



MANITOBA OPERA

*Werther*

Study Guide



2016/17 Season

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# 4 Great Resources for Engaging Your Students with the Art of Opera

## 1. Student Night at the Opera

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 of our mainstage productions, providing an exciting look at the art and magic of opera before the curtain goes up on Opening Night. Please note:

- *Werther* is an opera in four acts, with a running time of approximately three hours.
- The dress rehearsal is the last opportunity the singers will have to work on stage 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 \$12.50 each and are available to students from schools, postsecondary institutions, private and conservatory music programs, and youth organizations.

## 2. 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. Manitoba Curriculum Connections are provided with links to Grade 9 - 12 Music, Drama and English Language Arts.

## 3. CDs Available for Loan

Borrow a *Werther* CD from our office for a two-week period.

## 4. 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: *La Bohème*  
*Aida*  
*The Daughter of the Regiment*  
*The Magic Flute*  
*Carmen*  
 \*NEW THIS SEASON\* *Hansel and Gretel*

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

Contact Livia Dymond at 204-942-7470 or [education@manitobaopera.mb.ca](mailto:education@manitobaopera.mb.ca)

# 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.



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

## Staff

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*Chorus Master & Assistant Music Director*

Michael Blais  
*Director of Administration*

Judy Braun  
*Patron Services & Communications Coordinator*

Larry Desrochers  
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## Fast Facts

- *Werther* (pronounced vair-TAIR) is a French opera in four acts, composed by Jules Massenet with a libretto by Edouard Blau, Paul Milliet, and Georges Hartmann. The libretto is adapted from the novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.
- The world premiere of *Werther* took place on February 16, 1892 at the Court Opera in Vienna, Austria. The opera was translated into German, and premiered in that language first. It did not premiere in its original language, French, until December of that year.
- Massenet was inspired to write an opera based on *The Sorrows of Young Werther* after visiting the late author's home and reading the novel. Prior to this, he had planned on writing an opera on the story of *Scènes de la vie de bohème*, on which Puccini later based his classic opera *La Bohème*.
- The aria "*Pourquoi me reveiller*" sung by the title character, Werther, is the most well-known piece from the opera. He sings the words of the poet Ossain to Charlotte.
- This opera highlights the power orchestral music has to communicate and express feelings and stories without words. The orchestration is integral to understanding the longing Werther has for Charlotte, and the honour Charlotte feels for defending her family; words do not need to explicitly state such feelings; the music tell us.
- This is the first time Manitoba Opera has staged *Werther* in the company's 44-year history.



*Werther*, Opera de Montreal, 2011.

Photo:Y. Renaud



# Production Information

## Werther

April 29, May 2, & 5  
**Dress Rehearsal / Student Night:** April 27  
 Centennial Concert Hall

Music by Jules Massenet  
 Libretto by Edouard Blau, Paul Milliet, and Georges Hartmann, based on Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's  
 novel *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (The Sorrows of Young Werther)  
 Approximately three hours in four acts  
 Premiered (in German) at the Court Opera in Vienna, Austria on February 16, 1892  
 Sung in French with projected English translations

### PRINCIPAL CAST (In order of vocal appearance)

Werther	Tenor	JOHN TESSIER
Charlotte	Mezzo-Soprano	LAUREN SEGAL
Albert	Baritone	KEITH PHARES
Sophie	Soprano	LARA SECORD-HAID
Le Bailli	Bass	DAVID WATSON
Johann	Bass	TBA
Schmidt	Tenor	TERENCE MIERAU

### Manitoba Opera Chorus Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra

Conductor	TYRONE PATERSON
Director	ANN HODGES
Sets	OPÉRA DE MONTRÉAL
Costumes	OPÉRA DE MONTRÉAL
Lighting designer	BILL WILLIAMS
Stage manager	ROBERT PEL
Assistant stage managers	KATHRYN BALL CANDACE MAXWELL
Projected titles	SHELDON JOHNSON

## Production Information

### A Note on the Setting

Massenet's *Werther* is set in Wetzlar, Germany in the late 18th century. Manitoba Opera's production moves the action to the 1920s, while the libretto and music will remain unchanged. This production concept and set is borrowed from the 2011 production of *Werther* at Opéra de Montréal. The set was originally designed by Elijah Moshinsky for Opera Australia and the 1920's era costumes were designed by Montreal-based fashion house, Barilà.



