



MANITOBA OPERA

2017/18 SEASON PRESENTED BY BMO



LA Traviata

Study Guide

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MANITOBA OPERA

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www.manitobaopera.mb.ca

For Student Night tickets or more information on student programs:

204-942-7470 or education@manitobaopera.mb.ca

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La Traviata, Manitoba Opera, 2008.
Photo: R.Tinker

School Programs

STUDENT NIGHT AT THE OPERA

An affordable opportunity for students to watch the dress rehearsal of our mainstage productions, providing an exciting look at the art and magic of opera!

- *La Traviata* Student Night: **Thursday, April 12, 2018, 7:30 pm** at the Centennial Concert Hall
- Tickets to Student Night are only \$13 each
- Available to school groups, youth organizations, and post-secondary students
- *La Traviata* is suitable for grades 6 and up

Programming for Grades K-6:

OPERA CLASS

A free in-classroom workshop led by a professionally trained opera singer

Bring an opera singer to your classroom! Students will participate in hands-on learning activities which explore storytelling through music and experience the power of live operatic singing.



OPERA IN A TRUNK

Bring the magic of opera right into the classroom with our Opera in a Trunk program. Each trunk includes costumes, props, books, a CD and DVD of the opera, instruments, activities, and a guide for putting it all together. Trunks are free to borrow for a three-week period.

Available trunks:	<i>Hansel and Gretel</i>	<i>The Daughter of the Regiment</i>
	<i>La Bohème</i>	<i>The Magic Flute</i>
	<i>Aida</i>	<i>Carmen</i>



SCHOOL PERFORMANCE TOURS

Schedule allowing, Manitoba Opera visits schools with a touring production. Dates and cost vary depending on the production. Please contact us for more details.

For More Information/ To Purchase Tickets/ To Book a Trunk:

Livia Dymond, Education and Outreach Coordinator
 204-942-7470
ldymond@manitobaopera.mb.ca

About 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.

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.

Staff

Tadeusz Biernacki
Chorus Master & Assistant Music Director

Michael Blais
Director of Administration

Bethany Bunko
Patron Services & Communications Coordinator

Larry Desrochers
General Director & CEO

Livia Dymond
Education & Outreach Coordinator

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Fast Facts

- *La Traviata* is an Italian opera in three acts, composed by Giuseppe Verdi with a libretto by Francesco Maria Piave.
- The premiere performance took place at Teatro la Fenice in Venice, Italy on March 6, 1853.
- *La traviata* roughly translates to “the fallen woman” or “the one who goes astray” and refers to the main character, Violetta Valéry.
- The libretto is based on the play *La dame aux Camélias* (1852), which was adapted from the novel of the same name (1848) by Alexandre Dumas, fils. The story is based on Dumas’ real-life relationship with Parisian courtesan, Marie Duplessis.
- During the 2015/16 season, *La traviata* was the most-performed opera in the world. According to Operabase.com, Verdi’s opera was performed 4,190 times in 869 different productions across the globe.
- The story of *La Traviata* has inspired a number of popular films such as *Moulin Rouge* and *Pretty Woman*.
- Manitoba Opera last staged *La Traviata* in 2008.
- Manitoba Opera’s *La Traviata* in April 2018 is a joint production with Pacific Opera Victoria, Vancouver Opera, Edmonton Opera, and l’Opéra de Montréal. This new production resets the events of the opera to Paris of the 1920s.



La Traviata, 2008, Manitoba Opera. Photo: R.Tinker

Production Information



April 14, 17 & 20, 2018

Dress Rehearsal / Student Night: April 12, 2018

Centennial Concert Hall

Music by Giuseppe Verdi

Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave

Based on Dumas' play *La Dame aux Camélias*

Approximately 2.5 hours in three acts

Premiered at Teatro la Fenice in Venice, Italy on March 6, 1853.

