



THE DAUGHTER OF THE  
**REGIMENT**

# Study Guide

2011/12 Season

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# THE DAUGHTER OF THE REGIMENT

# 3 Great Resources for Teaching Your Students About Opera

## 1. Student Night

In order to expose student audiences to the glory of opera, Manitoba Opera created Student Night. It's an affordable opportunity for students to watch the dress rehearsal, an exciting look at the art and magic of opera before the curtain goes up on Opening Night, when tension is high and anything can happen. Please note:

- *The Daughter of the Regiment* is two acts, with a running time of \_\_.
- The dress rehearsal is the last opportunity the singers will have on stage to work with the orchestra before Opening Night. Since vocal demands are so great on opera singers, some choose not to sing in full voice during the dress rehearsal in order to avoid unnecessary strain.

## 2. The Study Guide

This study guide has been created to assist you in preparing your students for their visit to the opera at the Centennial Concert Hall. It is our hope that you will be able to add this to your existing curriculum in order to expand your students' understanding of opera, literature, history, and fine art.

Materials in the study guide may be copied and distributed to students. Some students may wish to go over the information at home if there is insufficient time to discuss in class.

## 3. Opera in a Trunk

Bring the magic of opera right into the classroom with our Opera in a Trunk. We provide you with all the tools you need – the music, costumes, props, story line, etc. – to recreate some of the world's greatest operas with your class.

- Contact Braden Alexander for more details on how to order our Opera in a Trunk for *The Daughter of the Regiment*, complete with \_\_.

*The Daughter of the Regiment* Study Guide compiled by Manitoba Opera from sources including: ClassicalMusic.about.com; BehindTheNames.com; Bellevue University; The Billboard Illustrated Encyclopedia of Opera; The Canadian Opera Company; A Dictionary of First Names; Encyclopedia of Manitoba; Encyclopedia of the Opera by David Ewen; Fort Worth Opera 2000 Study Guide; GradeSaver.com; La Scena; Lyric Opera of Kansas City; Manitoba Archives; Masonic Interpretation of Manitoba Legislative Building; Metropolitan Opera; Mozart's Letters; Mozart's Life; musicwithease.com; Music.MSN.com; New York City Opera; Opera America Learning Centre; operabuffa.com; Opera Columbus Study Guide; Opera News; Operas Every Child Should Know; Opera Lyra Ottawa Study Guide; Opera Today; Orchestra London Study Guide; Pacific Opera; San Diego Opera Study Guide; San Francisco Opera Guild Study Guide; schubincave.com; A Season of Opera; Skeletons from the Opera Closet; timelines.com; TodaysParent.com; Tulsa Opera Study Guide; University of Chicago Press; University of Manitoba; University of Texas; University of Waterloo; Rimrock Study Guide; Virginia Opera Study Guide; Winnipeg Free Press; Wikipedia; and The World's Great Operas by John Tasker Howard.

## *The Daughter of the Regiment:* Good To Know

- Unlike in *Salome*, the dialogue in *The Daughter of the Regiment* is not sung. The songs are spaced out with spoken dialogue, as in a play, carrying the plot line and connecting the songs to make the story. Interestingly, this doesn't occur in Italian operas (unless an Italian has written a French opera for a French audience).
- *The Daughter of the Regiment* is a comedy. The music is lively, the story is light-hearted, and the singers employ slapstick antics to bring the opera to life and get the audience laughing.
- In 1840, the year *The Daughter of the Regiment* premiered, there were 44 performances of the opera throughout Europe. By 1875, there had been over 600 performances in Paris alone.
- Gaetano Donizetti wrote 65 operas in less than 30 years. At one point, one of every four operas performed in Italy was his.
- Even though Donizetti was Italian, he wrote many operas in French. Some, like *La Fille du régiment*, have Italian counterparts. Donizetti later wrote *La figlia del reggimento*, an adaptation for the tastes of an Italian audience.
- Unlike many theatre works, *The Daughter of the Regiment* has no "source material" or pre-written story that the libretto is based upon. The story came from the imagination of its two librettists, Jules-Henri Vernoy De Saint-Georges and Jean-François Bayard.
- In 1972, Luciano Pavarotti became the first tenor in operatic history to reach all nine high C's in the aria "Pour mon âme, quel destin!" in *La fille du régiment* at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City.
- Donizetti belongs to a group of composers who were interested in *bel canto* operas, which rely on vocal acrobatics and focus on vocal melody. For more information on *bel canto* style, see page 14.
- In 2007, Juan Flórez, known as "the new king of the nine high C's," was permitted an encore at the famous Milan opera house La Scala after singing Tonio's aria "Ah! Mes amis." It was the first encore allowed on that stage since 1933.
- The last time Manitoba Opera staged *The Daughter of the Regiment* was in 1991. Tracy Dahl, the renowned Winnipeg soprano, sang the role of Marie. In this season's production, the role is sung by Nikki Einfeld, another Winnipegger, who studied and mentored under Ms. Dahl.



Natalie Dessay and Juan Flórez in *La Fille du régiment*.  
Photo: Catherine Ashmore.

# Production Information

## *The Daughter of the Regiment* (*La Fille du régiment*)

April 21, 24, and 27  
(Dress Rehearsal / Student Night: April 19)  
Centennial Concert Hall

Music by Gaetano Donizetti  
Libretto in French by Jules-Henri Vernoy De Saint-Georges and Jean-François Bayard

Premiere Performance: Opéra-Comique, Paris on February 11, 1840

Approximately 2 hours, 30 minutes in two acts.  
Sung in French with projected English translations.

### PRINCIPAL CAST

MARIE	NIKKI EINFELD	SOPRANO
TONIO	JOHN TESSIER	TENOR
MARQUISE OF BERKENFELD	REBECCA HASS	MEZZO-SOPRANO
SULPICE	THEODORE BAERG	BASS
HORTENSIUS		BASS
A CORPORAL		BARITONE
A PEASANT		TENOR
THE DUCHESS OF KRAKENTHORP	MARY WALSH	SPOKEN ROLE
A NOTARY		SPOKEN ROLE

Manitoba Opera Chorus  
Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra

Conductor	Tadeusz Biernacki
Director	Ann Hodges
Original Production	Robert B. Driver
Scenery and costumes provided by:	Opera Company of Philadelphia
Set designer	Boyd Ostroff
Costume designer	Richard St. Clair
Lighting designer	Bill Williams
Stage manager	Paul Skirzyk
Assistant stage managers	Kathryn Ball, Candace Maxwell

# Synopsis

## Act I: The Tyrolean Mountains, 1805

On their way to Austria, the terrified Marquise of Berkenfeld and her butler, Hortensius, have paused in their journey because they have found the French army blocking their way. When the marquise hears from the villagers that the French troops have at last retreated, she comments on the crude ways of the French people (“Pour une femme de mon nom”). Hortensius asks Sulpice, sergeant of the 21st regiment, to let the marquise continue on. Sulpice is joined by Marie, the mascot, or “daughter,” of the regiment, which adopted her as an orphaned child. When Sulpice questions her about a young man she has been seen with, she explains that he is a local Tyrolean who—though an enemy—once saved her life. Troops of the 21st arrive with a prisoner: this same Tyrolean, Tonio, who says he has been looking for Marie. She steps in to save him, and while he toasts his new friends, Marie sings the regimental song (“Chacun le sait”). Tonio is ordered to follow the soldiers, but he escapes and returns to declare his love to Marie. Sulpice surprises them, and Marie must admit to Tonio that she can only marry a soldier from the 21st Regiment.