*Werther*, Opéra de Montréal, 2011.  
Photo:Y. Renaud



# Synopsis

## Act I

*A midsummer's day outside the home of the Bailiff.*

It's only July, but the Bailiff, a widower, is teaching his six youngest children a carol they'll be performing at Christmas. A pair of neighbours, Schmidt and Johann, watch and gossip about that night's village ball. The Bailiff says his oldest daughter, Charlotte, whose fiancé is out of town, will be attending the ball with a visiting poet named Werther.

As the sun sets, Werther arrives. Watching her care for her siblings, he is smitten by the beautiful Charlotte. They leave for the ball, and shortly thereafter Charlotte's fiancé, Albert, returns unexpectedly from his trip. He tells her sister Sophie that he will surprise Charlotte in the morning. Charlotte and Werther arrive home from the ball in the moonlight and, inspired by the romantic mood, Werther declares his love to her. When the Bailiff calls out from the house that Albert has returned and Charlotte explains he is her fiancé, Werther's hope is shattered. He insists she keep her vow, yet he cannot imagine she will marry someone else.

## Act II

*One Sunday, the following September.*

Charlotte and Albert, married for three months, are walking to church, where the pastor's golden wedding anniversary is being celebrated. Werther, who has tried to maintain a friendship with them both but still feels tormented, appears. After the service, Albert tells Werther that he understands how he must feel, having met Charlotte when she was still free, and that he sympathizes with him. Werther replies that he feels only friendship for Charlotte. Sophie invites him to dance but he refuses. Finally Charlotte emerges from the chapel and tries to engage Werther in polite conversation, but he keeps talking about their first meeting and his love for her. In an attempt to soften his pain, she suggests he leave town, then relents, asking him to come visit for Christmas. Left alone, Werther for the first time contemplates the idea of suicide. When Sophie appears, he tells her he is leaving town and rushes off. Sophie bursts into tears, and tells Charlotte that Werther was acting like a crazy man. Albert, looking on, knows better: Werther is still in love with his wife.

## Act III

*Christmas Eve, Charlotte and Albert's home.*

Charlotte is home alone, sadly re-reading Werther's letters. Sophie unsuccessfully tries to cheer her up, then heads off to spend the holiday with their father and siblings. Suddenly Werther appears, distraught and bitter. Charlotte seeks to distract him with a favourite book of classical poetry, but Werther chooses a particularly morbid verse, reading aloud. He presses Charlotte to declare her love for him. She momentarily loses her composure and falls into his arms, but then recovers and runs from the room, saying they will never meet again. Werther declares that Charlotte's refusal has condemned him to death and leaves.

Albert, returning home, immediately discerns that Charlotte has had a visitor but she denies it. A messenger arrives, bearing a note from Werther: he is leaving on a long trip and wants to borrow Albert's pistols. Albert forces his wife to hand the guns to the messenger. She understands his intentions only too well and, the moment Albert leaves the room, rushes out, praying to reach Werther in time.

*A dramatic orchestral interlude.*

#### **Act IV**

*Werther's lodgings.*

Charlotte finds Werther mortally wounded. Barely able to register her presence, he declares his love once more, insisting he is happy to die in her arms. Charlotte admits she has loved him from the day they met, though she was bound by her vow to Albert. As Werther dies, the children are heard singing their Christmas hymn.

