

Lucia di Lammermoor

GAETANO DONIZETTI (1797 - 1848)



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Cover: Barry Banks as Edgardo and Anna Christy as Lucia in English National Opera's production of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, 2008. Photo: Clive Barda



Welcome

The Canadian Opera Company returns in 2012/2013 with the ultimate season of drama, mischief, love, horror and sacrifice. This spring, hear Lucia hit the high notes of madness with Donizetti's luscious cascading melodies in the dark and Gothic *Lucia di Lammermoor*; explore the biblical story of Salome in a celebrated production by Canadian film director Atom Egoyan; and witness the ultimate sacrifice by an order of Carmelite nuns during the French Revolution in director Robert Carsen's staging of Francis Poulenc's riveting *Dialogues des Carmélites*. The season is sure to inspire, shock and ignite the creativity of your students!

An evening at the opera is more than a night of entertainment. Opera provides many avenues for thought-provoking discussions and can be explored through many subjects beyond the arts, including history, social studies, media literacy, and yes, even science (think acoustics and sound!). The COC's Study Guides help enhance your students' visit to the COC by giving them a glimpse into the history, music, themes and the stories of the operas, while suggesting ways of putting their learning into practice.

Thank you for choosing to introduce your students to the thrilling and vibrant world of opera. It takes a creative and courageous educator to expose students to innovative subjects beyond the traditional curriculum, and I hope that the COC's Study Guides become a valuable educational resource for your efforts.

Katherine Semcesen
Associate Director, Education and Outreach

New this season:

Careers in Opera Spotlight

This season each Study Guide features a spotlight on an individual working at the COC. Learn about the many careers in opera and discover how the COC connects to Canada's cultural landscape.

Opera

at any stage of life!

The COC runs over 20 programs for school groups, children, youth and adults. Discover more at coc.ca/Explore!

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 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 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 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



So you're headed to the opera, and there are a few questions on your mind. What do I wear? Can I take photos of the performance? How will I understand it – isn't opera in another language?! Relax! Here are a few tips on how to get the most out of your opera experience.

First, there's the question of **what to wear**. Some people think of the opera and imagine the entire audience decked out in ballgowns and tuxes, but that's just not the case! People wear all sorts of things to the opera – jeans, dress pants, cocktail dresses, suits, etc. The important thing is to be comfortable and show personal flair. Wear something that makes you feel good, whether it be jeans or your nicest tie, and grab a sweater before you leave home – the air conditioning can be a bit chilly! Additionally, 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 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 from a screen in the lobby rather than your seat. If you need to buy or pick up a

ticket, arrive as early as possible, as sometimes the line-up for the box office can be quite long before a performance! The main doors open one hour before the performance starts. Line up there and have your ticket ready to present to the usher. If you have any questions about the performance, drop by the Welcome Desk to ask a member of the COC staff, who are full of useful information not only about the opera, but about COC programs in general. A **pre-performance chat** takes place in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre (Ring 3 of the lobby) about 45 minutes before the show. These chats, given by members of our **COC Volunteer Speakers Bureau**, offer valuable insight into both 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. The Four Seasons Centre is Canada's first purpose-built opera house, engineered with state-of-the-art design and technology for the best possible acoustics. Notice that the sound of traffic, streetcars and the general bustle of the city barely reaches the lobby, even though an airy glass wall looks out onto one of the busiest intersections in Toronto.

Stop by one of the bars and **order a beverage for intermission or purchase a snack**. Browse the **Opera Shop** to pick up a memento of your experience at the opera. (Note: the Opera Shop is not open at dress rehearsals.) Walk up the stairs, passing a sculpture as you go, and note the floating glass staircase – the longest free-standing 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 ring throughout the lobby starting **ten minutes** before the performance, reminding everyone to get to their seats. Head towards the door noted on your ticket, get a program from the usher, and find your designated seat. It's best to use this time to open any candies or cough drops 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! If you'd like to get a picture of you and your friends at the opera, do so now – **photography is not permitted** once the performance begins. A camera flash is very distracting to the performers, who are working hard to stay focused and in character.

