

The Bremen Town Musicians

DEAN BURRY



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Cover: A scene from the COC's Glencore Ensemble Studio School Tour production of *The Bremen Town Musicians*, 2014. Photo: Chris Hutcheson

Welcome

Opera 101

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 2015 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 Bremen Town Musicians was commissioned by Ottawa's Opera Lyra in 2009. Based on a tale by the Brothers Grimm, this timeless story teaches children about forgiveness, friendship, respect, self-confidence, and a sense of belonging through the tale of a group of unlikely animal friends. It's sure to make audiences sing along in delight!

The COC has created this Study Guide to serve 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

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 21.

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!



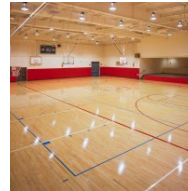
REQUIRED TIME FOR EACH PERFORMANCE

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 Kindergarten to Grade 6.

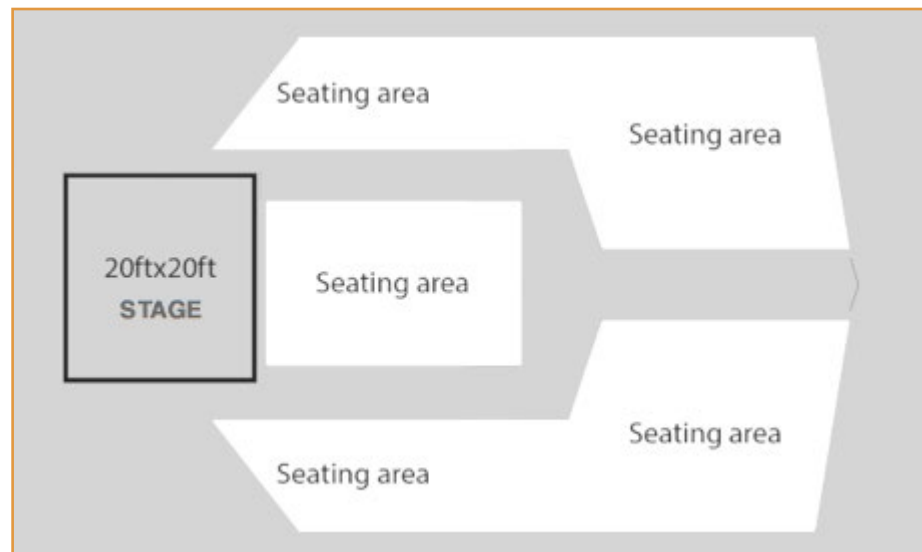


SPACE

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

SEATING ARRANGEMENT FOR THE BREMEN TOWN MUSICIANS

Director Ashlie Corcoran and designer Camellia Koo want to emphasize the theme of adventure and journey through the staging and design of this production. The grey sections indicate performance space, so the action will take place in pathways between the audience seating areas. Use this diagram to help you seat the students for the performance. The stage manager will provide markers to help with the seating process the day of the performance.



WHAT TO PREPARE IN ADVANCE OF THE PERFORMANCE

- ◆ Distribute this Study Guide to colleagues.
- ◆ Reserve performance space for the total time (see 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 if 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!

*Mezzo-soprano
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 TO THE PERFORMANCE

Note: Whoever is making 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 Bremen Town Musicians* 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 on your bottom 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.
- ♦ Save trips to the water fountain or washroom until after the opera, so you don't miss a note and so you don't disrupt your fellow audience members.

Please join me in welcoming the Canadian Opera Company!

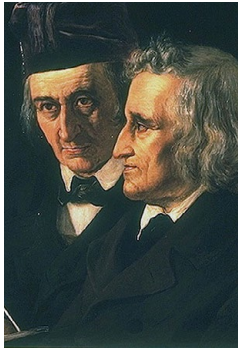


PHOTOGRAPHY/MEDIA AT PERFORMANCES

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 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



**The Brothers Grimm
(Jacob & Wilhelm)**
(Their stories 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.



Ashlie Corcoran
(Director)



Camellia Koo
(Designer)

MUSIC DIRECTOR

Works with the cast on how to sing the music, and plays the piano for performances. In larger operas, the piano is replaced by a full orchestra, which is led by the conductor.



Hyejin Kwon
(*Music Director*)



Michael Barrs
(*Stage Manager*)

STAGE MANAGER

Helps the stage director manage the rehearsals and performers. She or he writes down where people and sets move in the opera. Manages all performances once the stage director is finished.

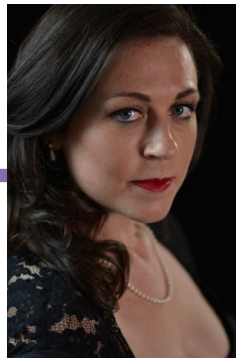


CAST

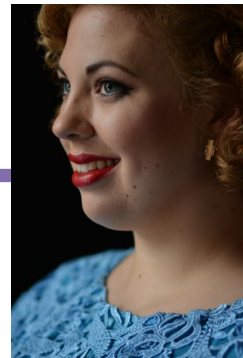
A group of singers who perform the roles of the opera with the help of the music director, director and stage manager.



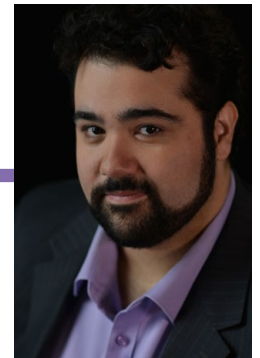
Karine Boucher
(*Cat*)



Charlotte Burrage
(*Dog*)



Aviva Fortunata
(*Cat*)



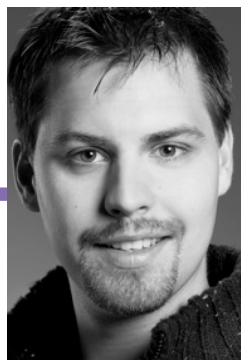
Andrew Haji
(*Rooster*)



Iain MacNeil
(*Donkey*)



Charles Sy
(*Rooster*)



Jan Vaculik
(*Miller/Wolf/Poet/Witch/Robber*)



AUDIENCE

What would a show be without an audience? Performing in front of an audience is what makes all the hard work worth it!

