audiences would never have witnessed a tornado or seen a live herd of lions!



Above: Christine Schäfer as Donna Anna and Paul Groves as Don Ottavio.
Left: Ainhoa Arteta as Donna Elvira. Both photos from *Don Giovanni* (Teatro Real Madrid, 2013). Photos: Javier del Real



Therefore directors could mount apparently realistic stage settings with little chance of being compared to actual life. After film and photography became more sophisticated and most people had access to footage or imagery of actual forces of nature, it became obvious that representing these ideas literally on stage would become impossible.

New generations of directors emerged who sought to meet the challenge of the new theatre. They delved into the psychological motivation of characters, used abstraction in set and costume design to create theatrical magic, incorporated more contemporary settings to heighten the relevance of works, and stressed concerns of the age, such as gender/race/sexual politics. They sometimes made changes to the script/libretto or order of scenes in a play or opera. Some of these directors include Peter Sellars, David Alden, Christopher Alden and Dmitri Tcherniakov, who all challenge their audiences with invigorating and astonishing visions of timeless works of theatrical

art. All have worked at the COC, with the exception of Tcherniakov, who will make his COC debut with *Don Giovanni*.

Dmitri Tcherniakov has a gift for plumbing the psychological depths of an opera, and he brings a fascinating approach to the COC's production of *Don Giovanni*. One way in which Tcherniakov's production differs from the "standard" telling is the timeline. Traditionally, the story takes place over a day or two and in several different locations, both indoors and outdoors. In this production, the story takes place over several weeks and the single location is a large room in a luxurious home. Another major departure from the original storyline in Tcherniakov's imagining is that all the characters are part of an extended family. Refer to the list of characters in "Characters and Synopsis" (page 7) and the chart which shows how they are all related in Tcherniakov's interpretation. These two decisions by the director bring the cast of characters into a more tightly woven web. Their relationships are intensified by their familial and physical closeness.

As for the title role, this Don Giovanni is not just a charming seducer of many women, as has often been the interpretation in the past. Giovanni is helplessly drawn to an ideal of absolute freedom in love. The fact that he is also a deeply magnetic character only serves to draw those around him into his sphere of influence. The results, as can be imagined, are complex and devastating within the close family unit.

Watching a Tcherniakov production is to have your preconceptions challenged, especially if you are familiar with the opera you are witnessing. However nothing Tcherniakov does is without great thought and consideration. He knows the opera he's working on inside out, he has considered what every note, every word, might mean. When you're watching *Don Giovanni*, consider that often what we say is not entirely married to what we mean or how we are feeling!

Watch [this introductory video](#) to the production when it premiered at Festival d'Aix-en-Provence.



Top: A scene from *Don Giovanni* (Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, 2010). Photo: Pascal Victor/Artcomart. Centre: Kyle Ketelsen as Leporello. Bottom: A scene from *Don Giovanni*. Centre and bottom photos from Teatro Real Madrid, 2013. Photos: Javier del Real

COC Spotlight: Dawn Marie Schlegel

Not everyone at the COC is an opera singer... take a peek behind the scenes and learn about the many diverse careers available in the arts! In this edition, we interview Dawn Marie Schlegel – Associate Director, Donor Relations, at the Canadian Opera Company. The COC is

a not-for-profit organization and depends very much on the support of government, corporations and individuals, because ticket prices only cover 25% of what it costs to produce opera. We asked Dawn Marie a few questions to see what led her down this career path.



Dawn Marie Schlegel
(Associate Director,
Donor Relations)

Position: Associate Director, Donor Relations

Name: Dawn Marie Schlegel

Hometown: Millbank, Ontario

Education: B.A. in English Literature and Political Science, (UofT); Diploma, Funeral Service Education (Humber College)

Role in the Company:

My role as part of the fundraising team is to ensure that our donors are connected and feeling the best they possibly can about their support of the COC. This starts with a “thank you” and expands to a series of events, behind-the-scenes experiences up to and including travel with the General Director and Music Director. Without the generosity of this amazingly loyal group of patrons the COC could not do what we do. It is so important to ensure that they know how grateful the company is for their support.

