



FIDELIO

2014/15 Season



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**For Student Night tickets or more information on student programs,
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Three 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:

- *Fidelio* is an opera in two acts, with a running time of approximately three hours.
- 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.
- Tickets to Student Night are \$12 per person and are available to schools and education groups only.

For more information or to book tickets, contact Livia Dymond at 204-942-7470.

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. Materials in the study guide may be copied and distributed to students.

3. Opera in a Trunk

Bring the magic of opera right into the classroom with our Opera in a Trunk. Each trunk includes costumes, props, books, a cd and dvd of the opera, photographs, activities, and a guide for putting it all together. Rental price is \$50 per trunk for a two-week period.

Available trunks:

La Bohème

Aida

The Daughter of the Regiment

The Magic Flute

Carmen

For more information or to book a trunk, contact Livia Dymond at 204-942-7470.

Fidelio: Good To Know

- *Fidelio* (pronounced fee-DAY-lee-oh) is Ludwig van Beethoven's only opera. It is a German opera with spoken dialogue (*singspiel*) in two acts.
- Set in a state prison, *Fidelio* tells the story of how Leonore, disguised as a prison guard named "Fidelio", rescues her husband Florestan from death in a political prison.
- Instead of *Fidelio*'s original setting of 18th century Spain, Manitoba Opera's production will be set in Germany around the time of the fall of the Berlin wall.
- The original libretto, inspired by Jean Nicholas Bouilly's French drama *Léonore*, was written by Joseph Von Sonnleithner. The scenario of *Fidelio* fit Beethoven's political outlook at the time as the story deals with themes of freedom, equality, and the brotherhood of man.
- Beethoven began composing *Fidelio* in the year 1804, shortly after the French Revolution and around the beginning of the Napoleonic Wars.
- By 1801, Beethoven had begun losing his hearing and by the last decade of his life, he was almost completely deaf. Despite this hearing loss, he continued composing and many of his greatest works are from his period.
- Beethoven wrote three versions of *Fidelio*, including four overtures, over the course of 10 years. The premiere performance took place at Theater an der Wien, in Vienna, Austria, on November 20, 1805. The second version premiered in 1806 and the final version at the Kärntnertortheater in Vienna on May 23, 1814.
- *Fidelio* is often regarded as the second great German opera after Mozart's *The Magic Flute*.
- November 2014 will be Manitoba Opera's first production of *Fidelio*. It will be presented to commemorate the opening of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.



Adrienne Pieczonka as Leonore in Canadian Opera Company's 2009 production of *Fidelio*. Photo: Michael Cooper.

Production Information

Fidelio

November 22, 25, & 28
(Dress Rehearsal / Student Night: November 20)
Centennial Concert Hall

Music by Ludwig van Beethoven
Libretto in German by Joseph Sonnleithner with subsequent revisions
by Stephan von Breuning and Georg Friedrich Treitschke

Premiere Performance: May 23, 1814 at Kärntnertortheatre in Vienna, Austria
Approximately three hours in two acts
Sung in German with projected English translations.

PRINCIPAL CAST

LEONORE	ILEANA MONTALBETTI	soprano
FLORESTAN	DAVID POMEROY	tenor
DON PIZZARO	KRISTOPHER IRMITER	bass-baritone
ROCCO	VALERIN RUMINSKI	bass
MARCELLINA	LARA SECORD-HAID	soprano
JACQUINO	MICHAEL COLVIN	tenor
DON FERNANDO	DAVID WATSON	bass

Manitoba Opera Chorus
Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra

Conductor	Tyrone Paterson
Director	Larry Desrochers
Scenery and props	Manitoba Opera
Costumes	TBC
Lighting designer	Bill Williams
Stage manager	Evan Klassen
Assistant stage managers	Kathryn Ball, Leigh McClymont
Projected titles	Sheldon Johnson

Synopsis

While *Fidelio* is usually set in 18th century Spain, Manitoba Opera's production will be set in Germany around the time of the fall of the Berlin wall.

ACT I. In a prison, Marcellina, daughter of the jailer, Rocco, rejects the attentions of her father's assistant, Jacquino, who hopes to marry her. Her heart is set instead on the new errand boy, Fidelio. The latter, a hardworking lad, arrives with provisions and dispatches and is distressed by Marcellina's interest in him, especially since it has the blessing of Rocco. Fidelio is in fact Leonore, a woman who has come to the jail disguised as a boy to find her husband, Florestan, a political prisoner languishing somewhere in chains. When Rocco mentions a man lying near death in the vaults below, Leonore, suspecting it might be Florestan, begs Rocco to take her on his rounds. He agrees, though the governor of the prison, Don Pizarro, allows only Rocco in the lower levels of the dungeon.