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. Adrienne Pieczonka is a very 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. John Relyea is a highly acclaimed Canadian bass. [Click here](#) to see him.

Characters and Story

MAIN CHARACTERS

Character	Voice Type
Miller/Wolf/Poet/Witch/Robber	Bass-Baritone
Donkey	Bass-Baritone
Dog	Mezzo-Soprano
Cat	Soprano
Rooster	Tenor

SYNOPSIS

Once upon a time, a Miller had a Donkey. After many years of hard work, the Donkey became slow and tired, and therefore, less and less useful to his master. Frustrated and angry, the Miller berates his Donkey for being so slow. The Donkey fights back, embarrassing the Miller in front of the townspeople. When the Miller speaks with one of the townspeople about how to get rid of the Donkey, the Donkey realizes it's time for him to run away.

As the Donkey is escaping, he meets a Dog who is howling mournfully. The Donkey asks her why she is howling. The Dog tells her story – she was once a great hunter, and her goal had been to bring down the Great Wolf for her master. Last night, she had the Wolf cornered – but he fought her and won, getting away. When her master found out, he was ashamed of her and loaded his gun. She ran away.

The Donkey invites the Dog to join him – he has decided to go to Bremen Town, where everyone is free, to become a town musician. The Dog agrees, and they continue on their journey.

Soon, they meet a Cat, who looks very sad. The Donkey and the Dog ask her to tell them her story. Her master is a Poet, and her job was to protect his library from mice. She was very good at it. However, now that she is getting older, she gets distracted. She got so distracted that a mouse got in and chewed on all of her master's books. Her master was furious and threatened to throw her in the river.

The Donkey and Dog invite her to join them on their journey. She agrees, and they set off once again. Soon they meet a loudly crowing Rooster, who seems upset. He says that he is crowing loudly now because he's retiring tomorrow, due to the fact that he will no longer have a head! The others ask him to explain.

The Rooster's mistress is a Witch, and it was his job to wake her up to tend to her vegetable garden. That is, until he slept in. The Witch was furious, as her magical garden was ruined. She threatened to turn him into stew.

The others invite the Rooster to join them, and he happily agrees. The Donkey, Dog, Cat, and Rooster continue on their journey. But it is getting late, and they become lost in the forest. They decide to stop and get some sleep. While they're resting, the Rooster spots a light flickering in the woods. The Cat sees it too – it is a small cabin, with a fireplace and a light in the window. The animals decide to head towards it.

In the cabin there is a Robber, with food and wine and bags of gold. The animals are hungry too. Too old and tired to fight the Robber, they decide to practice for becoming Bremen Town Musicians by singing for their supper.

The animals fall through the window and into the cabin. The Robber runs away, terrified. The animals eat the food and then, using the tablecloth as a blanket, settle down for the night.

While they're asleep, the Robber sneaks back in. He wakes up the animals, who rise up, still covered by the tablecloth. The Robber thinks they are a monster! They throw the tablecloth over the Robber, push him into a chair and bop him on the head, knocking him out.

The animals consider getting revenge on their masters and every human who has ever hurt them by harming the Robber. The Robber awakens and begs for his life, offering to be their servant. But the Donkey refuses to harm him. He encourages the others to learn to forgive and forget, as that is the only way to be free.

The animals get the Robber to swear that he will never rob again, that he will treat animals well, and will never return to the house. They realize that they no longer need to go to Bremen Town, as they have new friends and a very comfortable home right there in the cabin. They kick out the Robber and toast to their friendship and new beginnings.

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 the box office 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 17th anniversary last season.

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!

Learn more about Dean at deanburry.com.

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!](#)

The Scorpions' Sting: An Egyptian Myth – an opera for children, based on tale about the ancient Egyptian goddess, Isis, commissioned by the COC in 2006. [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 Brothers Grimm and *The Bremen Town Musicians*

The original story of *The Bremen Town Musicians* was written by two brothers – the Brothers Grimm!

Although fairy tales such as *Hansel and Gretel*, *Snow White* and *Rumpelstiltskin* are read the world over, few people know the two German scholars who collected and published them. Jacob (1785 – 1863) and Wilhelm (1786 – 1859) Grimm were born in the German city of Hanau and were the oldest in a family of nine children. Their father Philipp was employed as a local magistrate, a position which came with a large house, servants and a high social standing. All this changed upon Philipp's death in 1796 and the family was forced to move to more modest accommodations and rely on the charity of relatives.

Despite financial challenges, Jacob and Wilhelm excelled in school, studying law, philology (the study of words and language) and medieval German literature at the university in Marburg. It was these latter two subjects which inspired their life-long love of folk tales and in 1806, encouraged by their friend Clemens Brentano, the two set out to systematically collect and record the oral storytelling tradition of the local countryside. Contrary to what many believe, Jacob and Wilhelm were not really the authors of these fairy tales, unlike another famous writer of tales, Hans Christian Andersen. Andersen's works, while certainly appearing to be folktales, are defined as *literary* tales. His stories, including *The Little Mermaid* and *Thumbelina*, came from his imagination. As folklorists, the Grimm brothers sought to record common stories that were told around campfires or to children at night – some of which had been passed down for centuries. Travelling around the local district and inviting individuals into their home allowed them to accumulate a vast amount of raw material which included everything from magical fairy tales to parables, local legends, fables and other moral lessons. The resulting book, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* or *Children's and Household Tales*, was published on December 20, 1812 and contained 86 stories including *Rapunzel*, *The Frog Prince*, *Cinderella*, *The Fisherman and His Wife*, *The Bremen Town Musicians* and *The Elves and the Shoemaker*. By 1857, seven editions had been released and the publication had grown to include 211 entries.

