



The Scorpions' Sting

AN EGYPTIAN MYTH

DEAN BURRY

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Cover: Jon-Paul Décosse as the scorpions and Jacqueline Woodley as Isis in the COC’s Glencore Ensemble Studio School Tour production of *The Scorpions’ Sting: An Egyptian Myth*, 2011. Above: A scene from *The Scorpions’ Sting: An Egyptian Myth*, 2011. Photos: Karen Reeves

Welcome

Dear Educators,

Opera is a living, breathing art form. It’s for anyone, anywhere.

So it’s a good thing the Canadian Opera Company’s 2014 Glencore Ensemble Studio School Tour is once again bursting out of the opera house to bring incredible singing, gripping drama and magical sets and costumes to your schools and communities! Every year over 15,000 students in southern Ontario and beyond are treated to some of the best young singers, directors and musicians this country has to offer. It is our mandate to create opera of the highest quality and many of our school tour performers have gone on to grace the stages of the world’s major opera houses.

The COC travels back to the world of Ancient Egypt in *The Scorpions’ Sting: An Egyptian Myth*. Populated by a rich array of caring, conniving and colourful characters, this opera takes much of its inspiration and text from the actual Egyptian Book of the Dead and brings this long-forgotten story crashing into the modern world.

This study guide was created as the starting point for your own operatic experience. A brief history of the opera, synopsis and what to look for in the design elements of the production will deepen the experience, while teacher-created lessons plans will help connect the opera to the larger worlds of music, expression, literature and imagination.

Vanessa Smith
School Programs Manager
Canadian Opera Company

Opera 101

WHAT IS OPERA?

The term “opera” comes from the Italian word for “work” or “piece,” and it is usually applied to the European tradition of opera. Opera is a story told through music, drama and design. 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. The COC presents works in the western European tradition.

HISTORY OF OPERA - IN TWO MINUTES OR LESS!

Opera started in the late 16th century in Florence, Italy, at the beginning of the Baroque period of music. The first opera composers took many of their ideas from the ancient Greeks, who combined music and drama to tell a story more effectively. The Greeks also used a chorus to further the plot and comment on the action of the story.

Early operas recreated Greek tragedies with mythological themes. During the 17th and 18th centuries, opera used many different stories: some serious (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*).

You probably know more about opera than you realize, as music from Bizet’s *Carmen*, Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville* and Verdi’s *Rigoletto* (to name just a few) are featured in countless movies, cartoons and television commercials.

Wondering how to explain what opera is to your students? See Introduction to Opera activity on page 17.

Hosting an Opera Performance at Your School!

We are truly excited that your school has chosen the Canadian Opera Company to perform for you. We recognize how much planning and co-ordination is done by the teachers in advance of our visit. To make things easier for you, your colleagues and our cast, here are some tips on how to host a COC opera at your school!



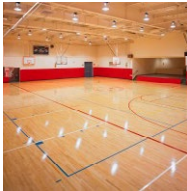
REQUIRED TIME FOR EACH PERFORMANCE

Set-up:	60 minutes
Performance:	45 minutes
Q&A:	15 minutes
Load-out:	30 minutes
TOTAL TIME:	2 hours 30 minutes



AUDIENCE

The opera is designed to perform for a maximum of 300 students in Grades 3 to 8.



SPACE

The opera is designed to be performed on the gym floor to allow for optimal sightlines for children.



Jean-Paul Décosee, Jacqueline Woodley, and Lindsay Barret in the Glencore Ensemble Studio School Tour production of The Scorpions' Sting: An Egyptian Myth, 2011. Photo: Karen Reeves

WHAT TO PREPARE IN ADVANCE OF THE PERFORMANCE

- Distribute the study guide to colleagues.
- Reserve performance space for the total time (listed on the previous page).
- Ensure that the space is cleaned and cleared prior to COC's arrival.
- Ensure load-in is accessible directly from the van to the performance space.
- Reserve parking for vehicles.
- Arrange for four to six older students to help unload the sets, props and costumes from the van the day of the performance.
- Arrange for a space where the artists can change into their costumes (adult washrooms, change room, etc.).
- Check the availability of a full-size digital or acoustic piano (complete with 88 keys). If you have an acoustic piano please check if it is in tune. If the piano is in a different room, please confirm that it can be moved into the performance space. If you do not have a piano, please notify the COC's stage manager as soon as possible.
- Notify the stage manager* if you are hosting another school at the performance.
- Arrange for bells, announcements and PA systems to be turned off during performance.

*Please note that approximately one week before your performance, you will be contacted via e-mail by the COC's stage manager as well as the COC's assistant publicist. The stage manager will send you a list of questions and reminders that will ensure a smooth performance, and the assistant publicist will only contact you in case any media outlets are interested in covering the performance at your school.

ON THE DAY OF THE PERFORMANCE

- Greet the artists at the arrival time.
- Direct the artists as to where to park the van.
- Have the older students ready to help the artists unpack the van.
- Provide water for the artists or direct them to the nearest water fountain.
- Direct the artists to their changing room.
- Arrange for the student audience to be seated by the performance start time. COC performers are unionized and Prologue to the Performing Arts has crafted a detailed itinerary which adheres to our union agreements and ensures that we can arrive at each school in a timely fashion, set up, and begin the performance on time.
- Introduce the performance!



Rihab Chaieb with enthusiastic audience members after a performance of the Glencore Ensemble Studio School Tour production of Cinderella, 2010. Photo: Michael Cooper

SUGGESTED INTRODUCTION FOR THE COC

Note: Whoever is making any welcome remarks should connect with the Stage Manager prior to beginning the speech to ensure that the performers are ready to begin.

Good morning/afternoon! We're very pleased to welcome the Canadian Opera Company to our school. Today, the COC (pronounced "see-oh-see") will present the opera *The Scorpions' Sting: An Egyptian Myth* written by composer Dean Burry (who lives in Toronto!). At the end of the performance you will have a chance to ask the performers questions about what you saw and heard and about opera in general.