The Marquise of Berkenfeld asks Sulpice for an escort to return her to her castle. When he hears the name Berkenfeld, Sulpice remembers a letter he discovered near the young Marie when she was found. The marquise soon admits that she knew the girl’s father and says that Marie is the long-lost daughter of her sister. The child had been left in the care of the marquise, but was lost on a battlefield. Shocked by the girl’s rough manners, the marquise is determined to take her niece to her castle and to give her a proper education. Tonio has enlisted so that he can marry Marie (“Ah, mes amis”), but she has to leave both her regiment and the man she loves (“Il faut partir”).

## Act II: The Castle of Berkenfeld

The marquise has arranged a marriage between Marie and Scipion, nephew of the Duchess of Krakenthorp. Sulpice has joined the marquise at the Berkenfeld castle, recovering from an injury and supposed to help her with her plans. The marquise gives Marie a singing lesson, accompanying her at the piano. Encouraged by Sulpice, Marie slips in phrases of the regimental song, and the marquise loses her temper (Trio: “Le jour naissait dans la bocage”). Left alone, Marie thinks about the meaninglessness of money and position (“Par le rang et l’opulence”). She hears soldiers marching in the distance and is delighted when the whole regiment files into the hall. Tonio, Marie, and Sulpice are reunited. Tonio asks for Marie’s hand, declaring that Marie is his whole life (“Pour me rapprocher de Marie”), but the marquise declares her niece engaged to another man and dismisses Tonio. Alone with Sulpice, the marquise confesses the truth: Marie is her own illegitimate daughter whom she abandoned, fearing social disgrace.

Hortensius announces the arrival of the wedding party, headed by the Duchess of Krakenthorp. Marie refuses to leave her room, but when Sulpice tells her that the marquise is her mother, the surprised girl declares that she cannot go against her mother’s wishes and agrees to marry a man that she does not love. As she is about to sign the marriage contract, the soldiers of the 21st regiment, led by Tonio, storm in to rescue their “daughter.” The noble guests are horrified to learn that Marie was a canteen girl, but they change their opinion when she describes her upbringing, telling them that she can never repay the debt she owes the soldiers. The marquise is so moved that she gives her daughter permission to marry Tonio. Everyone joins in a final “Salut à la France.”

*Courtesy of the Metropolitan Opera.*



*Diana Damrau as Marie in the Metropolitan Opera production of La Fille du régiment. Photo: Ken Howard.*

# *The Daughter of the Regiment*

## Principal Characters

### Marie

Marie is an energetic, tomboyish young orphan who was adopted and raised by the French army and considers the soldiers her family. Now a young woman, she serves as their mascot and *vivandière* (see page 16 for more information on vivandières in the military).

### Tonio

A young Tyrolean peasant who saves Marie's life and ends up falling in love with her. When he is captured by the French army, who mistakes him for a spy, he confesses his love and Marie comes to his defence, attesting to his character and admitting that she loves him back. Tonio later joins the 21st regiment, becoming a soldier so that he may be eligible to marry his beloved Marie.

### The Marquise of Berkenfeld

A somewhat haughty and fragile woman, the Marquise turns out to be a relative of Marie's. Shocked by the girl's crude manners picked up from a life among soldiers, she insists that Marie come to live with her and receive a proper education. Marie, an obedient girl, reluctantly agrees.

### Sergeant Sulpice

Sulpice is the good-natured sergeant of the 21st regiment of the French army. He acts as a friendly father figure for Marie, but feels it's best she live with her true family when the Marquis requests it.

### Hortensius

The steward of the Marquise.

### The Duchess of Krakenthorp

An unpleasant woman and the mother of the Duke, whom Marie is betrothed to marry.



*Anny Ondra and Pierre Richard-Winn in the 1933 film adaptation of La Fille du régiment.*

# The Principal Artists

## Nikki Einfeld *Marie*

"...a real flair for comedy, she is a delightful singing actress..." - *The Vancouver Sun*

The Winnipeg-born Nikki Einfeld is an acclaimed coloratura soprano who has brought her vocal talents to stages across North America. Her voice has won her awards and roles in numbers, and she has graced the Manitoba Opera stage multiple times before, including performances as Adina in *The Elixir of Love* and as Adele in *Die Fledermaus*.

[www.nikkieinfeld.com](http://www.nikkieinfeld.com)



## John Tessier *Tonio*

"...has the rare ability to rouse laughter and tears simultaneously..." - *The Guardian*

A Canadian and Juno Award winner, John Tessier has sung on opera stages around the world, working with conductors like Plácido Domingo and John Nelson. When he's not busy singing in faraway cities, Mr. Tessier can be found coaching other artists or recording music for well-known classical music studios.

[www.johnptessier.com](http://www.johnptessier.com)



## Rebecca Hass *Marquis of Berkenfeld*

"...big hearted theatricality and... comic color elsewhere..." - *Opera Canada*

Rebecca Hass, from Victoria, BC, has sung on almost every opera stage in Canada. She is known for her dedication to supporting roles, and currently enjoys a career as not only a singer of opera but of musicals and cabaret. She also writes, teaches, and guest-hosts a radio show on CBC.

[www.rebeccahass.ca](http://www.rebeccahass.ca)



## Theodore Baerg *Sulpice*

"We took delight in the naughty Jon Cleese-iness of military man Sulpice..." - *Edmonton Journal*

As well as a renowned baritone, Theodore Baerg is a professor of voice, opera and music theatre at the University of Western Ontario. He has sung with the New York Philharmonic, the San Francisco Opera, and the Glyndebourne Festival, to name a few.

[www.baergarts.com](http://www.baergarts.com)



# The Composer

## Gaetano Donizetti

Born: November 29, 1797

Died: September 8, April 7, 1848

Gaetano Donizetti, son of a pawnshop caretaker and a seamstress, was born and died at Bergamo, like many of his opera characters, a victim of madness. To the older, baroque-based style known as *bel canto* (characterized by long, ornamented vocal lines), he added a dramatic urgency, especially in dialogue, that paved the way for Verdi and verismo. Like his colleagues Rossini and Bellini, Donizetti was primarily a melodist. Yet, out of his admiration for the classical masters Haydn and Mozart, he developed a sharp ear for orchestration - unobtrusive but sensitive - and for the dramatic shaping of concerted pieces along symphonic lines.



A portrait of Gaetano Donizetti

Extraordinarily prolific, Donizetti habitually overworked himself in the attempt to keep pace with demands from various opera houses. Though the total number of his operas has been estimated to be as high as seventy, the steadiness and the freshness of his lyric inspiration belie the fact that so much of it was created under hackwork conditions. Donizetti's construction of scenes relies on formula, but it is formula that works, and he imbues it with a pulsing inner life that often makes stock characters believable.

Until the *bel canto* revival that followed World War II, Donizetti was known chiefly as the composer of one tragedy, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and one comedy, *L'Elisir d'Amore*. Today these are frequently accompanied in the repertory by other operas of his, both serious and comic. The former category tends toward the pseudo-historical subjects so much in vogue at the time, the remote country of England holding a particular fascination for him: *Anna Bolena*, *Maria Stuarda*, and *Roberto Devereux* all portray English rulers, and Elizabeth I appears in two of them. *Lucrezia Borgia*, set in Italy, and *La Favorita*, set in Spain, further pursue the fictionalization of people who actually lived, a sport popularized by Sir Walter Scott, whose *Bride of Lammermoor* inspired *Lucia*.

