

SARASOTA **OPERA**

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Exploration in Opera

Teacher Resource Guide



Beethoven's
Fidelio

Table of Contents

The Opera

The Cast	1
The Story	2-3
The Composer	4
The Librettists	5
Listening and Viewing	6

Providing Context

The Story Behind the Story	7
World Timeline	8-9
The Heiligenstadt Testament	10-11
Political Prisoners	12
Beethoven's Medical Mystery	13
How You Hear With Your Ears.....	14-15

Artist Q&A

Kara Shay Thomson (Leonore / Fidelio)	16-17
Michael Robert Hendrick (Florestan)	18-19
Ekhart Wycik (Conductor).....	20-21
Michael Schweikardt (Scenic Designer)	22-23

All About Opera

What To Expect at the Opera	24
Opera Terms	25
Opera Jobs	26

Exploration Ideas

Before The Show	27
After The Show.....	28-29

About Sarasota Opera

Sarasota Opera House	30
Sarasota Opera	31
Sarasota Youth Opera	32

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The Cast

Conductor Ekhart Wycik
Stage Director Tom Diamond

Don Fernando (*Don Fehr-NAHN-doh*)
the minister of state (bass-baritone) Jeffrey Beruan

Don Pizarro (*Don pee-TSAHR-roh*)
the governor of the state prison (baritone) Sean Anderson

Florestan (*FLOH-rehs-stahn*)
a political prisoner, Leonore’s husband (tenor) Michael Robert Hendrick

Leonore (*Leh-oh-NOH-reh*) or **Fidelio** (*Fee-DAY-lee-oh*)
Florestan’s wife disguised as Fidelio (soprano) Kara Shay Thomson

Rocco (*ROHk-koh*)
jailor at the prison, Marzelline’s father (bass) Harold Wilson

Marzelline (*mahr-tseh-LEE-neh*)
the jailor Rocco’s daughter (soprano)..... Vanessa Isiguen*

Jaquino (*yak-KEE-noh*)
the gatekeeper of the state prison (tenor)..... Christopher Trapani*

Officers, Guards, State Prisoners, Town People..... Chorus

* Studio Artist



Top Row
Ekhart Wycik
Tom Diamond
Jeffrey Beruan
Sean Anderson
Michael Robert Hendrick

Bottom Row
Kara Shay Thomson
Harold Wilson
Vanessa Isiguen
Christopher Trapani

The Story

The story takes place in a **state prison**, a few miles outside **Seville, Spain** in the early 18th century.

Act I

The courtyard of the state prison

Jaquino (*yak-KEE-noh*), the gatekeeper of the state prison, wants to marry Marzeline (*mahr-tseh-LEE-neh*), the jailer Rocco's (*ROHk-koh*) daughter. Marzeline puts Jaquino off since her affections are now with Fidelio (*Fee-DAY-lee-oh*), a man newly in the employ of the prison.

Fidelio returns from buying provisions. The attention that Rocco and Marzeline give Fidelio makes Jaquino envious. Fidelio is really a noblewoman, Leonore (*Leh-oh-NOH-reh*), who disguises herself in order to search for her husband, Florestan (*FLOH-rehs-stahn*), who has been wrongfully imprisoned. The jailer announces that he wants Fidelio to be his son-in-law. Rocco will also let Fidelio work with him in the secret dungeons. At the news that there is one person who has been in captivity for two years, Leonore becomes hopeful that it is Florestan.

Don Pizarro (*Don pee-TSAHR-roh*), the governor of the prison, arrives. He reads a dispatch that warns of an inspection by the Minister of State who believes that Pizarro holds people arbitrarily. Pizarro realizes he must kill Florestan and instructs his captain to sound a trumpet when the Minister's carriage is seen. Though plied with money by Pizarro, Rocco refuses to kill Florestan. Pizarro decides he will do it himself and commands Rocco to prepare a grave in the dungeon.

Fidelio convinces Rocco to let those jailed above ground walk freely in the courtyard and she and Jaquino open the cells. Rocco returns and states that Marzeline's marriage and Fidelio's wish to work in the dungeons have been approved by the governor. Indeed, Rocco and Fidelio must immediately go below to prepare a grave. Furious that the prisoners are out of their cells, Pizarro commands that they be locked up again.



Set design for Act I of *Fidelio* by Michael Schweikardt

Act II

Scene 1

A dark subterranean dungeon

Florestan decries the gloom and reminisces about his former happiness. Fidelio and Rocco enter the dungeon to prepare the grave. Because it is so dark, Leonore cannot clearly see the prisoner's face, but she finally recognizes that he is her husband.

The grave nearly complete, Rocco signals Pizarro to come down. As Pizarro lifts the dagger to kill his enemy, Fidelio shields Florestan. All are amazed when she reveals that she is Florestan's wife. When Pizarro again threatens Florestan, Leonore draws a pistol. A trumpet sounds announcing the Minister of



Set design for Act II, Scene 1 of *Fidelio* by Michael Schweikardt
State. Pizarro has been foiled in his attempts to corrupt justice and is escorted away.

Scene 2

The castle parade ground

Don Fernando (*Don Fehr-NAHN-doh*), the Minister of State, presides over the freeing of the prisoners. Rocco explains Leonore's disguise to him and Pizarro's attempt to kill

Florestan. Moved by Leonore's noble actions, Fernando bids her to undo Florestan's chains. Everyone praises the woman who has saved her husband.



Set design for Act II, Scene 2 of *Fidelio* by Michael Schweikardt

The Composer

1770-1827

Ludwig van Beethoven was born in Bonn, located in present-day Germany, in 1770 to a family of musicians. He studied piano and



Ludwig van Beethoven

violin from a very young age, training first with his father and grandfather, and then with a composer in Bonn named Christian Gottlob Neefe. He composed his first piece, a set of piano variations, at the age of twelve, and quickly became

known throughout Bonn as a musical prodigy. In 1792, he moved to Vienna, where he would spend the rest of his life.

While in Vienna, Beethoven studied under composers Franz Joseph Haydn, Johann Georg Albrechtsberger, and Antonio Salieri, and he quickly gained fame as a virtuoso pianist and improviser in the circles of the Viennese nobility. From 1796 to 1798, he continued to closely study the works of Haydn and Mozart while traveling across Europe giving concerts and composing. His compositions began to gain international acclaim with the debut of his Symphony No. 1 in C Major in 1801, closely followed by six string quartets and a popular ballet, *The Creatures of Prometheus*, the following year. Beethoven had little wealth of his own, and despite his musical successes, he was often in debt and relied on the generosity of noble patrons and fees from commissioned works for financial support throughout his life.

In 1800, Beethoven made the frightening discovery that he had begun to lose his hearing. While he feared what this might mean for his professional career, he continued to compose furiously throughout the next ten years, which have come to be known as his experimental "middle period." The middle period was the most prolific time in Beethoven's life, during which he produced an

opera (*Fidelio*), six symphonies, four solo concerti, five string quartets, six string sonatas, seven piano sonatas, five sets of piano variations, four overtures, four trios, two sextets, and 72 songs.