It is interesting to note, that although the brothers' original goal was to produce an accurate account of German folk tales, they found it irresistible to modify some of the story fragments they received to create a more satisfying

narrative. Through the various editions they also revised many of the tales to be more reflective of trends in religion, social appropriateness and children's literature.

Children's and Household Tales has been translated into over 100 languages and served as the inspiration for some of the world's most enduring operas, plays, movies and even video games.

THE ORIGINS OF *THE BREMEN TOWN MUSICIANS*

The story of *The Bremen Town Musicians* is said to have come from a historic region of northwestern Germany called Westphalia, though the tale of animals fleeing from their masters has been around for centuries. It was said that Wilhelm Grimm collected the story from Baron August Franz of the von Haxthausen family from Paderborn. A family friend and regular guest at their castle, Wilhelm likely heard the tale from the Baron who travelled often and recounted stories upon his return. *The Bremen Town Musicians* was included in the second publication of the Grimm fairy tales in 1819.



Portrait of August von Haxthausen by Hugo Denz, 1860

LESSONS IN *THE BREMEN TOWN MUSICIANS*

Like all good fairy tales and folk tales, the story of *The Bremen Town Musicians* is filled with valuable life lessons. After reading the story or watching the opera, find out which lessons stood out the most for your students.

The lessons or values that are most prominent to us include:

Respect your elders. The animals are treated poorly and are cast away due to their physical weakness and age. What the animals lack physically they make up for it with their deep wisdom. It's important to remember that just because something or someone is old and can't do what they used to do, they remain valuable and significant.

Teamwork. When the animals find themselves in an adverse situation at the Robber's house, their strength in unity and strength in numbers help them persevere through their challenges!

Change can be hard, but it can also result in new opportunities. Leaving their masters causes the animals a lot of grief and anxiety, but in choosing to leave, they are able to find each other and start better lives together.

THE REAL BREMEN AND THE LEGACY OF THE STORY

Bremen is not just a made-up place in a folktale – it is an actual city in Germany! Part of the Bremen/Oldenburg Metropolitan Region, Bremen is the tenth most-populated city in Germany and currently home to 2.4 million people.

Monuments and structures dedicated to the story of *The Bremen Town Musicians* are located all over Bremen and the surrounding region. The most famous is the bronze statue at town hall. It features the animals standing atop of one another, as they did to scare the robber. Seeing photos of this statue, you may notice that the donkey's hooves are shinier than the rest of the sculpture – there is a legend that rubbing them brings good luck, and so tourists and residents alike have rubbed them that way! This statue is one of Bremen's signature attractions.

The statue was commissioned by the city and created by artist Gerhard Marcks. Installed in 1953, it was initially

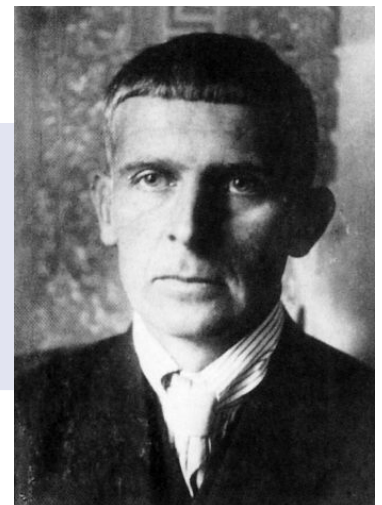
on loan from the artist, but the tourism organization collected donations to make it a permanent fixture.

Gerhard Marcks (1889 – 1982) was one of the most influential German sculptors of the 20th century. He faced many obstacles during his time as an artist – first during World War I, when he served with the military, and again during World War II, when several of his pieces were melted down for munitions and his Berlin studio was hit by a bomb. After the war, he taught at the School of Art in Hamburg and later pursued his career as a freelance artist. It was during this period that he created the famous *Bremen Town Musicians* statue.

Some of the other landmarks and monuments commemorating *The Bremen Town Musicians* include a sculpture and fresco in a restaurant, a mural on a house, a wooden stature carved from 160-year-old oak, two playgrounds, and a cycling path in nearby Kirchlinteln which allows you to follow the path said to be taken by the animals. It ends at the supposed former location of the cottage, where a monument pays tribute to the animals.



Left: Bremen monument with the “Bremen Town Musicians” and the medieval buildings as a background. Photo: Ivana Ebel, 2008



Right: The sculptor of the Bremen monument, Gerhard Marcks, c. 1924-1925. Photo: Unknown. Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin

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	Ostinato	A continually repeated musical phrase or rhythm
Composer	The individual who writes the music	Overture	The introductory musical passage played by the orchestra
Concept	A stage director's overall sense of how a given production should look and feel	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



Michael Barrs
(Stage Manager)

NAME: Michael Barrs

ROLE: Stage Manager

HOMETOWN: Ancaster,
Ontario

WHEN YOU DECIDED YOU
WANTED TO BE A STAGE
MANAGER: At 11 years old, I
decided I wanted to be involved
in theatre production and
design.

STAGE MANAGING DEBUT: As
an Assistant Stage Manager at
York University.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: Eight seasons at the Canadian
Opera Company, working with an all-Argentine cast on the
premiere of *Arrabal* (Marquis/BASE Entertainment), and
multiple productions with Mirvish Productions, Dancap
Productions, Drayton Entertainment and Just For Laughs.

FAVOURITE PART OF SCHOOL TOUR: The creative
post-opera questions asked by the audience!



Karine Boucher
(Cat)

NAME: Karine Boucher

ROLE: Cat

HOMETOWN: Québec City,
Québec

VOICE TYPE: Soprano

AGE WHEN YOU STARTED
SINGING: 11 years old

FIRST TIME ON STAGE: 14
years old

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



NAME: Charlotte Burrage

ROLE: Dog

HOMETOWN: Woodstock, Ontario

VOICE TYPE: Mezzo-soprano

AGE WHEN YOU STARTED SINGING: I had my first singing lesson when I was eight years old.