A couple of things to remember during the performance:

- ♦ Listen quietly so you don't miss a word and so you can easily follow the story.
- ♦ Please sit down during the show so those behind you can see.
- ♦ Save thoughts and comments until the question and answer time at the end of the performance. Please remember to put up your hand if you have a question for the performers during the question and answer session at the end.
- ♦ A special note for the teachers or any guests in the room (excluding media): please put away any cameras or recording devices as we are not permitted to take photographs, videos or make audio recording of the performance due to union regulations.
- ♦ Please avoid leaving for drinks or other reasons because you don't want to miss any of the opera and it can be disruptive to your fellow audience members.

Please join me in welcoming the Canadian Opera Company!



PHOTOGRAPHY/MEDIA AT PERFORMANCES

The COC's assistant publicist actively engages local media to publicize school tour performances. The assistant publicist will contact you in advance to confirm whether media are allowed to be on school premises and, with the necessary permissions in place, will notify you of the possibility that media, including those with cameras, may be attending the performance. If your school or school board wants to arrange media or photography of the performance, you or the school/school board contact must contact and notify the COC assistant publicist a minimum of three working days prior to the performance. Due to COC union agreements, only media that has been granted permission by both the COC and the school can video or photograph the opera. This means that any media that did not obtain permission from both the COC and the school will not be permitted to take photos or video of the performance. The agreement also stipulates that no one, aside from approved media outlets, is permitted to take photos of COC artists and productions. Teachers, administrators, parents, parent council members, students, school board staff, or guests or any other individuals are not permitted to take photos of the performance. Approved production shots will be available for download for any school requiring photos for parent/guardian newsletters and other school materials.

If you have any questions or require approved images for school materials, please do not hesitate to contact Kristin McKinnon, the COC's assistant publicist, at kmckinnon@coc.ca or 416-306-2383.

How a School Tour Opera is Created



Isis, the Egyptian Goddess
(*Egyptian mythology inspired an opera.*)

STORY

Someone (usually a librettist or composer) finds an exciting story they think would make a good opera – the story can be from history, myths, fairy tales or real life.

LIBRETTIST

Takes the basic story and writes it into a script like a play, known as a libretto, with characters, scenes and stage directions.

COMPOSER

Using the libretto, the composer writes the music in a way that best tells the story. The final combination of music and libretto is called the score.



Dean Burry
(*Composer/Librettist*)

DIRECTOR

Reads and studies the score and creates a concept of how to put the opera on stage. Asks a designer, singers and music director to help support that concept.

DESIGNER

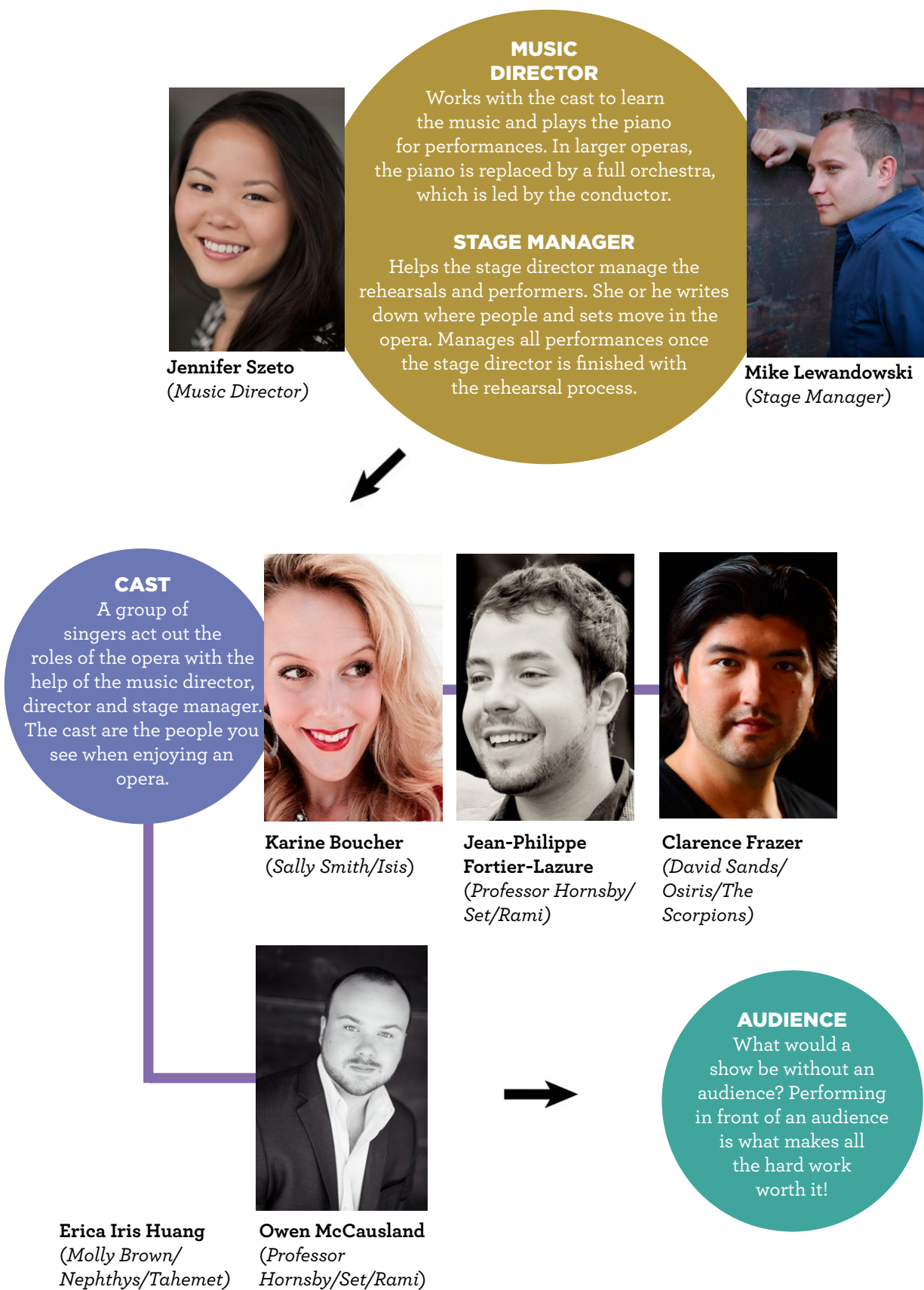
Studies the stage director's concept and works with the director on a look for the production. With the help of builders, the designer creates costumes, props and a set. In big productions there will be more than one designer.