As the lights go down and the audience quiets, **listen carefully**. Whatever little bit of outdoor sound you might have heard in the lobby (a siren passing, a rumbling streetcar) has been virtually eliminated here. Not a peep! That's because the auditorium is physically separated from

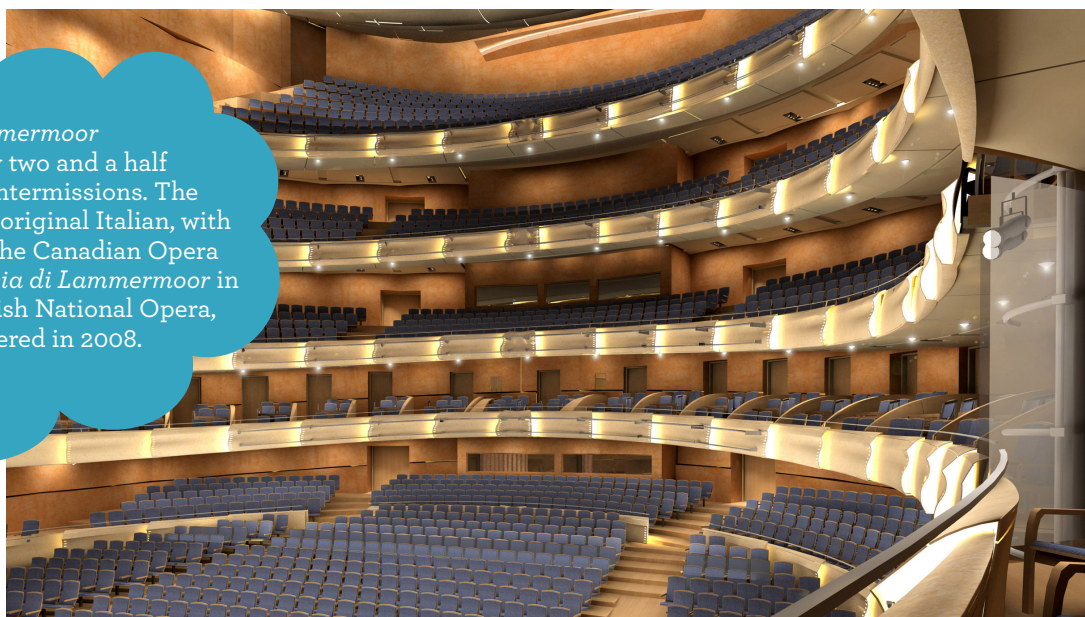
the outside and the ground below, making for the best acoustic experience possible.

Now it's time to sit back and **enjoy the opera**! But wait – you forgot your Italian-to-English translator! Don't worry about it. **SURTITLES™** are 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 around the world.

Make sure 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!

Lucia di Lammermoor lasts approximately two and a half hours, including two intermissions. The opera will be sung in the original Italian, with English SURTITLES™. The Canadian Opera Company will present *Lucia di Lammermoor* in a production from English National Opera, which first premiered in 2008.

R. Fraser Elliott Hall.
Photo: Tim Griffith



Characters and Synopsis

MAIN CHARACTERS (in order of vocal appearance)

Name	Description	Voice Type	Pronunciation
Normanno	follower of Ashton	Tenor	nor-MAHN-noh
Enrico	Lord Henry Ashton of Lammermoor	Baritone	en-REE-koh
Raimondo	Chaplain at Lammermoor	Bass	rye-MON-doh
Lucia	Enrico's sister	Soprano	loo-CHEE-yah
Alisa	companion to Lucia	Mezzo-soprano	ah-LEE-zah
Edgardo	Master of Ravenswood	Tenor	ed-GAHR-doh
Arturo	Lord Arthur Bucklaw	Tenor	ar-TOO-roh

SYNOPSIS

The Ashton family has been embroiled in an ongoing feud with the Ravenswood family. Enrico has murdered the patriarch of the Ravenswood clan and taken over their lands and castle.