As soldiers assemble in the courtyard, Pizarro learns from the dispatches brought to him that Don Fernando, minister of state, is on his way to inspect the fortress. At this news the governor resolves to kill Florestan, his enemy, without delay and orders Rocco to dig a grave for the victim in the dungeon. Leonore, overhearing his plan, realizes Pizarro's evil nature and the plight of his victim. After praying for strength to save her husband and keep up hope, she again begs Rocco to let her accompany him to the condemned man's cell - and also to allow the other prisoners a few moments of air in the courtyard. The gasping men relish their glimpse of freedom but are ordered back by Pizarro, who hurries Rocco off to dig Florestan's grave. With apprehension, Leonore follows him into the dungeon.

ACT II. In one of the lowest cells of the prison, Florestan dreams he sees Leonore arrive to free him. But his vision turns to despair, and he sinks down exhausted. Rocco and Leonore arrive and begin digging the grave. Florestan awakens, not recognizing his wife, and Leonore almost loses her composure at the familiar sound of his voice. Florestan moves the jailer to offer him a drink, and Leonore gives him a bit of bread, urging him not to lose faith. Rocco then blows on his whistle to signal Pizarro that all is ready. The governor advances with dagger drawn to strike, but Leonore stops him with a pistol. At this moment a trumpet sounds from the battlements: Don Fernando has arrived. Rocco leads Pizarro out to meet him as Leonore and Florestan rejoice in each other's arms.

In the prison courtyard, Don Fernando proclaims justice for all. He is amazed when Rocco brings his friend Florestan before him and relates the details of Leonore's heroism. Pizarro is arrested, and Leonore herself removes Florestan's chains. The other prisoners too are freed, and the crowd hails Leonore.

- courtesy of Opera News

Fidelio Principal Characters

Name	Description	Pronunciation
Florestan	A political prisoner	FLOH-rehs-tahn
Leonore	Florestan's wife, disguised as Fidelio	leh-oh-NOH-reh
Don Pizarro	Governor of the state prison	Don pee-TSAHR-roh
Rocco	Marcellina's father, a guard at the prison	ROHk-koh
Marcellina	Rocco's daughter	mahr-tseh-LEE-nah
Jacquino	Assistant to Rocco	yak-KEE-noh
Don Fernando	King's minister	Don fehr-NAHN-doh



The Principal Artists

Leonore

Ileana Montalbetti

Saskatoon native Ileana Montalbetti is a graduate of the prestigious Canadian Opera Company Ensemble Studio Program, as well as an alumni of the Chautauqua Institute, and holds an opera diploma from the University of Toronto. She has sung with such companies as Canadian Opera Company, Edmonton Opera, Michigan Opera Theater, and Teatro dell'Opera di Roma.



Florestan

David Pomeroy

Internationally acclaimed for his rich voice with thrilling top notes, Newfoundland native David Pomeroy has sung in the spotlight on some of the world's most important stages, with the Canadian Opera Company, Metropolitan Opera, Calgary Opera, Vancouver Opera and New York City Opera. He last appeared with Manitoba Opera in 2012 as the Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto*.



Don Pizarro

Kristopher Irmiter

A Grammy-nominated artist who has performed in all 50 states and throughout Canada, bass-baritone Kristopher Irmiter has appeared with such companies as Opera Lyra Ottawa, L'Opéra de Montréal, San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Florida Grand Opera among many others. With over 100 performed roles in his repertoire, Mr. Irmiter has exhibited a vast range both vocally and dramatically, earning broad critical acclaim. He last appeared with Manitoba Opera in 2006 as Figaro in *The Marriage of Figaro*.



The Principal Artists

Rocco

Valerian Ruminski

Valerian Ruminski is a graduate of the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia and of the University at Buffalo (State University of New York). A true basso cantante, he has received great recognition for his exceptional talent. Mr. Ruminski has performed with many of the great opera companies in the US and abroad including the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, Seattle Opera, l'Opéra de Montréal, and Opera de Monte Carlo.



Marcellina

Lara Secord-Haid

Winnipeg-based soprano Lara Secord-Haid has studied vocal performance at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston and completed a master's degree at The Juilliard School in New York. She has performed with companies such as Manhattan Opera Studio, New York Lyric Opera, The Banff Center, and The New Juilliard Ensemble. *Fidelio* will be Ms. Secord-Haid's Manitoba Opera debut.



Jacquino

Michael Colvin

Tenor Michael Colvin was born in Ireland but relocated to Canada as a child. He earned a degree in immunology, but went on to pursue music through the opera division of the University of Toronto, Czech Republic's International Opera Workshop, Canada's Banff Centre for the Arts, and England's Britten-Pears School. He has since appeared to critical acclaim on opera and concert stages throughout Canada, the United States, and Europe. He last appeared with Manitoba Opera in 2011 as Narraboth in *Salome*.