Joel Ivany
(*Director*)



Brent Krysa
(*Set and Costume Designer*)



Voice Types

Just as each person's speaking voice has a certain range and sound, each singer's voice falls within a certain range and possesses a unique tone or quality. In the same way that no two people are physically identical, no two voices sound the same. There is a tremendous variety within each vocal range.

FEMALE VOICES

Soprano: The soprano is the highest of the female voices. Some are able to sing very high notes and skip through rapid passages with ease (coloratura soprano). Others specialize in singing with great intensity and power (dramatic soprano). Still others have voices of exceptional beauty that can sustain long melodies (lyric soprano). Sopranos tend to play the heroines (lead female characters) in opera. Isabel Bayrakdarian is a well-known Canadian soprano. [Click here](#) to watch her perform!

Mezzo-soprano: These are lower female voices. Mezzo-sopranos have a darker sound and can reach low notes beneath the range of a soprano. Mezzo-sopranos often sing the roles of mothers, witches, confidantes, or even young male characters. Allyson McHardy is a notable Canadian mezzo-soprano and you can watch her by [clicking here](#).

Contralto: This is the lowest female voice. This voice type is often written for a very strong character, such as a goddess. Canadian Marie-Nicole Lemieux is a famous contralto. [Click here](#) to see her in performance.

MALE VOICES

Countertenor: A countertenor is a falsetto male voice with a very high register, so much so, that at first hearing he can sound similar to a female operatic voice. Daniel Taylor is a famous Canadian countertenor. To listen to him perform, [click here](#).

Tenor: Tenors are the higher male voices, and like sopranos, cover a wide variety of vocal colours. Ramón Vargas is an example of a "lyric tenor" with his ability to soar through melodies, while Canadian Ben Heppner exemplified the darker-hued intensity of the "dramatic tenor." They often play the hero. Michael Schade is a Canadian tenor, famous for his mastery of many Mozart roles. [Click here](#) to hear him.

Baritone: These are the middle male voices. Composers only began to write for this range in the 19th century. As with all the ranges, there are a number of types of baritones. Russell Braun is one of the world's leading lyric baritones. [Click here](#) to see him in performance. Many baritones have extremely flexible wide-ranging voices. They play the villains, fools, friends, fathers and other character parts.

Bass: The lowest of all voice types, the bass has a rich sound particularly suited to the wiser, older or evil characters in opera. Composers often challenge basses by writing notes at the extreme low end of their range. Robert Gleadow is a well-known Canadian bass. [Click here](#) to see him.

Characters and Story

MAIN CHARACTERS

Name	Voice Type
Professor Hornsby/Set	Tenor
Sally Smith/Isis	Soprano
David Sands/Osiris/The Scorpions	Baritone
Molly Brown/Nephthys/Tahemet	Mezzo-Soprano

SYNOPSIS

A blinding sandstorm in the Egyptian desert. A group of weary archaeology students, led by their professor, search for the mythical Lost Temple of Isis. Against the advice of his students, the old professor sits down for a brief rest and is stung by a scorpion. Unsure what to do next, the students carry their teacher into a cave. Upon entering the darkness they realize that this is no common cave – they have stumbled upon the Lost Temple itself.

In a desperate attempt to help the professor, Sally remembers Isis was known as the Goddess of Healing and that her knowledge might provide the answer. Perhaps the clues lie in the ancient hieroglyphics on the temple walls, telling the story of Isis, Osiris (her husband), Nephthys (her sister), and Set (Osiris’s brother). Molly and David don’t believe in the spell and leave Sally alone. After examining the hieroglyphics, Sally decodes a portion of the legend of Isis... something about a cure for scorpion stings.

The story tells of a great rivalry between the king of all Egypt, Osiris, and his jealous brother Set. Set wishes more than anything to become the one ruler and tricks his wife, Nephthys, into laying a trap for the king. At a royal banquet in honour of Osiris, Set unveils a beautiful gold chest. Whoever fits perfectly into the box will become its owner. Guest after guest lines up to win the prize, but only Osiris is the correct size. This was Set’s scheme all along, as the box had been crafted for this purpose. The lid is slammed shut on Osiris and the box is thrown in the river Nile. Set is now king. Good Osiris is dead and his wife Isis is banished to the unforgiving desert.

Isis spends her days in despair. Her beloved husband is gone and she is alone. Nephthys appears and Isis at first rebukes her for her involvement in the scheme, but

she soon realizes that Nephthys was tricked as well. The two sisters reconcile and sing to invoke the memory of Osiris. Nephthys gives Isis Osiris’s magical sistrum that will summon the scorpions to lead her out of exile in the desert. Upon shaking the sistrum, the seven scorpions appear and, led by Tefen, escort Isis out of the desert to a town, where they eventually come to the door of Tahemet, a rich woman. The woman is horrified at Isis’s bedraggled appearance and the seven frightening scorpions, and turns them away. The scorpions are enraged by the actions of Tahemet. “How dare she turn away the Queen of Egypt!” they cry out, and hatch a revenge plan. The scorpions give all of their poison to Tefen who will sting the rich woman’s baby. Moments later, the woman runs into the street crying that her baby has been poisoned. She cries for help, but no one will come to her aid.