*Courtesy of The Metropolitan Opera.*

# The Librettists

## Jules-Henri Vernoy De Saint-Georges

Born: November 7, 1799

Died: December 23, 1875

Jules-Henri Vernoy De Saint-Georges was born and died in Paris, after building a reputation as one of the most productive librettists of the 19th century. He wrote libretti for the opera and the ballet, as well as novels, including *Un Mariage de prince*.

As he did on *La Fille du régiment*, Saint-Georges often collaborated with other writers. In total, he wrote over 70 different works, most of them operas comiques with a rather predictable approach; his plotlines depended on improbably coincidences and lacked convincing characterization. In 1829 he became manager of the Opéra-Comique in Paris.



Jules-Henri Vernoy Do Saint-Georges

## Jean-François Bayard

Born: March 17, 1796

Died: February 20, 1853

Jean-François Bayard was a skilled writer of vaudeville, comedies and dramas, composing over 200 plays in his lifetime. His works are known for being witty and cheerful, but he also wrote articles for literary journals and poems for several anthologies.

Bayard, also a Frenchman, was a student of law and worked for a time as a lawyer's clerk. In 1857, he became director of the Théâtre des Variétés in Paris and was named a member of the Légion d'honneur.



Jean-François Bayard

## What is a Libretto?

Libretto means "little book" in Italian. It refers to the written text of an opera set to music by the composer. Today, we commonly refer to an opera as being 'by' the composer of the music, but the text is a vital component and is normally written first. 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.



## The Music of *The Daughter of the Regiment*

*The Daughter of the Regiment* is a happy, lively work with an abundance of graceful, passionate arias and sprightly martial music. Having Marie, a pretty little orphan, raised by the regiment and becoming a romantic heroine enabled Donizetti to develop a light, appealing love story with a military setting, thus bringing together elements beloved during his time: love against impossible odds and high-minded patriotism.

The opera is vocally demanding from start to finish, requiring its lead singers to bring sufficient technique to meet its challenges. Few singers, for example, can ever reach all of Tonio's nine high C's during his aria "Ah! mes amis."

The role of Marie, the "daughter" of the 21st Regiment, has been a showpiece for the great \*coloratura sopranos of the past 170 years, such the astonishing Joan Sutherland. Manitoba Opera's last production of *The Daughter of the Regiment*, back in 1991, saw Tracy Dahl tackle the role of Marie. At the time Ms. Dahl was just beginning her ascent into opera stardom, fresh off her debut at the Metropolitan Opera.

*The Daughter of the Regiment* is a distinctive opera, with a tone that differs from most works by Italian composers because it was written in the opéra comique style. As the dialogue is sung and music is not the sole form of expression, it's almost as if the music is treated with less solemnity; the whole stretch of the first act is dominated by unabashedly catchy military numbers. The light-hearted theme carries through to the end, even when Marie and Tonio are confession their love for one another. For a moment something more deeply-felt seems about to break through, before the refrain returns to remind us that we are still safely in the good-humoured world of opéra comique.

*Courtesy of Al Reimer and the Royal Opera House.*

\*A coloratura singer is one who is capable of singing highly elaborate, ornate music with many fast notes and trills. For more opera definitions, see page 24.



Nikki Einfeld as Susanna in the Vancouver Opera Company's 2010 production of *The Marriage of Figaro*.



# Comedy in Opera

Although opera is well known for storylines that include tragic suicides, violent murders, and scorned lovers, some of the greatest operas of all time are actually comedies. Comic operas usually offer light subject matter and happy endings for the main characters. The dialogue is mostly spoken, rather than sung.

There are various types of comic operas, including the Italian opera buffa (with sung dialogue, like *The Barber of Seville*), the German Singspiel (*Die Fledermaus*), English ballad operas (*The Beggar's Opera*) and Spanish zarzuela (*El golfo de las sirenas*). *The Daughter of the Regiment* is an opéra-comique, the French take on comic opera. Opéra-comique originated as a term for French comic operas, but later came to define any opera with spoken dialogue, such as *Carmen*, which is not a comedy but a tragedy.

Comic operas often follow storylines similar to modern comedies, with plot elements including mistaken identities, disguises, confusion over twins, lovers disguised as servants, and girls ordered to marry rich old men against their will.

## Mary Walsh

Manitoba Opera's production of *The Daughter of the Regiment* boasts a talented Canadian cast, including the inimitable Mary Walsh as the Duchess of Krakenthorp, a non-singing role. Mary is a long-time actor and comedian, starting her career on the East Coast in the Newfoundland Travelling Theatre Company and then with comedy troupe CODCO before becoming a household name on the comedy show *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*.

Despite a troubled childhood, Mary grew up to become an unforgettable comedian. One of her characters in particular — Marg Delahunty, Warrior Princess — has made a mark on Canada's political landscape. Dressed like Xena, Mary barges in on press conferences and photo ops to speak to politicians about important topics but with a brash, often crass manner, throwing her interviewees off guard and sometimes landing her in hot water.

Earlier this year, Toronto's mayor, Rob Ford called the police on Mary when she approached him for an interview dressed as Marg.



Mary Walsh in character as Marg Delahunty, Warrior Princess.

# Bel Canto Opera

*The Daughter of the Regiment* is a bel canto opera. Bel canto means “beautiful singing” in Italian and is a term used to describe a technique or style of singing that sounds effortless but in fact is very difficult to achieve. It requires the singer to produce a quick succession of high notes, seemingly without taking a breath in between. The difficulty for modern bel canto singers is achieving the high notes while still producing a sound powerful enough to fill a theatre and compete with the orchestra.

The focus of bel canto singing is more in beautiful tone and brilliant technique rather than dramatic expression, which is why it lends itself nicely to comedies and lighter fare.

## Pavarotti's Nine High C's

Luciano Pavarotti, recent history's most famous tenor, built his career on singing bel canto operas. In 1972, he wowed a Metropolitan Opera audience in New York when he successfully reached all nine high C's in Tonio's aria “Pour mon âme, quel destin!” from *The Daughter of the Regiment*. Pavarotti was the first known singer to achieve this vocal feat, sharing the stage with the legendary Joan Sutherland at the time.

Pavarotti “possessed an extraordinary, effortless voice with ringing high notes” (Sadie 312). After an extraordinary career as an internationally-renowned singer, he died of pancreatic cancer in 2007 at the age of 72.



Luciano Pavarotti

# Women in the Early 19th Century

In 1789, about 20 years before events in *The Daughter of the Regiment* are set, the National Assembly of France met and set down the Declaration of the Rights of Man. This was an important document in the progression of human rights, granting rights to property, equality, and justice. Unfortunately, these rights were only granted to men, not women (hence the name) and life for women in Europe in the early 19th Century was, in some ways, rather bleak.

A woman was expected to marry and produce children; it was her responsibility. Should she fail to do so, she was ridiculed as an outsider and an old maid, a biological failure. Considering the social pressures she faced, it makes sense that Marie from *The Daughter of the Regiment* would agree to marry the Duke of Krakenthorp, even though she loved Tonio.

