



OF *MICE*
& **MEN**
Study Guide



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MANITOBA OPERA

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**For Student Night tickets or more information on student programs,
contact Sophie Waldman at 204-942-7470 or
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Contents

	Great Resources for Teaching Your Students About Opera	4
the production	<i>Of Mice and Men</i> : Good to Know	5
	Production Information	6
	The Synopsis	7
	The Principal Characters	9
	The Principal Artists	10
	The Composer and Librettist	12
related topics of study	John Steinbeck's <i>Of Mice and Men</i>	13
	Playwright's Biography: John Steinbeck	14
	"To A Mouse" A Poem by Robert Burns	15
	The Great Depression	17
	The Dust Bowl and Migrant Workers	17
	The Character of Lennie Small	18
	Major Themes	19
bringing an opera to the stage	A Short Overview of Opera	21
	Bringing an Opera to the Stage	23
	The Operatic Voice and Professional Singing	25
	Glossary: Important Words in Opera	26
	Audience Etiquette	30
	Manitoba Opera	31
	Student Activities	32
	Winnipeg Public Library Resources	40

OF MICE AND MEN

Great Resources for Teaching Your Students About Opera

1. Student Night - April 21, 2016 at 7:30 pm (Centennial Concert Hall)

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. Please note:

- *Of Mice and Men* is an opera in three acts, with a running time of approximately two hours, 20 minutes, including one 20-minute intermission.
- 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 students from schools, post-secondary institutions, private and conservatory music programs, and youth organizations.

For more information or to book tickets, contact Sophie Waldman 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. CDs for Purchase or Loan

A CD of the opera *Of Mice and Men* (Houston Grand Opera) is available for purchase or to borrow free of charge for a two-week period. Please contact Sophie Waldman at 204-942-7470 for more details.

4. 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. The first booking is free! Regular rate is \$50 per trunk for a three-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 Sophie Waldman at 204-942-7470.

Of Mice and Men: Good To Know

- *Of Mice and Men* is an opera in three acts by American composer Carlisle Floyd.
- The libretto was written by Carlisle Floyd and is based on the John Steinbeck novella of 1937.
- *Of Mice and Men* tells the tragic tale of George and Lennie, two migrant ranch workers in 1930's California in pursuit of a simple dream: to own a small house and farm of their own. However, when fate forces this unlikely pair down a different path, they must say goodbye to their dream. Steinbeck's tale is a heartbreaking testament to the bonds of friendship. Carlisle Floyd takes this powerful story and infuses it with music that is at once dramatic and striking, but also haunting and lyrical.
- The opera is sung in English with projected English titles.
- Composed in 1969, the premiere performance took place on January 22, 1970, with the Seattle Opera at the Moore Theater in Seattle, Washington.
- *Of Mice and Men* has since become an essential part of the American opera repertoire and has been performed throughout the United States and all over the world.
- Anthony Dean Griffey will be singing the role of Lennie, a signature role for this acclaimed American tenor. He has also sung the role in Houston, New York, Austria, and Australia, where his portrayal earned the Helpmann Award for Best Male Opera Performance and the Green Room Award for Best Principal Male Opera Performance.
- Winnipeg-born baritone Gregory Dahl will be singing the role of George. Curley will be sung by American tenor Joel Sorensen and St. Paul, Minnesota native, soprano Sara Gartland is cast as his wife. Both singers are making their debuts with the company. Candy will be sung by the acclaimed American bass-baritone Peter Strummer, who last appeared with Manitoba Opera as Don Pasquale in 2013.
- This will be the first time that Manitoba Opera has staged *Of Mice and Men* in the company's 43-year history.



Barry Ryan (George) and Anthony Dean Griffey (Lennie) in
Opera Australia's *Of Mice and Men*
Photo: Branco Gaica

Production Information

Of Mice and Men

April 23, 26, & 29

(Dress Rehearsal / Student Night: April 21)

Centennial Concert Hall

Music by Carlisle Floyd

Libretto by Carlisle Floyd, based on the novella and play by John Steinbeck

Premiere Performance: January 22, 1970 by the Seattle Opera at the Moore Theater in Seattle, Washington

Approximately 140 minutes in three acts, including one intermission

Sung in English with projected English titles

PRINCIPAL CAST

LENNIE	TENOR	ANTHONY DEAN GRIFFEY
GEORGE	BARITONE	GREGORY DAHL
CURLEY	TENOR	JOEL SORENSEN
CURLEY'S WIFE	SOPRANO	SARA GARTLAND
CANDY	BASS	PETER STRUMMER
SLIM	BARITONE	DAVID WATSON
CARLSON	TENOR	TERENCE MIERAU
BALLAD SINGER	TENOR	PETER JOHN (PJ) BUCHAN

Manitoba Opera Chorus

Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra

Conductor	TYRONE PATERSON
Director	MICHAEL CAVANAGH
Chorus Master	TADEUSZ BIERNACKI
Stage Manager	ROBERT PEL
Assistant Stage Managers	KATHRYN BALL
	ALI FULMYK
Scenery and props	UTAH OPERA
Costumes	UTAH OPERA
Lighting designer	SCOTT HENDERSON
Projected titles	SHELDON JOHNSON

The Synopsis

Act One, Scene 1 (A Clearing in the Woods)

George and Lennie are once again fleeing from the police. This provokes exasperation and angry threats from George, followed by injured feelings and sulking from Lennie, followed by yet another reconciliation. Lennie has a mouse with him that he accidentally killed by petting it. George forces him to surrender the dead mouse. When George throws it away, Lennie protests, telling George of his love for soft things he can stroke and pet. Lennie is consoled by the promise of live pets in the future when they finally buy their farm, then pleads with George to recount their dream. To humour Lennie, George describes, in great detail, the house and farm they hope to have. Lennie, unable to restrain his excitement, joins George in the telling. The two men settle down for the night while a police siren whines ominously in the distance.