Sung in Italian with projected English translations

PRINCIPAL CAST

Violetta	Soprano	ANGEL BLUE
Flora	Mezzo-Soprano	BARBARA KING
Marchese d'Obigny	Baritone	HOWARD REMPEL
Gastone	Tenor	JAMES MCLENNAN
Alfredo	Tenor	ADAM LUTHER
Giorgio	Baritone	JAMES WESTMAN
Baron Douphol	Baritone	ANDREW LOVE
Dr. Grenvil	Baritone	DAVID WATSON
Annina	Mezzo-Soprano	SHANNON UNGER

Manitoba Opera Chorus Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra

Conductor	TYRONE PATERSON
Director	ALAIN GAUTHIER
Sets & Costumes	CHRISTINA PODDUBIUK
Lighting designer	BILL WILLIAMS
Stage manager	ROBERT PEL
Assistant stage managers	KATHRYN BALL
	CANDACE MAXWELL
Projected titles	SHELDON JOHNSON

1920s Paris and Josephine Baker

the production

Manitoba Opera's *La Traviata* resets the events of the opera to Paris of the 1920s, with the character of Violetta inspired by the legendary performer of that era, Josephine Baker.



Following the dark days of World War I, France longed for fun and gaiety. Parisians rejected the old pre-war conservatism and embraced new lifestyles, technology, and a “lust for extravagance and partying that had the era named *Les Années Folles* (the Roaring Twenties, or the 'mad years').” Paris established itself as a thriving centre of artistic activity. The low cost of living and vibrant artistic community (art, music, literature, and cinema) attracted writers and artists from around the world such as Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dali, Ernest Hemingway, James Joyce, Ezra Pound, and Josephine Baker.

Nightlife in Paris was greatly influenced by American jazz music. Music halls such as the Moulin Rouge, the Olympia, the Folies-Bergère, and the Casino-de-Paris were the places to see and be seen in.

In 1925, Josephine Baker, an African American dancer (and later singer) arrived in the City of Lights, just as Paris was developing an obsession with jazz and fascination with Black culture. Baker's scandalous cabaret dancing propelled her to stardom and she soon became one of the most sought-after and highly paid performers of Europe. Baker was among the most popular of performers to headline at the Folies Bergère and caused a sensation with her legendary banana skirt, which became her most iconic image and a symbol of the Jazz Age in Paris.



Admired and celebrated by artists and intellectuals of the era, she earned nicknames such as the “Black Pearl,” “Black Venus,” and the “Creole Goddess,” while author Ernest Hemingway called her “the most sensational woman anyone ever saw.”



Josephine Baker dancing the Charleston at the Folies-Bergère, Paris, 1926.

Synopsis

ACT I

Violetta Valéry knows that she will die soon, exhausted by her restless life on the stage. At a party she is introduced to Alfredo, who has been fascinated by her for a long time. The other guests are amused by Alfredo's seemingly naïve and emotional attitude, and they ask him to propose a toast. He celebrates true love, and Violetta responds in praise of free love. She is touched by his honesty. Suddenly she feels faint, and the guests withdraw. Only Alfredo remains behind and declares his love. There is no place for such feelings in her life, Violetta replies. But she gives him a camellia, and asks him to return when the flower has faded. He realizes this means he will see her again the following day. Alone, Violetta is torn by conflicting emotions. She doesn't want to give up her way of life, but at the same time Alfredo has awakened her desire to be truly loved.

ACT II

Violetta has chosen a life with Alfredo, and they enjoy their love in the country. When Alfredo discovers that this is only possible because Violetta has been selling her property, he immediately leaves for Paris to procure money. Violetta has received an invitation to a party at Flora's, but she no longer cares for such distractions. Alfredo's father, Giorgio Germont, pays her a visit. He demands that she separate from his son, as their relationship threatens his daughter's impending marriage. But over the course of their conversation, Germont comes to realize that Violetta is not after his son's money - but rather, is a woman who loves unselfishly. He appeals to Violetta's generosity of spirit and explains that her liaison with Alfredo has no future. Violetta's resistance dwindles and she finally agrees to leave Alfredo forever. She accepts the invitation to Flora's party and writes a goodbye letter to her lover. Alfredo returns, and while he is reading the letter, his father appears to console him. But all the memories of home and a happy family can't prevent the furious and jealous Alfredo from seeking revenge for Violetta's apparent betrayal.