ACT I

Enrico Ashton is angry because his sister Lucia refuses to marry Arturo Bucklaw, a powerful nobleman. The marriage would help the Ashton family regain political strength and dominance, but Lucia stubbornly rejects the offer. The family chaplain, Raimondo, warns Enrico not to force Lucia into marriage, saying that she is still mourning her dead mother and is not ready for a romance. Normanno, Enrico's captain, sneers at this suggestion and tells Enrico that Lucia has in fact been leaving the castle at night to secretly meet a man named Edgardo. Enrico is furious at this news because Edgardo is his sworn enemy, a member of the Ravenswood family. Enrico vows revenge.

By a fountain on the castle grounds, the servant Alisa begs Lucia to forget about her reckless love affair with Edgardo but Lucia is uninterested in her companion's advice. Eventually Edgardo arrives saying he must set sail for France in the morning. Before he departs, however, he intends to ask Enrico for Lucia's hand in marriage. Knowing that her brother will refuse, Lucia convinces Edgardo to keep their love secret. He agrees and they make a vow to be faithful to each other.

"Death alone can extinguish the flames of our love!"
Lucia and Edgardo

ACT II

Enrico and Normanno have been intercepting all of Edgardo's letters from abroad in order to drive a wedge

between the lovers. Now they have forged a letter in which Edgardo declares that he is in love with another woman. Lucia is horrified by what she reads and plunges into total despair, wishing only to die. Raimondo advises Lucia to sacrifice herself for the sake of the family and go through with the arranged marriage to Arturo. Miserable and resigned, Lucia agrees.

At the wedding ceremony, Lucia is in a daze and has to be physically propped up by Alisa and Raimondo to sign the marriage contract. Right after she does, Edgardo bursts through the doors. A violent fight nearly erupts, but Raimondo succeeds in pacifying the situation. Edgardo learns that Lucia has been married to another man and curses her.

"I love you, thankless girl, I love you still!" Edgardo

ACT III

That night, Enrico challenges Edgardo to a duel at sunrise. Meanwhile, at the castle, Raimondo interrupts the wedding celebration, telling the guests that Lucia has stabbed Arturo to death in their bedroom. Lucia appears in a state of complete delirium, thinking she is married to Edgardo. Enrico rushes in and his fury gradually gives way to great remorse as he witnesses Lucia's mental unravelling.

At dawn, Edgardo is awaiting the beginning of the duel. A procession of people from the castle informs him that Lucia, as she lies dying, has been calling out for him. He sets out for the castle, but Raimondo arrives to tell him it is too late: Lucia is dead. Overcome with the realization that she has loved him all along, Edgardo kills himself.

"If we were kept apart on earth, may God in heaven unite us." Edgardo

Genesis of the Opera

THE COMPOSER

Gaetano Donizetti (1797 – 1848) was an Italian composer whose operas were among the greatest of the Italian Romantic period of the 1830s and 1840s. He achieved tremendous success in his lifetime, which is not always the case with artists! His compositional style took the Italian tradition of *bel canto* and gave it more dramatic urgency. Anticipating the theatrical operatic genius of Giuseppe Verdi and the *verismo* movement, Donizetti's creative output ranged from sparkling comedies such as *L'elisir d'amore* (*The Elixir of Love*, 1832), *La fille du régiment* (*The Daughter of the Regiment*, 1840) and *Don Pasquale* (1843); to serious dramas such as *Lucia di Lammermoor* and three of his operas inspired by the Tudor period, *Anna Bolena* (*Anne Boleyn*, 1830), *Maria Stuarda* (*Mary Stuart*, 1835) and *Roberto Devereux* (1837).