*-Synopsis courtesy of Metropolitan Opera Education Department.*

## Principal Characters

Name	Description
Werther	A young poet, in love with Charlotte
Charlotte	A kind, beautiful young woman, dedicated to her family, betrothed to Albert
Albert	A decent man, betrothed to Charlotte
Sophie	An innocent and kind girl, Charlotte's younger sister
Le Bailli	A leader of the town, Charlotte and Sophie's widowed father
Schmidt	A friend of Le Bailli
Johann	A friend of Le Bailli



*Werther*, 2013, Scottish Opera.  
Photo: J. Glossop

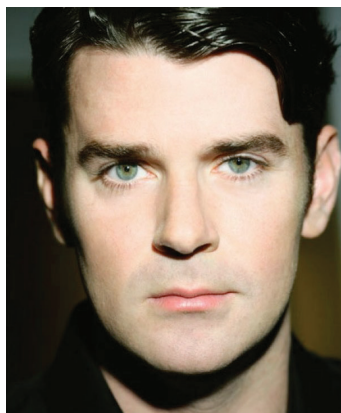
## The Principal Artists



**John Tessier**  
*Werther*



**Lauren Segal**  
*Charlotte*



**Keith Phares**  
*Albert*



**Lara Secord-Haid**  
*Sophie*



**David Watson**  
*Le Bailli*



**Terence Mierau**  
*Schmidt*

**TBA**  
*Johann*



# The Composer

## Jules Massenet

**Born:** May 12, 1842

**Died:** August 13, 1912

**Known for:** French composer in the romantic era, writing over 30 operas in his lifetime.

**Most frequently staged works:**  
*Manon* (1884) and *Werther* (1892)



Jules Massenet was born in Montaud, France and began playing piano as a child, taught by his mother. As he completed school, he began his studies at the Paris Conservatoire and won the prestigious *Prix de Rome*. This prize allowed him to study at the French Academy in Rome for three years, following which he worked as a piano teacher and composer.

Massenet's first large-scale opera was a comic opera titled *Don Cesar de Bazan*, which premiered in Paris in 1872, but was a failure. He continued to make his income primarily through teaching piano lessons to private students.

His opera *Manon* premiered in 1884 and was a tremendous success, and to this day continues to be a cornerstone of the repertoire of French opera. He found success again with *Le Cid* in 1885, but his next opera, *Werther*, did not have the same popularity. It was deemed "too gloomy," and was translated into German for its premiere in Vienna. *Werther* did not become popular until its revival in 1903. Massenet based his opera, *Werther*, on the novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* by Goethe after he visited the home of the late author and read the novel. Prior to this, he had planned on writing an opera on the story of *Scènes de la vie de bohème*, on which Puccini later based his classic opera *La Bohème*.

Throughout his adult life, Massenet continued composing operas with great success, living a private life despite the attention his work was receiving. Twice he turned down the position of Director at the Paris Conservatoire where he had studied in his youth. He continued to compose operas until the final years of his life, leaving behind unfinished works when he passed away in 1912 of abdominal cancer.



# The Composer

## Operas by Massenet

Esmeralda, 1865 (Unfinished)  
 La coupe du roi de Thule, 1866  
 (unperformed)  
 La grand'tante, 1867  
 Manfred, 1869 (unfinished)  
 Meduse, 1870  
 Don Cesar de Bazan, 1872  
 L'adorable Bel'-Boul, 1874  
 Les templiers, 1875 (lost)  
 Berangere et Anatole, 1876  
 Le roi de Lahore, 1877  
 Robert de France, 1880 (lost)  
 Les Girondins, 1881 (lost)

Herodiade/Erodiade, 1881/1884  
 Manon, 1884  
 Le Cid, 1885  
 Escalarmone, 1889  
 Le mage, 1891  
 Werther, 1892 (German), 1893 (French)  
 Thais, 1894  
 Le portrait de Manon, 1894  
 La Navarraise, 1894  
 Amadis, 1895  
 Sapho, 1897  
 Cendrillon, 1899  
 Griselidis, 1901  
 Le jongleur de Notre-Dame, 1902  
 Cherubin, 1905  
 Ariane, 1906  
 Therese, 1907  
 Bacchus, 1909  
 Don Quichotte, 1910  
 Roma, 1912  
 Panurge, 1913  
 Cleopatre, 1914



Premiere poster for *Werther*, 1893

# The Librettists

## Édouard Blau

**Born:** May 30, 1836

**Died:** January 7, 1906

Édouard Blau was born in central France and concentrated on writing for the theatre as a dramatist and opera librettist. He wrote librettos for many operatic composers including Bizet, Offenbach, and Godard.