During this time many of Beethoven's compositions reflected ideals of French heroism, after the conqueror Napoleon Bonaparte, whom he greatly admired. These include the famed "Eroica" Symphony No. 3 and his first and only opera, initially entitled *Leonore* but eventually adopting the title *Fidelio*. The opera's initial premiere in 1805 was unsuccessful, as it was criticized as being too long and the action too slow. It reappeared in a heavily revised production in 1814, upon which its reception was much more favorable.

Beethoven continued writing until 1812, when, after the successful debuts of his Symphonies No. 7 and 8, his career halted abruptly due to personal upheaval. Throughout his career his relations with his family were tenuous at best, yet after his brother Kaspar's death in 1815, he underwent a long and difficult battle with Kaspar's widow for custody of his nephew Karl, which he eventually won in 1820. Thus from 1812 to 1822, Beethoven suffered from depression and marked decrease in creative output. While his music remained extremely popular in Vienna, his deafness continued to worsen and he gave his last public piano performance in 1811.

And yet despite his declining health, Beethoven's work was yet to be finished. He revived his compositional career in 1824 with an unbroken string of masterpieces, including the famed *Missa Solemnis*, a number of complex string quartets, and his ninth and final symphony. Reception of these works was highly enthusiastic, and Beethoven's fame remained secure through his death due to illness on March 26, 1827 at the age of 56, in his beloved city of Vienna, where he was buried.

The Librettists

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.

Between 1805 and 1814, Beethoven worked with three separate librettists on *Fidelio*:

1766-1835



Joseph Sonnleithner was born in 1766 in Vienna to a prominent musical family. Throughout his life he worked as editor for Vienna's *Theatre-Almanach*, secretary of the court theatres, and Artistic Director of Theater an der Wien. In 1805, he wrote the first version of the libretto for Beethoven's *Fidelio*, which was translated and adapted from French playwright Jean-Nicolas Bouilly's piece *Léonore*. A leading figure in the Viennese musical life in the first decades of the 19th century, Sonnleithner helped found the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* (Society of Friends of Music) in 1812.

Stephan von Breuning was born in 1774 in Bonn, Germany. He had some musical training as a young man and went on to study law. Both Breuning and Beethoven took violin lessons from Franz Anton Ries during their childhood and Beethoven was a frequent guest at the Breuning family home. They remained close friends throughout their lives and in 1806 Stephan revised Sonnleithner's original text for the second version of *Fidelio*.

1774-1827



1776-1842



Georg Friedrich Treitschke was born in 1776 in Leipzig, Germany. A librettist, translator and lepidopterist (an entomologist who specializes in the study of butterflies and moths), he came to the Vienna Hofoper (Vienna State Opera) in 1800. From 1809 to 1814 he was principal of Theater an der Wien. He wrote mostly librettos for Paul Wranitzky, Adalbert Gyrowetz and C. Weigl, and translated many French operas into German. In 1814 he revised the libretto of *Fidelio* at Beethoven's request.

Text courtesy of Manitoba Opera

Pants role

Also called a breeches or trouser role, these are male roles played by female singers. Today, they are typically characters who are young boys and therefore the higher voice and stature of a female singer is more fitting to the age and physicality of the character. Some of the most famous pants roles are Mozart's Cherubino (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Humperdinck's Hansel (*Hansel und Gretel*), and Richard Strauss' Octavian (*Der Rosenkavalier*).

Leonore is not a true pants role as she is a woman pretending to be a man. That said it is vital that she be a convincing man to protect her life and to save her husbands.

Active Learning Research one of the pants roles above and compare/contrast it to Leonore.

Listening & Viewing

Fidelio | Act I Quartet ("Mir ist so wunderbar")

<https://youtu.be/A9l1wKCv9nE>

Rocco believes that Fidelio's willingness to work hard is an effort to prove himself worthy of Marzelline's hand. He is wrong. As all voice their feelings, Fidelio sings of the embarrassment and danger caused by Marzelline's affection:

Marzelline (*aside*)

So strange I feel,
My heart is gripped;
He loved me, it is clear.
I shall be happy!

Leonore, aka Fidelio (*aside*)

How great is the danger,
How weak the ray of hope!
She loves me, it is clear,
O nameless pain!

Rocco (*aside*)

She loves him, it is clear;
Yes, maiden, he will be yours!
A good young couple,
They will be happy!

Jaquino (*aside*)

My hair stands on end,
The father is willing,
Strange it is to me,
I see no way out!

Act I Prisoner's Chorus ("O Welche Lust, in freier Lust")

<https://youtu.be/RhMdMD9tXB0>

Fidelio returns to ask Rocco's permission to let the prisoners walk awhile in the garden. After some hesitation Rocco agrees, and leaves to distract Pizarro's attention by seeking his consent to the marriage of Marzelline and Fidelio.

The Prisoners emerge slowly, watched by Fidelio, and sing of the joy of even temporary freedom:

Prisoners

O what joy in the open air
to breathe with ease!
Only here, only here is life,
the prison a tomb.

First Prisoner

With trust we will
build on God's help.
Hope whispers gently to me;
we shall be free, we shall find rest!

All Others (*aside*)

O Heaven's Salvation! What joy!
O Freedom! Freedom, will you return?

Second Prisoner

Speak softly, restrain yourselves
We are overheard by ears and eyes.

All Others

Speak softly, restrain yourselves!
We are overheard by ears and eyes.

Speak softly, yes softly!
O what joy! In the open air
to breathe with ease!
O what joy!
Only here, only here is life.
Speak softly, restrain yourselves!
We are overheard by ears and eyes.

The Story Behind the Story

Beethoven's only opera was no simple accomplishment. With three versions and four overtures written over the course of ten years, *Fidelio* was the result of hard work and perseverance. Having played in theatre orchestras, Beethoven developed notions of what he thought opera should be and disagreed with the decadent pieces that were created for court entertainment. Instead, he took inspiration from German Singspiel (meaning song-play in German) and wanted to create opera portraying 'moral' themes.

It was in 1803 that Beethoven received a commission from Emanuel Schikaneder – the man who was responsible for persuading Mozart to compose *The Magic Flute*. However, when Schikaneder went bankrupt the Vienna Court Theatre acquired the contract. Joseph von Sonnleithner, the theatre secretary, composed a German libretto inspired by Jean Nicholas Bouilly's French drama *Léonore, ou l'amour conjugal*. This rescue story embodied Beethoven's desire to compose a piece portraying high moral standards and he began composing the first of three versions.

The first version, *Leonore*, premiered in 1805 at the Theatre an der Wien in Vienna with Beethoven's first of four overtures, *Leonore Overture No. 2*. With the French military occupation in Vienna many of Beethoven's

supporters fled, and this first production was short-lived with only three performances. In addition, many felt that the original three-act version was too long and as a result it was revised and shortened to two acts and with a new overture, *Leonore No. 3*. Stephen von Breuning revised the libretto and this second version debuted in 1806 and achieved modest success.