“Scorpions, did you do this?” Isis scolds them. “The child is not to be blamed for the actions of a thoughtless mother.” Taking the child in her arms, she begins to cast a spell, naming each of the scorpions in turn:

“Poison of Tefen and Befen appear on the earth. I take away your sting. Poison of Mesetet and Mesetetef release. I take away your sting. Poison of Petet and Tjetet and Matet retreat. Come forth! I take away your sting! I take away your sting!”

The baby is saved.

Back in the Temple of Isis, the students, by working together, realize that they have not only uncovered the cure for a scorpion sting, but a new sense of understanding and respect for one another. The professor is saved and they begin the triumphant journey home.

Meet the Composer and Librettist



DEAN BURRY

Dean Burry was born in St. John’s, Newfoundland in 1972, but grew up in the small town of Gander. As both his parents’ families came from small outport communities, he spent a great deal of time by the ocean and out in his father’s boat. Music is in the blood of Newfoundlanders, and it was in this environment that Burry began his own artistic journey. Early piano

lessons were not completely satisfying, and it wasn’t until a teacher encouraged his desire for composition, at age 10, that music became a passion. Theatre was another great interest and soon he was writing plays and music for the school drama club. His first produced script, *Good Gods*, won first place in the local drama festival in 1987.

Following high school, Burry enrolled in the bachelor of music program as a saxophone major at Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick. Looking for ways to combine his love of theatre and music, he began composing operas and musicals. In his first three years at university, he wrote, produced and conducted three major dramatic musical works: *The Resurrection*, *Joe and Mary Had a Baby* and *Unto the Earth: Vignettes of a War*.

His studies in music continued, and Burry completed his master of music in composition at the University of Toronto in 1996. Shortly afterwards, Burry began working in ticket services at the Canadian Opera Company while composing incidental music for small theatrical productions. Working for the COC enabled Burry to immerse himself in the Canadian opera world. His own curiosity and interest in opera drove him to spend a lot of time at the opera company outside of working hours, observing rehearsals and learning a great deal about the ways to create successful opera. In 1997, Burry was hired to develop and run the COC’s After School Opera Program, a community program designed to introduce children to all the elements of opera. The program is still vibrant today and celebrated its 15th anniversary last year.

In 1999, while working as an educator with the COC, Burry was commissioned to write *The Brothers Grimm*, a new opera for the annual school tour. The opera premiered in 2001 and received rave reviews from teachers and students alike, putting the composer on a national stage. Since its premiere in 2001, *The Brothers Grimm* has been seen by over 160,000 school children across Canada, the United States and Europe. In December 2012, *The Brothers Grimm* celebrated its 500th performance, making it the most performed Canadian opera in history.

Other major operatic works by Dean Burry

The Brothers Grimm – an opera for children which tells the story of how the famous Grimm brothers collected some of today’s favourite fairytales including *Little Red Cap*, *The Miller’s Daughter*, and *Rapunzel*. [Click here to watch!](#)

Pandora’s Locker for The Glenn Gould School. [Click here to watch a clip.](#)

Works for children’s chorus including an adaptation of Pierre Berton’s book *The Secret World of OG* and J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* ([click here for more information](#)), both commissioned by the Canadian Children’s Opera Company.

The Story Behind *The Scorpions’ Sting*

Almost every ancient culture had its own mythology* that helped its people explain the mysteries of life, death and nature, and formed an important part of religious and daily life. Our knowledge of the mythology of various cultures comes from a variety of sources. The writings of Homer, a famous Ancient Greek poet and storyteller, are one of the ways that scholars learned the stories of Greek myths. The mythology of Native North American tribes has largely been passed down orally from generation to generation. We have been able to learn of Egyptian mythology (as well as their culture and language) through their hieroglyphics.

The composer and librettist of *The Scorpions’ Sting*, Dean Burry, is very interested in Egyptian mythology, and was very excited when he discovered the story of *The Scorpions’ Sting* as described on the Metternich Stela, a stone tablet. He said about the opera:
“What I find most interesting about the potential of this piece is that much of the myth, including the actual recitation, comes from tomb walls, papyrus writings and statue bases.”

The Stela contains many stories of Isis, Osiris and their son Horus, and includes recitations intended to be used against serpents and scorpions. The incantation that Isis sings in the opera to cure Tahemet’s child is an interpretation of the actual writings from the Stela.

***Mythology**
is a term for a collection of stories that pertain to a specific culture – individual stories are called “myths.” Myths normally concern topics such as the origin of the people, history, deities, ancestors and heroes. Other types of world mythology include ancient Greek, Roman, Celtic, Babylonian, Native American, Norse, Aztec, Inuit... and many more!

THE ORIGINAL:
“*Poison of Tefen, come, go out to the earth, do not go about and do not penetrate: Poison of Befen, come, go out to the earth, I am Isis divine, mistress of magic, exercising magic, magical in speaking, effective of words. Every biting snake obeys me. Fall down, poison of Mestet, do not run. Poison of Mestetef, do not rise, Poison of Petet and Tjetet. Fall down, mouth of the biting one, at the words of Isis divine, great magic among the gods, to whom Geb has given his magic power in order to avert the poison in its power. Yield, recede, flee, backwards, poison, do not jump up, at the words of the beloved Ra, the egg of the sun-bird and who has come forth from the sycamore.*”

IN THE OPERA:
Poison of Tefen, appear on the earth, do not advance. Come forth.
Poison of Befen, appear on the earth, do not advance. Come forth.
I take away your sting.
Poison of Mesetet, halt! Poison of Mesetetef, release!
Poison of Petet and Tjetet and Matet retreat!
Come forth! Come forth!
I am Isis. I take away your sting. I take away your sting!

Other elements of the story and libretto come from various sources. The *Hymn to Osiris* is based on words found in the *Book of the Dead*, an ancient Egyptian text that was normally placed in a coffin or burial chamber as part of the ritual thought to help the dead pass into the afterlife. Part of the *Book of the Dead* describes the second life of Osiris.