Charlotte Burrage
(Dog)

FIRST TIME ON STAGE: The first time I sang in front of an audience was when I was eight for the Woodstock Rotary music festival. I sang "If you should meet a crocodile." I won a trophy and they played a recording of it on the radio. I haven't stopped performing since!

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: Performing Maria in *The Sound of Music* with my sister playing the role of Liesl, singing the Canadian and American national anthems at the Rogers Centre for a Blue Jays and Yankees baseball game, buying my first gown for my solo recital, singing Hansel in *Hansel and Gretel* for Vancouver Opera in Schools and of course becoming a member of the COC Ensemble Studio.

FAVOURITE PART OF SCHOOL TOUR: This is my third school tour and I can't wait to share what I love with people who are still deciding what they love. I consider myself an advocate for opera and I am excited to make it accessible to everyone. The more experiences you can have as a young person the better. Whether you enjoy the music, the acting, the costumes, or the set, there is something for everyone and I am excited to hear your questions! Decide what you love and can't live without and never give up.



NAME: Ashlie Corcoran

ROLE: Director

HOMETOWN: White Rock, British Columbia

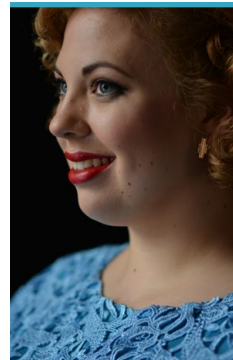
WHEN YOU DECIDED YOU WANTED TO DIRECT: When I was in first year university, I started doing all sorts of theatre jobs. I loved directing, as it meant that I could collaborate with each and every person on the team.

Ashlie Corcoran
(Director)

FIRST TIME ON STAGE: Probably when I was three, in a dance recital!

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: Co-founder and artistic producer of Theatre Smash; Former COC Ensemble Studio member (intern director); artistic director of Thousand Islands Playhouse.

FAVOURITE PART OF SCHOOL TOUR: Getting to work with the extremely talented members of the Ensemble Studio – and seeing how excited students are to see an opera only a few feet away from them!



NAME: Aviva Fortunata

ROLE: Cat

HOMETOWN: Calgary, Alberta

VOICE TYPE: Soprano

AGE WHEN YOU STARTED SINGING: Five years old.

Aviva Fortunata
(Cat)

FIRST TIME ON STAGE: Eight years old.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: Singing on the stage of the San Francisco Opera House, performing Desdemona with orchestra, working at the Canadian Opera Company!

FAVOURITE PART OF SCHOOL TOUR: Introducing opera to a whole new generation!



Andrew Haji
(Rooster)

NAME: Andrew Haji
ROLE: Rooster
HOMETOWN: London, Ontario
VOICE TYPE: Tenor

AGE WHEN YOU STARTED SINGING: I sang in choirs since the age of eight, but only started taking voice lessons when I was 22.

FIRST TIME ON STAGE: I sang on lots of stages with choirs, but my first real “stage” experience was performing *The Music Man* at the Grand Theatre in London in high school.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: Attending some amazing summer programs, such as COSI in Italy, Music Academy of the West in California, and the Salzburg Festival’s Young Singers Project.

FAVOURITE PART OF SCHOOL TOUR: I am looking forward to introducing our audiences to a genre of music they may not have experienced before.



Hyejin Kwon
(Music Director)

NAME: Hyejin Kwon
ROLE: Musical Director
HOMETOWN: Seoul, South Korea

AGE WHEN YOU STARTED PLAYING PIANO: Four years old

FIRST TIME ON STAGE?: Six years old

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: Public debut in Seoul Arts Center (at age seven), Orchestra debut with Seoul Philharmonic (age 10), Keumho Young Artist debut (age 11), interview/60 min featured show with Interlochen Public Radio (2003), worked as repetiteur/coach for Baltimore Lyric Opera (2011-12), Vocal Accompanying Fellow for Aspen Music Festival (2012)

FAVOURITE PART OF THE SCHOOL TOUR: Being able to share what I love the most with children and seeing excitement in their eyes! It’s such a rewarding experience seeing the changes music can make in their lives.



Camellia Koo
(Designer)

NAME: Camellia Koo
ROLE: Designer
HOMETOWN: born in London, Ontario, but grew up in Mississauga

AGE WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED DESIGNING: 18

FIRST THEATRICAL SHOW YOU DESIGNED FOR: *The Bundle* by Edward Bond.

FAVOURITE PART OF SCHOOL TOUR: The challenge of designing a set that is imaginative and evocative but still fits into a minivan.



Iain MacNeil
(Donkey)

NAME: Iain MacNeil
ROLE: Donkey
HOMETOWN: Brockville, ON
VOICE TYPE: Bass-Baritone

AGE WHEN YOU STARTED SINGING: 5

FIRST TIME ON STAGE: *Oliver Twist*, when I was 12.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: Singing the role of the bumbling Doctor Bartolo in the Ensemble production of *The Barber of Seville!*

FAVOURITE PART OF SCHOOL TOUR: being on the road, being silly, and hearing the wonderful questions that the audience members ask!



Charles Sy
(Rooster)

NAME: Charles Sy

ROLE: Rooster

HOMETOWN: Mississauga

VOICE TYPE: Tenor

AGE WHEN YOU STARTED SINGING: I always sang along to Disney and Barney movies, however I started performing at around 6 years old.

FIRST TIME ON STAGE: In the annual elementary school Christmas pageant, I sang the role of Moses.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: 1st place and Audience Choice prize in 2014 COC Centre Stage Competition, First Place in Ottawa Choral Society's 2014 New Discoveries Competition, Hnatyshyn Developing Artist grant for Classical Voice

FAVOURITE PART OF SCHOOL TOUR: When I was in school, my favourite school assemblies were when traveling artists would come and perform for us. I found it very inspiring and it really sparked my interest in performing. It is really exciting to come full circle and now be one of those traveling artists!