Theatre an der Wien in Beethoven's Time

It was not until years later that Beethoven was requested to revive the opera whereby he modified virtually every aria. He composed his third new overture, *Leonore No. 1*. Again the libretto was reworked, this time by poet Georg Friedrich Treitschke, and this his last version of *Fidelio* premiered in 1814 at the Karntnertor-Theatre in Vienna and was met with great success. His final overture, *Fidelio*, was complete shortly after the 1814 debut and used in the following performances.

Rescue Opera

Rescue Opera is a genre of opera that was popular during the late 18th and early 19th centuries in France and Germany. Like its name suggests, rescue operas generally deal with an innocent person heroically freed from wrongful captivity.

These operas first became popular in France following the French Revolution. Post-aristocratic, patriotic, and idealistic themes, such as resistance to oppression, secularism, the political power of individuals and of people working together, were popular. *Fidelio* is the most famous example of a rescue opera.

World Timeline

Beethoven lived between 1770 and 1827, 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 Beethoven. How would your life be different or the same? How did discoveries and inventions of the time affect daily life?

1770

Beethoven is born in Bonn

1774

The first Continental Congress meets in Philadelphia, PA

Beethoven begins music lessons with his father

1778

Beethoven presents his first public piano performance

1782

Beethoven's first pieces of music are printed

1783

The Revolutionary War ends with the Treaty of Paris

1787

Beethoven studies briefly with Mozart in Vienna
until the death of Beethoven's mother

1789

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

1792

Beethoven travels to Vienna to study with Franz Joseph Haydn

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

1795

Beethoven gives his first public concert in Vienna of his own works

1798

French playwright and librettist Jean-Nicolas Bouilly writes *Léonore, ou l'amour conjugal*, on which *Fidelio* will be based

1799

Napoleon becomes First Consul of the new French government

1800

Beethoven develops tinnitus, a ringing in the ears, signaling the start of his hearing loss

1802

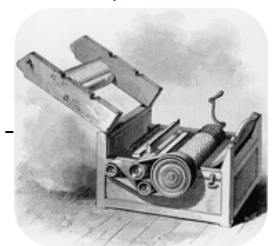
While suffering from depression, **Beethoven** writes the Heiligenstadt Testament during a stay in the town of Heiligenstadt

1803

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



Mozart



The Cotton Gin

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-----

Napoleon crowns himself Emperor in Notre-Dame Cathedral, Paris

Beethoven removes his dedication to Napoleon from his Symphony No. 3, believing Napoleon no longer embodies the democratic ideals of the French Revolution



Lewis, Clark, and Sacagawea

1805

The first performance of **Beethoven's** *Leonore* takes place, as does the premiere of his Symphony No. 3, "Eroica"

1808

Beethoven's Symphony's No. 5 and No. 6, the "Pastoral Symphony", premiere

1809

Austria declares war on France

1811

Beethoven attempts to perform his Piano Concerto No. 5 but cannot due to his increasing deafness. It will be his last public performance.

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 for the French



General Andrew Jackson in the Battle of New Orleans

1814

Beethoven's third and last version of *Fidelio* premieres, as does his Symphony No. 8

Napoleon is abdicated as Emperor for the first time, and exiled

1818

Beethoven begins sketches for his Symphony No. 9. His deafness progresses to the point where he must use paper and pencil to communicate.

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

1821

Napoleon dies in exile

1824

Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, featuring the Ode to Joy, premieres in Vienna

1827

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

1827

Beethoven Dies in Vienna, Austria



Heiligenstadt Testament

Written in 1802 in the Vienna suburb of Heiligenstadt, the **Heiligenstadt Testament** is a letter from Beethoven to his brothers, Carl and Johann, though Johann's name does not appear in the letter and is only indicated by a blank space. The Letter was kept hidden among Beethoven's private papers until its discovery after his death in 1827.

Beethoven spent six months in Heiligenstadt in an effort to improve his hearing loss, believing the fresh country air and close proximity to nature would have a healing effect. Though his letter speaks of despair, it is not the letter of a dying man. In fact, he rejects the idea of suicide stating "how could I possibly quit the world before bringing forth all that I felt it was my vocation to produce?"

After finishing the letter, Beethoven started work on the Symphony No.3, Eroica.

Heiligenstadt, Oct. 6, 1802

TO MY BROTHERS CARL AND [JOHANN] BEETHOVEN.

Oh! ye who think or declare me to be hostile, morose, and misanthropical, how unjust you are, and how little you know the secret cause of what appears thus to you! My heart and mind were ever from childhood prone to the most tender feelings of affection, and I was always disposed to accomplish something great. But you must remember that six years ago I was attacked by an incurable malady, aggravated by unskillful physicians, deluded from year to year, too, by the hope of relief, and at length forced to the conviction of a *lasting affliction* (the cure of which may go on for years, and perhaps after all prove impracticable).

Born with a passionate and excitable temperament, keenly susceptible to the pleasures of society, I was yet obliged early in life to isolate myself, and to pass my existence in solitude. If I at any time resolved to surmount all this, oh! how cruelly was I again repelled by the experience, sadder than ever, of my defective hearing!—and yet I found it impossible to say to others: Speak louder; shout! for I am deaf! Alas! how could I proclaim the deficiency of a sense which ought to have been more perfect with me than with other men,—a sense which I once possessed in the highest perfection, to an extent, indeed, that few of my profession ever enjoyed! Alas, I cannot do this! Forgive me therefore when you see me withdraw from you with whom I would so gladly mingle.

My misfortune is doubly severe from causing me to be

misunderstood. No longer can I enjoy recreation in social intercourse, refined conversation, or mutual outpourings of thought. Completely isolated, I only enter society when compelled to do so. I must live like an exile. In company I am assailed by the most painful apprehensions, from the dread of being exposed to the risk of my condition being observed. It was the same during the last six months I spent in the country. My intelligent physician recommended me to spare my hearing as much as possible, which was quite in accordance with my present disposition, though sometimes, tempted by my natural inclination for society, I allowed myself to be beguiled into it. But what humiliation when any one beside me heard a flute in the far distance, while I heard *nothing*, or when others heard *a shepherd singing*, and I still heard *nothing*! Such things brought me to the verge of desperation, and almost caused me to put an end to my life. *Art! art* alone, deterred me. Ah! how could I possibly quit the world before bringing forth all that I felt it was my vocation to produce? And thus I spared this miserable life—so utterly miserable that any sudden change may reduce me at any moment from my best condition into the worst. It is decreed that I must now choose *Patience* for my guide! This I have done. I hope the resolve will not fail me, steadfastly to persevere till it may please the inexorable Fates to cut the thread of my life. Perhaps I may get better, perhaps not. I am prepared for either. Constrained to become a philosopher in my twenty-eighth year! This is no slight

trial, and more severe on an artist than on any one else. God looks into my heart, He searches it, and knows that love for man and feelings of benevolence have their abode there! Oh! ye who may one day read this, think that you have done me injustice, and let any one similarly afflicted be consoled, by finding one like himself, who, in defiance of all the obstacles of Nature, has done all in his power to be included in the ranks of estimable artists and men. My brothers Carl and [Johann], as soon as I am no more, if Professor Schmidt be still alive, beg him in my name to describe my malady, and to add these pages to the analysis of my disease, that at least, so far as possible, the world may be reconciled to me after my death.