ACT II Sc 2

At Flora's, news has spread of Violetta and Alfredo's separation. Meanwhile, Violetta have arrived on the arm of the Baron Douphol. Alfredo and the Baron battle at the gaming table and Alfredo wins a fortune. When everybody has withdrawn, Alfredo confronts Violetta. In a rage Alfredo calls the guests as witnesses and declares that he doesn't owe Violetta anything. He throws his winnings at her. Giorgio Germont, who has witnessed the scene, rebukes his son for his behavior. The baron challenges his rival to a duel.

ACT III

Violetta is dying. Her last remaining friend, Doctor Grenvil, knows that she has only a few more hours to live. Alfredo's father has written to Violetta, informing her that his son was not injured in the duel. Full of remorse, Germont has told his son about Violetta's sacrifice. Alfredo wants to rejoin her as soon as possible. Violetta is afraid that he might be too late. The sound of Mardi Gras celebrations are heard outside. Alfredo arrives and the reunion fills Violetta with a final euphoria. Her energy and exuberant joy of life return. All sorrow and suffering seem to have left her—a final illusion, before death claims her.

(Adapted from a synopsis courtesy of the Metropolitan Opera)

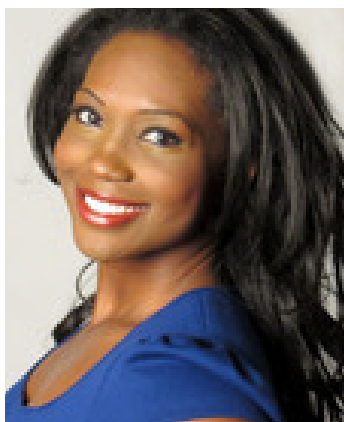
Principal Characters

Name	Description	Pronunciation
Violetta	a courtesan (a cabaret performer in Manitoba Opera's production)	vee-oh-LET-tah
Alfredo	a young man of good family but small financial resources	al-FRAY-doe
Giorgio	Alfredo's father	GEORGE-ee-oh
Baron Douphol	a protector of Violetta's	doo-FOLE
Flora	Violetta's friend	FLOH-rah
Dr. Grenvil	Violetta's physician	grahn-VEEL
Gastone	in Violetta's circle of friends	gas-TOHN
Marchese d'Obigny	in Violetta's circle of friends	mar-KAY-zay doh-bee-NYEE
Annina	Violetta's maid	Ah-NEE-nah



Kurt Lehmann (Alfredo) and Yali-Marie Williams (Violetta) in *La Traviata*, Manitoba Opera, 2008.
Photo: R. Tinker

The Principal Artists



Angel Blue

Violetta

Recognized for her beautiful timbre and stunning stage presence, American soprano Angel Blue's voice has been hailed for its shining, agile upper register and "smoky" middle register. Angel is quickly establishing herself as one of the best singers in her generation, having performed in over 35 countries in the last six years.

"The clear star." - *New York Times* (in her recent debut at the Metropolitan Opera as Mimi in *La Bohème*)



Adam Luther

Alfredo Germont

A native of Newfoundland, Adam Luther is one of Canada's most exciting and sought after leading tenors, with a repertoire ranging from Janacek to Mozart to Puccini. A graduate of the Canadian Opera Company Ensemble Studio, Adam has performed with many companies throughout North America such as Canadian Opera Company, Vancouver Opera, Pacific Opera Victoria, Calgary Opera, and Minnesota Opera.



James Westman

Giorgio Germont

Canadian baritone James Westman has appeared in leading roles in many of the world's leading opera, recital and concert halls, having sung with companies such as Canadian Opera Company, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, and English National Opera.