Jan Vaculik
(Robber)

NAME: Jan Vaculik

ROLE: Robber

HOMETOWN: Kosice, Slovak Republic (Europe)

VOICE TYPE: Baritone

AGE WHEN YOU STARTER SINGING: 13, while studying guitar.

FIRST TIME ON STAGE: at the age of 15, performing the role of a lion in a small musical theatre play created by my elementary school.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: This summer, I sang the title role in *The Marriage of Figaro* at Highlands Opera Studio.

FAVOURITE PART OF SCHOOL TOUR: Being able to perform for a young audience. They're just like sponges absorbing the story, the music and everything that comes with it. It is a challenge to entertain young audiences, but when achieved, it is the most gratifying feeling to see their happy faces.



Alison Wong
(Associate Director)

NAME: Alison Wong

ROLE: Associate Director

HOMETOWN: Scarborough, ON

WHEN YOU DECIDED YOU WANTED TO DIRECT: When I was studying opera in university. I started directing my friends' scenes in recitals and was hooked.

FIRST TIME ON STAGE: The first time I performed on a real stage was in the first grade. Before then, I used to build my own stage in the backyard and put on shows for my family and neighbours!

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: Touring *The Pearlfishers* all over the Netherlands with the Nederlandse Reisopera, directing a production of *Madama Butterfly* in Puccini's hometown of Lucca, Italy, and starting MYOpera in Toronto with a group of very talented friends after graduating university.

FAVOURITE PART OF SCHOOL TOUR: Putting a show together through the eyes of young people and getting to share with them the art form that I love so much.

What to Look for

JOURNEY

Designer Camellia Koo wanted a slightly different look for this school tour production. Taking advantage of the fact that school tour productions often take place in school gymnasiums, she wanted to make full use of the space to illustrate the animals' journey. She's created a seating plan (see page 4) with aisles to create a path through the audience. Singers in this production break the "fourth wall" and come right into the audience, making their journey to Bremen by winding a path around them.

*Right: Charlotte Burrage as Dog, Gordon Bintner as the Wolf, and Iain MacNeil (behind) as Donkey in the COC's Glencore Ensemble Studio School Tour production of The Bremen Town Musicians, 2014.
Photo: Chris Hutcheson*

SET

The animals in *The Bremen Town Musicians* are on their way to freedom, but have been fenced in for their entire lives. Koo wanted to create a set that would reflect this sense of being caged. She created three movable fences which can be rearranged into endless variations to set the scene – these fences transform into a table, a boxing ring, and even a library, depending on the scene. Encourage your students to watch for this and count just how many different ways the fences are used!



EXTENSION THEME: SOCIAL JUSTICE

The animals in *The Bremen Town Musicians* have had a tough life, full of abuse and mistreatment. There are many animals in your community who have, unfortunately, had a similarly harsh life. Use *The Bremen Town Musicians* as an opportunity to investigate local agencies that help abused and abandoned animals, such as the Humane Society or a local animal shelter. How do they help animals like those in *The Bremen Town Musicians*? How can you help? Are there volunteer opportunities for young people to get involved, or a way to raise money to help the cause?

The Humane Society and animal shelters are very helpful to dogs and cats, but what about larger animals, like Donkey? There are rescue organizations just for them – such as the [Donkey Sanctuary of Canada](#)! Located in Guelph, Ontario, The Donkey Sanctuary is home to donkeys, mules, and hinnies that have been neglected, abused, or who can no longer be cared for by their owners. Tours and educational programs are available – visit their [website](#) for more details!

COSTUMES

The costumes in this production emphasize each character's animal characteristics, without literally turning them into an animal. Most of the costumes reflect 19th-century styles, with a few modern elements thrown in. For instance, the rooster is a bit of a dandy, in his coat and long, rooster-like, tails. His "fauxhawk" hairstyle is reminiscent of a rooster's cockcomb. The dog is a fighter, and her costume is based on female boxers of the period. Donkey may remind you of another popular donkey – saggy, sad, and disheveled; Donkey's had a hard life. His costume reflects his struggles, as he prepares for a better future.



Camellia Koo collected a lot of material (above right) to help her determine how she would interpret each character. See below for just a few of the ideas she had on hand as she developed the look for the four musicians of Bremen.



Pre-Performance Activity

Introduction to Opera

Music, Media Literacy, two periods, 30 minutes each

SUMMARY

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.

OBJECTIVES

- ♦ Introduce opera as a collaborative form of storytelling which includes music, drama and design
- ♦ Highlight the difference between opera and other art forms including ballet, plays, etc.
- ♦ Identify how music helps to convey and emphasize the drama and emotions in a story and in opera

ACTIVITY

PART ONE:

1. Hand out three cue cards to students.
2. Ask the students: What do you think of when you hear the word “opera”?
3. Ask the students to write down three words that they associate with opera on the cue card (one word per cue card). Note: if students are not able to write yet, ask the students to voice their words and the teacher can then write the words out on the cue cards.
4. Invite the students to put their cue cards up on the board (chart paper, black board, white board, etc.).
5. Ask the students if any of their answers correspond to one another: e.g. “singing” and “instruments.” Begin to group the cue cards.
6. Hopefully, you will see at least three groups come out of this activity: one with music-focused words, another with words related to drama and/or movement and one group that relates mainly to visual arts or design.
7. Give the students the proper definition for opera: Opera is a form of theatre that uses music, drama and design to tell a story. Ask them if their findings and words support this definition.

8. Ask the students what they think is the difference between opera and a play? An opera and a ballet? What grouping might be noticeably absent from these other art forms?
9. Many individuals believe that the only way to understand an opera is to be fluent in the language in which it is sung. Ask the students how else they can follow a story without knowing a foreign language. Some of the possible answers may include: the music, the movement of the singers, the colours of the costumes, the light on stage, etc.
10. Tell the students that you’ll focus on discovering how music helps to tell the story.