I also hereby declare you both heirs of my small fortune (if so it may be called). Share it fairly, agree together and assist each other. You know that anything you did to give me pain has been long forgiven. I thank you, my brother Carl in particular, for the attachment you have shown me of late. My wish is that you may enjoy a happier life, and one more free from care, than mine has been.

Recommend *Virtue* to your children; that alone, and not wealth, can ensure happiness. I speak from experience. It was *Virtue* alone which sustained me in my misery; I have to thank her and Art for not having ended my life by suicide. Farewell! Love each other. I gratefully thank all my friends, especially Prince Lichnowsky and Professor Schmidt. I wish one of you to keep Prince L——'s instruments; but I trust this will give rise to no dissension between you. If you think it more beneficial, however, you have only to dispose of them. How much I shall rejoice if I can serve you even in the grave! So be it then! I joyfully hasten to meet Death. If he comes before I have had the opportunity of developing all my artistic powers, then, notwithstanding my cruel fate, he will come too early for me, and I should wish for him at a more distant period; but even then I shall be content, for his advent will release me from a state of endless suffering. Come when he may, I shall meet him with courage. Farewell! Do not quite forget me, even in death; I deserve this from you, because during my life I so often thought of you, and wished to make you happy. Amen!



Misanthropic (adjective)

Someone who hates humanity, or who dislikes and distrusts others and tends to avoid people.

Malady (noun)

A physical or psychological disorder or disease.

Beguiled (verb, past tense)

To charm or enchant (someone), sometimes in a deceptive way.

Vocation (noun)

Someone's work, job, or profession, especially a type of work demanding special commitment.

Constrained (verb, past tense)

Severely restrict the scope, extent, or activity of.

Benevolence (noun)

An inclination to do kind or charitable act.

Active Learning Write your own journal entry as though you were Beethoven, choosing another point in his lifetime. How did he feel about the challenges he was facing at the time? What were his musical aspirations? How did he relate to the social/political activities taking place in Europe?

Political Prisoners

In the story of *Fidelio*, Florestan is secretly imprisoned by Don Pizarro, governor of the state prison, who spread rumors that Florestan has died. Florestan was put in jail because he spoke up against Don Pizarro and accused him of imprisoning citizens who question his authority and of abusing the inmates in overly harsh conditions. Florestan has been jailed to be kept quiet; he is a **political prisoner**. Today, we would also describe someone in Florestan's situation as a **prisoner of conscience** and a victim of **enforced disappearance**.

What is a political prisoner?

A political prisoner is generally defined as a person who is imprisoned for their political beliefs or activities, particularly those who oppose or criticize the government of their countries.

According to Amnesty International, prisoners of conscience fall within the "political prisoner" designation but are more rigidly defined.

A **prisoner of conscience** is someone who has been imprisoned for their political, religious, or other conscientiously held beliefs, ethnic origin, sex, color, language, national or social origin, economic status, birth, sexual orientation or other status, provided that they have neither used nor advocated violence.

Enforced disappearance takes place when a person is arrested, detained or abducted by the state or agents acting for the state, who then deny that the person is being held or conceal their whereabouts, placing them outside the protection of the law.

Political imprisonment and enforced disappearance are still very much a problem today. In many countries people are being imprisoned for speaking out against their government and standing up for human rights. All too often, political prisoners and victims of enforced disappearance are tortured, never released, or killed. Those who manage to escape, are often forced to flee their homes

and find refuge in a country where their freedoms are protected under international human rights laws as well as regional laws. Organizations such as Amnesty International and the United Nations are continually working to release political prisoners and to stop the abuse of human rights around the world.

The United Nations

The United Nations is an intergovernmental organization founded in 1945 to promote international cooperation. The organization was established after World War II to prevent another such conflict. In June of 1945, the United Nations had its first conference in San Francisco at the city's opera house. At the United Nations founding, the organization had 51 member states and now has 193.

Declaration of Human Rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is an international document that outlines basic rights and fundamental freedoms to which all human beings are entitled. The declaration includes civil and political rights, like the right to life, liberty, free speech and privacy. It also includes economic, social and cultural rights, like the right to social security, health and education. The Universal Declaration was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948 and it has inspired human rights standards, laws, and institutions throughout the world.

Text courtesy of Manitoba Opera

Active Learning What fundamental freedoms are guaranteed to US citizens in the Constitution and Bill of Rights? How do our rights as US citizens differ from those who live in other countries? Why do some countries not follow the guidelines of the universal Declaration of Human Rights?

Beethoven's Medical Mystery

Ludwig von Beethoven is considered one of the greatest composers ever. How tragic is it that a great composer would have been robbed of hearing his own music. Beethoven was not born deaf, but he gradually lost his hearing over twenty years. He was completely deaf by the age of 42. There are several theories why Beethoven lost his hearing, but no one really knows the exact cause. We'll look at two of those theories as well as a few common types of hearing loss.

Types of Hearing Loss

Conductive hearing loss is when sound does not follow through the outer ear to the inner ear normally, or is obstructed in some way. Conductive hearing loss is not as serious as some types of deafness because the inner ear can still pick up some sounds even if the middle and outer ear do not.

Sensorineural hearing loss occurs when the hair like structures in the cochlea do not function, or when the nerve that connects the cochlea to the brain does not work. It can cause mild hearing impairment to complete deafness.

Hearing loss can also occur from loud sounds. For example, iPods and other headsets set at a loud volume can cause vibrations, which can damage the hairs in the cochlea, causing hearing loss. This type of hearing loss can happen to people who live near noisy airports, too. Some hearing loss is caused by genetics. Diseases and illnesses, and even some medications can cause deafness or hearing impairment if the nerves that transmit sound messages to the brain are damaged. Injury to the head area can cause deafness or hearing loss, especially if the injury is to the outer ear or the surrounding area.

Why did Beethoven Lose His Hearing?

Theory 1: It is believed that Beethoven may have had a form of **tinnitus**, which is Latin for ringing. When Beethoven first started to lose his hearing, he complained of a "roaring" in his ears, like that of tinnitus. Tinnitus can be brought on by many factors. Aspirin and other medications can cause tinnitus, as can too much earwax in the ear canal. Today there are many treatments for tinnitus, ranging from surgery to taking zinc vitamins and supplements.