A Glossary of Opera and Music Terms

A capella:	Vocal music without instrumental accompaniment	Librettist:	The individual who writes the libretto of an opera
Aria:	A song for one singer, content is often self-reflective in nature or emotional	Libretto:	The words and story of the opera set to the composer’s music; translates to “little book” in English
Arioso:	Aria-like, a lyrical and expressive passage of recitative	Mezzo:	Medium (i.e. mezzo forte means “medium loud”)
Bel Canto:	Italian for “beautiful singing” (also a style of music)	Note:	A musical sound with its own pitch
Chorus:	A group of singers who act and sing together	Octave:	The distance between the tone of scale and the next higher or lower tone of similar pitch (i.e. middle C and the C above are an octave, or eight notes, apart).
Coloratura:	Ornamental vocal music where several notes are sung for each syllable of the text	Overture:	The introductory musical passage played by the orchestra
Composer:	The individual who writes the music	Pianissimo:	Very soft
Conductor:	The musical director of the orchestra	Pitch:	The highness or lowness of sound
Crescendo:	Gradually getting louder	Recitative:	A type of singing unique to opera when words are delivered in a way that imitates speech
Decrescendo:	Gradually getting softer	Scale:	A series of notes (usually eight in the Western tradition) that can be played in an ascending and descending pattern, and that are related by the pattern of the intervals between the notes
Duet:	A song performed by, and written for, two singers	Score:	Music in written form with all the parts set down in relation to each other
Ensemble:	Connected singing by a number of performers	Tempo:	The speed at which a piece of music moves
Finale:	The final musical number of an act, scene, or opera	Timbre:	The quality of tone (vocal or instrumental)
Forte:	Musical notation meaning the note should be played or sung “loudly”		
Legato:	Smooth, connected playing or singing, with flowing transition from one note to another		

Meet the Cast and Crew



Karine Boucher
(Sally Smith/Isis)

NAME: Karine Boucher

HOMETOWN: Quebec

VOICE TYPE: Soprano

AGE WHEN YOU STARTED SINGING: 11

FIRST TIME ON STAGE: 14

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: When I successfully finished my master's degree, being chosen for Atelier lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal, winning the COC

Ensemble Studio Competition, and all of the opportunities I have to work with amazing people from around the world: coaches, teachers, conductors, and colleagues!

FAVOURITE ASPECT OF SCHOOL TOUR: Having so much fun with my colleagues and the kids! Sharing our passion for opera is always amazing.



Jean Philippe Fortier-Lazure
(Professor Hornsby/Set/Rami)

NAME: Jean Philippe Fortier-Lazure

HOMETOWN: Kitchener/Waterloo

VOICE TYPE: Tenor

AGE WHEN YOU STARTED SINGING: I sang as a boy in choir. At 14, when my voice changed, I decided to start taking voice lessons.

FIRST TIME ON STAGE: 16 – I sang the role of the young

confederate soldier and Britt Craig in *Parade* (by Jason Robert Brown) – it was with a community musical theatre company, and I've been hooked ever since!

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: My personal highlights were singing Pelléas in *Pelléas et Mélisande* during my first year at the Université de Montréal, as well as touring Europe with the Men and Boys Choir of Ottawa. The most thrilling experience I've had was competing in the Centre Stage Competition this past year at the COC – It was the most scary and yet exciting experience I have ever had!

FAVOURITE ASPECT OF SCHOOL TOUR: Getting to visit so many beautiful cities around Ontario and sharing music and art that I'm passionate about!



Erica Iris
(Molly Brown/Nephthys/Tahemet)

NAME: Erica Iris

HOMETOWN: Scarborough, Ontario

VOICE TYPE: Mezzo-Soprano

AGE WHEN YOU STARTED SINGING: Some say, since I was in my mother's womb! But I recall first singing at age 3.

FIRST TIME ON STAGE: Singing solos for church service when I was in first grade.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: I was granted the opportunity to sing at Carnegie Hall in New York City with the Toronto Children's when I was nine years old, being the youngest in the Touring Chamber Choir. The second I walked on stage to perform, I felt so comfortable, almost as if I found a second home. In 2008, I made my debut in Toronto singing the lead role of The Composer/Der Komponist in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Toronto Summer Music under the baton of Agnes Grossmann.

FAVOURITE ASPECT OF THE SCHOOL TOUR: Meeting the students and seeing how music is being incorporated in their education!



Brent Krysa
(Designer)

NAME: Brent Krysa



Joel Ivany
(Director)

NAME: Joel Ivany

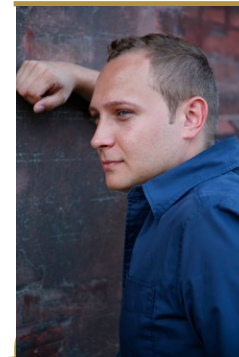
HOMETOWN: I was born in Penticton, but now Toronto is home

AGE WHEN YOU STARTED DIRECTING: 24

FIRST TIME DIRECTING: An original one act theatre piece. And then I directed the musical *Carbaret*

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: Directing an opera in the USA, working at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC

FAVOURITE ASPECT OF SCHOOL TOUR: Directing for a fun audience. Nothing serious, all fun and creative imagining.



Mike Lewandowski
(Stage Manager)

NAME: Mike Lewandowski

HOMETOWN: Toronto, Ontario

WHEN YOU DECIDED TO BE A STAGE MANAGER: I knew I wanted to be involved in theatre when I saw my first opera at the age of nine. In high school I participated in a school play, and decided to study theatre production in university. While at school I was exposed to acting, design and managing. It was then that I decided I wanted to make a career as a stage manager.

FAVOURITE ASPECT OF SCHOOL TOUR: Travelling around Ontario, visiting all the great communities. We become our own little family for a month, spending lots of time together in a van. And the constant question from the singers: "Are we there yet?"