PART TWO:

1. Introduce/review the musical terms (e.g. *forte*, *piano*, *tempo*, etc.) and operatic terms (see “A Glossary of Opera and Music Terms” on page 14).
2. Lead the 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 volumes of sound and tempos they chose to convey the different emotions. Why did they choose them?
3. Play three operatic excerpts, each representing a different emotion. Refer to the suggested list of pieces below. Play each excerpt twice through and ask the students to complete the questions for each excerpt on the Opera Detective worksheet (on page 22).
4. Discuss the responses once all three excerpts have been played and the worksheets are completed. What did the students imagine was happening in the story? What was (were) the singer(s) singing about?
5. Once you’ve reviewed each column, read the actual libretto (text) of the excerpt for the students. Were their interpretations of the music accurate? Did many students have a similar response? How did the music help tell the story?

EXTENSION

Discuss the universality of music and emotions. Is one sound always a “happy” sound? Can a sound convey a “happy” emotion for some but a “sad” feeling for others? If so, why?

SUGGESTED EXCERPTS

“Largo al factotum” – from Rossini’s
The Barber of Seville (baritone aria)

Music

Libretto

“Les voici, les voici!” – from Bizet’s
Carmen (children’s chorus)

Music

Libretto

“O soave fanciulla” – from Puccini’s
La Bohème (tenor/soprano duet)

Music

Libretto

“Va, pensiero” – from Verdi’s *Nabucco*
(chorus)

Music

Libretto

“Voi che sapete” – from Mozart’s *The*
Marriage of Figaro (mezzo-soprano aria)

Music

Libretto

“Una furtiva lagrima” – from Donizetti’s
L’elisir d’amore (tenor aria)

Music

Libretto

“Evening Prayer” – from Humperdinck’s
Hansel and Gretel (soprano/mezzo-
soprano duet)

Music

Libretto

“Der Hölle Rache” – from Mozart’s
The Magic Flute (soprano aria)

Music

Libretto

Opera Detective Worksheet

NAME _____

DATE _____



	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?)			
What do you think is the story behind this piece (what are they singing about)?			
How do you feel while listening to the piece?			

Pre-Performance Activities

What is Opera?

Drama and Music, 15 minutes

SUMMARY

Students will discuss what they know about opera and learn that opera uses music to tell a story and convey emotions.

OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Describe response to music
- ◆ Express current musical knowledge
- ◆ Learn roles of various individuals involved in opera

ACTIVITY

1. Draw the word “opera” in a large circle on chart paper. Ask students to brainstorm what they know about opera. (If you have not previously brainstormed with your class, please explain that this means they can raise their hand and express any idea they have about the subject in the centre – there are no wrong answers!)
2. Once you have some good answers, start steering the conversation towards who is involved in opera – important people to mention are singers, the orchestra, the chorus, the conductor, and try to introduce those who work behind-the-scenes, such as the stage manager.
3. Introduce the students to the idea that they will be seeing an opera soon – but first, you’d like to listen to some opera in class. Give every student a piece of blank paper and have a selection of different markers/crayons available to each student. Play an operatic selection for the class – good choices include the “*Habañera*” from *Carmen* or the Queen of the Night’s aria from *The Magic Flute*. As they listen, ask students to think about the music and choose a colour. Then, encourage them to draw on the paper – not necessarily pictures, but lines that illustrate how the music makes them feel. Does it make you want to draw long, loopy lines, or maybe short, zig-zag lines?
4. After a couple of minutes, ask for volunteers to share their drawings with the class and describe how they feel, or have them share with a partner.
5. Repeat with another piece of music, with a different feeling.

Let’s Perform!

Drama and Dance, 15 minutes

SUMMARY

Students will concentrate on the sounds around them and physically create dramatic characters.

OBJECTIVE

- ◆ Perform in a group
- ◆ Describe responses to music that they hear
- ◆ Demonstrate the ability to move and control their bodies in space and time

ACTIVITY

1. Have students find a spot in the room where they can spread their arms out and not touch anyone. Have them stand in those spots with their arms at their sides.
2. Tell the students they are becoming very sleepy and to sink to the floor as slowly as possible and lie down, using smooth movements.
3. When all students are lying down, ask them to concentrate on the sounds they hear outside the classroom, (people walking by, other classes) and inside the classroom (clocks, the lights). Which sounds are high and low, and which are loud and soft?
4. Finally ask them to concentrate so hard that they can “hear” their own heartbeat. They can find their pulse on their neck so they can feel the beat as well.
5. Ask them to imagine their favourite character from one of their favourite stories (preferably not TV). What is that person (or animal) wearing? What is he/she/it doing? Tell the students that when you clap three times, they are to wake up and “become” that character, moving silently around the space.
6. Tell the students that their character is doing a job or a task. Have them act out that task.
7. Freeze! Explain to the students that their character has just encountered a problem with the job he/she is doing (they have lost something, something has broken, etc.). Are the students clear enough in their silent actions that you can tell what the problem is?
8. Have the students figure out a way to solve this problem. When they have solved the problem, have them sit down.
9. Ask students to break into groups of three or four and tell the others who they were, what they were doing, what their problem was and how it was solved.

Sounds of a Magic Forest

Drama and Music, 30 minutes

SUMMARY

Students will create a class soundscape of various forest sounds.

OBJECTIVE

- ◆ Identify examples of dynamics in their environment and in music
- ◆ Identify different tempi (speeds) in their environment and in music
- ◆ Perform a “soundscape” or sound collage based on a theme or topic

ACTIVITY

1. Arrange students in a circle. Tell them that they are going to become an orchestra called “Sounds of a Magic Forest.” Brainstorm about what kinds of sounds one might hear in a forest. Give them a few moments to think of a unique sound they would like to produce (e.g. blowing air may sound like the wind, the rubbing of hands on one’s legs may sound like rustling leaves).
2. Tell the students that you are going to be the “remote control” for their sounds. When you move your hand(s) with your palms up to the ceiling, their sounds get louder. When you lower them with your palms down, they are to get softer. When you move your hands in a wave-like motion quickly, they are to speed up their sounds. When you wave very slowly, they slow down their sounds.
3. Have a discussion. What sounds are slow sounds in the school? Fast sounds? What sounds do they like? Which are fast in tempo? Slow?
4. Have fun! Have students be the conductor. Divide the students into two groups and have them each follow a different hand with different commands.