Act One, Scene 2 (The Bunkhouse)

George and Lennie arrive at a ranch the following day, having been hired by Curley, the contentious young owner of the ranch. Before their arrival, Curley and his wife, a flirtatious young woman, have a violent argument in front of the old ranch hand, Candy. Curley's wife accuses her husband of neglect and indifference, threatening to seek attention elsewhere. Curley orders her out of the bunkhouse and forbids her to return to it. Lennie and George soon appear. As they unpack their belongings, the ranch hands return to the bunkhouse from their supper. Slim, the ranch foreman, announces that his dog has just given birth to a new litter of puppies. As the men clamor for them, Curley's wife re-appears. Pretending she is looking for her husband, she flirts brazenly with the ranch hands, despite warnings from Slim and Candy, who urge her to leave. When she is gone, Carlson, the assistant foreman, abetted by the other ranch hands, demand that Candy give up his old dog, whose smell in the bunkhouse is unbearable. Candy protests but is eventually overruled by the men. When Carlson shoots the dog offstage after a long, tense wait inside, the Ballad Singer, a young ranch hand returning late to the bunkhouse, bursts in, alarmed at having heard the shot. After he is told what has happened, he briefly comforts Candy and then slowly climbs into his bunk as the ranch hands join him in singing his lonely ballad. Lennie pleads with a distressed George for one of Slim's puppies. The Ballad Singer plays a final strain of the ballad on his harmonica as the curtain falls.

Act Two (The Bunkhouse)

While intently reading a newspaper as he plays checkers with Slim, George discovers an ad for a small house and farm. Slim gently tries to discourage George from pursuing his dream and is angrily rebuffed. George insists that he and Lennie will not share the lonely life of the typical ranch hand and that their dream of owning their own house and farm will soon come true. Later, while reading the ad to Lennie, who now has his puppy, George is overheard by Candy, who asks to join them in their venture and offers his savings as inducement. After some calculation, George concludes that the three of them will be able to buy the house and farm in only one month. The men sing of their excitement at having a home and life of their own, and dance exuberantly. Curley's wife enters and the merriment abruptly stops. George angrily denounces her for coming to the bunkhouse and he and Candy plead with her to leave before her husband discovers her. She willfully insists on staying and Curley, arguing with Slim and Carlson, comes into the bunkhouse and finds her. Suspicious and threatened, he provokes a fight with Lennie, attacking him with a riding crop. When George shouts to Lennie to protect himself, Lennie crushes Curley's hand. After extracting a promise from Curley that George and Lennie won't be fired, Slim and Carlson exit with Curley's wife and Curley, who has been humiliated in front of the men and his wife. George, at the urging of Candy and Lennie, reads the ad aloud to them once again as the curtain falls.

Act Three, Scene 1 (The Barn)

Lennie is inconsolable at having accidentally killed his puppy and is hiding it in the loft of the barn. Curley's wife enters, carrying a suitcase and obviously preparing to leave the ranch. She and Lennie confide their dreams and fantasies to one another, neither aware the other is speaking. Her dream is to have a glamorous career as a movie star; his, to have pets on his farm. Lennie tells her of his love for stroking soft things, so Curley's wife invites him to stroke her hair. Lennie is fascinated with the softness of her hair. When she, at first annoyed and later in terror, tries to free herself from his grasp, Lennie, frightened at being discovered with her, tries to smother her screams. He then shakes her violently in anger, breaking her neck. Dimly realizing what he has done, Lennie furtively leaves the barn. Candy soon enters, looking for Lennie, and discovers Curley's wife's body. Distraught, he calls for George, who is outside the barn playing horseshoes with Slim and the ranch hands. When Candy has shown George and Slim the body, Slim urges George to find Lennie and shoot him before Lennie is tracked down and brutally lynched by Curley and Carlson. As George exits with Slim, Candy furiously curses the dead body of Curley's wife.

Act Three, Scene 2 (A Clearing in the Woods)

Lennie, shivering with dread, waits for George in the clearing. George enters and Lennie, to George's great distress, insists they go through a semblance of their ritual of angry threats and reconciliation. Lennie, alarmed when he hears the ranch hands with Curley and Slim, is reassured by George that he is not the target of their search. Lennie is delighted when George offers to recount their dream once again. After one abortive effort to shoot Lennie, he finally succeeds in firing the pistol and killing him at the moment Lennie ecstatically imagines he sees their house and farm in the distance. The ranch hands and Curley, hearing the shot, converge on the two lonely figures and, as Slim stays behind with George, the others, indifferent to the tragedy, exit. The Ballad Singer whistles a fragment of the ballad and exits as the curtain falls.

Of Mice and Men Principal Characters

Name	Description
Lennie	A kind, physically strong man labelled with an intellectual disability who travels with George and is his constant companion.
George	A quick-witted, yet uneducated man who is Lennie's guardian and best friend.
Curley	A contentious young ranch owner.
Curley's Wife	A flirtatious young woman.
Candy	An aging ranch handyman.
Carlson	A "large, big-stomached" ranch hand.
Slim	A lead mule-team driver at the ranch.



