

SARASOTA**OPERA**

VICTOR DeRENZI, Artistic Director
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Exploration in Opera

Teacher Resource Guide



The Rossini's
Italian Girl 
in **Algiers**

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Special thanks to the following organizations for the use of articles and content:

Lyric Opera Kansas City | Opera Philadelphia | OPERA America NOTES

Exploration in Opera is made possible by the
Community Foundation of Sarasota County



The Cast

Conductor Anthony Barrese

Stage Director Mark Freiman

Scenic Designer Michael Schweikardt

Costume Designer Howard Tsvi Kaplan

Lighting Designer Ken Yunker

Hair & Make-Up Designer Joanne Weaver

Chorus Master Roger L. Bingaman

Stage Manager Audrey Chait

Isabella (*ee-zah-BELL-ah*)

a young Italian lady (mezz-soprano) Tara Venditti

Lindoro (*leen-DOH-roh*)

a young Italian, and Mustafá's favorite slave (tenor) Hak Soo Kim

Taddeo (*tah-DAY-oh*)

An older companion of Isabella (baritone) Bruno Taddia

Mustafà (*mus-tah-FAH*)

the bey, or governor, of Algiers (bass) Harold Wilson

Elvira (*el-VEER-ah*)

Mustafá's wife (soprano) Jessica E. Jones*

Zulma (*DZOOOL-mah*)

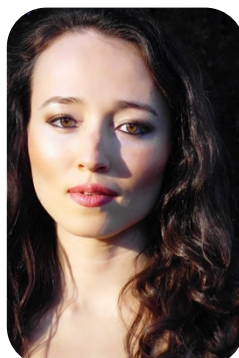
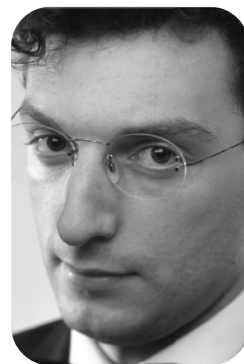
a slave, and confidante of Elvira (mezzo-soprano) Fleur Barron*

Haly (*ha-LEE*)

the captain of the Algerian pirates (bass) Alexander Charles Boyd*

Eunuchs, Corsairs, Slaves, Pappataci Chorus

* Studio Artist



Top Row
 Anthony Barrese
 Mark Freiman
 Tara Venditti
 Hak Soo Kim
 Bruno Taddia

Bottom Row
 Harold Wilson
 Jessica E. Jones
 Fleur Barron
 Alexander Charles Boyd

The Story

Act I

In Algiers, at the seaside palace of the bey Mustafà (*mus-tah-FAH*), his wife Elvira (*el-VEER-ah*)

complains that her husband no longer loves her; her attendants reply there is nothing she can do. Mustafà bursts in. Asserting he will not let women get the better of him, he sends Elvira away because she complains. Mustafà has tired of his wife and will give her to Lindoro (*leen-DOH-roh*), a young Italian slave at the court, to marry. Then he orders Haly (*ha-LEE*), a captain in his service, to provide him an Italian woman—someone more interesting than the “boring” girls in his harem. Lindoro longs for his own sweetheart, Isabella (*ee-zah-BELL-ah*), whom he lost when pirates captured him. Mustafà tells him he can have Elvira, insisting she possesses every virtue that Lindoro values.



Elsewhere along the shore, a wreck is spied, and Haly's pirates exult. Isabella arrives on shore, lamenting the cruelty of a fate that has interrupted her quest for her lost fiancé, Lindoro. Though in danger, she is confident of her skill in taming men. The pirates seize Taddeo (*tah-DAY-oh*), an aging admirer of Isabella's, and try to sell him into slavery, but he claims he is Isabella's uncle and cannot leave her. When the Algerians learn that both captives are Italian, they rejoice in having found the new star for Mustafà's harem. Taddeo is stunned at Isabella's poise on hearing the news, and they quarrel, but decide they had better face the predicament together.



Elvira's slave Zulma (*DZOOOL-mah*) tries to reconcile Lindoro and her mistress to the fact that Mustafà has ordered them to marry. Mustafà promises Lindoro he may return to Italy— if he will take Elvira. Seeing no other way, Lindoro accepts, making it clear he might not marry Elvira until after they reach Italy. Elvira, however, loves her husband and sees no advantage in aiding Lindoro's escape. When Haly announces the capture of an Italian woman, Mustafà gloats in anticipation of conquest, then leaves to meet her. Lindoro tries to tell Elvira she has no choice but to leave her heartless husband.

Mustafà welcomes Isabella with ceremony. In an aside, she remarks that she feels certain that she will be able to deal with him; he, on the other hand, finds her enchanting. As she seemingly throws herself on his mercy, the jealous Taddeo



starts to make a scene and is saved only when she declares that he is her "uncle". Elvira and Lindoro, about to leave for Italy, come to say good-bye, and Lindoro and Isabella are stunned to recognize each other. To prevent Lindoro's departure, Isabella insists that Mustafà cannot banish his wife, adding that Lindoro must stay as her own personal servant. Between the frustration of Mustafà's plans and the happy but confused excitement of the lovers, everyone's head reels.

- *Intermission* -

Act II

Elvira and members of the court are discussing how easily the Italian woman has intimidated Mustafà, giving Elvira hope of regaining his love. When Mustafà enters, however, he declares he will visit Isabella in her room for coffee. She comes out of her room, upset because Lindoro apparently broke faith with her by agreeing to escape with Elvira. Lindoro appears and reassures her of his loyalty; Isabella promises a scheme for their freedom. After Lindoro leaves too, Mustafà reappears, followed by attendants with the terrified Taddeo, who is to be honored as the bey's personal bodyguard, in exchange for helping secure Isabella's affections. Dressed in Turkish garb, he sees no choice but to accept the compulsory honor.



In her apartment, Isabella prepares for Mustafà's visit, telling Elvira that the way to keep her husband is to be more assertive. As she completes her grooming, Isabella keeps Mustafà waiting, as her "servant" Lindoro acts as a go-between. At last she presents herself to the bey, who introduces Taddeo as his bodyguard. Mustafà sneezes—a signal for Taddeo to leave—but Taddeo stays, and Isabella invites Elvira to stay for coffee, to Mustafà's displeasure. When Isabella insists that he treat his wife gently, Mustafà bursts out in annoyance, while the others wonder what to make of his explosions.

Elsewhere in the palace, Haly predicts that his master is no match for an Italian woman. As Lindoro and Taddeo plan their escape, Taddeo says he is Isabella's true love. Lindoro is amused but realizes he needs Taddeo's help in dealing with Mustafà, who enters, still furious. Lindoro says Isabella actually cares very much for the bey and wants him to prove his worthiness by entering the Italian order of Pappataci. Believing this to be an honor, Mustafà agrees to the conditions: eat, drink, and sleep all you like, oblivious to anything around you. Aside, Haly and Zulma wonder what Isabella is up to.

In her apartment, Isabella prepares a feast of initiation for the bey. Mustafà arrives, and is pronounced a Pappataci. Food is brought in, and he is tested by Isabella and Lindoro, who pretend to kiss while Taddeo reminds Mustafà to ignore them. The lovers prepare to embark, but Taddeo realizes that he too is being tricked, and tries to rally Mustafà, who persists in keeping his vow of paying no attention. When Mustafà finally responds, the situation is under control and the Italians bid a courteous farewell. Mustafà, his lesson learned, takes Elvira back, and everyone sings the praises of the resourceful Italian woman.

Freely Adapted from Opera News

The Composer



1792-1868

Gioacchino Rossini (jo-KEE-no roh-SEE-nee) was born on leap day 1792 in Pesaro, a small town on Italy's Adriatic coast. His parents – father Giuseppe, a trumpeter and inspector of

slaughterhouses, and mother Anna, a singer and baker's daughter – started his musical training early. Turmoil ensued in the Rossini family life when the newly restored Austrian occupying forces temporarily imprisoned Giuseppe for his actions supporting Napoleon.

While still a young teenager, Rossini began musical studies at the conservatory in Bologna. There he gained the nickname "the little German" for his devotion to Mozart and won a prize for a cantata that he composed. In 1810 at the age of 18, Rossini had his first opera, the one-act comedy *La cambiale di matrimonio* (*The Marriage Contract*), produced in Venice. Other operas soon followed, and Rossini achieved a substantial hit with *La pietra del paragone* (*The Touchstone*) when it was introduced at La Scala in 1812 and given 50 performances in its first season. The following year brought triumphant premieres of the dramatic *Tancredi* and the comedic *L'italiana in Algeri* (*The Italian Girl in Algiers*) at different theaters in Venice. With these successes, the 21 year-old Rossini became the idol of the Italian opera public.

In 1815, an impresario of opera houses in Naples hired Rossini as music director for the Teatro San Carlo. Rossini's responsibilities included writing operas for this theater and the contract paid well, including a cut from the impresario's popular gaming tables that were operated to help fund theatrical operations. In Naples, older composers such as Giovanni Paisiello were jealous of the young Rossini. However, Rossini scored an enthusiastic public success with his opera,

Elisabetta, Regina d'Inghilterra (*Elizabeth, Queen of England*). For this composition, Rossini employed two innovations: he wrote out all the vocal ornaments in full and replaced keyboard-accompanied recitatives with ones accompanied by string quartet. The production starred the mistress of the impresario, the popular Spanish singer Isabella Colbran. She would later become Rossini's first wife.

During his time at the Teatro San Carlo Rossini wrote two of his best comedies, *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (*The Barber of Seville*) and *La Cenerentola* (*Cinderella*), both of which premiered in Rome. *Il barbiere di Siviglia* was written in 1816, and though it was not favorably received at its premiere the opera quickly became one of the composer's most beloved works with admirers as notable as Beethoven and Verdi.