EXTENSION

Brainstorm types of sounds the characters from *The Bremen Town Musicians* would have heard throughout the story and create other soundscapes. Some examples could include: meeting the different animals, the farm where they met the Rooster, the forest where the animals find the house, the animals waking up to the Robber in the house.

Underscore

Language and Music, 30 minutes

SUMMARY

Students use sounds to help tell the story of *The Bremen Town Musicians*.

OBJECTIVE

- ◆ Demonstrate understanding of a variety of written materials read to them
- ◆ Express thoughts and feelings about a story
- ◆ Produce works of art that communicate thoughts and feelings
- ◆ Retell a story by presenting events in a coherent sequence

ACTIVITY

1. Read *The Bremen Town Musicians*, or use the synopsis on page 10, out loud to the students. Have children use their soundscape noises during the reading to underscore the scenes.
2. Have students decide what they thought the most exciting part was as well as their favourite parts.

DURING THE PERFORMANCE

Ask the students to consider two examples of how music helped with the drama.

Post-Performance Activity

The Bremen Town Musicians Mural

Visual Art and Language, 60 minutes

SUMMARY

Students will recreate their favourite images and scenes from the production and articulate why they enjoyed them.

OBJECTIVE

- ♦ Use pictures, sculptures, and collage to represent scenes
- ♦ Describe the subject matter in their own and others' art work
- ♦ Produce two- and three-dimensional works of art that communicate thoughts and feelings
- ♦ Correctly use the vocabulary appropriate to their grade level

ACTIVITY

1. Discuss as a class the most exciting aspects of the production.
2. Provide students with a large piece of paper and allow them to make drawings/paintings/collages of their favourite scenes from the opera. If possible, also encourage them to include words or sentences that correspond with their pictures.
3. Students can present their work to the class.
4. Fill the hallways with these terrific images!

Pre-Performance Activities

Frozen Pictures

Drama, 50 minutes

SUMMARY

Students will work co-operatively in groups to retell scenes from *The Bremen Town Musicians* through tableaux.

OBJECTIVE

- ♦ Interpret and communicate the meaning of stories using basic drama techniques
- ♦ Enact or create, rehearse, and present drama and dance works based on novels, stories, poems, and plays
- ♦ Demonstrate the ability to maintain concentration while in a role

ACTIVITY

1. Read the story of *The Bremen Town Musicians* out loud to the students (feel free to use the synopsis of the opera on page 10).
2. As a class, pick one of the animals (Donkey, Cat, Dog, Rooster) and tell their story in three sentences (beginning, middle and end).
3. Divide the students into groups of three or four and encourage them to create a tableau (frozen picture) for each sentence. Suggest that different levels and exaggerated facial expressions make a more exciting picture.
4. Allow each group to perform their tableaux while one student reads the sentences aloud.

EXTENSION

Allow each group to create their own three-sentence frames.

Comic Relief

Visual Art and Language, 50 minutes

SUMMARY

Students will create a comic strip based on their favourite segment of the story.

OBJECTIVE

- ♦ Identify and explain the specific choices they made in planning, producing, and displaying their art work
- ♦ Choose words that are most appropriate for their purpose
- ♦ Use a variety of sentence types correctly and appropriately
- ♦ Identify the emotional quality of the text

ACTIVITY

1. Tell the story of *The Bremen Town Musicians* to the class.
2. Invite the students to discuss their favourite scenes from the story and to consider appropriate costumes, props, and set designs.
3. Ask the students to recreate their favourite scenes through a comic strip, emphasizing the important relationship of images and text.
4. In groups, challenge the students to share their comic strips and to explain their artistic choices.
5. Collect all the comic strips from the students and create *The Bremen Town Musicians* comic book.

EXTENSION

Encourage students to think about the important relationship between music and drama. How does the music heighten the plot or provide further insight into characters? How does the music emphasize mood or communicate emotion?

Same Tune, Different Story

Music and Language, 30 minutes

SUMMARY

In this activity, students will use familiar tunes and create new texts to these melodies.

OBJECTIVE

- ◆ Divide words into syllables
- ◆ Substitute different words in familiar songs or create new verses, using their knowledge of rhythm to ensure that the new text fits with the melody
- ◆ Sing and/or play in tune

ACTIVITY

1. Write the words for “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” on the board with each phrase written on a different line. (Or use another familiar song, if that will suit your class better!)
2. As a class, sing the song aloud, and then clap each syllable while singing the song a second time. This will reinforce the rhythm that they will be matching to new lyrics.
3. Challenge the students to create their own lyrics based on *The Bremen Town Musicians* to the “Twinkle” tune. The following first lines for verses can serve as a template:
Verse #1: Once a Donkey was alone
Verse #2: Next they met a loud Rooster
Verse #3: In the house they found some food
4. When finished, students can form groups and share songs. One way to do this is to have students pick their favourite verse, and to recreate the storyline in chronological order.
5. Share songs with the class!

EXTENSION

Create one giant *The Bremen Town Musicians* theme song. The words could be printed on large chart paper, or keyed into a class newsletter for one big sing-along!

Post-Performance Activities

Bremen Town Party

Drama and Movement, 15 minutes

SUMMARY

In this activity, students will become the characters of *The Bremen Town Musicians* and interact with fellow characters at a party.