When did you first become interested in opera?

Music had always been a part of my family home growing up but I heard my first live notes of opera coming from a residence room when I was at Victoria College at UofT. It turns out, a number of fellow students were studying at the Faculty of Music. I would go to their concerts and then attended my first opera (*Madama Butterfly*) at the COC for the debut of one of my friends.

What made you decide to pursue this sort of career path?

Truly, I fell into my career as a fundraiser. I am a career-jumper... from funeral service to fundraising. I had the opportunity to shadow someone in fundraising while deciding what I wanted to do next with my life and discovered the joys of this field. My first job was doing fundraising events (not dissimilar to planning funerals) and then grew into different and larger roles as my career progressed. It is very rewarding when you can see the results of your work come to life, in this case, on stage.

If someone was interested in becoming a fundraiser, what would you recommend they have in terms of skills or experience?

Communication skills are essential as are your people skills. Relationships are critical to fundraising. There are many facets of fundraising that you can be a part of depending on your interests and skill set – events, corporate, major gifts, annual giving, direct mail programming, research, stewardship and donor relations – each requires different strategies and plays a significant role in achieving your overall goal. It is important to figure out what component suits you best.

What do you love most about your career?

The people – first and foremost – donors, patrons, artists, and colleagues alike. I have had the privilege to meet so many unbelievably generous, committed and passionate people throughout my time at the COC.

What do you enjoy the least about your career?

I will admit, sometimes the seemingly endless string of evenings when we are in the performance run gets a bit tiring. Mostly, it is the mornings after, especially those early meetings. But, if that is what works best for the donor, then put on a smile and go for it.

What surprises you most about your career?

It is the variety that surprises me. I have had the good fortune of working here twice, once during the Capital Campaign to build the Four Seasons Centre and now, and it is always changing. This is part of the excitement of working so closely with people. Your day may start out one way when the phone rings and everything changes! You need to be adaptable and flexible, not to mention organized.

What are you most looking forward to in *Don Giovanni*?

Don Giovanni is one of my favourites. “Dalla sua pace” is the first aria that made me cry and every time I hear it the same thing happens. Having the wonderful Canadian duo of Russell Braun and Michael Schade team up in this production will make for a fantastic evening of opera. I can’t wait!

What do you enjoy outside of opera?

I enjoy reading, gardening and travelling as much as possible. Well, that was all before we added the puppy to our family!



Dawn Marie with her new puppy, Remy!

Active Learning

One of the best parts of taking your students to the opera is the discussion and further exploration that live theatre can inspire. Take a deeper look into the themes and story of *Don Giovanni* with these discussion questions and ideas for further exploration.

- ♦ Research Mozart's biography and watch the movie *Amadeus*. Discuss the accurate facts found within the movie, while also bearing in mind the inaccuracies. What was Mozart's relationship like with his parents? What was his childhood like? How did his childhood affect his early adult life? Can he be compared to any child stars of today? After viewing the opera, what message do you think Mozart was trying to convey? How is Mozart's life reflected in this opera?
- ♦ When *Don Giovanni* premiered, it was viewed as a story that exposed the true lives of aristocrats. Use the libretto of the opera as a jumping point to investigate Western sociological shifts in knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and behavior and their impact on the society of the time. How have things changed? How have they remained the same?
- ♦ In what other books, movies, and plays have you seen a Don Juan-type character? How does Mozart's portrayal of this character differ from modern retellings?
- ♦ Rewrite your favourite scene from another character's point of view.
- ♦ A "foil" in literature and theatre is a character that contrasts another character, usually the protagonist, and through this contrast highlights certain aspects of the protagonist. Don Giovanni's foil is Leporello. How is this shown in the story? Give examples of when the audience learns something about Don Giovanni's character through Leporello.
- ♦ Can you name other literary or dramatic foils?

See the Listening Guide on page 13 for more great discussion starters!

Did viewing the opera spark some scintillating debates or discussions? Would your students like to share examples of their work with the COC? E-mail us at education@coc.ca. We'd love to hear from you!

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Above: Workshop at Howard Park Jr. P.S. Photo: COC