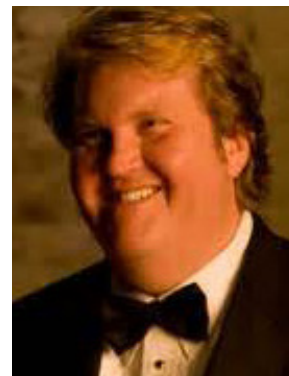
Jacqueline Mabardi as Curley's wife and the Ranch Hands in Opera Australia's *Of Mice and Men*
Photo: Branco Gaica

The Principal Artists

Lennie

Anthony Dean Griffey

American tenor Anthony Dean Griffey has captured critical and popular acclaim on opera, concert and recital stages around the world. The combination of his beautiful and powerful lyric tenor voice, gift of dramatic interpretation and superb musicianship have earned him the highest praise from critics and audiences alike. Mr. Griffey has appeared in the world's most prestigious opera houses including the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Los Angeles Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Paris Opera, and Teatro dell'Opera in Rome. *Of Mice and Men* will be Mr. Griffey's Manitoba Opera debut.



George

Gregory Dahl

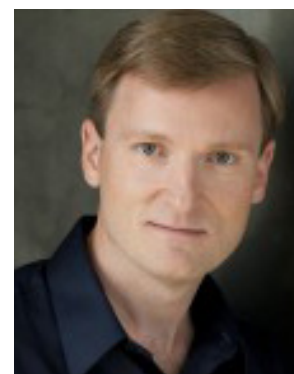
Winnipeg-born Gregory Dahl has boldly staked his claim to a position of prominence among baritones of his generation with performances notable for richness of characterization and a remarkable vocal authority. He has sung all across North America with such companies as the Canadian Opera Company, Edmonton Opera, Vancouver Opera, and the Metropolitan Opera, to name a few. He last appeared with Manitoba Opera as Amonasro in *Aida* in 2013.



Curley

Joel Sorensen

American tenor Joel Sorensen is recognized as one of the finest tenors to specialize in character repertoire, regularly praised for the clarion quality of his voice and a superlative vocal technique that supports his consummate musicality and impeccable diction. He has sung with such companies as LA Opera, San Diego Opera, San Francisco Opera, and the Metropolitan Opera. *Of Mice and Men* will be Mr. Sorensen's Manitoba Opera debut.



The Principal Artists

Curley's Wife

Sara Gartland

A native of St. Paul, Minnesota, soprano Sara Gartland has been described as “a fine soprano voice, focused and attractive” (*Bachtrack*) and has earned praises for leading roles with opera companies across North America. Recent engagements include performances with Opera Omaha, the Dallas Opera, San Francisco Opera, San Diego Opera, and Opera San Jose, among others. *Of Mice and Men* will be Ms. Gartland's Manitoba Opera debut.



Candy

Peter Strummer

Peter Strummer was born in Vienna, Austria, and emigrated with his family to Winnipeg when he was a child. He later moved to Vancouver where he resided until he went to the United States to undertake his musical education. He is now one of North America's foremost character bass baritones and has appeared at major opera houses world-wide including the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Washington Opera, New York City Opera, Canadian Opera Company, as well as 15 years performing in Germany and Austria. He last appeared with Manitoba Opera in the title role of *Don Pasquale* in November 2013.

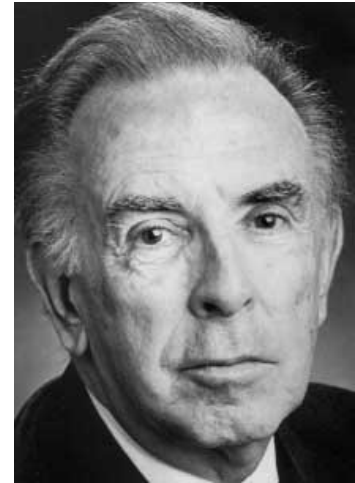


The Composer and Librettist

Carlisle Floyd

Born: June 11, 1926

Carlisle Floyd is one of America's most celebrated composers of opera, with a career spanning over 50 years. Born in 1926 in Latta, South Carolina, the son of a Methodist minister, Floyd earned a bachelor and master of music degree in piano and composition at Syracuse University. He began his teaching career in 1947 as part of the piano faculty at Florida State University (FSU), eventually becoming a professor of composition. It was at FSU that he wrote his first nine operas, including *Of Mice and Men* (1969) and his most popular, *Susannah* (1953–54).



In 1976, he was appointed Professor of Music at the University of Houston and also co-founded the Houston Opera Studio, a training program for young professional singers and repertory coaches. He retired from the university in 1996.

As he celebrated his 80th birthday in 2006, he told the *Houston Chronicle* he considered the acclaimed *Cold Sassy Tree*, which premiered in 2000, his professional finale. However, he later went on to write another opera, *Prince of Players*, which will premiere at Houston Grand Opera in March 2016.

Aside from composing, Floyd is also his own librettist, having written the libretto for all 12 of his operas. His works are among the most performed operas by American composers.

