

La Bohème

Lesson 1 – Text vs. Music

Written by Kristina Keener for LA Opera

Duration: about 4 hours

Grade Levels: 9-12

Subject: Choir

Visual and Performing Arts Standards:

Music Grades 9-12 - Proficient

- 4.4 Describe the means used to create images or evoke feelings and emotions in musical works from various cultures.
- 4.3 Compare and contrast the musical means used to create images or evoke feelings and emotions in works of music from various cultures.

Music Grades 9-12 -Advanced

- 3.3 Compare and contrast the social function of a variety of music forms in various cultures and time periods.
- 4.3 Compare and contrast the musical means used to create images or evoke feelings and emotions in works of music from various cultures.

English Grades 9-10

- 1.1 Formulate judgments about the ideas under discussion and support those judgments with convincing evidence.
 - 1.11 Assess how language and delivery affect the mood and tone of the oral communication and make an impact on the audience.
- 3.3 Analyze interactions between main and subordinate characters in a literary text (e.g., internal and external conflicts, motivations, relationships, influences) and explain the way those interactions affect the plot.
- 3.4 Determine characters' traits by what the characters say about themselves in narration, dialogue, dramatic monologue, and soliloquy.
- 3.10 Identify and describe the function of dialogue, scene designs, soliloquies, asides, and character foils in dramatic literature.

Goals & Objectives:

- 1) Introduce students to basic opera and music vocabulary
- 2) Summarize the plot and characters using the libretto and the video
- 3) Discuss the effects of the music on the text

Varying Objectives for Individual Needs:

- 1) Introduce students to basic opera and music vocabulary
- 2) Summarize the plot and the characters using the libretto and the video

Lesson Plan Description:

- 1) Discuss basic opera terms and ideas such as libretto, aria, recitative, theme, etc.
- 2) Read a synopsis of the opera and familiarize the students with the characters and plot
- 3) Read the libretto for of a section *La bohème* and discuss the characters
- 4) Show a recording of the same scene and discuss the effects of the music on the text

Procedures:

- 1) Distribute worksheet with basic opera and music terms – discuss and fill in the blanks
- 2) Discuss with the students the summary questions about the plot and characters of the opera
- 3) Read synopsis of the entire opera with the students
- 4) Have the students answer the summary questions and then discuss as a class
- 5) Have the students chose one character to focus on and list them on their paper
- 6) Invite some of students to read Act II of the opera (in English) as the characters
- 7) Watch Act II on video
- 8) Discuss with the students how the music affected the text of their character's lines and thus the character's development
- 9) Have the students answer the short answer section of the worksheet
- 10) Discuss their responses

Materials:

- 1) Libretto for *La bohème* in Italian with English Translation
- 2) Video of *La bohème*
- 3) Synopsis of *La bohème*
- 4) Worksheet

Assessment and Evaluation:

- 1) Have the students create three questions based on the lesson for a quiz for the class
 - a) One multiple choice question
 - b) One fill-in-the-blank
 - c) One short response
- 2) Use the students' questions to create a quiz

Bibliography/Discography/Videography:

Browning, Kirk, Director. La Bohème [videorecirding]. Long Beach, CA: Pioneer Classics, 1998

Erede, Alberto, Conductor. La Bohème [CD]. London: Decca Record Co., 1993

Fisher, Burton, Editor. Puccini's La Bohème. Coral Gables, Fla.: Opera Journeys Pub., 2001

Name _____

Basic Opera Terms

- 1) Acts –
- 2) Aria –
- 3) Baritone –
- 4) Bass –
- 5) Blocking –
- 6) Bohemian –
- 7) Bravo –
- 8) Giacomo Puccini –
- 9) Librettist –
- 10) Libretto –
- 11) Mezzo-Soprano –
- 12) Orchestra –
- 13) Overture –
- 14) Recitative –
- 15) Set –
- 16) Soprano –
- 17) Tenor –
- 18) Theme or leitmotif –

Summary of *La bohème* by Puccini

1) Setting – Place & Time

2) Main Characters

Name/Voice Type	Occupation	Who They Love	Actions to Remember Them By
Marcello			
Rodolfo			
Schaunard			
Mimi			
Colline			
Musetta			
Alcindoro			
Benoit			

Character to focus on:

Short Response

Answer the following questions using complete sentences,

1) How did the music change your view of the character?

2) Why sing it? How does singing the text affect the meaning of the text? (Use ideas like emotion, theme, character development, etc.)

3) Why do you think a good libretto was so important to Puccini?

4) In a song, which is more important to you a beautiful melody or a meaningful text? Why? Which is more memorable? (Yes, you must choose one or the other.)

In a longer work, like a Broadway show or an opera, which is more important to you – beautiful music or a good story. Why?

Create the Quiz Questions

Based on any part of the lesson, create your own quiz questions. Be sure to give the correct answer also.

1) Create one multiple-choice question and answer.

2) Create one fill-in-the-blank question and answer.

3) Create one short response question and answer.