## Basic Early 19th Century Etiquette for Ladies

*Always:*

- Graciously accept gentlemanly offers of assistance.
- Wear gloves on the street, at church and other formal occasions, except when eating or drinking.
- When crossing the street, one must lift her dress a bit above the ankle while holding the folds of her gown together in her right hand and drawing them toward the right. It was considered vulgar to raise the dress with both hands as it would show too much ankle, but was tolerated for a moment when the mud was very deep.
- When introduced to a man, a lady never offers her hand, she merely bows politely and says, "I am happy to make your acquaintance."

*Never:*

- Refer to another adult by his or her first name in public.
- Grab your hoops (of your hoop skirts) or lift your skirts higher than is absolutely necessary to go up stairs.
- Sit with your legs crossed (except at the ankles if necessary for comfort or habit).
- Lift your skirts up onto the seat of your chair when sitting down. (Wait for, or if necessary, ask for assistance when sitting down at a table or on a small light chair.)
- Speak in a loud, coarse voice.



Joan Sutherland as Marie in *The Daughter of the Regiment*.

# La Vivandière

Women have traveled with armies for as long as there have been armies, providing cooking, sewing, and laundry services, as well as companionship and, in many cases, a family atmosphere. However, by about 1700, regulations had trimmed their numbers and regulated their functions in most European militaries.

Most armies required women traveling with armies to be wives of soldiers, though there were still plenty of unauthorized women and children in many formations. In France, the army took a pragmatic approach, realizing that its own supply system could not provide all the food and drink that soldiers required, and knowing that soldiers would desert in order to get it. The French army of the Bourbon monarchy therefore authorized each regiment to have eight soldiers (usually sergeants) whose job was to sell food, drink, tobacco, wig powder, writing supplies, and other sundries to the troops. These soldiers were known as vivandiers. Each vivandier was authorized to marry a woman whose job would be to help him in his business, and these women were known as vivandières. While their husbands performed their military duties, these vivandières cooked, sold food, drink, and sundries, and often ran gambling tables as well. Their children, born in the regiment, helped their mothers with their duties. Beginning in 1766, the War Ministry authorized their sons to enroll as enfants de troupe, earning military pay and rations from age two. These children grew up in the regiment and generally made excellent and dedicated soldiers.

The French Revolution of 1789 swept away the old monarchy and its military system, but the need for female auxiliaries remained. In 1793, a new law eliminated male vivandiers and ordered vivandières to apply for their license directly to the regiment's new Council of Administration. Though it was an unintended consequence, the result was that vivandières became independent businesswomen, no longer dependent on their husbands for their livelihood. As France waged war on other monarchies of Europe, vivandières served heroically on the battlefield, and grew in importance as tactics and strategy changed.

One change that occurred during the wars of the Revolution was that French armies increasingly traveled without tents, meaning they moved faster, but the troops suffered more from exposure. The vivandière's tent thus became the focal point of social life for very practical reasons: it was warm and dry.

*Courtesy of cantinieres.com.*



# French Versus Italian Opera

At the start of the Romantic era, French and Italian opera were fighting it out for possession of the opera stage in Paris. However, in attempting to turn back the tide of Italian taste and vocal technique, which had “invaded” opera in France, the French were at a severe disadvantage. As one contemporary English guidebook to the Paris opera commented: “nothing can be worse than the style of singing which characterizes the French School.” Worse still, the French style was fighting a losing battle when the Italian had the keen support of no less a personage than Napoleon Bonaparte, the effective ruler of France.

Napoleon and his wife Josephine were enthusiastic patrons of the new Théâtre Italien, which opened in Paris in 1801. Here, Italian operas virtually monopolized the repertory and the great stars of the show were Italian singers - the contralto Guiseppina Grassini (1773 - 1850) and the castrato Girolamo Crescentini (1752 - 1846). Subsequently, the Italians grasped the management of the Théâtre Italien. Rossini was musical director from 1824 to 1826 and was officially named “Inspector General of Singing in France” by the government.

Eventually, even the more chauvinistic Paris Opéra and Opéra-Comique had to bow to the vogue for Italian opera.

*Courtesy of the Billboard Illustrated Encyclopedia of Opera.*

## France and Italy: Long-time Neighbours

France and Italy share 488 km of borderline along the Alps mountain range, and their shared history goes back a long time. In fact, two French queens have been Italians (the first wife of King Henry II and the second wife of King Henry IV) and from 1861 to 1946, Italy was ruled by the House of Savoy, a family with French origins.

Generally the two countries share a peaceful and cooperative relationship, historically uniting against their common enemies. However the last conflict between France and Italy was a recent as June of 1940 when Italy invaded France during World War II under the command of Benito Mussolini. The Italians were ill-prepared for battle, though, and failed to capture France, which eventually fell under German occupation during the war.

France and Italy share similarities in language as well. French and Italian are both Romance Languages, a branch of the Indo-European language family that also includes Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian, and Catalan. These languages share common rules and pronunciation, making it easy for native speakers of Italian to pick up French and vice versa.



# Winnipeg Public Library

## Resources

### Books

19th century girls & women [by Bobbie Kalman]  
New York : Crabtree Pub., c1997  
Call #: J 305.4 KAL

Political ideas in the romantic age : their rise and influence on modern thought [by Isaiah Berlin ; edited by Henry Hardy ; with an introduction by Joshua L. Cherniss]  
Princeton : Princeton University Press, 2006.  
Call No.: 320.1 BER 2006

The bel canto operas of Rossini, Donizetti, and Bellini [by Charles Osborne]  
Portland, Or. : Amadeus Press, 1994.  
Call No.: 782.10945 OSB

The New Grove masters of Italian opera : Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini, Verdi, Puccini [by Philip Gossett et al.]  
New York : Norton, c1983.  
Call No.: 782.1092 NEW

The lives and times of the great composers [by Michael Steen]  
Thriplow, Cambridge : Icon Books, 2003.  
Call No.: 780.922 STE

A history of women in the Canadian military [by Barbara Dundas]  
Montréal : Art global and Dept. of National Defense in co-operation with de Dept. of Public Works and Government Services Canada, c2000.  
Call No.: 355.008209 DUN

### Scores

The daughter of the regiment (La fille du regiment) / music by Gaetano Donizetti ; libretto by Jean Francois Bayard and J. H. Vernoy de Saint-Georges ; English version by Ruth and Thomas Martin.  
New York : G. Schirmer, c1971.  
Call No.: SCORE 782.1 DON

### Sound Recordings

La fille du regiment [Donizetti]  
London Records, [1986], p1968.  
Call No.: CD OPERA DONIZETTI FIL

The voice of the century [Joan Sutherland]  
Decca, p2007  
Call No.: CD OPERA SUTHERLAND VOI

The Pavarotti edition. Donizetti. 1  
Decca, p2001.  
Call No.: CD OPERA DONIZETTI OPE

### DVD Recordings

La fille du regiment [Donizetti]  
Decca Music Group, 2006  
Call No.: DVD 792.542 FIL

La fille du regiment / Donizetti.  
Virgin Classics, 2008.  
Call #: DVD 792.542 FI



*Nathalie Dessay in La Fille du régiment (2008)*

## A Short Overview of Opera

An opera, like a play, is a dramatic form of theatre that includes scenery, props and costumes. In opera, however, the actors are trained singers who sing their lines instead of speaking them. An orchestra accompanies the singers. A conductor coordinates both the singers on stage and the musicians in the orchestra pit.