Don Fernando

David Watson

Canadian bass-baritone David Watson began his professional singing career in 1974 in Winnipeg. He made his operatic debut in Manitoba in 1979 and has since performed extensively with opera companies and orchestras across Canada. He last appeared with Manitoba Opera in 2014 as Benoit/Alcindoro in *La Bohème*.



The Composer

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born: 1770

Died: 1827

Ludwig van Beethoven was born in 1770 into a musical family in Bonn, Germany. His father was a mediocre musician and struggled with alcoholism throughout his life. Beethoven's grandfather, on the other hand, had been a very successful musician at the royal court. Beethoven was expected to continue the family's music tradition and at age five his father began teaching him music. Beethoven's talents were obvious at a young age and by age seven, he was performing publicly. His first work was published at age 12.



In 1787, at age 16, Beethoven visited Vienna to meet Mozart and further his musical education. But shortly into this visit, Beethoven received a letter calling him back to Bonn - his mother was gravely ill with tuberculosis. She soon passed away and within a year, his sister passed away as well. Unable to cope with these events, his father's alcoholism worsened and Beethoven was forced to take over as head of the family. His father died in 1792, not long after Beethoven had moved to Vienna to study with Joseph Haydn.

In Vienna, Beethoven began composing in a new musical style and became well known for his dramatic, forceful piano playing. After a decade in Vienna he had composed a variety of works including piano sonatas, string quartets, symphonies, piano concertos and a ballet. But around 1801, Beethoven's life took a turn when he began losing his hearing. He threw himself into his music, hoping the problem would soon go away.

With many changes in Europe in the 18th century and early 19th century, including the French Revolution, Beethoven was inspired by the ideals of liberty, equality and brotherhood. In 1804, he turned his attention to writing an opera, *Fidelio*, which would celebrate courage in the face of tyranny and freedom from oppression. By this time, Beethoven's hearing had begun deteriorating even more.

The problem worsened until he became completely deaf in his late forties and as a result often withdrew himself from society. However, even with complete deafness Beethoven continued conducting, composing and performing. It was during this time that he had his most creative period yet, writing his groundbreaking *Symphony No. 9*, which was inspired by a poem about joy, and the choral mass, *Missa Solemnis*.

In 1826, Beethoven caught a cold, an illness that complicated other health problems he had suffered from all his life. He died on March 26 1827, just as a storm broke out, at the age of only 56.

The Librettists



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 play-wright Jean-Nicolas Bouilly's piece *Léonore*. A leading figure in the Viennese musical life in the first decades of the 19th century, Sonnleithner consequently 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*.



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 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.

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 *Fidelio*

“When I look back across my entire life, I find no event to place beside this in the impression it produced on me.” — Richard Wagner, on seeing a performance of *Fidelio*

Beethoven was not a facile composer; virtually everything he wrote was accompanied by tremendous, sometimes monumental effort, as evidenced by manuscripts and sketch books in the composer’s hand. The surfaces are often covered with erasure marks, cross-hatching, passages hidden by solid ink blots and disconnected notes flying from one end of the page to the other. It often took years for him to complete a symphony, sonata or string quartet, to say nothing of *Fidelio* which was the result of a 12-year creative process, at the end of which the composer had still not produced a definitive version of the work.



A page from Beethoven’s working manuscript of *Fidelio*
(source: Julliard Manuscript Collection)

Whether by accident or purposeful calculation, this sense of struggle is communicated in the music of *Fidelio* to a great degree. All of the classic elements particular to Beethoven are present in the score: heightened emotion, syncopation and heavily accented weak beats, a sense of equality among all sections of the orchestra, a motivic rather than melodic approach to musical development and an overall sense of craggy individualism, the singular artist battling against all odds for meaning and understanding. These Beethovenian hallmarks pervade nearly every one of the composer’s mature works. These style characteristics were surely enhanced by his gradual deafness, a handicap that must have underscored his sense of isolation.

In this opera, that sense of struggle also pervades the vocal writing. Writing on the heels of arguably the most elegant shaper of melody in Western music (Mozart), and parallel to an Italian master of nearly equal skill (Rossini), Beethoven’s vocal lines for the characters in *Fidelio* seem perverse in comparison. Much of the vocal music is angular and athletic in character, with unwieldy phrases that at times seem better suited to instruments than voice. The cumulative effect is that of characters struggling mightily to communicate, singers battling their own limitations and overcoming all odds in order to emerge victorious. The musical battle mirrors the narrative: the triumph of good over evil through selfless acts of steadfast love against all odds.