Theory 2: Sensitivity to sound is called **hyperacusis**. It can occur if the inner ear is damaged. It can also be caused by damage to the brain. Mostly, it is caused by extended exposure to loud sounds, Lyme's disease, or head injury. Tinnitus often accompanies hyperacusis, and the sufferer also may have ear pain. Normal sounds like a shower, phone ringing, door closing, and other everyday noise may startle or hurt the ears of someone with hyperacusis.

Theory 3: Another theory is that Beethoven may have become deaf due to lead poisoning. When Beethoven died at age 57 a lock of hair was cut from his head. In 2000 the hair underwent testing which showed that Beethoven suffered from extreme lead poisoning. Beethoven was known to take mineral spas; the lead in the bath's water would have been absorbed into his body, leading to lead poisoning. Lead can cause nerve damage, which could explain his deafness, and other health problems. Lead has no known health benefits for humans and can kill a person if absorbed in high amounts.

Deafness, hearing loss, tinnitus, and hyperacusis are all serious problems. The people who have them typically do not receive the same attention or recognition as those with blindness. "Blindness," as Helen Keller said, "isolates people from things. Deafness isolates people from people."

Text courtesy of Opera Philadelphia

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

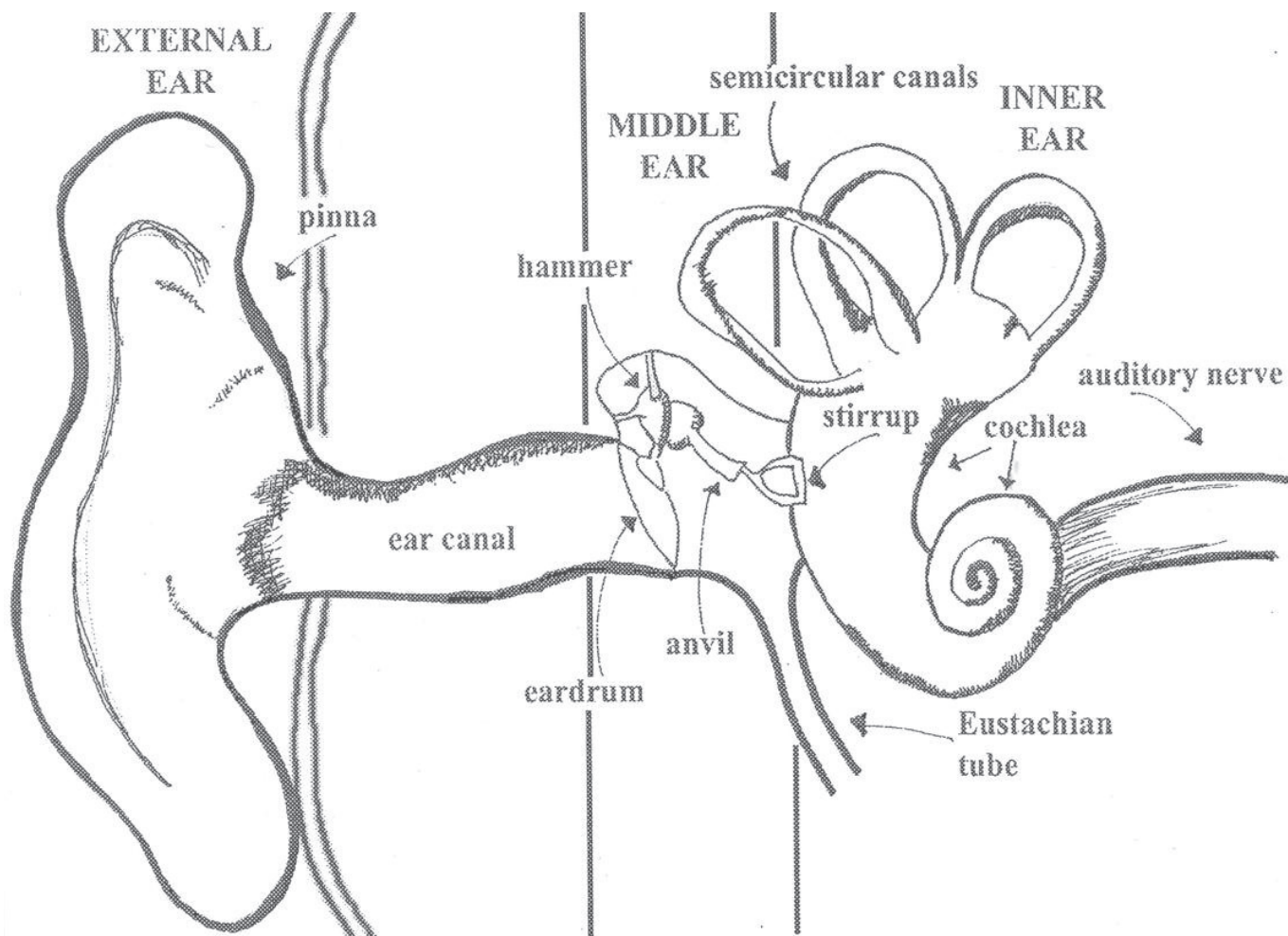
much louder than spoken speech; their voices can cut through the sound of the orchestra playing beneath them in the pit!

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.



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 hammer 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

Q&A with Leonore



American Soprano **Kara Shay Thomson** has proven herself a versatile and essential artist on the operatic and concert stages.

In 2014-15, she portrayed Leonore in *Fidelio* with Kentucky Opera, debuted with New Millenium Orchestra as Judith in *Bluebeard's Castle*, and returned to Sarasota Opera as Tosca. Prior year engagements included debuts with Atlanta Opera and Florida Grand Opera as Tosca, a return to Dayton Opera as Tosca, and her first appearance in concert with the Cincinnati Pops.

Where are you from? Where do you live now? Growing up the daughter of a preacher, I moved around the Midwest quite a bit. I was born in Cincinnati, OH but made my home in Rock Port, MO, Fairbury, NE, Terre Haute, IN, and Warrensburg, MO. I returned to Cincinnati 11 years ago and love living there with my husband and 10-year-old daughter.

When was the first time you performed in front of an audience? As a Preacher Kid (PK), I was on stage from a very young age. Our family offered an evening of song and scripture and this is where I learned how to communicate my message to a congregation. My parents fostered my musical talent and I was lucky to perform in various venues throughout my childhood and young adulthood.

Opera was not a part of my upbringing so my first moment on stage in an opera was singing the role of Ciesca in *Gianni Schicchi* by Giacomo Puccini at The New England Conservatory in Boston, MA. It was my first opera – EVER!

What made you want to become a professional opera singer? I was working in Lynchburg, VA as a minister of music and youth and wanted to find a community chorus so that I could continue singing. That was a great decision as I met my husband in the chorus and the conductor introduced me to a wonderful soprano, Carol Gutknecht, whom I began studying with. She gave me the aria "Marietta's Lied" from *Die Tote Stadt* and I fell in love with the German language and the sweeping lines of the piece.