Teatro San Carlo

Rossini's most important operas through the 1820's show his maturity as a musical dramatist. Among the masterpieces from this period are *Maometto II* (1820) and *Semiramide* (1823), as well as *Guillaume Tell* (1829), which was composed while Rossini was working in Paris as director of the Théâtre Italien (1824-1826).

At the age of 37 Rossini retired, and in 1837 moved to Italy. A number of years following his early retirement Rossini and his second wife, Olympe, returned to Paris. In 1858 the famous *samedi soirs* (Saturday Night) salons were initiated and quickly became a meeting place for singers, composers, artists and friends. The last occurred September 26, 1868 as the composer's chronic ill health finally overcame him. He died two months later. In 1887 his remains were brought to the city of Florence. A procession of more than 6,000 mourners attended the re-interment in Santa Croce.

The Librettist

Libretto means “little book” in Italian. It refers to the written text of an opera set to music by the composer. In earlier times it was often regarded as more important than the music, and it was common for audience members to purchase the libretto to read.

Early composers were usually contracted to set music to a pre-existing text. Only later did composers (such as Mozart and Verdi) work in close collaboration with their librettists. A few composers – notably Wagner – wrote their own texts.

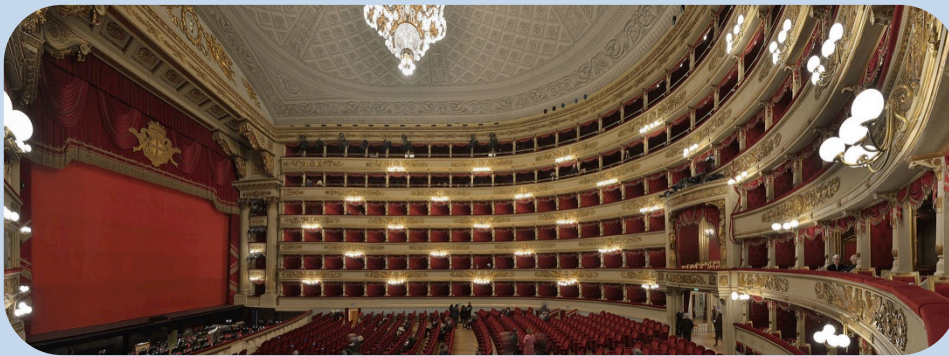


1761-1820

Angelo Anelli (AHN-jell-oh ah-NELL-ee), wrote forty opera librettos, though it is unlikely that you will ever see a production of any of his works outside of *The Italian Girl in Algiers*. In addition to his given name, Anelli also wrote under the pseudonyms Marco Landi and Niccolò Liprandi.

Born November 1, 1761 in Desenzano del Garda, Italy, he was educated in the classics and was a professor of both Forensic Oratory and Judicial Procedure. During his youth, he was active in the politics of the Cisalpine Republic (a sister republic of France in Northern Italy from 1797-1802), for which he was twice imprisoned.

From 1799 to 1817, Anello was one of the “house librettists” at La Scala. His opera librettos include those for Rossini's *The Italian Girl in Algiers*, Paer's *The Exiles of Florence*, Usiglio's *The Stolen Bucket*, and Pavesi's *Ser Marcantonio*, which later formed the basis for Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*. He largely abandoned his literary career to return to the legal profession in 1817 when he was appointed professor of procedura giudiziaria (judicial procedure) at the University of Pavia. He died in Pavia in 1820 at the age of 58.



The Teatro alla Scala, also known as **La Scala** is an opera house in Milan, Italy. It was built on the former location of the Church of Santa Maria alla Scala (hence the name) to replace the Royal Ducal Theatre, which was destroyed in a fire in 1776 during the annual carnival.

At its grand opening in August 1778, the theater could hold approximately 3,000 people. As was the tradition of the day, the first floor contained no chairs and spectators watched standing up. Only the wealthy patrons who owned private boxes on the first several floors, or those who could afford to purchase a seat in the galleries on the top two floors, had the privilege of watching from a seated position. La Scala also had a casino in the lobby, the proceeds of which helped fund the writing of new works for the theater.

Conditions in the auditorium could be frustrating for audience goers. As one patron in the 1800's noted, “La Scala serves, not only as the universal drawing-room for all the society of Milan, but every sort of trading transaction, from horse-dealing to stock-jobbing, is carried on in the pit; so that brief and far between are the snatches of melody one can catch.”

Listening & Viewing

Overture (<https://youtu.be/-rlatVmpjDA>)

In Rossini's time, the overture was generally looked upon as an opportunity for the audience to settle into their seats; it was not considered an integral part of the drama. Rossini sometimes recycled overtures from previous operas rather than writing new ones. The *Italian Girl* overture is widely recorded and performed today, known for its distinct opening of slow, quiet pizzicato basses, leading to a sudden loud burst of sound from the full orchestra.

"Cruda sorte! Amor tiranno!" (<https://youtu.be/xJ6Pln8RU78>)

A violent storm has driven a ship on to the rocks. The pirates carry stolen goods and prisoners ashore including Isabella, who had set out to find her fiancé. Overcoming her initial fear, she realized she must pull herself together and put her woman's wiles to good use (Pg. 84 in libretto):

Isabella

Cruel fate! Tyrannical love!
Is this the reward for my constancy?
No honor, terror or anguish exists
Compared to that which I now suffer.

For you along, my Lindoro,
I find myself in such peril.
From whom, O God, can I hope for counsel?
Who will give me comfort?

Chorus

She's a juicy mouthful for Mustafà.

Isabella

Keeping cool is what's wanted here,
No more rages or terror:
Now is the time for courage;
now they'll see who I am

From experience I already know
the effect of a languishing look,
of a slight sigh...

I know what to do to tame men.
Be they gentle or rough, cool or ardent,
They're all more or less alike...
They all seek, they all long for,
happiness from a pretty woman.

Act I Finale (<https://youtu.be/gx1J88LfSug>)

After a moment of confusion and surprise at the sight of Lindoro, Isabella regains her self-control turns the tables. She tells Mustafà that Lindoro, Elvira, and Zulma must not be allowed to leave, nor must Mustafà abandon his wife. She then asks for Lindoro as her own, personal slave (Pg. 124 in libretto):

Elvira

In my head I've a bell ringing, going ding dong

Isabella & Zulma

My head's like a bell, ringing out ding dong

Lindoro & Haly

In my head a great hammer is beating, going bang bang

Taddeo

I'm like a crow that's been plucked, crying caw caw

Mustafà

Like cannon fire, my head's going boom boom

Chorus

His brain's in a whirl:
he's near shipwreck

The Story Behind the Story

1813

In May of 1813, Rossini received a commission for a comic opera to be performed during carnival season in Venice. The company had experienced a cancellation and needed a new work in a hurry. Rather than start from scratch, the company decided to recycle a libretto that had been used before, Angelo Anelli's *L'Italiana in Algeri* (The Italian Girl – or woman – in Algiers), which had originally been set to music by Mosca in 1808, though to fit Rossini's style, the librettist made several revisions for the new production.

At the time of its origin it had been "ripped from the headlines," to use a modern term, as there had been a well-publicized incident a few years earlier when a young Italian woman, Antoinietta Frapollo, had been kidnapped and forced to become part of the Sultan's harem in Algiers. Though the specific incident was no longer front-

page news, Venice's position as an important center of trade had created a strong interest in all things Oriental. Years later a similar craze for Japanese culture in England was to inspire Gilbert and Sullivan to create *The Mikado*.

Working to meet a tight deadline, Rossini farmed out the writing of the recitatives and a couple of short arias, and writing at his usual break-neck speed, he composed the opera in less than a month. The May 22 premiere was a huge popular success, leading the composer to comment, "I thought that when they heard my opera, the Venetians would decide I was crazy. But they have shown themselves to be crazier than I am."

At first Rossini received some criticism for using a story, which had previously been set to music, but the audiences and critics soon realized the vast superiority of Rossini's approach.

*Text courtesy of Lyric Opera Kansas City
Written by Stu Lewis*



A dinner and ball in the Teatro San Benedetto Venice, in honor of the Conti Del Nord, 22nd January 1782

World Timeline

Rossini lived between 1792 and 1868, experiencing such events as the French Revolution, the Revolutionary War, Napoleon Bonaparte's rise and fall, and the dawn of the Industrial Revolution.

Active Learning Looking at the timeline below, discuss what it would be like to live in the time of Rossini. How would your life be different or the same? How did discoveries and inventions of the time affect daily life?

1774.....The first Continental Congress meets in Philadelphia, PA

1783..... The Revolutionary War ends with the Treaty of Paris

1789..... In France, a mob storms the Bastille, a symbol of French Royal tyranny

1891..... Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart dies -----

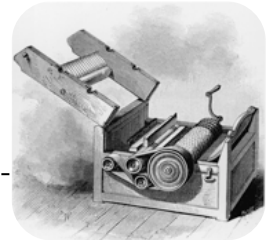


Mozart

1792..... **Rossini is born in Pesaro, Italy**

1793..... King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette are executed during the Reign of Terror, a period of violence that occurred after the onset of the French Revolution

1794..... The Cotton Gin, a machine that mechanically removes seeds from cotton, is invented by Eli Whitney -----



The Cotton Gin

1801.....Thomas Jefferson is elected President by the House of Representatives after a tie in the Electoral College

Great Brittan and Ireland merge to form the United Kingdom

1803..... The United States agrees to pay France \$15 million for the Louisiana Territory, doubling the size of the U.S.