Out of the context of this monumental struggle emerges the shape of Leonore’s vocal lines in *Ab-scheulicher!* (Abominable man!), and the cruel tessitura of Florestan’s *Gott! Welch Dunkel hier* (God! What darkness here). These are characters struggling against forces that seem stronger than them. At the same time, these are singers who seem to be (and very often are) struggling against musical demands that are almost impossible to achieve with any perfection. Intentional or not, Beethoven’s vocal writing is a logical extension of the fictional story.

Continued on next page...

Beethoven also uses emotional development in the musical numbers as a storytelling device. The first vocal piece (the Marcellina/Jacquino duet, *Jetzt Schätzchen* — Yes, sweetheart), features a slow progression from light to dark, and back to light again. This emotional development parallels the progression of the story from the relative light of the prison courtyard to the impenetrable darkness of Florestan's dungeon cell to the courtyard of the fortress in the full daytime sun. The difference in tone, color and emotion is immediately apparent when compared with the orchestral accompaniment of the Marcellina/Jacquino duet to the introduction to Act II.

Quickly shifting from there to the final chorus (*Wer ein holdes Weib errungen* — He who has a fair wife) which ends the work in a blaze of glory, we experience a quick aural snapshot of the opera's dramatic trajectory.

The quartet in Act I, *Mir ist so wunderbar* (It is so wonderful), is one of the first truly sublime moments in an opera with many. In this quartet, Marcellina, Leonore, Rocco and Jacquino reveal their innermost thoughts. Marcellina speaks of her overwhelming feelings for this stranger, Fidelio; Leonore remarks on her anxiety and the danger that she now finds herself in given Marcellina's feelings; Rocco, the loving father, sees in Fidelio the perfect match for his daughter; and Jacquino despairs that Marcellina will ever love him. All of these disparate feelings are dealt with in a canon, initiated by Marcellina. The tune is 32 bars long and each singer enters after the first eight bars have been sung by the previous singer. The canon breaks down at the 32nd bar after all four singers have entered, and a short coda finishes the piece. The musical structure of the quartet is remarkable enough, but the tune itself has the flexibility to perfectly capture each character's feelings: Marcellina's and Rocco's hopes, Leonore's anxiety and Jacquino's despair are all delineated with the utmost sensitivity.

The musical highlights certainly include Leonore's remarkable first act aria, *Abscheulicher!*, which is cast in the typical Italian double-aria form with introductory recitative, a slow movement (*Komm, Hoffnung* — Come, hope) and a fast movement to end (*Ich folg' dem inner Triebe* — I follow an inner drive). This being a German opera, we cannot strictly call these movements cavatina and cabaletta, but they are essentially identical to the Italian practice. Very un-Italian, however, is Beethoven's treatment of the voice, particularly in the final section. The soprano is treated as if she were a member of the orchestra, an oboe or a clarinet, her part replete with wide, ungainly leaps, scales and arpeggios, all sung quickly (*Allegro con brio*). Adding to the challenge, the soprano often competes with three horns: even with the relative weakness of their part in Beethoven's orchestra, this remains a daunting prospect. But thoughtful listening elucidates Beethoven's intent: to portray Leonore's monumental struggle through musical means. If the score is so interpreted and accepted, the composer hit his mark.

Many critics consider *Fidelio* a flawed masterpiece, basing their judgment on the unevenness of the dramatic through-line and the seemingly awkward vocal lines. But *Fidelio* can be an overwhelming emotional experience and music-drama at its very best.

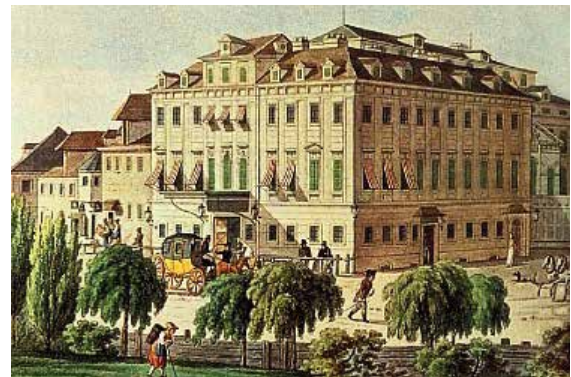
-Courtesy of San Diego Opera's Operapaedia

The History of *Fidelio*

In 1803, Beethoven received a commission from Emanuel Schikaneder – the librettist of *The Magic Flute*, who was now an impresario seeking an attraction for his Theater an der wein. The libretto was Schikaneder's own *Vestus Feuer (The Vestal Flame)*. Although Beethoven worked on it for much of 1803, he never got past 275 bars of the first scene and abandoned the project when his contract was annulled by a change of theatre ownership.