Opera consists of many dimensions: the human voice, orchestral music, the visual arts (scenery, costumes and special effects), drama (tragedy or comedy), and occasionally dance. The melding of these elements creates a multi-dimensional theatrical experience.

Opera has its roots in Greek drama and originated in Florence, Italy, in the late 1500's, with a small group of men who were members of the Camerata (Italian for society). The intellectuals, poets and musicians of the Camerata decided they wanted words to be a featured aspect of music. They used ancient Greek drama as their inspiration, including the use of a chorus to comment on the action.

The Camerata laid down three principles for their new art form:

1. The text must be understood; the accompaniment must be very simple and should not distract from the words.
2. The words must be sung with correct and natural declamation, as if they were spoken, and must avoid the rhythms of songs.
3. The melody must interpret the feeling of the text.

The first significant composer to fully develop the ideas of the Camerata was Jacopo Peri (1561-1633), whose opera *Dafne*, based on a Greek myth, was performed in 1594 and is regarded as the first opera.

Operas are divided into scenes and acts that contain different types of vocal pieces for one or many singers. An aria is a vocal solo that usually focuses on a character's emotions rather than actions. A recitative is sung dialogue or speech that occurs between arias and ensembles. It helps to further the action of the story and shape the relationships between the characters.

The story of the opera is written as a libretto: a text that is set to music. Composers write the score or the music for the opera. Sometimes



The Sydney Opera House

the composer will also write the text of the opera, but most often they work with a librettist. In the past, the libretto was also bound and sold to the audience. Today, the audience can easily follow the plot with the use of surtitles - the English translation of the libretto, which are projected onto a screen above the stage.

There are several differences between opera and musicals like *Phantom of the Opera*. One significant difference is the 'partnership' found between the music and the drama in an opera. While musicals use songs to help tell a story, in an opera, the music contributes to the drama, it does not only accompany it.

The musical style is another important difference between the two art forms; opera is usually classical and complex, while musicals feature pop songs and sometimes rock and roll. Also, singers in musicals have microphones hidden in their costumes or wigs to amplify their voices. The voices of opera singers are so strong no amplification is needed, even in a large venue. Furthermore, operas are almost completely sung while the use of spoken words are more common to musicals. There are some operas with spoken words and these are called singspiels (German) and opéra-comique (French). Examples are Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and Bizet's *Carmen*, respectively.



*The Metropolitan Opera (1937)*

## Bringing an Opera to the Stage

Opera combines many great art forms to make something completely different. First and foremost are the performers who portray characters by revealing their thoughts and emotions through the singing voice. The next very important component is a full symphony orchestra that accompanies the singing actors and actresses, helping them to portray the full range of emotions possible in the operatic format. The orchestra performs in an area in front of the singers called the orchestra pit, while the singers perform on the open area called the stage. Wigs, costumes, sets and specialized lighting further enhance these performances, all of which are designed, created, and executed by a team of highly trained artisans.

The creation of an opera begins with a dramatic scenario crafted by a playwright or dramaturg who, alone or with a librettist, fashions the script or libretto that contains the words the artists will sing. Working in tandem, the composer and librettist team up to create a cohesive musical drama in which the music and words work together to express the emotions revealed in the story. Following the completion of their work, the composer and librettist entrust their new work to a conductor who, with a team of assistants (repetiteurs), assumes responsibility for the musical preparation of the work. The conductor collaborates with a stage director (responsible for the visual component) in order to bring a performance of the new piece to life on the stage. The stage director and conductor form the creative spearhead for the new composition while assembling a design team which will take charge of the actual physical production.



*Wendy Nielsen (Tosca) and Richard Margison (Cavaradossi), Tosca, Manitoba Opera, November 2011. Photo: R. Tinker*

Set designers, lighting designers, costume designers, wig and makeup designers and even choreographers must all be brought on board to participate in the creation of the new production. The set designer combines the skills of both an artist and an architect using “blueprint” plans to design the actual physical set which will reside on the stage, recreating the physical setting required by the story line. These blueprints are turned over to a team of carpenters who are specially trained in the art of stage carpentry. Following the actual building of the set, painters following instructions from the set designers’ original plans paint the set. As the set is assembled on the stage, the lighting designer works with a team of electricians to throw light onto both the stage and the set in an atmospheric, as well as practical way. Using specialized lighting instruments, colored gels and a state-of-the-art computer, the designer, along with the stage director, create a “lighting plot” by writing “lighting cues” which are stored in the computer and used during the actual performance of the opera.

During this production period, the costume designer, in consultation with the stage director, has designed appropriate clothing for the singers to wear. These designs are fashioned into patterns and crafted by a team of highly skilled artisans called cutters, stitchers, and sewers. Each costume is specially made for each singer using his/her individual measurements. The wig and makeup designer, working with the costume designer, designs and creates wigs which will complement both the costume and the singer, as well as represent historically accurate period fashions.

The principals are the people who have the major roles in an opera. They are professional singers. Principals usually arrive about three weeks before the first performance, with all of their music memorized and a good sense of their character. In rehearsal, they work with the director who helps them block each of the scenes. The director works with the principals to develop their characters and their voice. For the first two weeks they are accompanied by a rehearsal pianist. The week of the show, they move into the Concert Hall and begin work rehearsing on stage with the orchestra in the pit.



*Danièle Leblanc (Dorabella), John Tessier (Ferrando), James Westman (Guglielmo) and Monica Huisman (Fiordiligi), Così fan tutte, Manitoba Opera, February 2003. Photo: R. Tinker*

# The Operatic Voice and Professional Singing

Operatic singing, developed in Europe during the 17th century, places intense vocal demands on the singer. Opera singers rarely use microphones, and therefore must project their voices to fill a large theatre and be heard above an orchestra.

An opera singer learns to use his or her body as an amplification device. By controlling the muscles of the diaphragm, the singer can regulate the amount of breath used. The diaphragm expands and contracts, regulating the air that passes through the vocal cords, causing them to vibrate. The speed of this determines the pitch. As the sound passes through the mouth, it resonates in the upper chest cavities and the sinus cavities of the face and head. These cavities act as small echo chambers that amplify the sound.

Each person's vocal tract is constructed differently. The roles that a singer performs are dependent mostly upon their vocal range, but within the vocal ranges, there are many colours and weights of voice that contribute. Vocal colour refers to the richness of the sound and vocal weight refers to how powerful a voice sounds.

Many singers begin their operatic training in university. Opera students study singing, music history, composition and vocal pedagogy (voice teaching). In addition to music classes, they study diction and often at least one foreign language. After university, their first professional roles are usually small parts, but if they continue to study and train, they may move on to the bigger principal roles.

Professional singers develop a number of roles in their repertoire. Since the principal artists are required to have their parts memorized before rehearsals begin, singers must prepare well in advance of each contract. Even well established singers have voice teachers, and often acting coaches, who help them refine their singing techniques.

Physical health is a major priority to a singer. Contrary to popular belief, not all opera singers are overweight. Opera singers once believed that excessive weight gave added volume and richness to the voice. However, now we know that physical fitness can give similar benefits to a voice. Plus, the overall health benefits of being in shape overshadow any loss of vocal power. Most singers, like professional athletes, try to avoid tobacco, alcohol, and caffeine.