1804..... Meriwether Lewis and William Clark set out from St. Louis on an expedition to explore the West and find a route to the Pacific Ocean -----

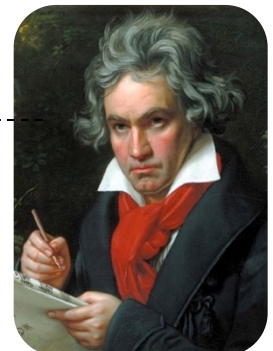


Lewis, Clark, and Sacagawea

The world population reaches 1 billion

The first steam locomotive begins operation

1808..... Ludwig van Beethoven performs his Fifth Symphony -----



Ludwig van Beethoven

1810..... **Rossini's** first opera, *The Marriage Contract*, premieres in Venice

The Mexican War of Independence Begins

The trumpet gets valves

1812..... The War of 1812 begins over British interference-----
with US maritime shipping and westward expansion

Napoleon leads the French invasion of Russia,
resulting in a catastrophic defeat

1813..... **Rossini's** *The Italian Girl in Algiers* premieres in
Venice

1815..... **Rossini** becomes the music director of the Teatro
San Carlo in Naples, Italy



General Andrew Jackson in the Battle of New Orleans

1816..... **Rossini's** *The Barber of Seville* and *La Cenerentola* both receive premieres in Rome

1819..... Spain agrees to cede Florida to the United States

1820..... The Missouri Compromise is signed, allowing Missouri to enter
the Union as a slave state while preventing slavery in the rest
of the northern Louisiana Purchase Territory

1824..... **Rossini** become director of the Théâtre Italien in Paris, France

1827..... The Erie Canal opens, creating a navigable water route -----
from New York City and the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Lakes



Lock on the Erie Canal

1829..... **Rossini's** 39th and last opera, *Guillaume Tell*, opens in Paris

1836..... Texas declares its independence from Mexico and Texan defenders of
the Alamo are all killed during a siege by the Mexican Army

1837..... **Rossini** retires at the age of 37 and moves to Italy

1849..... Harriet Tubman escapes from slavery -----

1859..... *On the Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin is published

1865..... Confederate general Robert E. Lee surrenders to Ulysses S. Grant at
Appomattox Courthouse, VA



Harriet Tubman

1867..... The U.S. acquires Alaska from Russia for the sum of \$7.2 million

1868..... **Rossini** dies in Passy, Paris, France

1869..... The Suez Canal opens

1870..... The Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution is
ratified, giving African Americans the right to vote---



Fifteenth Amendment Celebration Painting

Rossini & Operatic Conventions

The Italian Girl in Algiers represents two important trends in the history of opera – the *opera buffa*, which determines the structure of the opera, and the *bel canto*, a term given to the style of singing.

Opera buffa was a highly stylized form of comedy that originated in the early eighteenth century and flourished in the final decades of that century and on into the early nineteenth century. It had its origins in the *commedia del arte*, a form of improvisational comedy popular in the Renaissance, which could be seen as the forerunner of today's improv comedy. One feature which *opera buffa* inherited from *commedia del arte* was the use of comic types such as the attractive young lovers, the trusted confidante, and the blustering old man, generally a bass, referred to as a *basso buffo*. These operas generally depict the triumph of clever young people over their foolish elders.

Perhaps the most important innovation introduced by *opera buffa* was its focus on elaborate ensembles. In *opera seria* (serious opera), the most popular genre of opera prior to the introduction of the *buffa* form, the focus was on solo arias that would give singers the opportunity to display their vocal skills. In *opera buffa*, the composers who were most admired were those who could keep several melodic lines in play, advancing the plot by having several characters express their conflicting emotions simultaneously. Opera critic Michael Tanner attributes the strength of Rossini's ensembles to the fact that "However much Rossini's characters may loathe one another...they love collaborating," giving these numbers an "incremental force not to be found in Mozart's operas, where the characters maintain their individuality rather than joining their voices for purely musical effect."

The *buffa* style unfortunately belonged to a brief period of time. No one writes such operas today, though some of Gian-Carlo Menotti's operas in the mid-twentieth century (*The Old Maid and the Thief*, *The Telephone*, and *Amelia Goes to the Ball*) have some *buffa* elements. One composer who was greatly influenced by Rossini was Arthur

Sullivan, whose patter songs such as "Modern Major General" appear to be modeled on those found in Rossini's comic operas.

As for the style of singing, Rossini was the first major composer of the *bel canto*, literally "beautiful singing," era. There was no actual "bel canto school." In fact, Rossini coined the term in 1858, when he lamented that this style of singing no longer existed – he did not care for the harsher sounds of Wagnerian opera. Opera historian Owen Jander describes *bel canto* as "a naturally beautiful voice that was even in tone throughout its full range, careful training that encouraged effortless delivery of highly florid music, and a mastery of style that could not be taught, but only assimilated from listening to the best Italian exponents." Such singing made more vocal demands on singers than the operas of earlier composers, such as Mozart. One feature of such operas was the *coloratura* style, with its vocal pyrotechnics which has made superstars of numerous sopranos down through the ages.

Bel canto also allowed singers some latitude to improvise, much like a modern jazz singer, though Rossini felt that the trend had gone too far. It was reported that when Adelina Patti sang an aria from *The Barber of Seville* for Rossini, he replied, "Who wrote that piece you just sang?"

For several years *bel canto* was decried as old fashioned, but it was rediscovered in the later part of the twentieth century, championed by singers such as Beverly Sills and Joan Sutherland, under whose influence audiences have been able to rediscover several long-neglected works of the major *bel canto* composers.

*Text courtesy of Lyric Opera Kansas City
Written by Stu Lewis*

Local Connections Giovanni Domenico Ferretti's series of fourteen paintings entitled *The Disguises of Harlequin* at the Ringling Museum represent the multiple roles played by stock *commedia* characters Harlequin and Pulcinella. Visit <http://ringlingdocents.org/harlequin.htm> to explore.

How You Hear With Your Ears

Once the overture of an opera begins, your ear captures sound waves and sends them to your brain through a specific process. The first part of this process takes place in the **pinna** or outer ear. Your pinna collects sound waves and funnels them into your auditory or **ear canal**. At the end of your ear canal, the sound waves hit your **eardrum** (also known as the tympanic membrane). Beyond the eardrum lies the middle ear, which houses a group of three tiny bones known as the **ossicles**. The vibrations first travel to the **hammer**, then the **anvil**, and finally through the **stirrup**. As sound waves pass through these bones, the bones amplify the vibrations. The stirrup bone is connected to your inner ear through a small window in the **cochlea**. The cochlea and the **semicircular canals** contain fluid and are lined with tiny hairs called **cilia**. The fluid helps conduct the vibrations to these tiny hairs, which convert sound energy into electrical impulses. Finally, the **auditory nerve** carries these electrical signals to your brain.

The **Eustachian tube** is a tiny tube that attaches the middle ear to the nasal passages and throat. Your Eustachian tube is what affects the pressure in your ears. Often on long plane rides, or at the end of a hike up a tall mountain, you feel your ears “pop”. This is the pressure inside your ear equalizing to the pressure on the outside.

Amplified (On the Inside)

Listening to an opera performance is a lot different than listening to a rock concert. Rock concerts use amplifiers to make their instruments and voices much louder than normal. Sometimes, sounds are so much louder that you can still hear them perfectly through earplugs! But at the opera, there are no amplifiers, microphones, or speakers.

So how can you still hear everything?

Your outer and middle ear are like miniature amplifiers built right into your head. The folds in your outer ear help channel more sound into the middle ear, where the eardrum and ossicles amplify the vibrations. In total, your outer and middle ear provide as much as 20 decibels (dB) of amplification!

The instruments in the orchestra pit and the trained voices of the singers on stage both help to make things easy for your ears. The instruments are arranged in an orchestra pit with the quieter instruments (the strings) toward the front of the pit, and the louder instruments (brass and percussion) in the back underneath the stage overhang. Opera singers are trained to support and project their voices much louder than spoken

speech; their voices can cut through the sound of the orchestra playing beneath them in the pit!