Verismo

was a literary movement in southern Italy beginning in the 1870s, characterized by gritty realism, a concern with poverty, the use of everyday rather than poetic language, quotes from popular songs of the day, and a tragic ending. *Verismo* literature influenced opera, and the first *verismo* work to be adapted for the operatic stage was Pietro Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* (*Rustic Chivalry*, 1890).

Bel canto

Meaning “beautiful singing” in Italian, *bel canto* is a term usually applied to the period of Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti, when a highly decorated and virtuosic style of singing was practiced.

HIS INSPIRATION

The libretto (Italian for “little book,” the term refers to the words or text of an opera) for Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* was based on Sir Walter Scott's extraordinarily popular novel *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819). Europe was experiencing a romantic fascination with Scotland at this time, evidenced by the fact that three librettos based on *The Bride of Lammermoor* were already in existence when Donizetti was composing his own take on the story.

Scott's novel was based in part on the tragic, real life of Janet Dalrymple. The actual story is hard to pin down, since there are at least seven versions of her short life and marriage! But Scott pieced together enough to produce a novel that appealed greatly to readers of the time.

HOW LUCIA CAME TO BE

With the success of his first Tudor-inspired opera, *Anna Bolena* in 1830, Donizetti achieved a high level of fame and creative control as musical director of the Royal Theatres of Naples. *Lucia di Lammermoor* was the first of three operas he was contracted to compose for the house. He finished the composition of the music in less than six weeks, but its performance was delayed by financial difficulties experienced by the opera house management, resulting in the leading soprano refusing to rehearse until she was paid. Eventually King Ferdinand II intervened to resolve the financial problems and the opera house was able to go ahead with the premiere.

THE REACTION

Lucia di Lammermoor premiered on September 26, 1835, in Naples. It was a success with both critics and audiences. The two other great Italian composers of the period, Rossini (best known for his opera, *The Barber of Seville*) and Bellini were no longer active, with the former retired and the latter recently deceased. Donizetti was now the king of Italian opera and wrote of his success with *Lucia*:

“...at the risk of sounding immodest... *Lucia*... judging by the applause and compliments I received, pleased the audience very much. Every number was listened to in religious silence and then hailed with spontaneous cheers.”

Lucia di Lammermoor went on to be performed all over Europe and, later, in North America. It has remained one of the most popular operas in the repertoire.

A CHALLENGE FOR THE SINGERS

Lucia di Lammermoor is a superb showpiece for great singing and Lucia's mad scene, in particular, provides sopranos with a musical and dramatic *tour de force*.

But the mad scene is not the finale of the opera. In fact, Donizetti noted in a letter that the creator of the role, soprano Fanny Tacchinardi-Persiani, made a terrible fuss because after her last scene there remained another aria, sung by Edgardo, which gave the tenor final applause!

Lucia is a demanding role, physically, dramatically and vocally. Great interpreters of the past include Maria Callas and Joan Sutherland. The COC is thrilled to have the American soprano Anna Christy singing Lucia for us in the spring of 2013. The production from English National Opera was created around her, and she has sung it to great acclaim.



Anna Christy as Lucia in English National Opera's production of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, 2008. Photo: Clive Barda

One of the methods of extending a book's popularity in the 19th century was to create an operatic version of it. These days, a popular book or series is more likely to become a movie, examples being the *Twilight* and *Hunger Games* novels. Sir Walter Scott was so popular in the 19th century that there were at least 50 libretti based on his work, which makes Scott second only to William Shakespeare in the rankings of opera-inspiring writers.

MADNESS!

Even before Donizetti began work on *Lucia di Lammermoor*, madness had become popular fodder for art of the day. It is a curious and sad fact that, at the time, certain behaviours exhibited by young women were often attributed to madness. Anything from wilfulness and melancholia, to independence and sexuality might be identified as examples of the weaker natures and minds of women in the 19th century. Subsequently, lunatic asylums during this time were mainly populated by women.