OBJECTIVE

- ◆ Embody a role and explore character motivations
- ◆ Interact with fellow classmates and improvise dialogue
- ◆ Demonstrate understanding of the opera

ACTIVITY

1. Have students lie down on the ground with room to themselves. Ask them to close their eyes.
2. Ask students to choose one of the characters from *The Bremen Town Musicians* – it can be one of the animals, one of the masters, or the Robber. Have students think about this character – Who are they? How do they walk? How do they talk?
3. Students can start slightly moving their arms and their legs as if they are the character. Is this character human? How will that affect their movement?

4. How will their character talk? Have the students think of one key word or phrase their character would say.
5. Have students open their eyes and stand up, and start moving around the room like their character. As they move, encourage them to take notice of the other characters in the room. How does your character react to that character? Are they friends? Are they enemies? Do they ignore them?
6. Characters can now interact using their one word or phrase, but focusing on the emotions and actions the character relationship would cause.
7. As students seem more comfortable with that, encourage them to spread past their one word or phrase – what would these characters have to talk about?
8. Wind the party down, and bring the students back to sitting in a circle to discuss the activity. Have students share some of their favourite interactions, and how the activity made them feel. Did they gain a new understanding for any of the characters?

EXTENSION: Have students write a post-opera diary for their character. How is their life now that the story is over?

Pre-Performance Activities

Frozen Pictures

Drama, Dance and Language, 50 minutes

SUMMARY

Students will work co-operatively in groups and retell scenes from *The Bremen Town Musicians* through tableaux.

OBJECTIVE

- ♦ Work collaboratively and adapt the scenes from the story of *The Bremen Town Musicians* into “tableaux” (frozen pictures)
- ♦ Learn about the important dramatic elements in tableaux including: levels (individuals positioned at different heights), defined and animated facial expressions, intention and focus (giving the body a sense of “movement” while holding a static pose)
- ♦ Use movement as a language to explore and communicate ideas and emotions expressed in the story of *The Bremen Town Musicians*
- ♦ Analyze and reflect on the tableaux created by their peers and identify the proper use of the dramatic elements listed above and offer constructive feedback on ways to improve tableaux

ACTIVITY

1. Review the story outline and characters of *The Bremen Town Musicians* with the students.
2. As a class, reduce the story to seven sentences (meeting each of the four animals, finding the house, scaring the Robbers, end).
3. Divide the students into groups of three or four, and assign each group one part of the story.
4. Encourage the students to create a tableau (frozen picture) for their assigned sentence. Suggest that different levels, exaggerated facial expressions, and intention and focus in their poses make a more exciting picture.
5. Ask groups to choose one student to narrate the sequences before each presentation. Each group will share their scene with the class.

EXTENSION

Invite the students to be directors and help improve each of the scenes by offering suggestions of how to make the student’ poses better reflect the emotion they are trying to express.

DURING THE PERFORMANCE

Ask students to look closely for elements in the production that are similar to the tableaux they created in the pre-performance activity. How did the performers use the space? What type of stage “pictures” stood out in this production for you? How was dramatic or musical movement effective in this production? How did the images created by the performers contribute to the overall production of the opera? How do you think it fits into the opera? How does the music emphasize the mood or characters?

Post-Performance Activity

Extra! Extra! Read all about it!

Language, 60 minutes

SUMMARY

Students will write a musical review of the production using appropriate musical and operatic terms.

OBJECTIVE

- ◆ Demonstrate an understanding of the information and ideas in oral texts by summarizing important ideas and citing a variety of supporting details
- ◆ Identify a range of presentation strategies used in oral text and analyze their effect on an audience
- ◆ Interpret oral text by using stated and implied ideas from the text
- ◆ Extend understanding of oral texts by connecting, comparing and contrasting the ideas and information in them to their own knowledge and experience
- ◆ Sort and classify ideas and information for their writing in a variety of ways
- ◆ Identify whose point of view is presented or reflected in a media text
- ◆ Identify the conventions and techniques used in some familiar media forms and explain how they help convey meaning and influence or engage the audience

ACTIVITY

1. Brainstorm different types of media with the class. Specifically discuss the aspects of print media and online posts or blogs.
2. Divide the students into partners or groups of three.
3. Ask each group to write a blog review of one aspect of the opera experience: acting, singing or design. The students should try not to use a story synopsis to make it a little challenging. The glossary of opera terms would also be helpful for this activity. This can be done online, or in hard copy and presented to the class.
4. The students will then write a news piece that will be incorporated into their segment. To make it more challenging, the students should try not to use a story synopsis.
5. Other groups could then present or write short posts or comments on each review.

In the Hotseat

Drama, 40 minutes

SUMMARY

Volunteers will embody various characters from the story, and their fellow students will have the opportunity to ask them questions and further explore the drama and motivations.

OBJECTIVE

- ◆ Embody a character
- ◆ Explain a character's motivation using examples from the performance
- ◆ Think critically and ask questions of a character

ACTIVITY

1. Have students stand in a circle. Place a chair in the centre of the room. Explain that the students will have the opportunity to ask one of the characters in the opera a few questions. Ask for a volunteer to sit in the centre.
2. Allow the volunteer to choose which character to play – start with one of the animals or the Robber.
3. Give the student a moment to get into the character's head – ask them to tell you when they are ready to proceed (maximum of a minute).
4. Once the student in the centre is ready, invite the other students to raise their hands and ask questions of the character. The character can choose whose questions they will take. Questions can be about what happened in the opera, their relationship to other characters, etc. Feel free to redirect students to keep them on topic. All questions should be related to the characters and story, though personality questions like “what's your favourite food?” may provide interesting insight (perhaps the Robber is a vegetarian now that the animals scared him!), so those should be allowed.
5. Allow 5 – 7 minutes for questions, depending on how many questions the students have. Then, switch, and allow a new student to volunteer and choose a different character.
6. After each character has been in the hotseat, bring the class together to reflect and discuss. What new things did they learn about each character? How did the answers from the character before you influence your own responses? Has this created a greater understanding of how the characters relate to one another?

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The COC gratefully acknowledges:



Charitable Registration Number: 11883 4829 RR0001

The Bremen Town Musicians Study Guide
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