Beethoven then took on composing an opera for a libretto by the theatre secretary, Joseph Sonnleithner, who had adapted it from a 1798 French opera (*Léonore ou L'amour conjugal*) by Pierre Gaveaux, which was based on a play by Jean Nicholas Bouilly.

The first version of *Fidelio* premiered the next year at Theater an der Wien in 1805 with Beethoven's first of four overtures, Leonore No. 2. With the French military occupation in Vienna many of Beethoven's supporters had fled, and this first production was attended mostly by French military officers who did not understand German. The production was not well received and Beethoven withdrew it after only three performances.



Theater an der wien as it appeared in the early 19th century.

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. Stephan von Breuning revised the libretto and this second version debuted in 1806, but failed to achieve the expected success.



Poster for the premiere of *Fidelio* at Vienna's Kärntnertortheater, 1814

Years later, Beethoven revised the opera yet again, with additional changes to the libretto by poet Georg Friedrich Treitschke. This time, Beethoven modified virtually every aria and composed his third new overture, Leonore No.1. This last version of *Fidelio* premiered in 1814 at the Kärntnertortheatre in Vienna and was met with great success. His finale overture, which he named *Fidelio*, was completed shortly after the 1814 premiere and used in subsequent performances.

The Cold War

Fidelio's original setting is a prison in Spain during the late 18th century. Manitoba Opera's production is set in a prison in Germany at the height of the Cold War, around the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The Cold War lasted from the mid 1940s until the early 1990s and is characterized as a period of political and military tension between the United States and Soviet Union (USSR). This tension centered on each nation's need to control the political and economic climate of the post war era to reflect their respective world view or ideology. Following World War II, the Soviet Union continued to adhere to communist ideals. Unlike the United States, which was considered a capitalist society with a more or less free market economy and a democratic political system, the Soviet Union favored a command economy whereby the government is highly centralized and has control over every aspect of the market. Throughout the Cold War period, the United States as well as its Western European allies, would become increasingly concerned about the potential of communist ideals threatening their democratic freedom. This clash in ideologies between the two nations resulted in mutual suspicions and a series of confrontations throughout the world. Some of the most significant confrontations during the Cold War were the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Vietnam and Korean Wars, and the partitioning of Germany with the construction of the Berlin Wall, all while tension and stubbornness between the two nations fueled a nuclear arms race producing enough fire power to destroy the entire planet.

It was called a "cold" war because there was no large-scale fighting directly between the two nations. However, various skirmishes and even all-out war broke out between countries that were aligned with, and most certainly funded by the two powers. For example, South Vietnam was anti-communist and was supplied by the United States during the Vietnam War to fight North Vietnam, while the North was pro-Communist and so was supplied by communist Russia and its allies.

Cuban Missile Crisis

In 1962, an American U2 spy plane spotted the construction of Soviet nuclear missile sites in Cuba. Given the proximity of Cuba to the United States and Cuba's communist ties to the Soviets, the United States felt extremely vulnerable to a nuclear attack. In the two weeks that followed the United States would be on the verge of preemptively striking the Soviets directly as they were almost convinced that nuclear war was imminent. However, their reaction was a fair bit more subdued. Instead of striking they would send their navy out to sea to block Soviet ships from entering waters that led to Cuba, ensuring that any additional missile sites would remain inoperable. The crisis, according to most scholars, was eventually resolved through diplomatic negotiations between the President of the United States and the President of the Soviet Union with the help of the United Nations Security Council.

Nuclear Arms Race

The incredibly powerful nuclear weapons held by the Soviets and United States combined with the political and economic tension between them threatened a war that could end life on earth as it was known. The “arms race” involved each side increasing the number and power of its nuclear and regular weapons.

These weapons made any confrontation between the United States and Soviet Union very dangerous. In fact, many scholars believe that fire power was so immense between the two nations that any hostility would most certainly have resulted in Mutually Assured Destruction (M.A.D.). Nuclear missiles and bombs were for many, the most worrying threat of the Cold War. Schools in the United States and Canada regularly performed emergency drills in preparation for an attack. Students would practice hiding under their desks or in the hallway.



A classroom of children performs an emergency drill during the Cold War era.

The Rise and Fall of the Berlin Wall

On August 13, 1961, the Communist government of the German Democratic Republic (GDR, or East Germany) began to build a barbed wire and concrete wall between East and West Berlin. The purpose of the Berlin Wall was to keep Western “fascists” from entering East Germany and undermining the socialist state. The Berlin Wall stood until November 9, 1989, when the head of the East German Communist Party announced that citizens of the GDR could cross the border whenever they pleased. That night, crowds of East Germans swarmed the wall and were greeted by West Germans in a celebratory atmosphere. Others brought hammers and picks and began chipping away at the wall. To this day, the Berlin Wall remains one of the most powerful and enduring symbols of the Cold War.