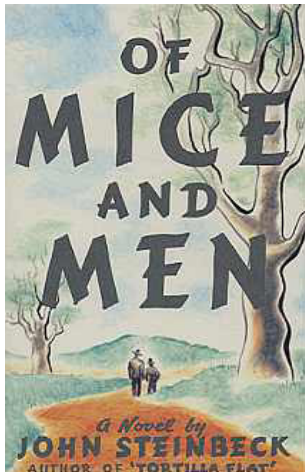
What is a Libretto?

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.



John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*



First edition (1937)
cover artist: Ross MacDonald

Of Mice and Men is a novella written by Nobel Prize-winning author John Steinbeck that was published in 1937. It was originally written as a “play-novelette.” Structured in three acts, Steinbeck intended it to be both a novella and a script for a play. Shortly after its release, Steinbeck transformed the book into a play using standard script format. The play premiered November 23, 1937, at the Music Box Theatre on Broadway. Although most of today’s students still read the story in its original literary form, it is important to remember that Steinbeck intended *Of Mice and Men* to be both read as a novella and seen on the stage.

Steinbeck originally titled his novella *Something That Happened* (referring to the events of the book as “something that happened” since nobody could really be blamed for the unforeseen tragic events that unfold in the story), however, he changed the title after reading a poem by Scottish poet Robert Burns titled “To a Mouse.” Burns’ poem tells of the regret the narrator feels for having destroyed the home of a mouse while plowing his field. Written in 1785, in a Scottish dialect, the poem contains a famous line which translates as “The best-laid schemes of mice and men often go awry.”

Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men* centers around George Milton and Lennie Small, two migrant ranch workers, who move from place to place in search of new job opportunities in California during the Great Depression. Steinbeck often wrote about the experiences among the working classes in rural California. The geography and demographics of Steinbeck’s hometown of Salinas, California, as well as his experience as a bindlestiff (hobo) during the 1920s, greatly influenced many of his novels, including *Of Mice and Men* and *The Grapes of Wrath*, and informed his characters’ strong identification with the land.

The novella was highly anticipated, selling 117,000 copies before its official publication date of February 25, 1937, and garnered critical acclaim shortly after its publication. Following the success of the play, the production was chosen as Best Play by the New York Drama Critics’ Circle in 1938. It continues to be produced all over the world, including a new version of the play which opened on Broadway for a limited engagement in 2014, starring James Franco, Chris O’Dowd, Leighton Meester, and Jim Norton. The first film adaptation took place in 1939 and was nominated for four Oscars. Another popular and more recent (1992) film adaptation stars Gary Sinise as George and John Malkovich as Lennie. Carlisle Floyd’s opera adaptation premiered in 1970.

Of Mice and Men has often been criticized for everything from its coarse language to the depiction of people with disabilities to the promotion of euthanasia. Despite appearing on the American Library Association’s list of the Most Challenged Books of the 21st Century, *Of Mice and Men* is considered one of Steinbeck’s most important and influential works and continues to be widely read.



Poster for the 1939 film

Playwright's Biography: John Steinbeck

John Steinbeck was born in Salinas, California, on February 27, 1902. He attended Stanford University, where he studied marine biology intermittently between 1920 and 1926. Steinbeck did not graduate from Stanford but instead chose to support himself through manual labor while continuing his writing career. Steinbeck's first novel, *Cup of Gold* was published in 1929, and was followed by *The Pastures of Heaven* (1932) and *To a God Unknown* (1933). However, these first three novels were unsuccessful, both critically and commercially.



Steinbeck had his first success with *Tortilla Flat* in 1935, an affectionately told story of Mexican Americans imbued with gentle humor. His subsequent novel, *In Dubious Battle* (1936), is a classic account of a strike by agricultural laborers and a pair of Marxist labor organizers who engineer it, and is the first Steinbeck novel to encompass the striking social commentary of his most notable work. Steinbeck received even greater acclaim for the novella *Of Mice and Men* (1937), a tragic story about the strange, complex bond between two migrant laborers, which he later adapted to the stage. His crowning achievement, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), won Steinbeck a Pulitzer Prize and a National Book Award. After the best-selling success of *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck went to Mexico to collect marine life with the freelance biologist Edward F. Ricketts, and the two men collaborated in writing *Sea of Cortez* (1941), a study of the fauna of the Gulf of California.

During World War II, Steinbeck wrote some effective pieces of government propaganda, among them *The Moon Is Down* (1942), a novel of Norwegians under the Nazis. He also served as a war correspondent. With the end of World War II and the move from the Great Depression to economic prosperity, Steinbeck's work did soften somewhat. While containing the elements of social criticism that marked his earlier work, the three novels Steinbeck published immediately following the war, *Cannery Row* (1945), *The Pearl*, and *The Bus* (both 1947), were more sentimental and relaxed in approach. Steinbeck also contributed to several screenplays. He wrote the original stories for several films, including *Lifeboat* (1944), directed by Alfred Hitchcock, and *A Medal for Benny*, and wrote the screenplay for Elia Kazan's *Viva Zapata!*, a biographical film about Emiliano Zapata, the revolutionary Mexican peasant who rose to the presidency.

Among Steinbeck's later works are: *Burning Bright* (1950), *East of Eden* (1952), *The Winter of Our Discontent* (1961), and *Travels With Charley* (1962). Steinbeck received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962 and died in New York City in 1968.

- Article compiled by National Players staff. Reprinted with permission of National Players and Olney Theatre Center.

To A Mouse on Turning Up Her Nest with the Plough

The title “Of Mice and Men” was inspired by this poem by Robert Burns, written in 1785.