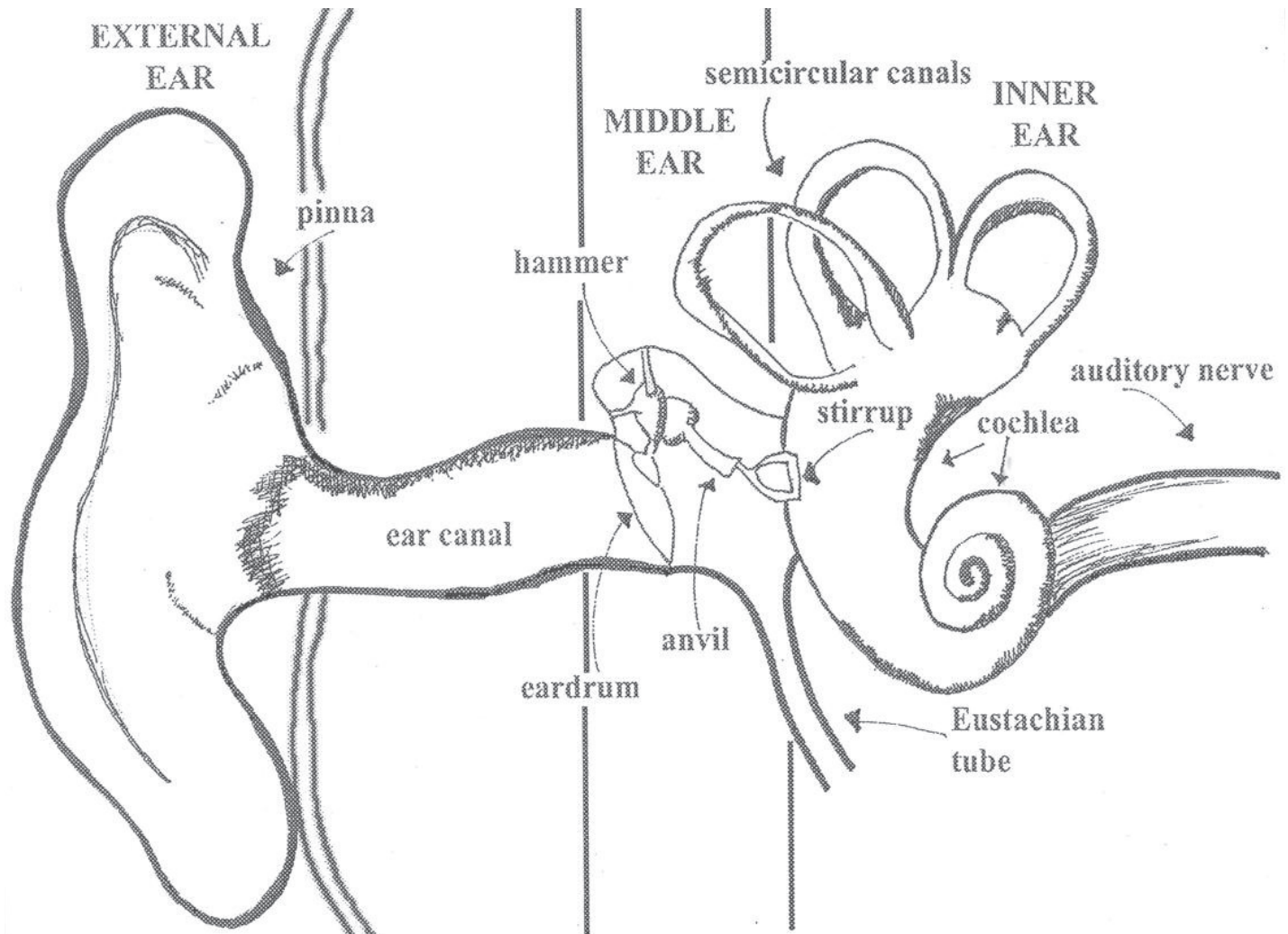
Why We Have Two Ears

Have you ever wondered why we have two ears? Having one on each side of the head, some space between the two of them, helps the brain figure out where the sound is coming from. When you hear something to your extreme left, your left ear picks up the sound slightly faster than your right. The tiny delay between signals from each ear allows your brain to locate the source of the sound. In listening to music such as opera, your two ears give you “stereo” sound, which is fuller and richer

The Ear

During an opera performance, your ears pick up a wide range of sounds. Instruments such as the flute or violin, bass and soprano voices, and even cymbal crashes are all an important part of the opera experience. All of these sounds are picked up by your ears and transmitted to your brain through tiny bones and nerves. On the next page is an in-depth look at how the ear works.

Further Exploration Check out this video from the BBC on the parts of the ear and how they work: <https://youtu.be/r-c5GpoD8wI>



Parts of the Ear

The ear is divided into three main sections: the **External Ear**, the **Middle Ear**, and the **Inner Ear**.

Your external ear is what is visible on the outside of the skull, the middle ear contains three tiny bones, which are referred to as the ossicles, and your inner ear sends signals to your brain.

Anvil or Incus - a small bone that passes vibrations from the to the stirrup.

Cochlea - spiral-shaped, fluid-filled soft tissue lined with tiny hairs; creates a nerve impulse.

Eardrum - a membrane that vibrates when hit by sound waves.

Eustachian Tube - tube that connects middle ear to the back of the nose; equalizes ear pressure

Hammer or Malleus - a small bone that passes vibrations through from the eardrum to the anvil.

Outer Ear Canal - tube that carries sound to the eardrum.

Pinna or Auricle - the visible outside part of your ear; collects sound.

Semi-circular Canals - 3 fluid-filled looped tubes attached to cochlea; maintain balance.

Stirrup or Stapes - smallest bone in the human body; u-shaped and passes vibrations from the anvil to the cochlea.

Text and diagram courtesy of Opera Philadelphia

Costume Design

Costumes provide the audience with important clues about the characters in an opera. Details about the wealth, profession, goals, secrets, and relationships with other characters can all be represented by the clothes a character wears.

The **costume designer** plans or designs the costumes and supervises their construction. Through research and careful planning, they insure that the performer's costumes fit the character as well as the time period and location in which the opera is set. They also take into account any "clues" the composer includes in the score which tell how the character might act or physical actions they might do (for example, hide something on their person).

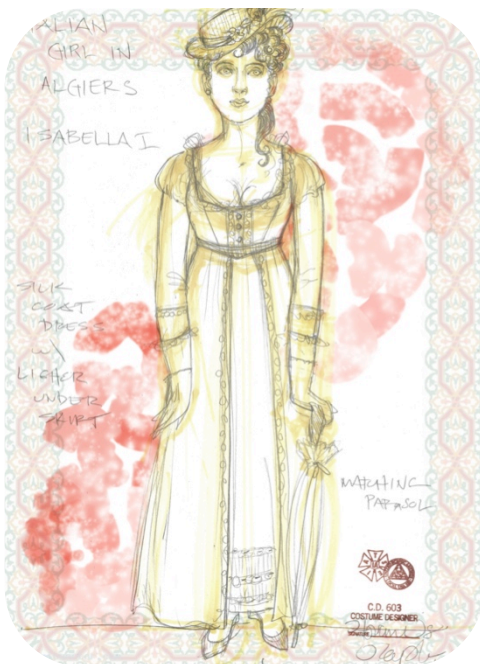
Active Learning Using the sketches below, identify three basic clues about each character, such as age, sex, societal status, profession, etc. Then, on a separate paper, create modern day costumes for each character based on these traits.



Costume designer **Howard Tsvi Kaplan's** designs for Isabella, Lindoro, and Mustafà can be found below. Mr. Kaplan has been Sarasota Opera's resident costume designer since 1998 and has designed for more than 20 different productions. Other

recent endeavors include *The Man of La Mancha* (Olney Theatre - nominated for a Helen Hayes Award); *The Mikado* (Pittsburgh Public Theatre); *Il Trovatore* (Opera New Jersey), *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Werther* (Kentucky Opera), *Siege of Corinth* and *La bohème* (Baltimore Opera).

For twelve years, Mr. Kaplan designed for Ringling Bros. & Barnum and Bailey Clown College.



Isabella



Lindoro



Mustafà

Scenic Design

Sets provide the audience with important clues about the characters and locations within an opera. Details about the wealth, profession, goals, secrets, and relationships with other characters and the physical location of each scene can all be represented by the sets and how the actors interact with their environment.

The **set designer** plans the sets through careful research and study, making sure that the scenery fits the story. Like the costume designer, they take into account the “clues” left by the composer and librettist, making sure to provide the needed set pieces to move the story along. This could include a balcony for a singer to perform from, or a beautiful palace befitting a king or queen.

Set designer **Michael Schweikardt** (see bio on pg. 21) first creates sketches before translating his design into computer-based imagery and blueprints. At each step in the design process, he works with the artistic director, stage director, director of production, and others to make sure the design meets the needs of the production, both artistically and budgetarily. Once approved, the designs are sent out to scenic shops around the country for bidding. The shop that is able to produce the design within budget is selected and the final set is shipped to Sarasota via semi-truck and assembled by the stage crew in the theater. After the production, the set is dissambled for storage at the Opera’s warehouse by the SRQ airport.

Step One

Designer creates sketches for each scene using the “clues” left by the composer and librettist in the score, making sure to provide the needed set pieces to move the story along.



Step Two

Once designs are approved by the artistic director and stage director, the set designer translates the sketches into computer-generated images and blue prints.

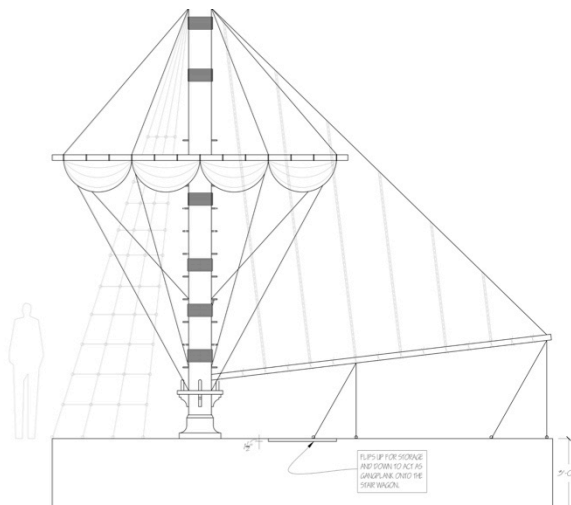


Step Three

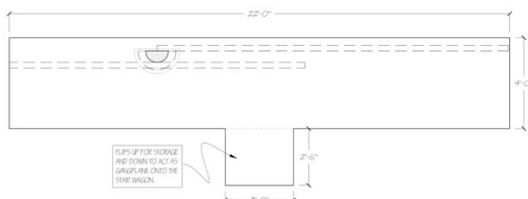
After the computer-generated images and blue prints are approved, they are sent out to scenic shops around the country for bidding. Included in the bid package are "paint elevations" so the shop can see exactly how each set piece or backdrop should be painted and the dimensions.