Madness was also a tantalizing condition to see embodied on stage, as it gave audiences the thrill of witnessing moments of extreme intimacy, vulnerability and bizarre behaviour. Donizetti had already portrayed madness (most notably in his *Anna Bolena*), when he started work on the composition of *Lucia*.

Originally Donizetti wrote the mad scene aria with a **glass harmonica** accompaniment, which provides a haunting and fragile sound, emphasizing Lucia's vulnerability. However, the glass harmonica player quit abruptly over a complaint about his pay, and a flute was substituted for the premiere. A flute is still often used, but the Canadian Opera Company will be using the originally planned glass harmonica!



Anna Christy as Lucia in English National Opera's production of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, 2008. Photo: Clive Barda

Lucia di Lammermoor still resonates with audiences today. The *Romeo and Juliet*-style of love story and the sublimely dramatic and thrilling music are just two reasons why it continues to be among the most performed operas all over the world.

For a bit of fun, check out *The Guardian's* short and irreverent take on *Lucia di Lammermoor*!

Listening Guide

Get an earful of Donizetti's masterpiece with our listening guide, designed to help you appreciate this *bel canto* gem.

Recording: Gaetano Donizetti, *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Orchestra and Chorus of the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, under Richard Bonyngue, conductor. With Joan Sutherland, Luciano Pavarotti, Sherrill Milnes, Nicolai Ghiaurov, Huguette Tourangeau. Decca, 478 1513. You can also experience the Listening Guide online at coc.ca/Radio.

1

MUSICAL EXCERPT

Act I, cavatina/cabaletta: "Regnava nel silenzio... Quando, rapito in estasi" ("Enveloped in silence... When enraptured, ecstatic")

CONNECTION TO THE STORY

Lucia gazes into a fountain, recalling that here, a girl had been stabbed to death by her jealous lover and that in these waters her body remains buried. She tells her companion, Alisa, that she has recently seen the girl's ghost emerge from the fountain.

MUSICAL ELEMENTS AND SIGNIFICANCE

This is Lucia's *aria di sortita* (entrance aria) which is written in the standard form of the period: a *cavatina/cabaletta* in which the opening section is slower and requires the singer to vocalize on long, melodic lines in a *legato* (smooth) style. In the second part (the *cabaletta* – listen at 4:08) there is a change of focus in order to express a different emotion – in this case, joy as Lucia anticipates the arrival of her lover, Edgardo. The *cabaletta* is usually faster, and requires a different type of singing – less smooth and melodic, much more florid with rapid scales (*coloratura*) and high notes.

Despite its traditional structure, this aria is by no means a conventional expression of love, but instead conveys a dark, foreboding mood as Lucia tells us of this violent crime of passion from the past, colouring her voice to express the shock of meeting the dead girl's ghost at the fountain (1:16). The *coloratura* that helps build the exciting conclusion of the scene is more than an opportunity to show off the singer's virtuosity: it establishes Lucia's delicacy and fragility from the start (4:58). We'll hear more of this kind of music later in the opera when Lucia actually has gone mad, but here – appropriately enough for a foreshadowing scene – it is more of a taste of things to come.

2

MUSICAL EXCERPT

Act I, duet: "Sulla tomba che rinserra il tradito genitore... Ah! Verrano a te sull'aure" ("On the tomb that holds my betrayed father's remains... Born by gentle breezes my ardent sighs will come to you")

CONNECTION TO THE STORY

Edgardo explains that he once swore eternal vengeance against Lucia's family, who had been responsible for his father's death. Only love now deters him from realizing his oath. Solemnly, they exchange tokens of love before he departs.