The Collapse of the Soviet Union and End of the Cold War

Many consider the collapse of the Soviet Union as the event which marked the end of the Cold War. In the last few years before the collapse, the Soviet president attempted to decentralize government and lessen its constraints on the economy. In addition to this, both leaders began to negotiate an agreement which would restrict the building of additional nuclear weapons, effectively putting an end to the arms race. The Soviet Union was officially dissolved in December 1991, creating the Russian Federation and, in effect, freeing most of the countries that had been under the Soviet Union’s sphere of influence. After its fragmentation, due to the Federation’s attempt to lean toward a capitalist-style economy and its willingness to adopt some democratic principles, it was no longer considered a threat and the Cold War was, for the most part, over.

Political Prisoners

In the story of *Fidelio*, Florestan has been secretly imprisoned by Don Pizarro, Governor of the state prison, who spread rumors that Florestan 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.



Nelson Mandela (1918-2013), former President of South Africa and human rights advocate, was a political prisoner for many years.

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.

What is enforced disappearance?

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.

What is Rescue Opera?

Rescue Opera is a genre of opera that was popular during the late 18th and early 19th century 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.

Although the story of *Fidelio* was originally set in the late 18th Century and Manitoba Opera's production is set during the Cold War, 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 the Second World War 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. The UN Charter was then drafted and signed. At the United Nations founding, the organization had 51 member states and now has 193.



The first United Nations Conference at San Francisco's Opera House in June of 1945.

Universal 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.

Liberty, Equality, and Brotherhood

As we can see in *Fidelio* and many other of his works, Beethoven believed strongly in the ideals of liberty, equality and brotherhood. These ideals are France's national motto, which has its origins in the French Revolution. It was during this period of social and political change in Europe that Beethoven had begun composing *Fidelio* (1804). The French Revolution had just ended (approx. 1789-1799), which marked the decline of powerful monarchies and churches and brought on the rise of democracy and nationalism. As well, the Napoleonic Wars (approx. 1799-1815) were just beginning between Napoleon Bonaparte's French Empire and various opposing coalitions led by Great Britain. These events had a strong impact on Beethoven's political outlook and his works.

Symphony No.3

As Beethoven began working on *Fidelio* in 1804, he was also finishing Symphony No.3. He originally dedicated the work to Napoleon and intended to name it *The Bonaparte Symphony*. But when Beethoven heard the news that Napoleon had crowned himself Emperor of France, he was upset that Napoleon wasn't the great liberator of the people whom he had thought he was in the French Revolution. He quickly changed the name of his symphony to simply *Eroica* ("heroic").

Symphony No.9

Symphony No. 9 in D Minor is Beethoven's final complete symphony and is now one of the most well-known pieces of classical music. Completed in 1824, this was the first time that a major composer used choral and vocal soloists within a symphony. The words in the finale of the Ninth Symphony are borrowed from Friedrich Schiller's poem *Ode to Joy*, which declares that "Alle Menschen werden Brüder" (All men shall become brothers). The words and music yearn for peace, joy, and the brotherhood of man.

It was in this spirit that conductor Leonard Bernstein led concerts of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 in West and East Berlin to commemorate the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989. Bernstein took the liberty of changing the word *Freude* ("joy") to *Freiheit* ("freedom"), throughout the chorale.

More than a thousand people gathered in the hall to watch the celebratory performance at East Berlin's Schauspielhaus (theatre) on Christmas morning, and hundreds more stood outside in the square. The concert was broadcast live to 20 countries and over 100 million people.

Fidelio

Like the 9th Symphony, *Fidelio* is often performed as a symbol of hope and freedom and celebration of life. For example, in 1955 *Fidelio* was chosen to reopen the Vienna State Opera following reconstruction after World War II bombings had devastated the theatre. Like Bernstein's "Ode to Freedom" concert, this performance of *Fidelio* was of special significance to its audience given its historical context. Perhaps this is why Beethoven's final version of *Fidelio* was finally embraced by audiences in 1814, just as the Napoleonic Wars were coming to an end.

Brutalist Architecture

Manitoba Opera's production of *Fidelio* will be directed by General Director and CEO, Larry Desrochers, who has chosen to reset the opera to Germany around the time of the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, symbolic of a state that was an oppressive regime one day and a liberated society the next. To help bring this concept to life, Director of Production, Sheldon Johnson, has designed the set and oversaw its construction. The stark Brutalist design of the set, with its extensive use of concrete, serves as a visual metaphor for the ruthless society depicted by Beethoven.

"Brutalist architecture, or Brutalism, is a style of post-modernist architecture that developed in the 1950s and was prevalent through the 1970s. It's a no-nonsense-style architecture that strips away ornamentation and emphasizes the underlying construction, in most cases, poured concrete," Johnson explains.