Examine this poem and determine what connections can be made between the story of the mouse in the poem, and the story of the opera. What similarities can be found between the character of the mouse in the poem and characters from the opera? What is the central message of the poem?

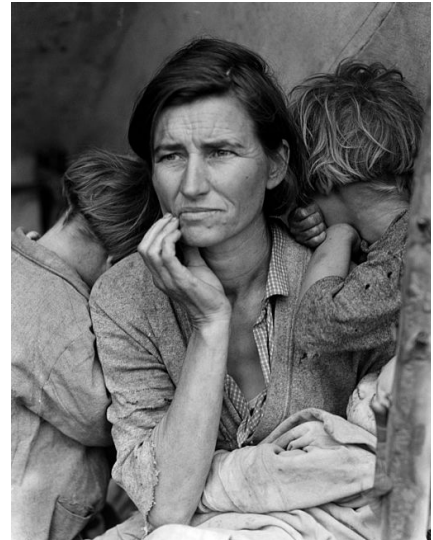
Burns' Original Poem	Standard English Translation
Wee, sleekit, cowrin, tim'rous beastie, O, what a panic's in thy breastie! Thou need na start awa sae hasty Wi bickering brattle! I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee, Wi' murdering pattle.	Small, sleek, cowering, timorous beast, Oh, what panic is in your breast! You need not start away so hasty With a hurrying scamper! I would be loath to run and chase you, With a murderous spade!
I'm truly sorry man's dominion Has broken Nature's social union, An' justifies that ill opinion Which makes thee startle At me, thy poor, earth born companion An' fellow mortal!	I'm truly sorry that Man's dominion Has broken Nature's social union, And justifies that ill opinion Which makes you startled At me, your poor, earth-born companion And fellow mortal!
I doubt na, whyles, but thou may thieve; What then? poor beastie, thou maun live! A daimen icker in a thrave S a sma' request; I'll get a blessin wi' the lave, An' never miss't.	I doubt not that you may steal; So what? Poor beast, you must live! An odd ear from twenty four sheaves of corn is a small request: I'll get a blessing with the rest, And never miss it!
Thy wee-bit housie, too, in ruin! It's silly wa's the win's are strewin! An' naething, now, to big a new ane, O' foggage green! An' bleak Decembers win's ensuin, Baith snell an' keen!	Your tiny house, too, is in ruin! Its feeble walls the winds are strewing! And nothing now, from which to build a new one Of foliage green! And bleak December's winds ensuing Both bitter and keen!

Burns' Original Poem	Standard English Translation
<p>Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste An' weary winter comin fast, An' cozie here, beneath the blast, Thou thought to dwell, Til crash! the cruel coulter past Out thro' thy cell.</p>	<p>You saw the fields laid bare and wasted And weary Winter coming fast, And cosy here, beneath the blast, You thought to dwell, Until crash! the cruel plow passed Right through your cell.</p>
<p>That wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble, Has cost thee monie a weary nibble! Now thou's turned out, for a'thy trouble, But house or hald, To thole the winters sleety dribble, An' cranreuch cauld.</p>	<p>That tiny heap of leaves and stubble (grain stalks) Has cost you many a weary nibble! Now you are turned out for your trouble Without house or home (belongings), To endure the Winter's sleety dribble, And frosty cold.</p>
<p>But Mousie, thou art no thy lane, In proving foresight may be vain: The best laid schemes o' mice an' men Gang aft agley, An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain, For promis'd joy!</p>	<p>But Mousie, you are not alone In proving that foresight may be vain: The best laid schemes of mice and men Go oft astray (oft go awry) And leave us nothing but grief and pain Instead of promised joy!</p>
<p>Still thou are blest, compared wi' me! The present only toucheth thee: But och! I backward cast me e'e, On prospects drear! An' forward, tho' I canna see, I guess an' fear!</p>	<p>Still, you are blessed, compared with me! Only this moment touches you: But oh! I backward cast my eye On prospects turned to sadness! And though forward I cannot see, I guess and fear!</p>

The Great Depression, The Dust Bowl and Migrant Workers

The Great Depression

Of Mice and Men is set during The Great Depression, the worst economic crisis experienced by the industrialized Western World, spanning from around 1929 into the 1930s. The New York Stock Market Crash of October 29, 1929, (known as Black Tuesday) is often regarded as the start of the Depression era, although it was not the sole cause. Several factors contributed to the Depression, including loss of foreign markets, a farm depression that cut farm purchasing power, and lack of buying power for most people. The United States soon became crippled by mass unemployment, bank failures, widespread hunger, and poverty. The problems were compounded by a six-year drought that turned America's fertile farmlands into a dust bowl. Nationwide, the average unemployment reached nearly 25%, but was much higher in some areas and demographics. Although the Depression began in the United States, it quickly turned into a world-wide economic slump.



Migrant Mother,
Florence Owens Thompson, 1936.
Photograph by Dorothea Lange
Source: Library of Congress

The Dust Bowl and Migrant Workers

The Dust Bowl, or the “dirty thirties,” was a period of severe dust storms which caused major ecological and agricultural damage to the American and Canadian prairies from 1930 to 1936 (in some areas until 1940). Severe drought coupled with decades of poor soil conservation practices led to the soil being easily blown away.