"Westman, with a lush, soaring, flexible voice that equips him to be a Verdi or Puccini baritone, is heir to some of the most coveted roles in Opera." - Paula Citron, *The Globe and Mail*

The Composer

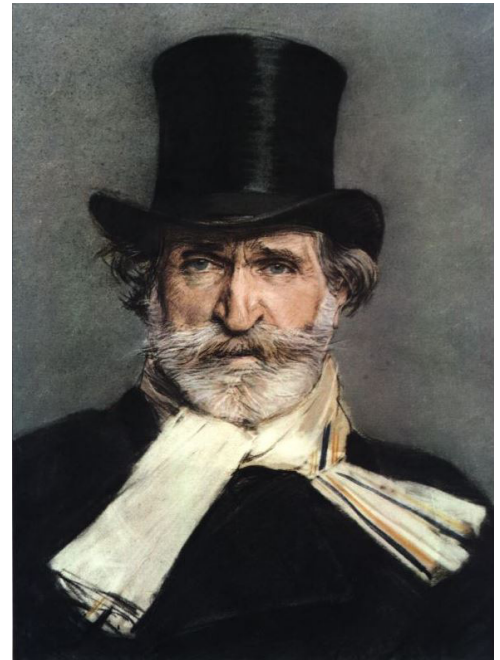
Giuseppe Verdi

Born: October 10, 1813

Died: January 27, 1901

Giuseppe Verdi dominated Italian opera for half a century with 28 operas that include some of the best known in the repertoire. He was not only a very popular and successful composer, but an astute businessman and producer, an active and committed farmer, a hero of the Italian nationalist movement, a member of the first nationalist movement, a member of the first Italian Parliament, and a generous philanthropist.

Giuseppe Fortunino Francesco Verdi was born in 1813, near Busseto, a small commune in northern Italy. He was born the same year as the German composer Richard Wagner, to whom he loathed to be compared.



Giuseppe Verdi, 1886.

Young Verdi showed an early interest in music, and was encouraged by his father, who bought an old spinet piano and sent him to the church organist for lessons. When Verdi was 10, his father sent him to the nearby city of Busseto for further musical training. He stayed in the home of Antonio Barezzi, a local merchant and music enthusiast and gave singing and piano lessons to Barezzi's daughter, Margherita, whom he would later marry. At age 20, he left Busseto to further his studies in Milan.

In 1836, having returned to Busseto, Verdi accepted the position of town music master and married Margherita Barezzi. It was during this period that he composed his first opera, *Roccester*, which he later renamed *Oberto, conte di San Bonifacio*. The opera was successful enough to persuade the impresario at La Scala to offer Verdi a contract to write more operas.

The Verdis' daughter Virginia was born in 1837, but died the following year. In 1839, Giuseppe and Margherita moved back to Milan with their little son, Icilio Romano, who died shortly after. While Verdi was working on his next opera, a comedy called *Un Giorno di Regno*, his wife died. The deaths of his entire young family within such a short time left him devastated. Although he completed *Un Giorno di Regno*, it was a failure, and Verdi resolved never to compose again.

It took two years for Merelli to persuade Verdi to compose another opera, *Nabucco*. Verdi became a celebrity overnight. The opera's Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves, "Va pensiero" was sung in the streets of Milan and became an unofficial Italian national anthem. During this period came his "big three," the three operas that are his most popular. *Rigoletto* premiered in 1851 in Venice; *Il trovatore* was launched in Rome in 1853; followed six weeks later by *La Traviata* in Venice.

The Composer

Another of his famous works, *Aida*, premiered in 1871, and completed what was meant to be his last composition, *Requiem*, in 1874. Verdi came out of retirement to collaborate with Arrigo Boito, a composer and novelist, to create *Otello* in 1886, based on the play *Othello* by William Shakespeare. The two collaborated once again in 1890, writing Verdi's last opera, *Falstaff*, based on Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, which opened to hugely positive reviews.

Verdi's biggest operas remain as popular today as when they first appeared, they form the core of the current standard repertoire.

Verdi suffered a stroke on January 21, 1901, and died six days later. He was buried in Milan at the Casa di Riposo. His funeral was a national event, and thousands lined the streets, singing "Va pensiero," the famous chorus from *Nabucco*. Among the mourners were such great composers as Rossini, Donizetti, and Puccini.