Construction of Manitoba Opera's *Fidelio* set

"Coincidentally, there are plenty of examples in Winnipeg within walking distance of my office in the Concert Hall of this architecture: the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, the Canadian Grain Commission Building, the Radisson Hotel, and the Public Safety Building, to name a few," Johnson adds.

The word Brutalism, comes from the French word *béton brut*, meaning "raw concrete," a practice popularized by Swiss-French architect Charles Édouard Jeanneret-Gris, commonly known as Le Corbusier (1887-1965). Other characteristics of the style include massive structural shapes, geometric forms and straight lines, recessed windows, the use of concrete with linear patterning (sometimes referred to as "corduroy concrete"), exposed steel beams, and interiors with exposed pipes, ducts, and other mechanical devices. Brutalist buildings were mainly built for function and were a popular choice for government buildings, universities, high-rise housing, and theatres.



Winnipeg's Public Safety Building

Some other examples of Brutalist architecture in Winnipeg include the Pan Am Pool (1966), The Public Safety Building (1966), Robson Hall at the University of Manitoba (1969), the Manitoba Teacher's Society (1966), and the Winnipeg Transit Garage (1969).

For more information on Brutalist architecture in Winnipeg, check out Winnipeg Free Press' *City Beautiful* series online at www.winnipegfreepress.com/citybeautiful.

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 composer will also write the text of the



The Sydney Opera House

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 2010. 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 designer’s 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 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 Centennial Concert Hall and begin work rehearsing on stage with the orchestra in the pit.



Michel Corbeil (Monostatos), Andriana Chuchman (Pamina),
The Magic Flute, Manitoba Opera, April 2011. 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: 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: 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 19th 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.

CURTAIN CALL: occurs at the end of the per-

formance 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.



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

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 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.

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.

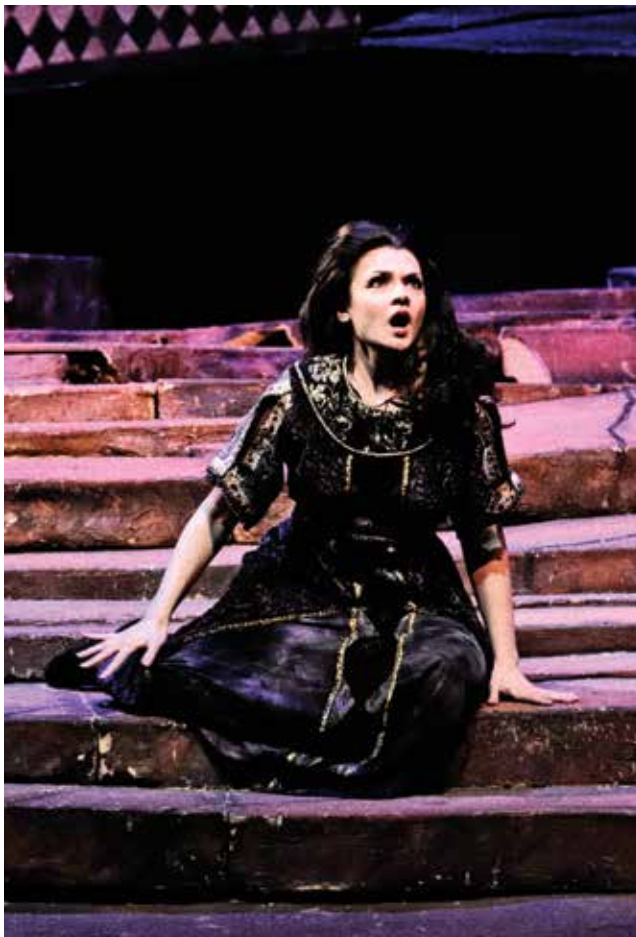
SITZPROBE: the rehearsal held on the main stage for the first time. The entire opera is sung through without any costumes or blocking.

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 bring 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, 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 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 the opera 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

Manitoba Opera was 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 internationally renowned artists, highlights the best local talent, and is supported by the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. 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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Chorus Master & Assistant Music Director

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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 *Fidelio* Student Night at the Opera, including such details as 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 *Fidelio*.
- Have the students write a press release about *Fidelio* 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. If you were the stage director, 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, and 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 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:

LEONORE | FLORESTAN | ROCCO | PIZARRO | MARCELLINA | JACQUINO | FERNANDO

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 biography 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. For example: What are Florestan's thoughts as he is locked away and awaiting death? What does Leonore wish to say to Florestan when she first sees him in his cell? What are Florestan's thoughts and feelings about having been finally freed?