Owen McCausland
(Professor Hornsby/
Set/Rami)

NAME: Owen McCausland

HOMETOWN: Saint John, New Brunswick

VOICE TYPE: Tenor

AGE WHEN YOU STARTED SINGING: six years old, in school choirs

FIRST TIME ON STAGE: 14 years old

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: Singing the role of Tito in the COC's production of *La clemenza di Tito*

FAVOURITE ASPECT OF SCHOOL TOUR: Being on stage with friends!



Jennifer Szeto
(Music Director)

NAME: Jennifer Szeto

HOMETOWN: Calgary, Alberta

AGE WHEN YOU STARTED PLAYING PIANO: Age 5

FIRST TIME ON STAGE: Age 7

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: I have piano degrees from University of Toronto and McGill University. For Opéra de Montréal, I was an apprentice pianist for two years.

FAVOURITE ASPECT OF THE SCHOOL TOUR: School is the best place to try new things and learn all about the world. I'm so excited to be back in a place where we can share what we love about opera with all of our students!



Christopher Enns in the Glencore Ensemble Studio School Tour production of *The Scorpions' Sting: An Egyptian Myth*, 2011. Photo: Karen Reeves

What to Look for

ABOUT THE DESIGN OF *THE SCORPIONS' STING: AN EGYPTIAN MYTH*

The set for *The Scorpions' Sting* was designed by Brent Krysa. Brent's design serves to evoke both the mystical world of Isis in ancient Egypt and a present day, barren Egyptian desert in which Professor Hornsby, Sally, David, and Molly find themselves in peril.

USE OF COLOUR

In Ancient Egypt, colour could be used to symbolize an integral part of a person's nature. Different colours had specific meanings, and colour used in combination with hieroglyphs intensified the meaning of the symbol. Colours were often paired. For example, silver and gold were considered complementary colours because they formed a duality of opposites, like the sun and moon. Two colours stand out in Brent's set, costume and prop design: gold and blue.

Blue was considered a divine colour, appropriate for sacred places. Dark blue or "Egyptian blue" was the colour of the heavens and water, and it represented creation, life and re-birth.

Gold (or yellow) designated the eternal and the indestructible, also considered to be qualities of the sun. Statues of the gods were either made of gold or were gold-plated to symbolize their eternal life.

THE EYE OF HORUS

The Eye of Horus (also known as the Udjat or Wadjet) is painted on the centre panel of the set piece. The Eye is the symbol of Horus who is the son of Isis and Osiris, and is one of the oldest and most revered deities in Ancient Egyptian religion.

Brent chose to depict the Eye of Horus on the set piece because it is a powerful symbol believed to have healing and protective power. In Ancient Egypt, it was frequently represented in jewellery to ensure the safety and health of the person who wore it. Will the Eye of Horus bring its protective and healing powers to the Professor and his students?

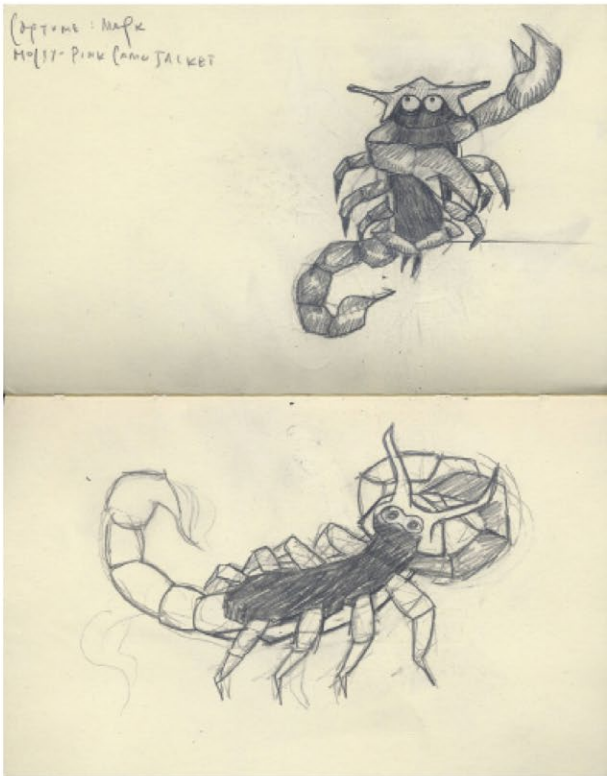
COSTUME CHANGES

The singers in this opera play dual roles, meaning they each play two or more different characters. The singer who plays Sally Smith, for instance, also plays the Ancient Egyptian Goddess, Isis. One way this is represented is through changes in costume. Sally wears modern-day clothing that is well-suited to the climate of present day Egypt, while her secondary character, Isis, dons draped white linens and a golden crown. See if you can spot the other characters' transformations.

Do they act differently? Sing differently? What subtext do these different costumes give to the story?

Hieroglyphics

SET AND COSTUME SKETCHES BY DESIGNER BRENT KRYSA



WHAT IS HIEROGLYPHICS?

Hieroglyphics was the Ancient Egyptians’ formal writing system. Although many hieroglyphs (characters) look like drawings, hieroglyphics is a very complicated system, and a drawing that looks like a bird doesn’t necessarily stand for the word “bird.” Linguists, archaeologists and historians were stumped by hieroglyphs and the Ancient Egyptian language until the discovery of the Rosetta Stone in 1799. The Stone is carved with a decree written in two

forms of Egyptian hieroglyphs and also Ancient Greek: by comparing the Greek text with the hieroglyphs, scholars began to decipher Egyptian writing. In 1822 French scholar Jean-François Champollion published a full translation of the Rosetta Stone text. Our understanding of Ancient Egyptian language, mythology and culture has grown from this first amazing discovery.