## VOCAL CATEGORIES

### *Women*

**SOPRANO:** Similar to a flute in range and tone colour. Usually plays the heroine in the opera since a high, bright sound can easily suggest youth and innocence.

**MEZZO-SOPRANO:** Similar to an oboe in range and tone colour. Called an alto in choral arrangements, this voice can play a wide variety of characters including gypsies, mothers, and young men (trouser role).

**CONTRALTO:** Similar to an English horn in range and tone colour. Usually play unique roles including fortune-tellers, witches, and older women.

### *Men*

**TENOR:** Similar to a trumpet in range, tone, color and acoustical "ring." Usually plays the hero or the romantic lead in the opera.

**BARITONE:** Similar to a French horn in tone color. Often plays the leader of mischief in comic opera or the villain in tragic opera, sometimes even the hero.

**BASS:** Similar to a trombone or bassoon in tone color. Usually portrays old, wise men, or foolish, comic men.

HIGHER

LOWER

## VOCAL COLOURINGS

**COLORATURA:** A light, bright voice that has the ability to sing many notes quickly, usually with an extended upper range.

**LYRIC:** A light to medium weight voice, often singing beautiful sweeping melodies.

**DRAMATIC:** Dark, heavy and powerful voice, capable of sustained and forceful singing.

## Glossary: Important Words in Opera

**ACT:** a section of the opera that is then divided into scenes.

**ARIA:** means “air” in Italian. This is a piece of music written for a one singer (soloist), usually with instrumental accompaniment.

**ASIDE:** a secret comment from an actor directly to the audience that the other characters cannot hear.

**BARITONE:** the middle singing range of the male voice.

**BASS:** the lowest singing range of the male voice.

**BASSO BUFFO:** a bass singer who specializes in comic characters.

**BASSO PROFUNDO:** the most serious bass voice.

**BATON:** short stick that the conductor uses to lead the orchestra.

**BEL CANTO:** Italian phrase literally meaning “beautiful singing.” A traditional Italian style of singing emphasizing tone, phrasing, coloratura passages, and technique. Also refers to the operas written in this style.

**BLOCKING:** directions given to the performers for movement on stage.

**BRAVO:** (Italian)- a form of appreciation shouted by audience members at the end of a particularly pleasing performance. Technically, bravo refers to a male performer, brava refers to a female performer and bravi refers to many performers.

**BUFFO:** from the Italian for “buffoon.” A singer of comic roles (basso-buffo) or a comic opera (opera-buffa.)

**CADENZA:** a passage of singing, often at the end of an aria, which shows off the singer’s vocal ability.

**CASTRATO:** (Italian)- a castrated male prized for his high singing voice.

**CHOREOGRAPHER:** the person who designs the steps of a dance.

**CHORUS:** a group of singers of all vocal ranges, singing together to support the vocal leads.

**CLASSICAL:** the period in music which comes after the Baroque and before the Romantic, roughly from the birth of Mozart to shortly after the death of Beethoven. It represents the greatest standardization in orchestral form and tonality.

**COLORATURA:** elaborate ornamentation of music written for a singer using many fast notes and trills. Also used to describe a singer who sings this type of music.



*Jeffrey Springer (Turiddu), Pagliacci, Manitoba Opera, April 2004. Photo: R.Tinker*

**COMPOSER:** the individual who writes all the music for both voice and instrument.

**COMPRIMARIO:** a nineteenth century term referring to secondary or supporting roles such as confidantes, messengers, and matchmakers.

**CONTRALTO:** the lowest female voice range.

**CONDUCTOR:** the person responsible for the musical interpretation and coordination of the performance. The conductor controls the tempo, the dynamic level, and the balance between singers and orchestra. You will see this person standing in the orchestra pit conducting the musicians and the singers.

**COUNTERTENOR:** a male singer with the highest male voice range, generally singing within the female contralto or mezzo-soprano range.

**CRESCENDO:** a build in the volume or dynamic of the music.

**CUE:** a signal to enter or exit from the stage, to move or to change lighting or scenery; or a signal given by the conductor to the musicians.



Jeff Mattsey (*Don Giovanni*) and Stefan Szkarofsky (*Commendatore*), *Don Giovanni*, Manitoba Opera, November 2003. Photo: R.Tinker

**CURTAIN CALL:** occurs at the end of the performance when all the cast members and the conductor take bows. This can occur in front of the curtain or on the open stage.

**DESIGNER:** a production can have two or three designers: a lighting designer, a costume designer, a set designer, or someone who is both costume and set designer. They work closely with the stage director to give the production a distinctive look.

**DIVA:** literally *goddess* in Italian. An important female opera star. The masculine form is *divo*.

**DRESS REHEARSAL:** the final rehearsal before opening night, includes costumes, lights, makeup, etc. Sometimes it is necessary to stop for adjustments, but an attempt is made to make it as much like a regular performance as possible.

**DUET:** music that is written for two people to sing together.

**ENCORE:** a piece that is performed after the last scheduled piece of a concert. An encore is usually performed because the audience wants to hear more music even though the concert is over.

**ENSEMBLE:** a part of the opera written for a group of two or more singers. This may or may not include the chorus.

**FALSETTO:** the upper part of a voice in which the vocal cords do not vibrate completely. Usually used by males to imitate a female voice.

**FINALE:** the last musical number of an opera or an act.

**GRAND OPERA:** spectacular French opera of the Romantic period, lavishly staged, with a historically-based plot, a huge cast, an unusually large orchestra, and ballet. It also refers to opera without spoken dialogue.

**HELDEN:** German prefix meaning “heroic.” Can also apply to other voices, but usually used in “heldentenor.”

**HOUSE:** the auditorium and front of the theatre excluding the stage and backstage areas.

**IMPRESARIO:** the proprietor, manager, or conductor of an opera or concert company; one who puts on or sponsors an entertainment manager, producer.

**INTERLUDE:** a short piece of instrumental music played between scenes and acts.

**INTERMISSION:** a break between acts of an opera. The lights go on and the audience is free to move around.

**LIBRETTIST:** the writer of the opera's text.

**LIBRETTO:** Italian for *little book*. It is the text or story of the opera.

**LYRIC:** used to describe a light-to-medium-weight voice with an innocent quality, capable of both sustained, forceful singing and delicate effects.

**MAESTRO:** means "master" in Italian. Used as a courtesy title for the conductor (male or female).

**MARK:** to sing, but not at full voice. A full-length opera is very hard on a singer's voice, so most performers mark during rehearsals. During the dress rehearsal singers try to sing at full voice for part, if not all, of the rehearsal.

**MEZZO-SOPRANO:** the middle singing range for a female voice.

**MOTIF OR LEITMOTIF:** a recurring musical theme used to identify an emotion, person, place, or object.

**OPERA:** a dramatic presentation which is set to music. Almost all of it is sung, and the orchestra is an equal partner with the singers. Like a play, an opera is acted on stage with costumes, scenery, makeup, etc. Opera is the plural form of the Latin word *opus*, which means "work."

**OPERA BUFFA:** an opera about ordinary people, usually, but not always comic. First developed in the 18th century.

**OPERA SERIA:** a serious opera. The usual characters are gods and goddesses, or ancient heroes.

**OPERA-COMIQUE:** (singspiel) a form of opera which contains spoken dialogue.

**OPERETTA:** lighthearted opera with spoken dialogue, such as a musical.

**ORCHESTRA:** an ensemble, led by a conductor, that is comprised of string, woodwind, brass and percussion instruments.

**ORCHESTRA PIT:** sunken area in front of the stage where the orchestra sits.

**OVERTURE:** an orchestral introduction to the opera played before the curtain rises. Usually longer than a prelude and can be played as a separate piece.