Carol encouraged me to enter the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions for my region. I had a terrible audition but I stayed to hear my comments from the judges. One judge in particular told me that if I was happy with my life in ministry, I should embrace it but if I felt like opera was a part of my soul, then I needed to go obtain the necessary training. So, Carol helped me choose The New England Conservatory and I entered the intense opera program under the direction of John Moriarty. I thank Carol, my husband, and the nameless judge who made me realize this was what I was created to do.

Did you ever think about doing something outside of opera? I had many aspirations other than singing opera for a career. I started with the idea of music therapy and then migrated to teaching music. I received a Bachelor of Science in Music Ed K-12 and thought that I would lead the next Mid-West high school show choir to the state championship. After I realized that teaching was not right for me, I returned to my roots in the church. In all honesty, if I hadn't found opera, I would have sought out a career as an activities coordinator in a retirement village.

So you are singing in an opera called *Fidelio*. What is this opera about? This opera is about Hope and Faith! After years possibly of not knowing if her husband is alive, Leonore relies on faith in her husband and hope that he is alive to drive her determination to find him. She is willing to completely change her appearance and go "undercover" in a world that could mean losing her life if she is

discovered. In the course of this journey, she finds compassion and true love among her companions.

How does your character fit into the story of this opera? Without Leonore, this story would be a tragedy. Her husband would be dead and the lives of the prisoners, Marzelline, Joaquin, and Rocco would never leave the horrible world of Pizarro's rule. But because she has hope that her husband is alive and that she has the strength to rescue him she not only saves her husband but changes the lives of all who come in contact with her.

Are there any modern day movies or TV shows you might compare *Fidelio* to? Katniss (Hunger Games) is a great example of the strength and will to survive. Even though Leonore is not on the same journey as Katniss, they both possess amazing strength and compassion for others as they pursue their goals. I think that when these women are pushed to their limits they emerge even stronger. And if I could turn *Fidelio* into a modern day movie I would love to wear Katniss' costumes!

In real life I would make the parallel with Mariane Pearl whose husband, Journalist Daniel Pearl disappeared in Pakistan. The 2007 movie "A Mighty Heart" tells their story and I see an amazing correlation between Marianne and Leonore. Mariane's pain was so unbearable and her fight to save his life was what I hope all of us would have done when pushed to that breaking point. If I have one ounce of her bravery in my portrayal of Leonore I will feel I have done justice to Beethoven's great Masterpiece.

What is the craziest thing that has happened to you during a rehearsal or performance? In performance, the majority of my mishaps have happened in the opera *Tosca*. I have been thrown to my knees and ended up sliding on the gown and had to stop myself from saying "hello" to the orchestra pit.

Probably one of my favorite moments from *Tosca* is a moment that the audience never

sees. At the end of the opera, Tosca jumps off of the Castel Sant'Angelo. So, just before that moment, I ran up the stairs, did my quick check to make sure my crash pad was in place and saw that the crew had drawn a dead body outline on the black jump pad.

In your opinion, why should people care about opera? Opera turned my life into a world where I get to work at the highest point of self-expression. I am passionate about how important opera is to our community and to our world.

When you walk through the doors of the Sarasota Opera House you can be transported to a different time and place. When you feel the voice of the singer vibrate in your chest, the orchestra fill your head with sound and your eyes transfixed on the stagecraft in front of you, you will never be the same. If we could tell you exactly what you will experience then we would be wrong because the amazing thing about opera is that everyone has their own personal reaction. Whether it is your first opera or your 100th you will be transformed again and again by the passion and artistry.



Thomson as Tosca in *Tosca*
(Sarasota Opera 2015)

Is there anything we forgot to ask you? This is the only opera where I sing a "pants role", a male role sung by a female singer. Since I am disguised as a young man, I must try to take on the physicality of a man. Even though the audience knows that I am in disguise the other characters in the opera must be convinced of my new identity or I could lose my life and my husband will be banished to prison until death.

Q&A with Florestan



Tenor **Michael Robert Hendrick** made his debut with Sarasota Opera in 1996 as Trabucco in *La forza del destino* and Tinca in *Il tabarro*, and has returned in subsequent seasons to sing Guillot in *Manon*, and Laca in *Jenufa*.

Mr. Hendrick has performed with leading opera companies and orchestras in Europe and in North America. He made his Metropolitan Opera debut in 2007 singing the role of Meneas in Strauss' *Die aegyptische Helena* and has since returned to the Metropolitan Opera as Bacchus in *Ariadne auf Naxos*.

Where are you from? Where do you live now? For the last 14 years I've lived in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, but I was born and raised in LaGrange, Georgia. After graduating from college I then went to graduate school in Cincinnati, Ohio and ended up living there for ten years! Now I split my time between Cincinnati and New York City when I am not on the road.

When was the first time you performed in front of an audience? I was five years old and I sang a solo in church! As a kid I was active as a trumpet player, playing solos in the marching and concert bands. When I first entered college, there was a talent show for "new faces" and I competed as a singer and won! I was only 18 at the time, and not singing opera yet. My solo was the title song from the movie "Footloose".

What made you want to become a professional opera singer As a young teenager I went to a Boy Scout meeting (I was a member) to discover that my scout house was being transformed by a local group into a haunted house for Halloween. I asked if I could help out, they said yes, and the experience of being on the "other side" of a production, in this case a haunted house, watching how the sound system worked, watching the other actors, etc., made a big impression on me!

Deciding to be a professional opera singer was a combination of different experiences. I was very inspired in college by my very first voice teacher, whose enthusiasm for opera and for the art form of singing was a major factor in my decision.

Did you ever think about doing something outside of opera? I actually started college as a trumpet major, but I was not happy with it and changed the very next year to pursue a singing (voice) degree. I still continued playing trumpet in symphonic and jazz bands. I have never regretted my decision.

So you are singing in an opera called *Fidelio*. What is this opera about? Have you ever lost someone (or something, like a pet) but loved them so much that you would give anything to have them back? This is the big message of *Fidelio*. A woman (Leonore) loves another person (her husband Florestan) and spends the whole opera risking her life to save his.



Hendrick as Canio in *Pagliacci*
(Sarasota Opera 2014)

How does your character fit into the story of this opera? Florestan is Leonore's husband. He has committed no crime but has been kept in jail for a very long time because he spoke out against a wicked tyrant, Pizarro. As a result, Pizarro has locked him away to keep him silent.

Are there any modern day movies or TV shows you might compare *Fidelio* to? Do you remember the movie "Frozen"? Even though it is only a cartoon, it is about the love of one person for another, as the ultimate self-sacrifice! What about the first "The Hunger

Games" (2012) when Katniss Everdeen takes her little sister's place to fight for the death!

What is the craziest thing that has happened to you during a rehearsal or performance?