Some examples of hieroglyphs

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| | tethering rope |
| | two flowering reeds |
| | oxen |
| | man |
| | seated man |
| | Eye of Horus, protection, health |
| | mouth |
| | small bird |
| | lion, pride |
| | water, pot |



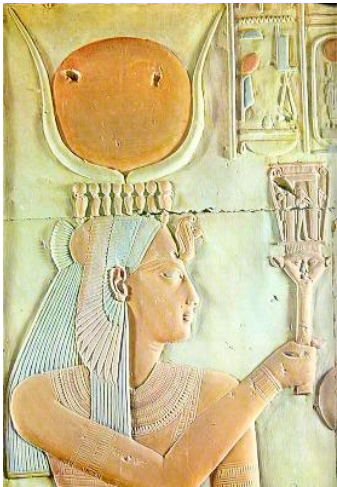
Music in Ancient Egyptian Ritual

THE SISTRUM

Percussion has been a part of most cultures from the our earliest history, starting with hand clapping and sounds created by stomping on the earth. There is pictorial evidence that Ancient Egyptian musical culture included both pitched instruments (for example flutes, harps, and trumpets) and non-pitched instruments (for example cymbals, drums, and rattles). Rhythmic music was at the core of Egyptian religious practices and was always used in ritual processions.

In Ancient Egypt, most of the highly trained percussionists who performed for the entertainment of wealthy and noble people were women.

One instrument that was used in rituals associated with Isis was the sistrum. The sistrum, called seshesht in Egyptian, was a type of shaker and considered sacred to Hathor, goddess of the sky, love, beauty, and music. The instrument originally consisted of cut papyrus stems, but evolved into a more advanced and decorative metal rattle. The sound that it produced was thought to attract the attention of the gods.



Over time, percussion music from Egypt and the Middle East continued to play an important role in the religious, military, and cultural life of the region, and even began to influence the music and culture of other areas in the world. In fact, the use of percussion instruments in European orchestras today can be traced to the influence of a particular style of Turkish military music played by “Janissary bands.” Janissaries were a kind of percussion band associated with the Turkish military and the personal bodyguards of Turkish Sultans. The music is characterized by its use of extra percussion instruments, including the bass drum, cymbals, triangle and one instrument that is similar to the sistrum: the crescent. The Turkish crescent is a handheld stick with lots of bells and jingles hanging from crescent-shaped crossbars. During the 18th century, military bands all over Europe copied the Janissary style, and imported the instruments used by the Janissary bands. By the end of the century European composers had begun using percussion instruments such as the bass drum, cymbals, and triangle in their orchestral compositions.



Lesson Plan: Introduction to Opera

OVERVIEW

Students are introduced to the opera medium and opera-related vocabulary. Students listen to opera excerpts and identify emotions/stories in music. In this lesson, students explore opera through reflection and active participation, and practice listening skills.

MATERIALS

- Chart paper and markers
- CD player, CD(s) of opera selections (suggestions on the next page)
- COC *The Scorpions’ Sting: An Egyptian Myth Study Guide*
- “Opera Detective” table (Worksheet 1.1)

INTRODUCTION TO OPERA

Suggested discussion questions (see Study Guide for this information):

- What do you think of when you hear the word “opera?” Write the answers on chart paper, and group them according to music, drama, and design elements.
- What do you think you need to put on an opera? Use what was written above to prompt answers. What makes an opera different from a play? A ballet? A pop concert?
- How many other different ways can you think of to tell a story? (e.g. in a play, in a film, with puppets, with a song)
- Why is it important that music and text match in emotion and intention?

EXTENSION IDEAS

- Introduce/review musical terms (e.g. forte, piano, allegro, tempo, etc.) and operatic terms (see “A Glossary of Terms” article on page 12).
- Lead class in singing a familiar tune, then sing it again with different emotions (e.g. “Row, row, row your boat” sung happily, angrily, sadly). Discuss what differences students notice in volume, tempo, etc. when they try to portray different emotions while singing.

1.1 LISTENING ACTIVITY

Play three operatic excerpts, each representing a different emotion. Ask students to complete the “Opera Detective” table. With younger students, fill out the table as a class, or in groups.

EXTENSION IDEAS

- Have students include proper musical/operatic vocabulary in table.
- Have students do the Listening Activity in groups. When finished, each group picks one of the excerpts, and creates three tableaux describing the story they have identified in that excerpt. Groups take turns performing them for the class and classmates must guess which excerpt they are dramatizing.

ASSESSMENT

Students can be assessed on overall participation and comprehension.

Opera Detective Worksheet

SUGGESTED EXCERPTS

- ♦ “Largo al factotum” – from Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville* (baritone aria)
- ♦ “Les voici, les voici!” – from Bizet’s *Carmen* (children’s chorus)
- ♦ “O soave fanciulla” – from Puccini’s *La Bohème* (tenor/soprano duet)
- ♦ “Va pensiero” – from Verdi’s *Nabucco* (chorus)
- ♦ “Voi che sapete” – from Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro* (mezzo-soprano aria)
- ♦ “Una furtiva lagrima” – from Donizetti’s *The Elixir of Love* (tenor aria)
- ♦ “Barcarolle” – from Offenbach’s *The Tales of Hoffmann* (soprano/mezzo-soprano duet)



	EXCERPT 1	EXCERPT 2	EXCERPT 3
What is the tempo?			
What is the overall emotion(s) of the piece?			
Who do you think is singing? (e.g. a young woman? a group of sailors?)			
How do you feel while you’re listening to the piece?			

Lesson Plan: Myths and Hieroglyphs

OVERVIEW

In this lesson students are introduced to the concepts of myths and hieroglyphs, and explore the mythology of other cultures through personal or group research. Students use reading comprehension skills to analyze a myth and identify selected characters, concepts and vocabulary. Visual art and language skills are used in creating and defining their own hieroglyphs.

MATERIALS

- ♦ Chart paper and markers/chalkboard and chalk for discussion (optional)
- ♦ COC *The Scorpions’ Sting: An Egyptian Myth* Study Guide
- ♦ Research materials (library, books, computers, etc.)
- ♦ “Myth and Hieroglyphs” table

INTRODUCTION TO MYTHOLOGY AND HIEROGLYPHS (GROUP LESSON/DISCUSSION)

See Study Guide article (page 11) “The Story Behind *The Scorpions’ Sting*” for information about mythology and hieroglyphs, and types of world mythology.