**PITCH:** how high or low a note sounds.

**PRELUDE:** a short introduction that leads into an act without pause.

**PRIMA DONNA:** literally *first lady* in Italian. The leading woman in an opera. Because of the way some of them behaved in the past, it often refers to someone who is acting in a superior and demanding fashion. The term for a leading man is *primo uomo*.

**PRINCIPAL:** a major singing role, or the singer who performs such a role.

**PRODUCTION:** the combination of sets, costumes, props, and lights, etc.

**PROPS:** objects carried or used on stage by the performers.

**PROSCENIUM:** the front opening of the stage which frames the action.

**QUARTET:** four singers or the music that is written for four singers. Also quintet, sextet, etc.

**RAKED STAGE:** a stage that slants downwards towards the audience.

**RECITATIVE:** lines of dialogue that are sung, usually with no recognizable melody. It is used to advance the plot.

**REHEARSAL:** a working session in which the singers prepare for public performance.

**SCORE:** the written music of an opera or other musical work.

**SERENADE:** a piece of music honouring someone or something, an extension of the traditional performance of a lover beneath the window of his mistress.

**SITZPROBE:** the rehearsal held on to the main stage for the first time. The entire opera is sung through without any costumes or blocking.

**SOPRANO:** the highest range of the female singing voice.

**SOUBRETTE:** pert young female character with a light soprano voice.

**SPINTO:** a lyric voice that has the power and incisiveness for dramatic climaxes.

**STAGE AREAS:** refers to the various sections of the stage as seen by those on stage.



*Andriana Chuchman (Pamina), The Magic Flute, Manitoba Opera, April 2011. Photo: R.Tinker*

**STAGE DIRECTOR:** the person in charge of the action on stage. He or she shows the singers, chorus and cast where and when to move and helps them create their characters. The stage director develops a concept for how the entire performance should look and feel. He or she works closely with the stage managers, lighting designer, set designers, costume designer, and wig and makeup artists to make his or her vision into reality.

**STAGE MANAGER:** the person who coordinates and manages elements of the performance.

**SUPERNUMERARIES:** appear on stage in costume in non-singing and usually, non-speaking roles.

**SURTITLES:** the English translations of the opera's language, in this production Italian, that are projected above the stage during a performance to help the audience follow the story, much like subtitles in a foreign film.

**SYNOPSIS:** a short summary of the story of the opera.

**TABLEAU:** occurs at the end of a scene or act, when all cast members on stage freeze in position and remain that way until the curtain closes. It looks as though that moment has been captured in a photograph.

**TEMPO:** speed of the music.

**TENOR:** the highest natural adult male voice.

**TRILL:** very quick alternation between two adjacent notes. See coloratura.

**TRIO:** an ensemble of three singers or the music that is written for three singers.

**TROUSER ROLE:** the role of an adolescent boy or young man, written for and sung by a woman, often a mezzo-soprano. Also known as a pants role.

**VERISMO:** describes a realistic style of opera that started in Italy at the end of the 19th century.

# Audience Etiquette

*The following list will help you (and those around you) enjoy the experience of a night at the opera:*

- Dress to be comfortable. Many people enjoy dressing up in formal attire, but this is optional and people attend wearing all varieties of clothing.
- Arrive on time. Latecomers disturb the singers and others in the audience. Latecomers will only be seated at suitable breaks - often not until intermission.
- Find your seat with the help of your teacher or an usher and remember to thank them.
- Remove your hat. This is customary and is respectful to the artists and to people sitting behind you.
- Turn off, tune in. Switch off all electronic devices including cell phones, smart phones, iPods, pagers, and digital watch alarms.
- Leave your camera at home and do not use the camera function on your phone during a performance. This can be very disturbing to the artists and audience members.
- Find the “EXIT” signs. Look for the illuminated signs over the doors. You always want to know where the nearest emergency exit is in a theatre.
- If you think you might need a breath mint or cough drop, unwrap it before the performance.
- Settle in and get comfortable before the performance begins. Read your program. This tells you what performance you’re about to see, who created it, and who’s performing in it. You might like to read a synopsis of the opera before it begins.
- Clap as the lights are dimmed and the conductor appears and bows to the audience. Watch as the conductor then turns to the orchestra and takes up his or her baton to signal the beginning of the opera.
- Listen to the prelude or overture before the curtain rises. It is part of the performance and an opportunity to identify common musical themes that may reoccur during the opera.
- Save all conversations, eating, drinking, and chewing gum, for the intermission. Talking and eating can be disruptive to other audience members and distracts from your ability to be absorbed by the show. The audience is critical to the success of the show – without you, there can be no performance.
- Sit still. Only whisper when it is absolutely necessary, as a whisper is heard all over the theatre, and NEVER stand during the performance, except in the case of an emergency.
- Read the English translations projected above the stage.
- Feel free to laugh when something is funny – this is a performance and you are expected to respond!
- Listen for subtleties in the music. The tempo, volume and complexity of the music and
- Singing often depict the “feeling” or “sense” of the action or character.
- Notice repeated words or phrases; they are usually significant.
- Applaud (or shout Bravo!) at the end of an aria or chorus piece to show your enjoyment of it. The end of a piece can be identified by a pause in the music.
- Finally, have fun and enjoy the show!

# Manitoba Opera

Founded in 1969 by a group of individuals dedicated to presenting the great works of opera to Manitoban audiences, Manitoba Opera is the province's only full-time professional opera company. The company attracts great international artists, highlights the best local talent, and is supported by the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra under the direction of internationally renowned conductors. Manitoba Opera celebrated its 35th Season in 2007/08 by presenting the world premiere of an opera commissioned by the company, *Transit of Venus*.

## Chorus

The Manitoba Opera Chorus, under the direction of Chorus Master Tadeusz Biernacki, is hailed for their excellent singing and acting abilities. The chorus boasts a core of skilled singers who give generously of their time and talents. Some are voice majors at university, a few are singing teachers, but most work in jobs that aren't music related.



*Carmen, Manitoba Opera, April 2010. Photo: R.Tinker*

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# Student Activities

## Activity #1: Using the Five C's, Have your Students Analyze the Opera as Drama:

**CHARACTERS:** Are they interesting? Believable? Are their actions, words, thoughts consistent?

**CONFLICT:** What conflicts are established? How are they resolved?

**CLIMAX:** To what climax does the conflict lead?

**CONCLUSION:** How well does the conclusion work? Is it consistent? Satisfying? Believable?

**CONTEXT:** What are the historical, physical, and emotional settings? Sets and costumes?

- Give students the synopsis to read and have them re-tell the story after they have read it.
- Ask comprehensive questions.
- Present and discuss the composer and librettist.
- Listen to excerpts from the opera. Watch a DVD of the opera. Have students identify and recognize recurring themes.
- Discuss the historical background, emphasizing the visual and performing arts and history-social science frameworks. Discuss the results of certain events. Whom did they affect? How? Why? Did any changes occur as a result?
- Review the glossary of terms.
- Have the students watch for references to themes in the opera in their everyday lives. The internet, radio, TV, magazines, and movies often refer back to classics.