MUSICAL ELEMENTS AND SIGNIFICANCE

Edgardo marks a turning point in the history of Italian tenor roles. Previously, composers wrote music

for tenors that mostly required them to sing sweetly and lyrically, not making huge demands on their abilities to sing with too much force or drama. But throughout this opera, Donizetti gives Edgardo many short, dramatic phrases – emotional outbursts high in the singer’s range and sung dramatically, at full volume.

The role does not begin with a smooth, legato vocal line as one might expect for a Romantic tenor lead, but instead, with short, jagged phrases followed by a quick rise to a demanding, dramatic high note (00:45) all of which has been carefully written to express Edgardo’s difficulties in quelling his thirst for revenge.

Eventually, this somewhat unsettled opening is transformed into what is probably the most beautiful and memorable musical passage in the entire opera: the “Veranno a te sull’aure” (5:21) first sung by Lucia, then by Edgardo and finally by both in unison. This is the only moment in the score when happiness seems remotely possible for the ill-fated couple, as reflected by the grand, sweeping vocal line.



3

MUSICAL EXCERPT

Act II, duet: “Appressati, Lucia... Il pallor, funesto, orrendo” (“Come nearer, Lucia... The pallor, so deathly, so awful”)

CONNECTION TO THE STORY

Enrico reproaches his sister for being unhappy on the eve of her wedding (a forced marriage to Arturo Bucklaw, which Enrico hopes will repair his own family’s waning fortunes). Lucia turns on her brother for the inhumane treatment she has received.

MUSICAL ELEMENTS AND SIGNIFICANCE

Although in *bel canto* operas such as *Lucia di Lammermoor* the focus is predominantly on the voices, Donizetti is notable for giving a greater expressive role to the orchestra. Listen at the opening for the interrupted oboe tune that announces Lucia’s entrance into the room: its plaintive tone tells us a lot about her mood and underscores Enrico’s smarmy, false concern for her well-being (00:46), which in seconds is transformed into a bullying rant over her love for Edgardo (beginning at 3:01).

In the *bel canto* period, we start to see the creation of the evil “tyrant” type, usually sung by a baritone, which in turn signals the increased importance of the baritone voice: greater demands are put on the singer to vocalize for longer periods in his upper range, with more drama, over a larger orchestra than had previously been required.

When Enrico is given an opportunity to sing warmly in this duet, it is only with the intent to deceive: listen to the central section (7:29) where the beauty of the vocal line hides the true intent of his words, “Tradisti il tuo sangue per vil seduttore” (“You betrayed your blood to a vile seducer...”).

MUSICAL EXCERPT

Act III, aria: “Spargi d’amaro pianto” (“Spread with bitter tears”)

CONNECTION TO THE STORY

In the second section of Lucia’s mad scene she rushes to her brother, Enrico, believing him to be Edgardo and begs forgiveness for having married Arturo. She goes on to predict that she will soon be praying for him in heaven.

MUSICAL ELEMENTS AND SIGNIFICANCE

So-called “mad scenes” like this, depicting a character’s descent into insanity, mark the culmination of Italian Romantic opera’s main aim, which was to move the audience.

The highly-decorated vocal line stands for the fantasy world into which Lucia has escaped – listen to the dazzling trills (quick oscillations between two notes) and *coloratura* starting at (00:59). In the context of other 19th-century Italian operas that contain mad scenes – and they were a hugely popular trend at the time – Lucia’s stands apart as one of the few that is truly warranted by the heroine’s situation. Often the soprano’s mad scene appears to come out of nowhere (for examples of this, see Bellini’s *I Puritani* or Donizetti’s own *Anna Bolena*) but in Lucia’s case, her madness is a direct consequence of the abuses she has suffered. She is bullied by all the men around her; her brother forces her into a marriage for political reasons; her tutor and supposedly trusted confidant advises her to put familial duty above her own happiness; and even her lover doubts her constancy. It is no wonder then that on her wedding night she loses all contact with reality and kills her new husband in the bedchamber.