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 *Fidelio*

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

Activity #9: Beethoven's Journal

Beethoven kept a diary of his day-to-day activities when he moved to Vienna in 1792. Write a series of journal entries as though you were Beethoven. How did he feel about the struggles he was experiencing in his personal life? What were his musical ambitions at the time? How did he relate to the social and political changes that were taking place in Europe?

Activity #10: Human Rights

Have students explore the issue of “human rights.”

Consider questions like: What fundamental freedoms are guaranteed to Canadians under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms? How do our rights as Canadians differ from those who live in other countries? Why do some countries not follow the guidelines of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

Activity #11: *Fidelio* 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 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 *Fidelio*. 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.

Fidelio

1. Who is the composer? _____
2. In what year was the premiere of the final version of *Fidelio* (after revisions)? _____
3. Where does this two-act opera take place? _____
4. Who is disguised as Fidelio? _____
5. Why was Florestan imprisoned? _____
6. Who does Jacquino hope to marry? _____
7. Who does Marcellina fall in love with? _____
8. The role of Fidelio is sung by a _____ (name the singing voice).
9. The role of Florestan is sung by a _____ (name the singing voice).
10. What language is the opera performed in? _____
11. Who will sing the role of Fidelio in Manitoba Opera's production of *Fidelio*? _____
12. What is the term used to describe 18th-century German opera characterized by spoken word?

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

Fidelio

1. Ludwig van Beethoven
2. The final version premiered in 1814.
3. A Spanish state prison
4. Leonore
5. Florestan was imprisoned for his political beliefs.
6. Marcellina
7. Fidelio
8. Soprano
9. Tenor
10. German
11. Ileana Montalbetti
12. Singspiel

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

Education and Outreach Coordinator,
Manitoba Opera, 1060 - 555 Main St., Winnipeg, MB R3B 1C3

or

ldymond@manitobaopera.mb.ca

Winnipeg Public Library

Resources

Books

Beethoven: World of Composers [by Greta Cencetti]
Columbus, Ohio: Peter Bedrick Books, 2002
Call No.: J 780.92 BEETHOVEN

Beethoven's World: Music Throughout History [by Jennifer Veigas]
New York: Rosen Pub. Group, 2008
Call No.: J 780.92 BEETHOVEN 2008

Beethoven Lives Upstairs [by Barbara Nicol]
Toronto: Lester Pub., c1993
Call No.: J FICTION NIC

Beethoven and the Classical Age [by Andrea Bergamini]
Hauppauge, N.Y. : Barron's Educational Series, c1999.
Call No.: J 780.924 BER

Late Beethoven: music, thought, imagination [by Solomon Maynard]
Berkeley : University of California Press, c2003.
Call No.: 780.92 BEETHOVEN 2003

Scores

Fidelio: opera in two acts / music by Ludwig van Beethoven; libretto by Joseph Ferdinand Sonnleithner
New York: G. Schirmer, c1935
Call No.: SCORE 782.1 BEE

Fingerpicking Beethoven / music by Ludwig van Beethoven
Milwaukee, Wis.: Hal Leonard, c2013.
Call No.: SCORE 784.184 BEE 2013

Sound Recordings

Fidelio [Beethoven]
London: Decca, p2011
Call No.: CD OPERA BEETHOVEN FID

Fidelio [Beethoven]
EMI Classics, p2003
Call No.: CD OPERA BEETHOVEN FID

Symphony no. 9 in D minor, op. 125 "Choral";
"Fidelio" overture, op 72b [Beethoven]
Sony Classical. c1992
Call No.: CD CLASS BEETHOVEN SYM 9

DVD Recordings

Fidelio [Beethoven]
Metropolitan Opera Association, c1978;
Deutsche Grammophon, p2006.
Call No.: DVD 792.542 FID

Beethoven Lives Upstairs [Classical Kids]
The Children's Group, c1992
Call No.: J DVD FILM/TV BEE

The Best of Beethoven
Pickering, Ont.: Classical Kids; Distributed in the U.S. and Canada by Naxos of America, p2004.
Call No.: CD JUV BEETHOVEN BES



A meat extract advertisement from 1893 featuring scenes from *Fidelio*.

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- "UN at a glance" UN.org. 16 Jul 2014. <<http://www.un.org/en/aboutun/index.shtml>>

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This study guide was compiled accumulatively and includes information from the following sources accessed at various unknown dates since 2000:

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BehindTheNames.com
Bellevue University
The Billboard Illustrated Encyclopedia of Opera
The Canadian Opera Company
Encyclopedia of Manitoba
Encyclopedia of the Opera by David Ewen
Fort Worth Opera Study Guide
GradeSaver.com
La Scena
Lyric Opera of Kansas City
Manitoba Archives
Metropolitan Opera
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
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
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