## Activity #2: Create a Poster, Set, Costume, Press Release, or Ad

- Choose a time and place to set your production
- Have the students design a poster for *The Daughter of the Regiment* Student Night at the Opera, including the date, the time, and the people involved.
- Have them draw a set for a production of the opera.
- They might also sketch a costume, wig, and makeup for a character in *The Daughter of the Regiment*.
- Have the students write a press release about *The Daughter of the Regiment* Student Night at the Opera, including the date, the time, the people involved, and why it would be exciting or fun to attend.
- Have the students create an ad for the opera. Include whatever you feel is the biggest “selling point” of the opera - what makes it exciting? Why should people come to see it?

### Activity #3: A Review

#### *Step 1 – Think-Group-Share*

Individually students will write, in point form, the answers to the following questions:

1. What did you like about the opera? What did you dislike?
2. What did you think about the sets, props, and costumes?
3. Would you have done something differently? Why?
4. What were you expecting? Did it live up to your expectations?
5. What did you think of the singers' portrayal of their characters?

Break the students into groups to discuss their feelings and reactions to the production. Have the students write on poster papers their answers or important points of their discussion. Encourage the students to go beyond the questions posed.

#### *Step 2 – Class Discussion*

Have the whole class examine the poster papers and discuss the different ideas from each group.

#### *Step 3 – Outlining your review*

Go over the essential aspects of a review including: a clearly stated purpose, a coherent comparison/contrast organizational pattern, a summary paragraph capturing the interest of the reader, precise nouns, revision for consistency of ideas. You might give your students a few samples of reviews for fine arts events – or ask them to bring in some reviews they find themselves. Have the students fill out the review outline, then complete a rough draft.

1. Purpose (why are you writing this and who is your audience?)
2. Plot Synopsis (including who sang what role, etc.)
3. Paragraph 1 (compare and contrast things you liked or didn't like)
4. Paragraph 2 (compare and contrast things you liked or didn't like)
5. Paragraph 3 (compare and contrast things you liked or didn't like)
6. Summary/Closing Paragraph

#### *Step 4 - Peer Conferencing*

Students will exchange reviews to critique and edit. Encourage the students to focus on effective coordination of ideas in sentences and the correct use of grammar and punctuation.

#### *Step 5 - Creating the final draft*

Have students make the appropriate adjustments to their reviews. You could also have the students type the pieces up and organize them into a newspaper.

### Activity #4: Have your students act out the story

Have students consider the characters and the role they play in the story. Choose one of the following:

MARIE | TONIO | MARQUISE OF BERKENFELD | SULPICE | HORTENSIUS | DUCHESS OF KRAKENTHORP

If you were going to play this character, you would have to discover, create, and imagine background, personality, and physical qualities. Some clues are provided in the story and the music and some you need to make up yourself.

*Pretend you are that character and answer the following questions:*

1. What motivates you? How does this affect your actions? What obstacles stand in your way?
2. What steps in the opera do you take to achieve your objectives? What are the results?
3. What obstacles are beyond your control (laws, social status, others' actions)?
4. What are your (character's) greatest strengths? Greatest weaknesses?
5. What is your relationship to the other characters?
6. How is the character's personality expressed through the music of the opera?
7. Can you think of a modern-day character who has similar characteristics and traits?
8. If this character were alive today, how would s/he be more or less successful?
9. What different steps would s/he take to achieve an objective?

### Activity #5: Write a Biography

Have students research and write a bio of the playwright, composer, librettist or one of the characters.

### Activity #6: Create a Journal or Blog from the Point of View of a Character

Have the students choose a point of conflict, and write a journal or blog of those events from a character's point of view. What does Marie think of life in the army? Why does the Marquise first say that she is Marie's aunt and not her mother? What does Sulpice think of Marie leaving the 21st regiment to live with the Marquise?

### **Activity #7: Write a Letter from One Character to Another**

Have the students choose a moment in the story and have one character write a letter to another, giving them advice for the future. Ethical questions raised by the plot or characters can be addressed.

### **Activity #8: Cast *The Daughter of the Regiment***

Have the students cast modern-day singers or bands as the performers in *The Daughter of the Regiment*. Who did you choose? What are their costumes like? What did you base your decisions on?

### **Activity #9: Tweet About *The Daughter of the Regiment***

Have the students tweet about *The Daughter of the Regiment* Student Night by writing out a twitter in 140 characters. Have students read their tweet aloud to the class and post them to Manitoba Opera's Facebook wall. Try to be clever, funny, or start a conversation.

### **Activity #10: Women's Rights**

Have students research the history and progression of women's rights. Consider questions like: When did women get the right to vote in Canada? What countries still do not treat women as equals to this day? Why is treating women as equal to men important? What other groups suffer from inequality in Canada or other countries?

### **Activity #11: *The Daughter of the Regiment* Mood Board**

Often before artists and designers create their work, they make a mood board to set the tone for the piece. This is usually a poster-sized piece of paper covered in images and words, usually torn from the pages of magazines and newspapers, that together communicates the complex mood of the piece in a way that words can't. It's the same as making a collage, except a mood board is for the purpose of communicating a focused concept.

Have your students go through a stack of old magazines and newspapers to create a mood board for *The Daughter of the Regiment*. They can create one each or work together on a large one for the class. Consider elements like colours, textures, phrases, faces, patterns, and images that represent the opera.

## Activity #12: Opera Comprehension Tests

### *The Opera*

1. \_\_\_\_\_ A theatrical production incorporating both vocal and instrumental music, drama, and sometimes dance.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ The lowest male vocal range.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ An instrumental introduction to an opera.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ The area where the orchestra is seated.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Considered the first opera.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ A song for solo voice in an opera.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ The highest female vocal range.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ A song for two voices.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ The lowest female vocal range.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ The Italian word meaning "little book."
11. \_\_\_\_\_ The middle male vocal range.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ He/she is in charge of all the action on the stage.

*The Daughter of the Regiment*

1. In which city was the premiere performance of Donizetti's *La Fille du regiment*? \_\_\_\_\_
2. In what year did it premiere? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many high C's does Tonio sing in one song? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Upon which other work was the libretto for *The Daughter of the Regiment* based?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Where does this two-act comedy take place? \_\_\_\_\_
6. The role of Marie is sung by a \_\_\_\_\_ (name the singing voice).
7. The role of Tonio is sung by a \_\_\_\_\_ (name the singing voice).
8. Who is the composer? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What language is the opera performed in? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Who will sing the lead role in Manitoba Opera's production of *The Daughter of the Regiment*?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Answer Key

### General Opera

1. Opera
2. Bass
3. Overture
4. Orchestra pit or “the pit”
5. Daphne
6. Aria
7. Soprano
8. Duet
9. Contralto
10. Libretto
11. Baritone
12. Stage director

### *The Daughter of the Regiment*

1. Paris
2. 1840
3. Nine
4. None, it’s original
5. Tyrol mountains
6. Coloratura Soprano
7. Tenor
8. Gaetano Donizetti
9. French
10. Nikki Einfeld

Manitoba Opera would love to receive a copy of any work related to this opera produced by your students. Please forward to:

Marketing Coordinator, Manitoba Opera, 1060 - 555 Main St., Winnipeg, MB R3B 1C3

or

[balexander@manitobaopera.mb.ca](mailto:balexander@manitobaopera.mb.ca)

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