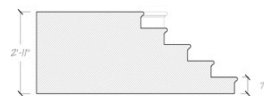
SHIP WAGON - FRONT ELEVATION
SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0"



SHIP WAGON - FRONT ELEVATION
SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0"



**BID DRAWINGS
DO NOT BUILD**



SHIP WAGON - SECTION
SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0"

THE ITALIAN GIRL IN ALGIERS

PRESENTED TO THE PUBLIC BY
SARASOTA OPERA ASSOC.
SARASOTA OPERA HOUSE - SARASOTA, FL

ELEVATIONS

SCALE: AS NOTED DATE: 1 JUN 2006

DIRECTED BY: MARK FREEMAN
DESIGNED BY: MICHAEL SCHWENKART
ASSOCIATE SCENE DESIGNER: IVAN SCOTT

REV. DATE:

*THESE DRAWINGS REPRESENT VISUAL CONCEPTS ONLY. THE DESIGNER AND HIS OR HER EMPLOYEES ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE STRUCTURAL, MECHANICAL, ELECTRICAL, OR ANY OTHER ASPECTS OF THE DESIGN AND WILL NOT ASSUME ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY WORKING DRAWINGS, CONSTRUCTION OF SETS, OR ANY OTHER ASPECTS OF THE PRODUCTION.

*PLEASE COMPLY WITH ALL APPLICABLE LOCAL AND STATE SAFETY RULES AND REGULATIONS AS THEY PERTAIN TO THIS PRODUCTION AND THIS FACILITY.

*PLEASE VERIFY ALL CRITICAL SITE MEASUREMENTS.



4



SEASCAPE PROP - FRONT ELEVATION
SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0"

THE ITALIAN
GIRL IN ALGIERS
SARASOTA OPERA ASSOC.
SARASOTA OPERA HOUSE - SARASOTA, FL

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P8

TED Ed Videos and Lessons



A different way to visualize rhythm

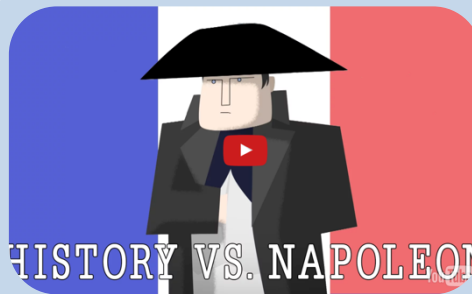
<http://ed.ted.com/lessons/a-different-way-to-visualize-rhythm-john-varney>

In standard notation, rhythm is indicated on a musical bar line. But there are other ways to visualize rhythm that can be more intuitive. John Varney describes the 'wheel method' of tracing rhythm and uses it to take us on a musical journey around the world.

Why we love repetition in music

<http://ed.ted.com/lessons/why-we-love-repetition-in-music-elizabeth-hellmuth-margulis>

How many times does the chorus repeat in your favorite song? How many times have you listened to that chorus? Repetition in music isn't just a feature of Western pop songs, either; it's a global phenomenon. Why? Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis walks us through the basic principles of the 'exposure effect.'



Napoleon Vs. History

<http://ed.ted.com/lessons/history-vs-napoleon-bonaparte-alex-gendler>

After the French Revolution erupted in 1789, Europe was thrown into chaos. Neighboring countries' monarchs feared they would share the fate of Louis XVI and attacked the new Republic, while at home, extremism and mistrust between factions led to bloodshed. In the midst of all this conflict, Napoleon emerged. But did he save the revolution, or destroy it? Alex Gendler puts Napoleon on trial.

Corruption, Wealth and beauty: The history of the gondola

<http://ed.ted.com/lessons/corruption-wealth-and-beauty-the-history-of-the-venetian-gondola-laura-morelli>

It's hard to imagine Venice without the curious, banana-shaped gondolas that glide down the canals. How did these boats come to be the trademark transportation of Venice? Laura Morelli details the history of the gondola, explaining why these boats were needed, the painstaking process by which they were made and why they have slowly begun to fade from the once-crowded canals.



Q&A with the Stage Director



Mark Freiman has impressed audiences with his rich lyric bass, his engaging stage presence, and his creative stage direction. Credits include work with opera companies of New York, Sarasota, Kansas City, Ft. Worth, Virginia, Nashville, Mobile, and Central City (Colorado), as well as N.Y. City Opera Education, The Orchestra of St. Luke's, and the Caramoor Festival (NY). Stage directing credits include *The Marriage of Figaro* for Nickel City Opera (Buffalo, NY); *La Bohème*, *Tosca*, and *Otello* for Winter Opera St. Louis; and *La Bohème* for Muddy River Opera (Quincy, IL) and the Southern Illinois Music Festival.

A child soloist for three seasons with the Metropolitan Opera, Mark Freiman sang a solo in the very first *Live From the Met* telecast, *La Bohème* with Luciano Pavarotti. He made his professional adult debut singing the title role in *The Marriage of Figaro* at Virginia's Ash Lawn Opera.

Where are you originally from and where do you live now? I grew up in New York City. I moved to St. Louis, Missouri eleven years ago.

Before you were a director, were you ever a performer? Before I was a director, I was — and I still am — a performer. I sang in my first opera when I was 8, in the children's chorus at a very tiny theater in New York City called the Amato Opera. I was enthralled by the theater, and I stayed involved there for 37 years, returning to sing the lead in the company's final performance after 61 seasons.

When I was 11, I heard about children's chorus auditions at the Metropolitan Opera through my school music teacher and decided to try out. I sang in over 200 performances there over the next three seasons with many famous opera stars and even got to sing some solos. In high school, I performed in plays and musicals, but I studied art in college. I got a job designing children's books but I continued to sing on weekends in the adult chorus at the Amato Opera. For fun, and I also helped out backstage. When I was cast in a small role, I began voice lessons in order not to embarrass myself, and I kept improving. I decided to pursue a professional career.

What made you want to become a professional stage director? Many of my colleagues had told me over the years that I should direct, but I enjoyed performing so much that I didn't give it much thought. A few years ago I was in a production of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* with a

director who was overwhelmed. I had done the show many times, so I helped out my colleagues by suggesting stage business and fun comic bits. The head of the company saw what I had done to help and asked if I would direct, so I decided to give it a try.

I directed *La Bohème* and I sang two small comic roles in the show, too. I found that I really enjoyed working with singers, and I liked having dramatic control over the show. I could continue to sing, but a whole new facet of opera had opened up to me.

What kinds of things did you study to become a stage director? I'm probably the wrong person to ask, since I didn't formally study how to do this. Many directors work first as a stage manager or assistant director, but I grew up with opera and I have experience in all different aspects of putting on a show. Besides being a child singer, an adult chorister, and a singer of both small and lead roles, my practical theater experience includes building and moving scenery, operating lights, pulling the curtain, doing makeup, working in the box office, and ushering. My art background also helps me in the visual aspects of directing.

Can you tell us what a stage director does and what your responsibilities are? The stage director is responsible for everything that you see on the stage, while the conductor is responsible for what you hear. I need to make sure the story is told clearly. I figure out the movement for the performers in advance and then work with them to

refine it and change it if needed. I work on the acting, so that the singers are conveying the emotions of the drama or the comedy effectively.

I work closely with the scenic designer, costume designer, wig and makeup designer, and lighting designer to achieve a common vision. I'm happiest when I have a talented cast that has new ideas to offer and ways to improve what I've worked out in advance. I love working with talented designers who understand what I'm asking for and then take it to a higher level with their expertise — or make a suggestion I hadn't thought of that really improves the look of the show.

How do you create the staging or movement of the performers around the stage?

My music is full of instructions I write in pencil for movement and character motivation, and diagrams to show where everyone goes onstage.

First I study the libretto – the words — and write a translation in my music if it's in a foreign language. Then I study the music. I develop an overview of the story and the motivations of the characters. What does each character want, and what do they do to achieve their goals? What actions and characters interfere to create conflict?

Then I look and listen for all the places where there are dramatic changes. The music tells you everything, from the emotion (happy? sad? funny?) to the action (slow? fast? sudden?). If Rossini gives the singer a measure or two of orchestra music in between sung phrases, I want movement there. If there is a sudden loud accent in the music, I want a gesture to go with it. In movies, the composer



Freiman as Benoît in *La Bohème* (Sarasota Opera, 2006)

writes music to go with the action. In opera, I'm working backwards, finding action to go with the music.

From your perspective, what is *Italian Girl* about? At first glance, it's just funny and silly. But there is also a poignant love story. In fact, there are at least three love stories.

Isabella and Lindoro have been separated on distant lands and they are trying to find each other. It's a complete surprise when, by accident, they wind up together again. Elvira is in love with Mustafà even though he wants to leave her. He doesn't realize until the end of the opera how lucky he is to have her. The servants Zulma and Haly are also in love and learn a great deal by watching Isabella. And Taddeo thinks he loves Isabella, but he really doesn't understand the first thing about her.

There is a lot of drama and comedy in the clash of two cultures, the Algerians and the Italians. Mustafà is excited by the idea of romance with an exotic "Italian girl," but he isn't prepared for a woman who is not ultimately subservient to him. In the end, all of the characters have learned something by their exposure to a very different culture.

Are there be any special moments in the opera the audience should watch for?

Rossini is famous for his exciting opera overtures. Even though the curtain is down and nothing is happening onstage, there is a lot of excitement in the orchestra pit. Listen to this great music, feel the excitement build from a soft piano to a loud forte, and think about how Rossini creates the buildup by repeating the phrase, each time adding instruments, each with its own texture.