Cartoon by unknown author of the Sextet from the opera *Lucia di Lammermoor* by Gaetano Donizetti (1900).

MUSICAL EXCERPT

Act III, aria: “Fra poco a me ricovero” (“Soon an uncared-for tomb”)

CONNECTION TO THE STORY

Not knowing that Lucia has killed Arturo and descended into madness, Edgardo prepares to commit suicide. In this aria, he imagines his neglected grave and warns Lucia not to pass by it on her husband’s arm.

MUSICAL ELEMENTS AND SIGNIFICANCE

As late as the first half of the 20th century, it was common practice to bring this opera to a close after the mad scene. Audiences were content not to listen to the final scene in which Edgardo sings his demanding double-aria, the first section of which is heard in this excerpt. But, by including this scene, a balance is restored to the opera and it is revealed to be as much a showcase for the tenor as it is for the soprano. Edgardo’s suicide is also completely in keeping with the traditions of Italian Romantic *opera seria** in which a tragic ending is inevitable. There is no doubt, however, that Lucia’s mad scene is a hard act to follow, a challenge made doubly difficult by the sheer length of the tenor’s double aria and its technical challenges. It lies consistently high in the singer’s range, requires a voice with enough power to project the text’s intense emotions and, finally, comes at the end of what has already been a hugely demanding night of singing for the tenor.

***Opera seria:** An Italian musical term which refers to the “serious” style of Italian opera that predominated in Europe from the 1710s to around the 1770s. Stories were frequently based on mythology and followed a very rigid musical structure of repeated themes. Early *opera seria* shows a marked preference for redemptive endings, i.e. moral characters are rewarded with a triumph of some sort, as opposed to a tragic end. With the end of the 18th century, however, the rigid prohibitions against death and other tragic endings had become loosened. By the time *Lucia* is composed in the early 19th century, the convention is no longer a considerable binding force, as evidenced by Edgardo’s and Lucia’s deaths.

What to Look for

Director David Alden and his creative team have created a **darkly Gothic world** in keeping with the Scotland of Walter Scott's novel, *The Bride of Lammermoor*. A large house, its grandeur now faded and crumbling, its fabrics and wallpapers falling apart, is the home of Enrico and his sister Lucia. Nothing remains of their former wealth, just a few personal effects, such as a collection of family photographs. The **colours** of the set are **monochromatic**, mostly shades of grey.

The **costumes** suggest the rigid conventions of Victorian society with a strong Protestant ethic. Clothing is dark and plain. The women's hair is tightly bound and their long dresses firmly corseted. All this supports the contained and repressed atmosphere. With her loose hair and her dress hemmed above her ankles, there is something of an *Alice in Wonderland* look to the way Lucia appears in this production. Also note that Lucia's youth is emphasized in this production, in order to make clear that her innocence is being manipulated by those with more experience and power.



Anna Christy as Lucia in English National Opera's production of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, 2008. Photo: Clive Bara

David Alden is one of the most respected directors in opera today. His twin brother, Christopher Alden, is an equally accomplished director, two of whose productions appear at the Canadian Opera Company this season: *Die Fledermaus* and *La clemenza di Tito*.

The production premiered in 2008. When it was remounted in 2010, *The Telegraph* review noted "David Alden's production makes *Lucia di Lammermoor* seem like a novel that Emily Brontë or the young Charles Dickens should have written but didn't: it's set in some haunted, dream-like early Victorian limbo, poetically realised in Charles Edwards and Brigitte Reiffenstuel's designs, where walls are crumbling, fortunes have decayed, cupboards are full of dusty legal papers and suppressed desires are matched by explosive hatreds."