Dust storm approaching Spearman, Texas,
April 14, 1935

The Dust Bowl was devastating to farmers who were already badly hit by the Great Depression. More than half a million people in the United States were forced off their land. Many displaced people became migrant workers, traveling from farm to farm to work at starvation wages. The Dust Bowl exodus was the largest migration in American history within a short period of time. By 1940, around 2.5 million people had moved out of the Plains states; of those, 200,000 moved to California. More of the migrants were from Oklahoma than any other state so migrant workers became known as “Okies”, no matter where they were from.

Most Californians didn't welcome the influx of “Okies.” The number of migrant workers outnumbered the available jobs, weakening the demand in the labour pool and leading to low wages for both migrant workers and California residents. Groups of vigilantes beat up migrants and burned their shacks to the ground. Migrant workers and their families were often treated as outsiders and perceived as being a burden on local resources.

Lennie Small

THE CHARACTER OF LENNIE

Lennie Small is portrayed within Carlisle Floyd's *Of Mice and Men* as a child-like man who although good hearted, is unaware of the danger he presents with his physical strength. Lennie enjoys petting soft things - rabbits, puppies, Curley's wife's hair - and his dream is to own a farm with George where he can have rabbits of his own. The character is commonly described as "slow-witted" and "just a kid" despite his age and physical stature. Though it is never explicitly stated, Lennie is a character that is labelled with an intellectual disability, which is suggested in the original Steinbeck novella as well.

WHAT IS AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY?

An intellectual disability is defined as "a disability characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and in adaptive behaviour, which covers many social and practical skills" (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities).

STEREOTYPES FOUND WITHIN THE OPERA

The primary stereotype that is found within the opera is the depiction of Lennie as being "just a kid" rather than a man labelled with an intellectual disability. He is deemed dangerous because he has the physical strength of a strong, full-grown man but not the problem-solving skills of an adult. He relies strongly on George to help him make the right choices, and whenever George leaves his side Lennie gets into trouble.

The way that George takes care of Lennie reflects the way Candy cares for his old dog, both Lennie and the dog are seen as a burden by other characters in the story. Slim tells Candy that he should kill his old dog, "You'd do him a favor just to end his life" which is the same thing he tells George to do to Lennie after the death of Curley's wife. The comparison between Lennie and the dog upholds the stereotype that people with disabilities are treated more like animals than humans. Although George is seen as the caretaker, Lennie cares deeply about George and sees their relationship as a partnership. This is evident when he tells George "Because I got you to look after me, and you got me to look after you."



Anthony Dean Griffey as Lennie in Opera Australia's *Of Mice and Men*
Photo: Branco Gaica

Major Themes

LONELINESS

The majority of characters in *Of Mice and Men* struggle with feelings of loneliness. George and Lennie's companionship and their dream of a farm gives meaning to the otherwise lonely existence of a ranch hand. When Lennie pets soft things, as he loves to do, it allows him to feel safe, secure, and not so alone in the world. Candy has his old dog as his one companion, but after his dog is killed, he feels as though he has no one and desperately latches onto the dream that George and Lennie share to give meaning to his life. Curley's wife feels neglected by her husband and is so overwhelmed by her loneliness that she looks for attention from other men and seeks out the friendship of Lennie and the other ranch hands.

FRIENDSHIP

George and Lennie share a bond not usually seen among migrant ranch hands. The two friends always travel together and as we see in the opening scene, George is constantly looking out for Lennie and helping him to avoid trouble. Lennie shares this feeling, and always strives to be respectful of George. Their shared dream of one day owning a farm together strengthens their friendship even more. At the end, George saves Lennie from a brutal lynching. By shooting him at the moment Lennie ecstatically imagines he sees their house and farm in the distance, George takes Lennie to a safe and comforting place in order to allow his friend a more gentle and humane death.

POWERLESSNESS

Lennie appears to be powerless against his urges and his physical strength, and does not always understand the repercussions of his actions. He does not want to get into trouble, but he inevitably ends up in this position time and time again, and relies on George to protect him. Although George does his best to help Lennie avoid trouble, he cannot ultimately control what Lennie does and is therefore, himself, powerless.

George and Lennie are also economically powerless. As ranch hands, they are victims of a society in which they face overwhelming odds of being able to get ahead financially. They are hard-working men, but they are paid so little that it is difficult to save enough money to purchase their own land.

THE AMERICAN DREAM

Nearly all of the main characters in *Of Mice and Men* dream of a better life and the freedom to follow their own desires, yet their dreams are never realized. Most notably, George and Lennie dream of having a small house and farm of their own. George yearns to live "off the fat of the land," be his own boss, and live a peaceful life with Lennie. To Lennie, their own farm would mean safety and security in a life with George; and a place where he could pet and tend to rabbits of his own. This dream is unreachd as George is unable to keep Lennie from getting into trouble. Throughout the story, it is revealed that Curley's wife has always dreamt of living the life of a glamorous movie star, although she remains on the ranch in an unhappy marriage. After the death of his dog, Candy latches onto George and Lennie's dream of living off their own land. He is broken when he finds Curley's wife's body because it marks the end of this shared dream. Candy's cursing of the corpse underlines how important hoping and dreaming is to the individual.

Discussion Questions:

- Who do you think is the loneliest character in the story? Why?
- In what other ways does the theme of friendship appear in the story?
- Discuss each character in terms of how much power they have in relation to each other. What do you think is the message that John Steinbeck is trying to portray through these power dynamics in the story?
- How does Steinbeck comment on the 'impossibility' of the American Dream with *Of Mice and Men*?