Rossini comedies also have big ensemble numbers where the principal characters and chorus all sing together, stepping out of the story for a moment to describe their emotions to the audience. Look for this at the end of Act 1. The action stops and each character sings about what they are feeling. In a play, with everyone talking at the same time, it would be a mess; but in opera, it's beautiful! It's traditional for the characters to stop acting realistically and to do stylized movement — choreography, really — in finales like this. So look for this exciting conclusion to Act 1.

Q&A with Lindoro



Born in Seoul Korea, Korean-American tenor **Hak Soo Kim** is a recent alumnus of the Domingo-Thornton Young Artist Program at Los Angeles Opera and has garnered high remarks both in Europe and America for his interpretation of the Bel Canto repertoire. In the 2010-2011 season, he debuted at Sarasota Opera as Don Ramiro in *La Cenerentola* and returned to LA Opera to cover Don Narciso in *Il Turco in Italia*.

As a concert artist, he made his Ravinia Festival debut at Borsa in *Rigoletto* with Chicago Symphony Orchestra, appeared in concert under the direction of Plácido Domingo and was the tenor soloist in *Les Noces* with Monmouth Civic Chorus.

When was the first time you ever performed in front of an audience? Koreans love singing. The biggest part of the music grade at school was to sing, and it was always in front of your classmates. Even on the way to a field trip, we entertained one another on the bus by taking turns to sing. Koreans still do. There are “NoRaeBang,” which translates to a “singing room” almost every block in Seoul.

What made you want to become a professional opera singer? I met a professor in my senior year of college at Northwestern. He came to the school opera performance, because he was an avid music fan who particularly loved classical music and opera, although he taught Political Science. One evening, shortly before I graduated, he asked me what my plans were after college. I told him that I would work in an auto industry or in banking, as my major was German and Economics. Then, he said, “Hak Soo, I heard you sing. You are born with a gift. Do you know what that means? It means that you are not an ordinary person. A man of gift is destined to use his talent. Otherwise, he will have a huge regret in his life. You can always go to a business school or a law school later, if it does not work out. But, do give it a shot. Give your talent a chance.” I thought about it and felt that I would definitely regret not trying. So, there we go. I moved to New York City and started my life as an aspiring artist.

Did you ever think about doing something besides being a professional singer? Being an aspiring artist means that you should be willing to do anything to stay in the game, which often requires having many different types of side jobs.

Among a few I had, I fell in love with the restaurant industry. I had a great mentor who happened to be my best friend from college and learned so much about being in a “memory-making” business. More than anything else, being there and helping people to enjoy an unforgettable meal was as rewarding as getting an applause on stage. I kept learning and studying more to be a better service personnel and ended up becoming a certified sommelier through an organization called “The Court of Master Sommeliers.” You may have seen a documentary movie called “Somm.” Now, I work as a chief sommelier at a two-Michelin-star restaurant in TriBeCa. Although, I had wonderful success as a sommelier, I can never see myself giving up singing. It will totally kill my soul. I am not born to taste wine. I am born to sing.

So you are singing in an opera called *The Italian Girl in Algiers*. What is this opera about? It is about two lovers reuniting like most other operas. It takes place in an exotic setting of Algiers with comical contrast of two different couples, Lindoro and Isabella, who will do anything to reunite in love, versus Mustafa and Elvira, who had a broken relationship.

How does your character Lindoro fit into the story of this opera? In many ways, he is the hopeless one who needs a lot of help. Lindoro is an Italian who is sold to slavery in Algiers after being captured by the pirates. His lover, Isabella has been looking for him venturing the entire the world. Thankfully, his lover, Isabella is a very smart woman, who can take care of any men’s ill intentions and thus comes up with an escape plan

out of Algiers back to Italy. In summary, Lindoro carries the emotion of an audience from being desperate to being joyful at the end of the opera.

Why do you like this opera and why do you think other people should like it as well? The complexity of interwoven comic plots, the ridiculousness of figured being fooled, and the simplicity of characters' feelings and intentions are immensely entertaining and cute! By the way, Rossini's music in this opera is absolutely fun and beautiful as well.

Thus far, what is the craziest thing that has happened to you during a rehearsal or performance? Very fortunately so far, I have not had any crazy experience on stage, thanks to wonderful production and wardrobe staffs. Speaking of wardrobe, many of my friends rave about my masculine look every time I get facial hair. It is really unfortunate that I cannot grow sideburns or mustache in real life. I cannot even grow a beard.

Do you have any pre-performance rituals? Performance superstitions? Good luck charms? If yes, why? I guess it has to do with being Korean. I need to have soup before I sing. It warms my voice up so naturally. I also need to work out gently to wake my body up. Normally, I

need to be very active on the day of the show and extremely inactive before and after the show to protect my vocal chords and make sure that I am well rested.

How do you relax in between performances? What hobbies do you enjoy at home and "on the road"? Next year, I am taking an exam to be an advanced sommelier which is a level below the master sommelier. As for master sommeliers, only 3 or 4 people pass the test in the United States every year, and there are less than 250 of them in the whole world. Advanced sommelier exam is not as notoriously difficult, but there are only about 20-30 people in the United States who get the "Green Pin" every year. So, I have to spend a lot of time, studying wines of the ENTIRE world from France to South Africa and even Canada and train my palate to taste wines analytically.

In your opinion, why should people care about Opera? I feel like the world is going in a very wrong direction lately with so many wars and struggles in all fronts. Opera represents our life in the form of music and drama, and the joy and beauty it brings to us makes us reflect ourselves and our actions, because it touches goodness of your soul.



Hak Soo Kim (front left) as Don Ramiro in *La Cenerentola* (Sarasota Opera, 2010)

Q&A with the Scenic Designer



Since 2007, **Michael Schweikardt** has designed the sets for Sarasota Opera's productions of *La rondine*, *L'amico Fritz*, *The Crucible*, *Vanessa*, and *Turandot*.

Other set design credits include Blue Light Theater Company, Syracuse Stage, New Jersey Shakespeare Festival, HB Playwrights Foundation, SoHo Rep., The Workhouse, Sacramento Music Circus, Theaterworks in Hartford, Theater Virginia, Merrimack Rep., Barrington Stage Company, The Emelin, Westchester Broadway Dinner Theater, The Williamstown Theater Festival, Julliard, Philadelphia Theater Company, among others.

Where are you from? Where do you live now? I was born and raised in Cranford, NJ. My parents and both my brother's families still live there. I lived in Manhattan for 20 years and then I felt it was time for a change from urban living. I now live in State College, PA..

Before you were a scenic designer, were you ever a performer? In junior high school and in high school I performed in plays and musicals. I had a wonderful time and I was passionate about it. I played the flute in school band (marching and concert) and orchestra from grade 3 thru grade 12. I also sang as a tenor in every group that was available to me in school as well as the NJ All State Choir and the All Eastern Choir.

What made you want to become a professional scenic designer? I knew in my heart that performing was not for me. I loved it but I was growing increasingly self conscious and uncomfortable being in the spotlight. I also had all of this passion and talent for painting, drawing, architecture, photography, sculpture and problem solving which wasn't performing did not satisfy. I wanted to make things.

My dad is a musician and he made his living in the orchestra pit so I grew up backstage. I was fascinated by it from an early age and I understood that people made a living behind the curtain. Walking in the wings amongst the set pieces and then watching that scenery rearrange itself into new environments on stage was my favorite thing. Scenic design seemed like a career where many of my interests intersected.

Tell us what a scenic designer does and what some of your responsibilities are? Using the libretto and the score as his or her road map, the scenic designer imagines the physical environment of every scene in an opera and he or she must clearly communicate these ideas to the stage director and the Maestro in a way that allows them to see what he or she imagines. This is usually done with a sketch. Then the scenic designer must clearly communicate what he or she imagines to a large staff of artisans (carpenters, welders, sculptors, painters, props) in a way that will enable them to build, paint and detail the actual full scale objects. This is accomplished by making scaled drawings (think blueprints), scaled models (where every 1/4" is equivalent to 1 foot), and paint elevations detailing all colors, textures and finishes for all surfaces.

What kind of things do you have to study to become a Scenic Designer? Drafting, model building, painting, architecture, art history, drawing, literature, music, history, and geometry, to name a few.

Did you ever consider doing something else besides being a scenic designer? No, actually. I decided at 17 years old that this what I wanted to do and I was very tenacious about it – some would say stubborn. I never looked back.

From your perspective, what is the opera *The Italian Girl in Algiers* about? For me, *Italian Girl* is about the innate power of women in all its many forms. There is beauty, but more importantly there is intelligence, strength of character and strong will. The opera shows us that in a patriarchal society, a woman, through the use of

her brain and her will, can bring her oppressor to his knees. It is a bonus that it does it with comedy.

What is the process of creating scenery for a theatrical production? Where do you begin?

I begin with the libretto and the score. It is the librettist and the composer who have created this opera and it is their story and vision that I am interested in creating in the scenery. I must understand their intention.

I study the plot and the mechanics of the plot. What events drive the story forward and what must I as the Scenic Designer supply to enable those events? Where do the entrances need to be? If 'Character A' is standing at the fireplace does she need to immediately notice 'Character B' when he walks in the front door? Does the story require a second level? Does it snow? Does someone climb out a window and stand on a ledge? How much time is allowed to get from scene 1 to scene 2 in the score? I literally make a list of requirements based on the libretto. It's often several pages long but a road map of sorts gets created for me to honor and follow when I am designing the set. I then know that each moment in the plot can be realized on stage by the director.

Simultaneously I spend a lot of time simply listening to the opera. I listen in the studio, I listen in the car, I listen on airplanes, I listen while I cook dinner. The music really tells you the rest. In my opinion the opera should look like it sounds. The composer is telling me if it is angular or curved, if it is dark or light, if it is blue or yellow. This is how it always begins.