Anna Christy as Lucia (centre) in a scene from English National Opera's production of Lucia di Lammermoor, 2008. Photo: Clive Barda

COC Spotlight: Wayne Vogan

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 Wayne Vogan – the Music Librarian at the COC and one of the music coaches. Aside from being an invaluable resource of opera history and music knowledge, Wayne works to make sure that the music scores used by the

members of our orchestra are ready for rehearsals and performances. He's on hand at every performance to ensure that things go smoothly in that department. As a music coach, he also rehearses with individual singers as they study their parts in the lead up to performance. We asked Wayne a few questions to see what led him down this career path.



Wayne Vogan
(Music Librarian)

Position: Music Librarian/Music Coach

Name: Wayne Vogan

Role in the Company: Music Librarian/Music Coach

Hometown: Moncton, New Brunswick

Education: BA (Mount Allison); MA (Eastman School of Music)

First became interested in opera: While playing for singers as an undergraduate.

What made you decide to pursue this career path? Partly by accident! While studying musicology in graduate school, I got a job playing for opera rehearsals and it seemed like fun. I was considering going into library work or arts administration, but playing and coaching seemed so enjoyable that I decided to concentrate on that for a while.

If someone was interested in becoming a music librarian, what would you recommend they have in terms of skills or experience? A strong background in music history and theory; experience as a performer, especially in a collaborative setting; an attention to detail that borders on the obsessive; the ability to foresee how a change in some aspect of a production will affect other aspects.

If someone was interested in becoming a music coach, what would you recommend they have in terms of skills or experience? A strong piano background, in collaborative work as well as in solo repertoire; background in languages; a “good ear;” the ability to work with other people; seeing as much opera as possible.

What do you love most about your career? I’m lucky that my job has constant variety.

What do you enjoy the least about your career? Changing cuts in orchestra parts.

What surprises you most about your career? The fact that no matter what you do, there will always be something wrong.

What are you most looking forward to in *Lucia di Lammermoor*? The chorus in Act III: “O qual funesto.”

What do you enjoy outside of opera? Sometimes I wonder if there is anything else!

Active Learning

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

DISCUSSION

- ♦ *Lucia di Lammermoor* is a *bel canto* opera. In *bel canto* (see page 8 for definition), the singer is the top priority. Research the characteristics of *bel canto* operas and discuss how this is evident in this opera.
- ♦ The “mad scene” towards the end of the opera is one of the most famous scenes in opera. Each time a director stages *Lucia di Lammermoor*, they have the opportunity to re-imagine this scene. What in this production made the mad scene particularly powerful? Given the opportunity to stage such a famous scene, what would you have done differently?
- ♦ Consider Lucia’s mad scene, written specifically for a *coloratura* soprano. How would this scene be different if Lucia were sung by a different voice type, without this ornamentation? Would it be as effective?

FURTHER EXPLORATION

- ♦ Combine your visit to the opera with studies of the book *The Bride of Lammermoor* by Sir Walter Scott, which this opera is based upon. Compare and contrast the two.
- ♦ Explore how those with mental illnesses were treated in Lucia’s era, the 1700s. If the opera were to continue and Lucia were to live, what would her future be like?
- ♦ Rewrite parts of the story from Lucia’s point of view. How might she see things differently?

Coloratura:
derived from
the Italian *colorare*, meaning
“to colour” or “to enliven.”
Coloratura is an ornamental type
of vocal music where several notes
are sung for each syllable of
the text.

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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Education & Outreach
Canadian Opera Company
227 Front St. E., Toronto, ON M5A 1E8

Tel: 416-306-2392
Fax: 416-363-5584
education@coc.ca

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Lucia di Lammermoor Study Guide contributors and editors: Carly Anderson, Children & Youth Programs, Manager; Nikita Gourski, Development Communications Officer; Gianmarco Segato, Adult Programs Manager; Katherine Semcesen, Associate Director, Education and Outreach; Vanessa Smith, School Programs Manager; Suzanne Vanstone, Senior Communications Manager, Editorial; Gianna Wichelow, Senior Communications Manager, Creative | Produced by the Canadian Opera Company © 2012

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Above: Summer Opera Camp. Photo: COC