The Operas of Verdi

<i>Oberto</i> , 1839	<i>Luisa Miller</i> , 1849
<i>Un giorno di regno</i> , 1840	<i>Stiffelio</i> , 1850
<i>Nabucodonosor</i> , 1842	<i>Rigoletto</i> , 1851
<i>I lombardi alla prima crociata</i> , 1843	<i>Il trovatore</i> , 1853
<i>Ernani</i> , 1844	<i>La traviata</i> , 1853
<i>I due Foscari</i> , 1844	<i>Les vepres siciliennes</i> , 1855
<i>Giovanna d'Arco</i> , 1845	<i>Simon Boccanegra</i> , 1857
<i>Alzira</i> , 1845	<i>Un ballo in maschera</i> , 1859
<i>Attila</i> , 1846	<i>La forza del destino</i> , 1862
<i>Macbeth</i> , 1847	<i>Don Carlos</i> , 1867
<i>I masnadieri</i> , 1847	<i>Aida</i> , 1871
<i>Jérusalem</i> , 1847	<i>Otello</i> , 1887
<i>Il corsaro</i> , 1848	<i>Falstaff</i> , 1893
<i>La battaglia di Legnano</i> , 1849	

The Librettist

Francesco Maria Piave

Born: May 18, 1810

Died: March 5, 1876

Francesco Maria Piave was an Italian opera librettist who was born in Murano, Venice, during the brief Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy. His career spanned over 20 years working with many of the significant composers of his day. In addition to Giuseppe Verdi, for whom he was to write 10 librettos, other composers include Giovanni Pacini, Saverio Mercadante, Federico Ricci, and Michael Balfe.



Piave was not only a librettist, but a journalist and translator. He was resident poet and stage manager at La Fenice in Venice and later at La Scala in Milan. His expertise as a stage manager and tact as a negotiator served Verdi well over the years, although Verdi bullied him mercilessly. For example, during the efforts to have *Rigoletto* approved by the censors, Verdi goaded Piave to make every effort to get the subject approved: "Turn Venice upside down to make the censors permit this subject."

But the librettist became Verdi's lifelong friend and collaborator. Like Verdi, Piave was an ardent Italian patriot, and in 1848, during Milan's "Cinque Giornate," when Radetsky's Austrian troops retreated from the city, Verdi's letter to Piave in Venice was addressed to "Citizen Piave."

Piave would have also prepared the libretto for *Aida*, the commission for which Verdi accepted in 1870, had he not suffered a stroke, which left him paralyzed and unable to speak. Verdi helped to support his wife and daughter - by proposing that "an album of pieces by famous composers be compiled and sold for Piave's benefit" - and paid for his funeral when he died nine years later in Milan at age 65.

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.



Major Arias

ACT I

- **Libiamo ne' lieti calici** ("Drink from the joyful cup") - Sung by Violetta and Alfredo and chorus

This song is a *brindisi*, a lively drinking song and one of the best-known opera melodies.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ehIwBCDoL9U>

- **Un dì felice, eterea** ("One day, happy and ethereal") - A duet in which Alfredo professes his love for Violetta, and she dismisses the advance; claiming that they aren't matched for each other.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GKGk_3LT3M

- **Sempre libera** - ("Always Free") - Violetta's pledge to pleasure and freedom.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGlugsYQZgg>

ACT II

- **De' miei bollenti spiriti** ("My Passionate Spirit") - This aria sung by Alfredo, comes at the opening of the second act. Alfredo sings of his happy life with Violetta and how much she loves him.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NaAsZV4q9cY>

- **Di Provenza il mar, il suol** ("The sea and the soil of Provence") - Sung by Germont. Prior to this aria, Germont has convinced Violetta to leave Alfredo. In this aria, Germont tries to comfort him by reminding him of his home and family in Provence.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4uCMthTErbw>