Are there any special details in the scenery for *Italian Girl* the audience should be watching for? I hope the audience will notice the efficiency with which we tell the story scenically. The goal was eliminate long and cumbersome scene changes and replace them with lightning fast, elegant and effervescent changes of scene.

Besides Opera, what other type of scenery have you designed? Most of my work has been designing plays and musicals. Musicals are my favorite. I designed scenery for a concert tour. I have not worked in film nor in television – I like the theater. And I am lost without having a story to tell so I have not delved into decorating or commercial design or any design discipline that doesn't include working with a text.

In your opinion, why should people care about opera? Some of the greatest stories ever are being told in the most visceral and potent ways in opera. History and pedigree and art aside, if you want a thrilling experience in the theater that will quicken your heart, dazzle your eyes and expand your mind, you should look to the opera.

What do you think are some good things to do before coming to see a performance of *The Italian Girl in Algiers*? This is a comedy with a gorgeous score. Given how overwhelmingly tense our collective day to days have all been I'd encourage the audience to let go of their day, leave their troubles and worried on the sidewalk outside and open themselves up to bathe in music and laughter for a couple of hours.



Michael Schweikardt design for "Audrey II" puppet in *Little Shop of Horrors* (Portland Center Stage, 2016, Directed by Bill Fennelly)

What To Expect at the Opera

Opera is not a remote art form that only the initiated appreciate. It reflects human conflicts and passions. It has inspired a level of devotion in some people best compared to that of a die-hard sports fan. Just as you do not need to know every statistic to enjoy watching a football game, you do not need to be a music or opera expert to enjoy a performance.



Supertitles - Real-time English translations are above the stage, providing immediate understanding of what is happening, helping you to experience the excitement of the performance no matter what the language.

Theater - With just under 1,200 seats, there are no 'bad' seats in our theater. Most operagoers love attending opera in our theater because of its intimate size.

What to Wear - Dress comfortably, and be yourself. Opera is not the playground of the rich, and we work hard to make sure that everyone feels at home in our theater. At the Sarasota Opera House, "Opera Dress" can be khakis or jeans or evening gowns and tuxedos.

Applause - At the opera, unlike the symphony or other classical music concert, you can applaud when the performance moves you (similar to a solo at a jazz performance). You can also express your appreciation for the performers by yelling bravo, brava, or bravi when the conductor enters the orchestra pit, at the end of a well-sung aria or ensemble, or during the bows.

Eating and drinking - During regular performances, food and drinks are available prior to the show and during intermissions. During dress rehearsals, our concessions are closed.

Restrooms - There are ample restrooms located in the lobby of the theater. We asked that you encourage your students to use the bathroom before the opera begins or during intermissions.

Late Seating - If you arrive after the performance has begun or leave while an act of the opera is in progress, you will need to wait until an intermission to re-enter.

Electronics - Out of consideration to our performances and patrons, we asked that all cellphones and electronic devices be turned off before the performance begins. Just like at your local movie theatre, the use of any recording devices is strictly prohibited.

Opera Terms

The words you hear around an opera house can often be confusing, especially the ITALIAN ones! The following is a list of words you may hear and their definitions.

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| ARIA | A solo song in an opera |
| BRAVO | The word the audience yells after a great show! |
| COLORATURA | A type of singing where the singer sings a lot of notes very quickly |
| CONDUCTOR | The person who leads the singers and orchestra |
| COMPOSER | A person who writes music |
| DUET | A song sung by two people at the same time |
| FINALE | Italian for "final", a musical number at the end of an act |
| LIBRETTO | The words of the opera that are then set to music by the composer (literally means "little book") |
| MAESTRO | Italian for "master" or "teacher", the conductor is often referred to as maestro to show respect |
| OPERA | A play that is sung rather than spoken |
| OVERTURE | The musical introduction |
| PIT | The place in the theater where the orchestra sits; it is in front of and at a lower level than the stage |
| QUARTET | A musical piece involving four singers or instruments |
| RECITATIVE | A kind of sung speech; many Mozart opera have this type of sung dialogue |
| SINGSPIEL | A German word for an opera that has spoken dialogue; <i>The Magic Flute</i> is an example of this. |
| TRIO | A musical piece involving three singers or instruments |

Opera seems to have fancy words for everything and the singers are no exception. There are a lot of different types of voices. The list below gives the basic voice types for men and women.

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| SOPRANO | The highest female voice; they are usually the heroine or female romantic lead in the opera. |
| MEZZO-SOPRANO | Mezzo is Italian for "middle", so a mezzo-soprano is the middle female voice type; they often play more character- type roles like witches, old ladies, gypsies and even young boys! |
| CONTRALTO | The lowest female voice. A real contralto is very rare; the roles written for them are often sung by mezzos who have a strong lower range. |
| TENOR | The highest male voice; they are generally the hero or male romantic lead. |
| BARITONE | The middle male voice; with a warm vocal quality they often play comic roles such as Papageno (in <i>The Magic Flute</i>) or fathers. |
| BASS | The lowest male voice; because of the very low sound they are often villains or the father figure. |

Opera Jobs

Opera requires a huge cast of players both on and off the stage to make everything come together.

Administration

Led by the **Executive Director**, members of the administrative staff work to support the artistic mission of the company through fundraising, donor cultivation, community outreach, patron education, and management of the day-to-day needs of the organization. The Development, Marketing, Finance, and Education departments are but some of the areas covered under administration.

Artistic Director - Defines the artistic mission of the company and works with the Executive Director and Artistic Administrator to decide which operas will be performed. In many companies, the artistic director is also a conductor.

Artistic Administrator - Works with the artistic director to cast and plan each production.

Stage Director - Tells the singers where to go, instructs them on how to portray their roles, and works with others to create a vibrant story with lights, costumes, sets, and props.

Stage Manager - Assists the director, singers, and backstage crew during rehearsals and performances with the help of several assistant stage managers.

Set Designer - Plans or designs the sets through careful research and study.

Lighting Designer - Plans or designs the color, intensity, and frequency of the lights onstage.

Costume Designer - Plans or designs the costumes and supervises their construction.

Wig & Makeup Designer - Oversees the design of hairstyles, wigs, and makeup.

Stage Crew - Assists in the construction, installation, and changing of sets, costumes, lighting, and props during rehearsals and performances.

Backstage

Cast - All singers and actors who appear onstage.

Principals - Singers who perform the large roles within the opera.

Comprimario - Singers who perform the supporting roles within the opera, from the Italian meaning "next to the first."

Supernumeraries - "Supers" are actors who participate in the action but do not sing or speak.

Conductor - The person who leads the singers and orchestra.

Orchestra - The musicians who play the instrumental parts within the score of the opera.

On Stage

Pre-Performance Activities

Understanding the plot and characters before attending a performance greatly enhances the experience. The activities below will help your students explore *The Italian Girl in Algiers* and prepare for their live opera experience.

Readers Theater

Divide into small groups and assign each group a part of the synopsis. Within each group designate characters and one narrator. Allow students time to practice their scene. Students will need to create their character's dialogue based on the assigned synopsis.

After they have prepared, the narrator for the group will read their section as the other students act out the story. Groups will perform their part following the sequential order of the opera.

Call and Response

<https://youtu.be/OofDpHTWSi0>

Using the following excerpt from the synopsis, create original words for Lindoro, Isabella, and Mustafà:

After a moment of confusion and surprise at the sight of Lindoro, Isabella regains her self-control turns the tables. She tells Mustafà that Lindoro, Elvira, and Zulma must not be allowed to leave, nor must Mustafà abandon his wife. She then asks for Lindoro as her own, personal slave.

Tableau Reflection Discussion

<https://youtu.be/Wt9gsLAsAfs>

Using the activity described in the video above and the synopsis of *The Italian Girl in Algiers*, have students divide into groups to create tableaux for different sections of the opera.

After they have prepared, have groups perform their tableaux in the sequential order of the opera, taking time to reflect on the connections between the story, the music, and the drama that might accompany the tableau while providing evidence for their answers.

Create Your Own Props

Create prop and/or costume with basic materials (paper, tape, etc.) for specific character using verbal and non-verbal clues from libretto

Facebook Character Exploration

Have students explore the characters in *The Italian Girl in Algiers* through the creation of Facebook profiles.

Using clues in the music, libretto, and synopsis develop profiles that address each character's interests, education, work, philosophy, arts, sports, likes, etc. Include status updates that match the storyline and events in the opera.

Consider; What groups, organizations, bands, celebrities, etc. has the character "liked"? Who are their friends, including characters in *Italian Girl* and others during the time period? What level of privacy/security do they have on their Facebook profile?

Post-Performance Activity

Create Your Own Review Using the worksheet below, and the Sarasota Observer's review of *The Secret World of Og* as a guide, create a review of Sarasota Opera's performance of *The Italian Girl in Algiers*.