Youtube Links:

San Diego Opera Talk! with Nick Reveles: Of Mice and Men

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GaenCX2Tt6Q>

Opera Australia: Barry Ryan, Anthony Dean Griffey - "An' we'll live off the fat of the land"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14m45R2ECMI>

Kentucky Opera dress rehearsal footage + interview with Carlisle Floyd

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p92M6g635L8>

Sarasota Opera interview with Carlisle Floyd

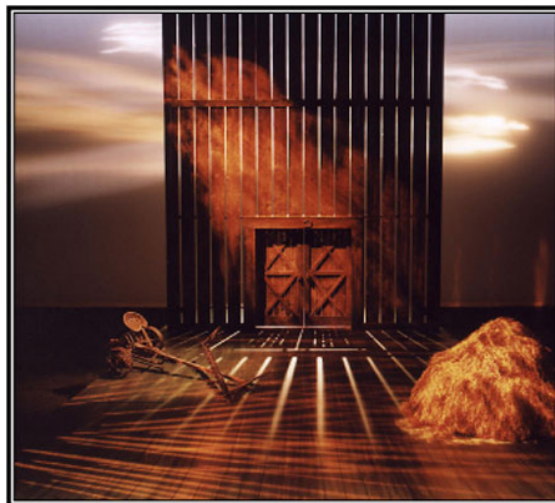
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p92M6g635L8>

Interpreting a Character for Opera - Opera Australia interview with Anthony Dean Griffey

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p92M6g635L8>

Composing an Opera - Opera Australia interview with Carlisle Floyd

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtn7bVD-eTo>



Utah Opera *Of Mice and Men* set

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.

Staff

Claudia Alvares
Development Assistant

Tadeusz Biernacki
Chorus Master & Assistant Music Director

Michael Blais
Director of Administration

Valorie Block
Event & Sponsorship Manager

Judy Braun
Patron Services & Communicatinos Coordinator

Larry Desrochers
General Director & CEO

Sheldon Johnson
Director of Production

Tyrone Paterson
Music Advisor & Principal Conductor

Darlene Ronald
Director of Marketing

Dale Sulymka
Chief Financial Officer

Sophie Waldman
Interim Education & Outreach Coordinator

Monica Wood
Director of Development



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

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Student Activities

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

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

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

CLIMAX: To what climax does the conflict lead?

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

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

- Give students the synopsis to read and have them re-tell the story after they have read it.
- Ask comprehensive questions.
- Present and discuss the composer and librettist.
- Listen to excerpts from the opera. 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; 2.1.3; 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 *Of Mice and Men* Student Night at the Opera, including such details as the date, the time, and the artists involved.
- Have them draw a set for a production of the opera.
- Have them also sketch a costume, wig, and makeup for a character in *Of Mice and Men*.
- Have the students write a press release about *Of Mice and Men* Student Night at the Opera, including the date, the time, the artists 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 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.

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:

GEORGE | LENNIE | CURLEY | CURLEY'S WIFE | CANDY

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; 2.1.3; 2.3.2; 2.2.2; 3.3.2

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

Activity #5: Write a Biography

Have students research and write a biography of the novelist, composer and librettist, or one of the characters.

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 3.3.1; 3.3.2; 3.3.3; 3.2.2; 3.2.3; 4.3.1; 4.3.2; 4.3.3; 4.2.2; 4.2.3

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-C1

Music Curriculum Connections: M-C1

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, ie., How does Candy feel as his dog is taken away to be shot? What thoughts lead to Lennie overpowering Curley's wife? Explore George's internal struggle leading up to his decision to shoot Lennie.

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 #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.

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 #8: Cast *Of Mice and Men*

Have the students cast modern-day singers or bands as the performers in *Of Mice and Men*. Who did they choose? On what did they base their decisions, ie., how do the singers' voices and/or personas suit the characters in the story? What are their costumes like?

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 #9: Symbolism in Literature

Objects, characters, figures, and colors are often used to represent abstract ideas or concepts within literature. Ask students to choose one of the following symbols to discuss within the context of *Of Mice and Men*: the clearing in the woods; Lennie and George's farm; mice; Candy's dog; Lennie's puppy.

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.2.4; 2.1.2; 2.1.3; 5.2.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-R2

Activity #10: *Of Mice and Men* 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 communicate 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 *Of Mice and Men*. 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 #11: Musical Interpretation of Literature

Step 1 - Prepare a Musical Outline

Working in small groups, have your students choose a novel or story 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 #12: Active Listening

Play the first few minutes of CD1 - Track 1 of the Houston Grand Opera production of *Of Mice and Men* (CD is available for purchase or loan from our office. Please contact the Education and Outreach Coordinator at 204-942-7470).

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; 1.1.2; 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

Activity #13: The Languages of Opera

English-language operas have become more common and more popular since the 20th century. Have your students research and listen to excerpts from some other English-language operas besides *Of Mice and Men* such as *Peter Grimes*, *Porgy and Bess*, *Nixon in China*, and *Einstein on the Beach*. Have your students compare and contrast operas in English to those sung in other languages such as Italian, German, French, Russian, etc. Discuss questions could include:

- Which language of opera do they prefer? What is it about the sounds of that language that makes for an enjoyable listening experience?
- How does understanding the words being sung when hearing English opera change the listening experience?
- Why are operas that were written in other languages not typically sung in English?