SUGGESTED CLASS DISCUSSION TOPICS

- ♦ What is the difference between a myth and a fairy tale or story?
- ♦ Why do you think myths would be important for a culture?
- ♦ What are some of the characters/stories/themes you would expect to find in a myth? (e.g. heroes, gods and goddesses, creation legends, etc.)
- ♦ In our world, we use symbols to tell us something without letters, like hieroglyphs – what are some examples? (e.g. men’s and women’s bathroom signs, wheelchair access, no smoking, recycling, etc.)

ACTIVITIES

RESEARCHING WORLD MYTHOLOGY

As a class, in groups, or as individuals, students choose a type of world mythology to research (see Study Guide article for examples – topic can also be assigned by the educator). Students will choose one particular myth from this culture to focus on.

- ♦ For younger grades, do the activity as a class or group project, with a myth assigned by the educator and discussed in class.

2.2 TELLING A STORY WITH HIEROGLYPHS

Using the “Myths and Hieroglyphics” worksheet, students identify one major character, one object, one action, and one emotion from the myth they are studying, and create a corresponding hieroglyph, explaining why they have created that particular symbol.

- ♦ For older grades, have them retell the story, inserting their hieroglyphs in the appropriate places

ASSESSMENT

Students can be assessed on overall participation and research, and submit the worksheet for grading.

The culture this myth is from is:		This myth is called:	
A major character is:	The hieroglyph for this character is:	Explanation:	
An important object is:	The hieroglyph for this object is:	Explanation:	
An important action is:	The hieroglyph for this action is:	Explanation:	
An emotion found in the myth is:	The hieroglyph for this emotion is:	Explanation:	

Create a Sistrum

WHAT IS A SISTRUM?

A sistrum is an Ancient Egyptian metal shaker used extensively in religious and royal ceremonies.

SUMMARY/OBJECTIVE OF ACTIVITY

- ♦ Students will research the role of music in Ancient Egypt. What are some examples of instruments people played in Ancient Egypt? On what occasions was music played, and why?
- ♦ Students will create their own sistrum as seen in the opera *The Scorpions’ Sting: An Egyptian Myth* out of found materials.
- ♦ Students will demonstrate an understanding of basic rhythm patterns.

INPUT

1. A week in advance, ask students to bring in toilet or paper towel rolls from home that they will use to construct a sistrum.
2. Read the synopsis of the opera to the students or have them take turns reading aloud. Pay special attention to the banquet for Osiris.
3. Teach students to distinguish between beat and rhythm in a simple song. Identify different tempi (faster and slower speeds), and identify examples of dynamics (loudness and softness) and discuss how they are achieved.
4. Create a template for students to work from and give instructions for how to create the sistrum.
5. Upon completion, work as a group to experiment with different rhythm patterns, tempi and dynamics with your new instruments.

HOW TO MAKE A SISTRUM

MATERIALS (PER STUDENT)

- ♦ Three pieces of wire (at least 22 gauge) cut into pieces 10 cm in length
- ♦ Six paper clips
- ♦ Duct tape or stapler
- ♦ Strip of Bristol board (3 cm wide, 30 cm long)
- ♦ One toilet paper roll

WHAT TO DO

- ♦ Bend the strip of Bristol board into an oval shape and staple or tape it to the toilet paper roll so that it is in the shape of a tennis racket.
- ♦ Attach the three pieces of wire horizontally inside the oval shape by poking a hole through the sides of the Bristol board strip and bending the wire ends on the outside to secure.
- ♦ Attach two paper clips on each wire (two on each line, six in total).
- ♦ The sistrum is ready to be used in percussion-based activity.

Percussion Activity

CREATE A SOUNDSCAPE

OBJECTIVE

- ◆ Identify examples of dynamics in their environment and in music.
- ◆ Produce a specific effect using various sound sources.
- ◆ Identify examples in their environment and in music.
- ◆ Identify different tempi in their environment and in music.
- ◆ Perform a soundscape or sound collage based on a theme or topic.

INPUT

1. Have students sit in a circle facing each other. Tell them that they are about to become an orchestra called “Sounds of a Desert Oasis.” What is a desert oasis? Brainstorm what kinds of sounds you might hear in a desert oasis.
2. Distribute some found objects, e.g. scrap paper, fabric.
3. Give students a few minutes to think of a unique sound they would like to produce, e.g. blowing through their hands might sound like the wind, paper rustling together might sound like palm leaves in the breeze, fabric flapping might sound like cranes flapping their wings.
4. Tell the students you are going to be the conductor for their sounds.
 - a. When you move your hands (palms up), their sounds get louder. When you lower your hands (palms down) their sounds get softer.
 - b. When you move your hands in a wave-like motion quickly, they are going to speed up their sounds. When you wave slowly, they slow down their sounds.
5. Discussion: How did the loudness/softness, fastness or slowness of their sounds change the soundscape? Did it connote a different feeling or mood?

EXTENSION

Have students come up and be the conductor. Divide the students into two groups. Designate two conductors. Have them each conduct their own group. How does this change the sound?

Alternatively, divide the students into two groups and have each group follow a different hand with different commands. As a group, brainstorm the different types of sounds that a group of archaeologists might hear while exploring an Ancient Egyptian tomb. Make a new soundscape based on this idea. Some examples of sounds include the tomb door opening, the sound of footsteps, the sound of a chest opening slowly. This could be an add-on activity post-performance.

Attempt to create the soundscape without using visual communication. Instead of looking to a conductor for instructions, tell students to close their eyes. The conductor taps students once on the head to indicate that they should begin to make their individual sound. A second tap turns the sound “off.” A touch on the right shoulder means “get louder.” A touch on the left shoulder means “get softer.” Depending on the size of the group, you can experiment with having more than one conductor at a time.



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