ACT III

- **Addio del passato** ("Farewell, happy dreams of the past") - Sung by Violetta

Knowing she has lost her battle with tuberculosis, she sings this aria as a farewell to her happiness and future with Alfredo.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Usei8mAxoac>

- **Parigi, o cara** ('Away from Paris, my dear') - The final duet between Alfredo and Violetta, which some call the quintessential Verdi duet. The pair make plans to leave Paris forever.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRG_6h_Eqww

Tuberculosis

Tuberculosis Remains One of the Top 10 Causes of Death Worldwide

Prepared by The Lung Association - Manitoba

In *La Traviata*, Violetta has her life and dreams cut short by Tuberculosis (TB). At the time at which this opera was initially set - the mid-1800s - tuberculosis had reached epidemic levels in Europe and the US.

This infectious disease attacks the lungs and damages other organs. Before the advent of antibiotics, its victims slowly wasted away, becoming pale and thin before dying of what was then known as consumption.

The World Health Organization (WHO) states that TB is one of the top 10 causes of death worldwide. The WHO also says that in 2016, 10.4 million people fell ill with TB, and 1.7 million died from the disease (including 0.4 million among people with HIV). Over 95% of TB deaths occur in low and middle-income countries.

Tuberculosis is caused by breathing in bacteria called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. TB usually infects the lungs. TB can also infect other parts of the body, including the kidneys, spine, and brain.

People can have TB and not be sick, this is called latent TB. Latent TB is when a person has the TB bacteria in their body but it is not growing. The latent TB can become active TB at any time and make you very sick. If you have inactive TB infection you need to get treatment to cure your TB infection.

TB is contagious. People who are sick with active TB disease spread TB germs through the air. It's important for people with TB to get treatment right away. TB oral antibiotic treatments can cure TB and prevent it from spreading to others. This treatment normally lasts six to nine months.

Canada overall has relatively low rates of TB, in fact it is close to being eliminated here. Unfortunately, some areas have more TB than others. Manitoba has persistently higher rates of TB than that of Canada overall (see the chart). Rates are highest in some Manitoba First Nations communities. This is primarily due to poor living conditions and overall poor health. Efforts to improve housing, nutrition and general health as well as treatment will bring rates of TB down to national averages.

The Lung Association is helping by providing education and awareness activities as well as having two staff seconded to the Manitoba Public Health TB Surveillance Unit.

To support these actions and to learn more about TB please go to www.mb.lung.ca.



Lining up for TB X-Ray Screening c. 1930

The “Outsiders” in Verdi’s Works

During Verdi’s incredibly creative period of 1851 to 1853, he wrote his three most popular operas: *Il Trovatore*, *Rigoletto*, and *La Traviata*. At the centre of each of these operas are characters who are “outsiders” from the court or bourgeois society: the jester in *Rigoletto*, the “gypsy” in *Il Trovatore*, and the courtesan - Violetta - in *La Traviata*. In particular, Violetta is asked to break off her relationship with Alfredo so as not to disgrace his family’s name.

It is often speculated that Verdi’s personal life influenced the theme of the “outsider” in these operas. In 1849, he moved with his common law wife, former singer Giuseppina Strepponi, to the small Italian village of Busseto, near his birthplace. As an unmarried woman of the theatre, Giuseppina was shunned by the community and the Church. The situation worsened when she was rumoured to have had Verdi’s child and left the child at the local nunnery (a common practice for unwanted children at the time). Verdi was livid at the community’s treatment of Giuseppina to the point that he broke off relations with his parents. He felt the community had no right to judge him or who he slept with.



Giuseppina Strepponi



Josephine Baker

Manitoba Opera’s joint production of *La Traviata* resets the events of the opera to Paris of the 1920s, with the legendary cabaret performer Josephine Baker as its inspiration. The music-hall scene in Paris was thriving in the 1920s, and stars, like Baker, were admired and marginalized, just like Violetta of *La Traviata*. Although widely celebrated, both women lived on the outskirts of society. Their freedom towards their life choices, and their sometimes scandalous behaviour, kept them at the centre of attention, but still very much outsiders.