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 2.3.1; 2.2.1; 4.4.3; 5.2.2; 5.2.1

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-R2

Music Curriculum Connections: M-R3; M-R2

Activity #14: Opera Comprehension Tests

General 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.

Of Mice and Men

1. Who is the composer? _____
2. In which era does *Of Mice and Men* take place? _____
3. What is George and Lennie's dream? _____
4. Who joins in on George and Lennie's dream? _____
5. In Act Two, who tries to discourage George from pursuing his dream? _____
6. Who attacks Lennie in Act Two and why? _____
7. Who does Lennie accidentally kill? _____
8. Why does George shoot Lennie? _____
9. The role of Lennie is sung by a _____ (name the singing voice).
10. The role of George is sung by a _____ (name the singing voice).
11. In which language is the opera sung? _____

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

Of Mice and Men

1. Carlisle Floyd
2. The Depression era
3. To own a small house and farm of their own.
4. Candy
5. Slim
6. Curley. After finding his wife in the bunkhouse, he is suspicious and threatened and provokes a fight with Lennie.
7. Curley’s wife
8. To save him from a death in the hands of Curley and his men
9. Tenor
10. Baritone
11. English
12. 1970

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

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

Winnipeg Public Library

Resources

Please note: These resources relate to the novella *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck. To borrow or purchase a CD (including libretto) of the *Of Mice and Men* opera, please contact Manitoba Opera at 204-942-7470.

Books

Of Mice and Men [by John Steinbeck]
New York: Penguin Books, 2002, c1937.
Call No.: FICTION STEINBECK

Of Mice and Men [by John Steinbeck]
New York: Viking Press, c1965
Call No.: FICTION STEINBECK

Understanding Of Mice and Men [by Bradley Steffens]
San Diego, CA : Lucent Books, c2002.
Call No.: YA 813.52 STEINBECK 2002

John Steinbeck, Of Mice and Men Peguin Study Notes [by Marsailli Camerson]
London: Peguin, 1999.
Call No.: 813.52 STEINBECK

Readings on Of Mice and Men [by Jill Karson]
San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, c1998
Call No.: 813.52 REA

John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men [by Harold Bloom]
Broomali, PA: Chelsea House Publishers, c1999.
Call No.: 813.52 STEINBECK

Of Mice and Men: A kinship of powerlessness [by Charlotte Cook Hadella]
New York: Twayne Publishers, London: Prentice Hall International, c1995.
Call No.: 813.52 STEINBECK

Sound Recordings

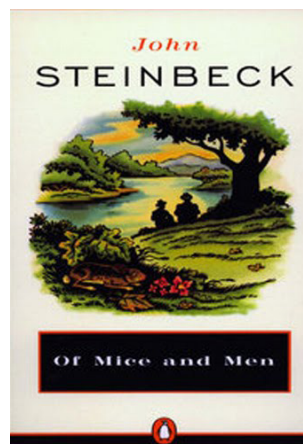
Of Mice and Men [by John Steinbeck, read by Gary Senise]
Penguin-Highbridge Audio, p2002
Call No.: CD FICTION STEINBECK

The World's Very Best Opera for Kids - in English!
The Children's Group, p2003.
Call No.: CD JUV WORLDS

DVD Recordings

Of Mice and Men
John Malkovich, Gary Sinise, Sherilyn Fenn; directed by Gary Sinise.
MGM Home Entertainment, c2004
Call No.: DVD FILM/TV OFM

Of Mice and Men
Burgess Meredith, Betty Field, Lon Chaney Jr.; produced and directed by Lewis Milestone.
Image Entertainment/Corinth Films, c2001
Call No.: DVD FILM/TV OFM



Works Cited
(Of Mice and Men)

- "Carlisle Floyd". Boosey & Hawkes. 11 May 2015. <http://www.boosey.com/pages/cr/composer/composer_main.asp?composerid=2810&ttype=BIOGRAPHY>
- "Composer inspired to finish one more opera". Houston Chronicle. 11 May 2015. <<http://www.houstonchronicle.com/entertainment/arts-theater/article/Composer-inspired-to-finish-one-more-opera-5358307.php>>
- "The Story with Musical Examples" Utah Opera. 28 May 2015. <<http://www.utahopera.org/index.php/the-story-with-musical-examples-mice-and-men>>
- "John Steinbeck" biography.com. 28 May 2015. <<http://www.biography.com/people/john-steinbeck-9493358>>
- Of Mice and Men (study guide). Olney Theatre Center. 12 May 2015. <http://ihssteinbeckfestival.weebly.com/uploads/1/1/4/0/11404813/of_mice_and_men_study_guide.pdf>
- Of Mice and Men (study guide). Theatre Calgary. 05 Jun 15. <<https://www.theatrecalgary.com/media/TC-OfMiceAndMenSG.pdf>>
- "Dust Bowl Migrants." Boundless U.S. History. 05 Jun. 2015. <<https://www.boundless.com/u-s-history/textbooks/boundless-u-s-history-textbook/the-new-deal-1933-1940-25/social-costs-of-the-depression-194/dust-bowl-migrants-1074-4462/>>
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- Gallagher, Charles A. and Cameron D. Lippard, ed. Race and Racism in the United States: An Encyclopedia of the American Mosaic. Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood, 2014
- "To A Mouse" Essential Life Skills. 4 December 2015. <<http://www.essentiallifefskills.net/toamouse.html>>
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Works Cited

(General)

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
The World's Great Operas

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