What are the elements of a review? What areas of the production does the reviewer cover? How does the reviewer speak about the positive and negative aspects of the performance?

| | Rating | Notes |
|--|--------|-------|
| Tara Venditti as <i>Isabella</i> | ☆☆☆☆☆ | |
| Hak Soo Kim as <i>Lindoro</i> | ☆☆☆☆☆ | |
| Bruno Taddia as <i>Taddeo</i> | ☆☆☆☆☆ | |
| Harold Wilson as <i>Mustafà</i> | ☆☆☆☆☆ | |
| Jessica E. Jones As <i>Elvira</i> | ☆☆☆☆☆ | |
| Fleur Barron as <i>Zulma</i> | ☆☆☆☆☆ | |
| Alexander Charles Boyd as <i>Haly</i> | ☆☆☆☆☆ | |
| The Action | ☆☆☆☆☆ | |
| The Music | ☆☆☆☆☆ | |
| The Sets | ☆☆☆☆☆ | |
| The Staging | ☆☆☆☆☆ | |
| The Lighting | ☆☆☆☆☆ | |
| The Costumes | ☆☆☆☆☆ | |
| The Makeup | ☆☆☆☆☆ | |

OPERA REVIEW: Sarasota Opera shows youth opera at its finest

By Edward Alley, Sarasota Observer / Thursday, November 17, 2016



A fall season highlight is the annual Sarasota Youth Opera production by the Sarasota Opera, arguably the only opera company to present operas by and for youth on its main stage every year. I'm always impressed by the quality of singing and acting and the ingenuity of everyone connected with these splendid productions. Not "children's shows," but fully mounted productions with lighting, costumes, staging, an orchestra and all the stagecraft expected from a regular main-stage production.

This year's journey to "The Secret World of Og", a U.S. premiere, is a prime example of youth opera at its finest. The opera, based on the book by Pierre Burton, has both music and libretto by Dean Burry, whose charming opera "The Hobbit," was produced by Sarasota Youth Opera last year.

The green people of Og live underground and have only one word, "Og", in their vocabulary. Their world is one of make-believe and role playing, drawn from objects and books they have "borrowed" from children of the world above. Penny, Pamela, Patsy, Peter and Paul – known as Pollywog (this opera positively percolates with perky, profound alliteration) are children who delight in playing pretend.

Penny, Peter and Paul follow two of the green people down into a tunnel under their playhouse and are eventually captured by Ogs and rescued by Patsy, Pamela and Cheshire the dog in a series of escapades careening through that make-believe world.

These people of Og, beautifully sung and acted by at least 65 of the 85 youth opera members in the cast, have a great time singing and dancing an extended number using only the word "Og" in every possible permutation, which is priceless, then from time to time comment on the events in true Greek chorus fashion. Their only other words are from those characters in the books they have purloined from the world above and made their own.

The result is a perfect plethora of scenes with Ogs as Wyatt Earp, Captain Hook and Smee from Peter

Pan, and rather famous spies, each scene flowing smoothly from one to the other with nary a pause or break in the mood.

This charming piece was brought to life by a talented group of young singers, including the five peripatetic protagonists: Katherine Herbert as Penny, Aubree Zern as Pamela, Dominique Cecchetti as Patsy, Samantha Lane as Peter and Ursula Kushner as Paul (Pollywog). Hunter Thorkelson is Earless the cat, and Astrid McIntyre is Yukie the dog. Important smaller roles were Griffin Stahlmann as the butcher, Pablo Gonzalez as the sheriff and Sky Stahlmann as Hook. Principal voices were discreetly amplified to help prevent oversinging, and it would have been a help to have the dialogue amplified, as well. The orchestra was ably conducted by Jesse Martins, who didn't miss a cue, using Burry's excellent orchestration commissioned by the Sarasota Opera.

Ken Yunker's lighting of the extremely clever and cartoonish sets by Donna and Mark Buckalter enhanced the atmosphere of the opera from the playhouse of the children to the deep depths and caves of the world of Og. I continue to be astonished by the ingenious staging of Martha Collins as she directs these productions.



All too often the staging of youth operas consists of "controlling traffic," but each person on this stage was a definite character with every movement skillfully timed and executed in mood with the music. Collins' choreography

in the big chorus line was a crowd pleaser.

Burry's score is eclectic but charming, bringing us ever-so-slight reminders of Copland, Prokofiev, a little Poulenc and a lot of Burry. The character scenes are scored in their styles – lifted on purpose from hoe-downs, pirate chanties and even a hint of James Bond – but all still Burry. Melodic lines are certainly within the scope of voices of this age, and they created lovely melodies while keeping the story moving.

It was a delightful evening, and the lower floor of the Opera House was packed with a lot of families, each seeming to have a bouquet of flowers for these young performers. And there is a moral: You can pretend to be whomever you want to be, but in the end –you're only exactly who you are.

Sarasota Opera House

Looking for opportunities to promote the real estate market in Sarasota Arthur B(ritton) Edwards, Sarasota's first mayor, prominent entrepreneur, and real estate investor, decided that downtown needed an attraction, signaling to the world that the city was a destination. The Edwards Theatre, opened in April 1926 would serve the community as a place of entertainment, community resource and finally as an opera house over the next nine decades. Approaching its 91st year in 2017.



The opening night in 1926 was accorded great fanfare in the local press. The performance included a live band, dancers, and an opera singer (Mr. Edwards' daughter). As a mixed-use venue, it also included the silent movie "Skinner's Dress Suit" accompanied by the Robert Morton orchestral organ. Later bill of fare included Will Rogers, the

Ziegfeld Follies, the exotic fan dancer Sally Rand, and touring opera companies. A hurricane in 1929 destroyed the organ and required renovations to the lobby, but performances continued.

Mr. Edwards sold the venue to the Sparks movie theater chain, which renamed it the Florida Theater. Movies became more prominent in future years, especially in 1952 when Cecil B. DeMille's *The Greatest Show on Earth*, largely filmed in Sarasota, had its world premiere, with many of the stars including Charlton Heston and Mr. DeMille in attendance. Live performances in those years included a young Elvis Presley in 1956 (with a top ticket price of \$1.50).

The years took its toll on the Florida Theater and in 1972 it stopped showing films. The front part of the building continued to house offices and a radio school, but in 1979, a new future was destined for the building.

The Asolo Opera Guild, founded in 1960 to support opera performances at the Asolo Theatre on the grounds of the Ringling Museum, needed a new home and arranged to purchase the Florida Theater for \$150,000. Over the next few years the Guild undertook to renovate the building as it raised funds and in 1984 it was ready to reopen as the Sarasota Opera House.

After a subsequent renovation in 2008, with much of its original beauty restored and enhanced, the Sarasota Opera House was called "one of the finest venues for opera in America" by *Musical America*. It seats 1,129 and the orchestra pit accommodates over 75 players. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1984, received the Florida Preservation Award in 2010, and helped spurred the revival of downtown Sarasota.

Sarasota Opera

Based on Florida's beautiful Gulf Coast, **Sarasota Opera** recently completed its 57th consecutive season and the final season of the company's internationally acclaimed Verdi Cycle making it the only company in the world to have performed every work of Giuseppe Verdi.

In 1960, the company began presenting chamber-sized repertoire in the historic 320-seat Asolo Theater on the grounds of Sarasota's Ringling Museum of Art. Recognizing the need for a theater more conducive to opera, the company purchased the former A.B. Edwards Theater in downtown Sarasota in 1979 and first performing in it in 1984 as the Sarasota Opera House. In 2008, the theater underwent a \$20 million renovation and rehabilitation enhancing audience amenities, while updating the technical facilities including increasing the size of the orchestra pit.



Since 1983, the company has been under the artistic leadership of Victor DeRenzi and administrative leadership of Executive Director Richard Russell since 2012. The company has garnered international attention with its Masterwork Revivals Series, which presents neglected works of artistic merit, as well as the Verdi Cycle producing the complete works of Giuseppe Verdi. Recognizing the importance of training, Maestro DeRenzi founded the Apprentice Artist and Studio Artist programs. Sarasota Opera also maintains a commitment to education through its Invitation to Opera performances for local schools and the unique Sarasota Youth Opera program.

Opera is the ultimate art form combining music, theater, sets, costumes and dance. It has the power to express the full range of human emotions and the human experience. Compelling stories partnered with great music and dazzling productions make a performance at Sarasota Opera an experience that will not be forgotten.

Sarasota Opera is sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Programs are supported in part by an award from the Tourist Development Tax through the Board of County Commissioners, the Tourist Development Council and the Sarasota County Arts Council. Additional funding is provided by the City of Sarasota and the County of Sarasota.

Sarasota Youth Opera

Since 1984, **Sarasota Youth Opera** has given young people age 8 and above an opportunity to experience the magic of opera through participation in choruses, Sarasota Opera's main stage productions, a three-week summer workshop, and the Youth Opera's own full-scale productions.

Accepting all who apply, regardless of skill level or ability to pay, this program is unique in the opera world.



Youth Productions

Regarded as a leader in the commissioning and producing of works for young voices, Sarasota Youth Opera is the only program in the United States committed to presenting annual, full-scale opera productions for young voices with professional musicians, direction, and costume and scenic design.

Since 1986 five commissioned world premieres and over 20 additional productions have been presented. Past commissions include *Little Nemo in Slumberland* (2012), *The Language of Birds* (2004), *Eye of Ra* (1998), *Her Lightness* (1993), and *Deadline* (1989). In November 2016, SYO will present its six commission and world premiere, *Rootabaga Country*, by Rachel J. Peters.



Summer Camp

Summer camp is a three-week, hands-on workshop held at the Sarasota Opera House every June that immerses young people in all aspects of the opera. Under the direction of Sarasota Opera's professional staff participants experience the magic on stage and behind the scenes as they study many facets of opera, from music and acting to opera appreciation and production.

Mainstage Productions

Youth Opera members have opportunities to participate in Sarasota Opera's mainstage productions as children's chorus members, supernumeraries (extras who perform non-singing roles) and in special roles written by the composer for children's voices. In recent seasons these have included roles in *The Magic Flute*, *la Bohème*, *Tosca*, *Carmen*, and *Turandot*.



Images by Rod Millington / Sarasota Opera