Richard Margison, *Il Trovatore*,
Manitoba Opera, 2008
Photo: R.Tinker



Rigoletto, Manitoba Opera, 2012
Photo: R.Tinker



La Traviata, Manitoba Opera, 2009
Photo: R.Tinker

Student Activities

Curriculum Connections to the Manitoba curriculum Frameworks for Grade 9 - 12 are provided below each activity. For a more in-depth look at the connections, view our Manitoba Curriculum Connections documents at www.manitobaopera.mb.ca/learn.

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.

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.2.1; 2.1.2; 5.2.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-M2; DR-C1; DR-R3

Music Curriculum Connections: M-M2; M-C2; M-R1

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 *La Traviata*, 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 *La Traviata*.
- Have the students write a press release about *La Traviata*, 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?

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 2.3.5; 2.3.4; 4.1.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-C2; DR-C3

Music Curriculum Connections: M-C2; M-C3

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 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.

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.1.1; 1.1.2; 1.2.2; 3.1.3; 3.3.1; 4.1.3; 4.3.1; 4.3.2; 4.3.3; 4.4.1; 4.2.2; 5.2.1; 5.1.1

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-R1; DR-R2; DR-R3; DR-R4

Music Curriculum Connections: M-R1; M-R2; M-R3; M-R4

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:

VIOLETTA / ALFREDO / GIORGIO

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?

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.1.1; 2.1.2; 3.3.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-M1; DR-M2; DR-M3

Activity #5: 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. Explore how they would be feeling about the events of the day.

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.1.2; 1.1.3; 2.3.5; 4.2.2; 4.1.2; 4.1.3; 5.2.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-R3

Activity #6: Cast *La Traviata*

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

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 2.3.1; 2.2.1; 2.2.2; 4.1.2; 5.2.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-M1; DR-C3; DR-R3

Music Curriculum Connections: M-C2; M-R4

Activity #7: Research and Report

Have the students study the history and politics of Verdi's time, particularly the year when *La Traviata* premiered (1853). What authors were popular? What scientific discoveries were being made?

What was the social and political life in Europe at the time (as well as in Canada)?

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 2.2.1; 2.2.2; 3.3.1; 3.3.3; 3.2.2; 3.2.3; 4.3.1; 4.3.2; 4.3.3; 4.2.2; 4.2.3; 5.2.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-C2

Music Curriculum Connections: M-C2

Activity #8: *La Traviata* 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 *La Traviata*. 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.

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 2.3.5; 2.3.4; 2.2.3; 4.1.1; 4.1.2; 4.1.3; 4.4.1; 5.1.1

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-M3; DR-R3

Music Curriculum Connections: M-R2

Activity #9: Musical Interpretation of Literature

Step 1 - Prepare a Musical Outline

Working in small groups, have your students choose a play, novel, or story that they've read and think about how they'd go about adapting it into an opera. Have them write out an outline and try to structure the beginnings of the opera. Which parts of the drama would be highlighted with which types of music? Would they have a large chorus to back up the principal singers or would the opera be more intimate? Which singing voices (soprano, baritone, tenor, etc.) would best suit each character?

Step 2 - Compose and Perform an Overture

How could the elements of music (ie., rhythm, pitch, dynamics, etc.) be used to communicate the mood of the piece within the overture? Which instruments would be used? Allow them some time to work on composing their overture based on their answers to these questions. Students can then perform their overture for the class either as a composed and rehearsed piece or improvised. Alternatively, they may choose to present their overture by describing the characteristics of the elements of the music within their piece.