Once there was a malfunction on stage that prevented me from exiting, but I had to exit because another scene was already starting! The lights had all gone out and it was



Soprano Chelsea Basler as Curley's Wife and
Hendrick as Lennie in Carlisle Floyd's
Of Mice and Men (Sarasota Opera, 2013)

completely dark, and I tripped on a piece of scenery, and my hand was pierced by something metal! As a result, I have always had a little bit of a problem with that hand.

How do you relax between performances?

What hobbies do you enjoy at home and "on the road"? Between performances I tend to avoid crowded places, to try not to catch any colds or viruses! So I don't go to see movies where a lot of people could be. I prefer to stay alone and will very often go for long walks, especially if the weather outside is beautiful!

At home I am the father of a 15-year old son! He just started high school this year in the 9th grade. When I am at home I tend to spend as much time with my son and wife as I can. I help out around the house and make repairs when needed.

In your opinion, why should people care about opera?

Opera is not like anything you will ever experience. It is a combination of great music, acting, costumes, architecture, even history and literature, and it has the power to touch you with a depth you never thought possible! The best operas remind us of the highest ideals of our existence on earth, and challenges and inspires us to become better people, and to see outside the limitations of our own daily lives to something greater! It has the power to change your life forever!

Q&A with the Conductor



Ekhart Wycik is one of Europe's most versatile upcoming conductors. His vast repertoire in both opera and concert genres, his stylistic versatility, and his technical and communicative skills have made him a welcomed guest with orchestras and opera companies throughout Germany and Europe as well as internationally.

The young conductor has appeared in concerts with major German orchestras including the Deutsches Sinfonie-Orchester (DSO) in Berlin, the National Philharmonic Orchestra of Rheinland-Pfalz, the Berlin Symphonic Orchestra, the Frankfurt Symphony Orchestra, Bochum Symphony Orchestra, the Staatsorchester Darmstadt, and Saarbrücken's and Cologne's Radio Symphony Orchestras.

Where are you from? Where do you live now?

I was born in the city of Hagen, Germany. After my high school exam, military service, college and some early conducting jobs, I was appointed Associated General Music Director in Dortmund Opera, one of the major German houses. This city is just 20km (about 12 miles) from my home, so after two decades, I returned back to my home city, where I live today. Hagen/Westphalia is in West Germany, about 1hr drive from Cologne.

When was the first time you ever performed in front of an audience?

As Pianist, 7 years old. Playing some Bartók pieces for children. My first performance as conductor for an ensemble was as leader of my Big Band when I was 22. And my first performance as professional opera conductor was at Stadttheater Bielefeld/Westphalia, with Rossini's *L'Italiana in Algeri*.

What made you want to become a professional conductor?

The passion for working with people – and a stunning example of a German Kapellmeister (the leader or conductor of an orchestra or choir) leading the studio choir of our music school, in my teenage years. He was very much “old school”, very experienced, very skillful and passionate – and all at the age of 60!!!

Tell us what a professional conductor does and what some of your responsibilities are?

The conductor does two things: He organizes, and he animates the musicians on the stage

and in the pit. As an opera conductor, you need big technical and musical skills, since the apparatus of an opera is the biggest and most complex in the music business. Your responsibilities are to plan and to organize the musical side of an opera performance – preferably in close cooperation with the stage director and the soloists. This requires in-depth preparations months or even years before opening night, but includes as well split-second-decisions in the moment of the performance.

Do you have to play an instrument to be a conductor?

You should be able to understand the musicians and their instruments in order to lead them. This is like in any craftsmanship and business - it helps if you have learned your profession “from scratch”. Playing an orchestral instrument is very helpful because you understand how musicians “work”. Playing piano very well is required in the German conducting school since it enhances the understanding of a score if you can play it on the piano for studying. – So: I personally play piano, but also Trombone, and quite a bit of violin and percussion.

Did you ever consider doing something else besides being a conductor?

I decided late for a musical career – in my teenage years. I attended the humanistic Albrecht Duerer High School, majored in Latin, Ancient Greek and Philosophy – so my teachers were a bit disappointed when I told them I wanted to be a conductor. They probably thought I would

take a career in law, as a doctor, or as a politician.

From your perspective, what is the opera *Fidelio* about? It is not only about the power of LOVE, but about the power of HOPE. It encourages us to not give up on yourself and your beloved ones. If you believe in yourself, you can do mystery. In that sense, it is actually very German AND very American!

Why do you like this opera and why do you think other people should like it as well? This opera does not have many famous melodies. It's biggest asset is the IDEA. Very German. But the idea behind the drama has the outmost power and catches me always. You know the famous saying "Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come." FIDELIO is this on the field of music.

How many instruments are in the orchestra for *Fidelio*? The body of strings, about 35-40, and full woodwind – double flutes (adding a 3rd player for the piccolo flute), oboes, clarinets, bassoons – brass – 4 french horns, 2 trumpets, and 2 trombones – and timpani. All together over 50 musicians.

Are there any musical passages or moments the audience should be listening for from the orchestra? Watch out for the dramatic moment in Act 2 when a trumpet signal backstage, announcing the arrival of the governor, interrupts the action onstage and creates a moment where time stands still. Or the freaky tuning of the timpani after the curtain raises in Act 2: normally, they are tuned in Fifths – Tonic and Dominant. Here, Beethoven wants them tuned in FLATTED FIFTHS – creating a very spooky atmosphere.

Do you have any pre-performance rituals, superstitions, or good luck charms?

Of course. The whole day before is a ritual. T'ai Chi, the right food, and my little power nap of exactly 10mins are essential. And – no matter how often I have conducted an opera, I ALWAYS read through the whole score before my performance. And NEVER answer me "thank you" if I wish you "Toi Toi Toi" and spit over your left shoulder – this brings bad luck!

How do you relax in between performances? What hobbies do you enjoy at home and "on the road"?

I was always doing sports – was always a runner. For the last years, I did every year a half marathon. When I came for first time to Sarasota last year, I was thrilled to see that there was a running group, with many colleagues from the orchestra. We trained together and did the Sarasota Half Marathon together last March. Very cool! – But my elixir of life is T'ai Chi. Almost every day since my college time. Keeps me relaxed and healthy. 5 years ago, I started Archery, my new love. And, of course, I LOVE reading. Literature, History, Philosophy.

In your opinion, why should people care about Opera?

I think, opera is a power plant for feelings and emotions. It is about human beings, and about human beings in touching situations. And these situations – we call this the drama - make us laugh, shiver or cry. And, above all – it is telling a story with the most mesmerizing and transforming kind of art, and this is MUSIC! So for me, opera is having fun with drama and music.

What are some good things to do before coming to see a performance of *Fidelio*?

Maybe you would like to listen to some other great Beethoven pieces. Beethoven's music speaks always about humanity, and some great other examples are the 2nd movement of his Piano sonata op 13, the "Sonate pathétique", or the 2nd movement of his 5th symphony. Another favorite of mine is his 2nd Violin Romance in F major op 50.

Q&A with the Scenic Designer



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

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. For the past two years I have been living in Elmira, NY.

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 *Fidelio* about? I believe *Fidelio* is a

celebration of the strength of the human spirit. It shows us that faith, love, tenacity, and conviction in one's beliefs can overcome oppression. Good will cannot be dominated by evil. Truth cannot be silenced by lies.

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 *Fidelio* the audience should be watching for?

This set combines three-dimensional sculpted scenery with flat painted scenery. In the flat scenery I've used tricks of perspective in combination with painted highlight and shadow to fool the eye into believing it is actually dimensional. See if you can spot the difference and let me know if everything works in combination to create a believable 'whole'.

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. There is so much humanity to be found but also exciting plots of murder, love, politics, duplicity and the supernatural. So come for the story, come for the music, come for the event.

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; *The Magic Flute* 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 *The Magic Flute*) or fathers.
- BASS** The lowest male voice; because of the very low sound they are often villains or the father figure.

Opera Jobs

Administration

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

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.

Backstage

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.

On Stage

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.

Pre-Performance Activities

Understanding the plot and characters before attending a performance greatly enhances the experience. The activities below will help your students explore *Fidelio* 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 Rocco, Fidelio/Leonore, Marzelline, and Jaquino to complete the activity describe in the video above:

"Rocco believes that Fidelio's willingness to work hard is an effort to prove himself worthy of Marzelline's hand. He is wrong. As all voice their feelings, Fidelio sings of the embarrassment and danger caused by Marzelline's affection."

Tableau Reflection Discussion

<https://youtu.be/Wt9gsLAsAfs>

Using the activity described in the video above and the synopsis of *Fidelio*, 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 *Fidelio* through the creation of Facebook profiles.

Using clues in the music, libretto, and synopsis develop profiles that address each characters 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 *Fidelio* and others in early 18th century Spain? 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 Herald Tribune’s review of *La bohème* as a guide, create a review of Sarasota Opera’s performance of *Fidelio*.

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
Jeffrey Beruan as Don Fernando	☆☆☆☆☆	
Sean Anderson as Don Pizarro	☆☆☆☆☆	
Michael Robert Hendrick as Florestan	☆☆☆☆☆	
Kara Shay Thomson as Leonore	☆☆☆☆☆	
Harold Wilson As Rocco	☆☆☆☆☆	
Vanessa Isiguen as Marzelline	☆☆☆☆☆	
Christopher Trapani as Jaquino	☆☆☆☆☆	
The Action	☆☆☆☆☆	
The Music	☆☆☆☆☆	
The Sets	☆☆☆☆☆	
The Staging	☆☆☆☆☆	
The Lighting	☆☆☆☆☆	
The Costumes	☆☆☆☆☆	
The Makeup	☆☆☆☆☆	

OPERA REVIEW: Opera season starts with a winner

By Richard Storm, Herald-Tribune / Saturday, October 31, 2015

The 2015 Fall Season of the Sarasota Opera opened with a sure-fire winner on Friday evening, reviving their superb presentation of Giacomo Puccini's beloved "La bohème" conducted by Victor DeRenzi.

This production, first seen here in 2006, has stood up wonderfully in the intervening years, evoking the legendary bohemian lifestyle that was found in Paris in the early 19th century, with insightful stage direction by Stephanie Sundine, stunning scenery by David P. Gordon and magical lighting by Ken Yunker.

The dramatic framework for the familiar and beloved music is a difficult one, combining intense emotional crisis with comedic sexuality and male horseplay.

The poet Rodolfo (Martin Nusspaumer) is struggling to make a living, writing in his garret, which he shares with a painter,



Jessica Rose Cambio as Mimi and Martin Nusspaumer as Rodolfo in Act 1 of "La bohème" at the Sarasota Opera.
Photo by Rod Millington

Marcello (Craig Irvin), Schaunard, a musician (Gideon Dabi) and philosopher Colline (Colin Ramsey).

The action begins on Christmas Eve, as the colleagues plan to celebrate at the local Parisian restaurant, Café Momus, although they have no idea how they will pay for their

meal. Rodolfo stays behind to work on a poem and is alone when there is a feeble knock on the door. Mimi (Jessica Rose Cambio) enters, coughing and fainting, her candle having gone out. She and Rodolfo soon connect romantically and leave to join the crowd at the café.

During the celebration in the crowded square outside the restaurant, Marcello's former lover, Musetta (Angela Mortellaro) sweeps in on the arm of her current flame, Alcindoro, a distinguished state official. Musetta creates a scene which results in her returning to the arms of Marcello, leaving behind the dinner check for everyone, to be paid by a stunned Alcindoro.

The action moves to the Paris city gate, where Marcello and Musetta are working in the tavern. Rodolfo and Mimi arrive separately and it is clear their relationship is in danger, attributable to Mimi's advancing illness and despite their love. They decide to remain together until spring, while Musetta and Marcello argue and split.

In the final, emotionally wrenching, scene, the men and Musetta are back in the garret when the fatally ill Mimi arrives. She and Rodolfo reminisce while the others feign other concerns. When no one is paying attention to her, Mimi dies and the tragedy comes to an end as the curtain descends.

Throughout all of this gripping drama, both vocal and dramatic gifts are on display, with fine singing of several familiar arias and a welcome directness in the acting, all supported by the excellent Sarasota Orchestra and the opera chorus under the supple direction of Maestro DeRenzi.

Only one aspect is puzzling: soprano Cambio, as the consumptive Mimi, often sang with huge and sometimes acerbic tone, hardly what one would expect from her dying character in this dramatic setting.

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 90th year in 2016 (the final year of Sarasota Opera's Verdi Cycle), it is still the jewel of downtown Sarasota.

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

Recently called “one of American’s leading festivals” by London’s *Opera Now* magazine, **Sarasota Opera** has been a fixture in Sarasota life for 57 consecutive seasons.

Under the guidance of Artistic Director Victor DeRenzi, who is celebrating his 33rd season, and Executive Director Richard Russell, Sarasota Opera is renowned throughout the world for the high quality of its performances and innovative education programs. Maestro DeRenzi’s unique artistic vision, expressed in the Sarasota Opera’s Verdi Cycle has consistently garnered Sarasota Opera international attention as one of the few places to experience rarely performed operatic works. The 2016 Winter Season will mark the end of the Verdi Cycle (begun in 1989) and will set Sarasota Opera apart from other opera houses worldwide as having produced all of Verdi’s music (operatic and incidental).

The 2015-2016 festival season will include Puccini’s *La bohème*, Verdi’s *Aida*, Mozart’s *Così fan tutte*, Beethoven’s only opera *Fidelio*, and Verdi’s *The Battle of Legnano* completing Sarasota Opera’s Verdi Cycle, the company’s commitment to performing all the works of Verdi by 2016.



Turandot, 2013 | Rod Millington/Sarasota Opera

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 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 youth opera 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).



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*.