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.1.2; 2.3.5; 2.2.1; 3.1.2; 3.1.3; 4.1.2; 4.4.3; 4.4.2; 4.2.5; 5.1.1; 5.1.2; 5.1.4

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-CR2; DR-M1; DR-M2

Music Curriculum Connections: M-CR2; M-CR3; M-M3

Activity #10: Active Listening

Play the first few minutes of the *La Traviata* CD. Ask your students to listen closely to the music and jot down their thoughts, feelings, and first impressions. Then have your students share their reactions with the classroom. Ask them to listen again and pay close attention to the elements of music (ie. rhythm,

pitch, dynamics, etc.) then explore questions such as the following:

- What are the instruments used to make the music?
- How does this music make me feel?
- What is the mood of the piece?
- What type of emotions do the singers bring forth?
- Does the music have a steady beat or pulse?
- What is the size of the ensemble?
- What do the singing voices tell us about those characters?

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.1.1; 1.12; 1.2.2; 2.3.1; 2.2.3; 4.4.3; 5.2.1

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-R1

Music Curriculum Connections: M-R2



La Traviata, Manitoba Opera, 2008.

Photo: R. Tinker

Activity #14: 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.

La Traviata

1. Who is the composer? _____
2. Who wrote the novel and play that inspired *La Traviata*? _____
3. In what year did the premiere performance take place? _____
4. In what language is the opera performed? _____
5. Where does the story of *La Traviata* take place? _____
6. Who wrote the libretto? _____
7. What is Violetta's last name? _____
8. What is the name of the famous aria Violetta sings after Alfredo confesses his love to her?

9. The role of Violetta is sung by a _____ (name the singing voice).
10. The role of Alfredo is sung by a _____ (name the singing voice).
11. From which disease does Violetta suffer? _____
12. What is the name of the aria which Violetta sings as she says goodbye to life? _____

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

La Traviata

1. Giuseppe Verdi
2. Alexandre Dumas, fils
3. 1853
4. Italian
5. Paris
6. Francesco Maria Piave
7. Valery
8. “Sempre libera”
9. Soprano
10. Tenor
11. Tuberculosis
12. Addio del passato

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

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

or

education@manitobaopera.mb.ca

Winnipeg Public Library

Resources

Books

The New Grove Masters of Italian Opera:
Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini, Verdi, Puccini
[by Philip Gossett]
New York : Norton, c1983
Call Number 782.1092 NEW

DVD

La Traviata (Blu-ray)
Opus Arte, [2013]
Call Number DVD 792.542 TRA

Scores

Opera's greatest melodies [music] : 71 favorite
selections from 42 operas transcribed for
simplified piano solo, lower intermediate level
Author: Neely, Blake.
Milwaukee, WI : Hal Leonard, [2000]

La Traviata, in full score [music]
Author: Verdi, Giuseppe
New York: Dover, [1990]
Call Number: SCORE 782.1 VER

Sounds Recordings

La Traviata
[Place of publication not identified]: Deutsche
Grammophon, [2005]
Call Number: CD OPERA VERDI TRA

Violetta: arias and duets from Verdi's
La Traviata
[Place of publication not identified]: Deutsche
Grammophon, [2005]
Call Number: CD OPERA VERDI TRA

Electronic Resources (Available on Hoopla)

Verdi: La Traviata
United States: Amor Verlag GmbH
Made available through hoopla, 2014
Call Number: STREAMING

Verdi: Opera Choruses
Author: Orchestra, Chicago Symphony
United States: Decca:
Made available through hoopla, 2012.
Call Number: STREAMING

Verdi: Opera Highlights
Author: Hoopla Digital
United States: Warner Classics:
Made available through hoopla, 1982.
Call Number: STREAMING

Karaoke Opera: Soprano Passions
Author: McCulloch, Susan.
United States: Musical Concepts:
Made available through hoopla, 2009.
Call Number STREAMING



Cover of a circa 1855 vocal score with an engraving by
Leopoldo Ratti

Works Cited (General)

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

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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
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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
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La Traviata (study guide). Manitoba Opera, 2008. <<http://www.manitobaopera.mb.ca/learn/documents/LaTraviataStudyGuide.pdf>>

La Traviata (study guide). Michigan Opera, 2013. <<http://www.michiganopera.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/MOTLaTraviataClassroomGuide.pdf>>

La Traviata. The Opera 101. 29 January 2018. <<https://www.theopera101.com/operas-traviata/>>

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