Blau

## Paul Milliet

**Born:** February 14, 1848

**Died:** November 21, 1924

Paul Milliet was an opera librettist and playwright who wrote over 20 librettos for opera throughout his lifetime. He collaborated with Massenet on his opera, *Herodiade*, a decade prior to *Werther*. Milliet was married to an American soprano, Ada Adini.



Milliet

## Georges Hartmann [pen name Henri Gremont]

**Born:** May 15, 1843

**Died:** May, 1900 [exact date unknown]

Georges Hartmann was born in Paris, France, wrote librettos for opera and was also a dramatist. He worked as a music publisher and published many compositions by Massenet. He collaborated with Massenet twice, writing the libretto for *Herodiade* and *Werther*.



Hartmann

## 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.



# Musical Highlights

## What To Listen For

- The overture is the first piece of music you will hear and is most often played with the curtain down.
- ACT I: The opera begins with children learning a Christmas carol, used as a framing device in the opera. The first time the audience hears this piece, it may seem peculiar as the opera begins in summer.
- ACT I: Werther sings “O Nature, pleine de grace” as he first lays eyes on Charlotte, and as he watches her care for her younger siblings, he falls in love with her.
- ACT II: A devastated Werther sings “Lorsque l’enfant revient d’un voyage” and contemplates ending his life when he cannot be with Charlotte.
- ACT III: Charlotte sings her letter aria titled “Va! Laisser couler mes larmes” in which she admits that she is in love with Werther while reading the letters he has written her. The saxophone part in this aria is one of the first uses of the instrument in a classical opera.
- ACT III: Werther’s “Pourquoi me reveiller” is the most well known aria from this opera, and he sings the words of the poet Ossain to Charlotte.
- ACT III: Once Charlotte discovers what Werther plans to do with Albert’s pistols, she rushes to find him, and an orchestral intermezzo titled “La nuit de Noel” plays as the audience is led into the final act.
- ACT IV: The opera ends with the same children’s Christmas hymn that the opera began with; the pure voices of children with such a simple song symbolize the innocence found in the characters of *Werther*.



*Werther*, Seattle Opera, 1997.  
Photo: G. Smith

## Love Letters Throughout History

For a poet such as Werther, expressing his love to Charlotte through the written word comes naturally. As a person who communicates primarily through literature, that is how his voice and thoughts are clearest. Werther is certainly not the first famous literary character to write love letters to express his innermost feelings.

The first love letters are thought to have been created over 3,500 years ago, in a time when communication was limited by distance. Throughout the Middle Ages, writing a love letter evolved from a means of communication into an art form. The grace and eloquence found within a letter was rooted in the desire to impress the person for whom the letter was intended. Traditionally, the most well known love letters are written by men, often in a position of status. This differs from the character of Werther, a poet who did not have anything to offer Charlotte except his passionate love for her.

William Shakespeare popularized the idea of writing a love letter in the form of a sonnet, a 14-line poem that follows a strict rhyming pattern. Within these sonnets, lovers can express their love on a grander scale, and share how their feelings of passion affect their perspective on the world.

Despite the advances in technology in the modern age- reducing communicating feelings to sending an emoji through a text message - there is still an appreciation for the art of letter writing. The strength of a letter is communicating feelings that one may not have the courage to say in person. Pouring their heart onto a page, lovers do not have to worry about face-to-face rejection, and can carefully craft exactly what they want to say to their beloved.

Love letters played an important role in the relationship between Charlotte and Werther; it is whilst reading Werther's letters in Act III that Charlotte finally admits her undying love for Werther. Using letters in opera also helps to communicate a conversation between two characters, despite only one character singing on stage.



*Werther*, Metropolitan Opera, 2014.

Photo: K. Howard



# Goethe and the Epistolary Novel

*Article provided by the Boston Lyric Opera.*

**Johann Wolfgang von Goethe** was born in Frankfurt, Germany in 1749. The son of a wealthy tailor turned inn-keeper, he was given a comprehensive education and showed an artistic prosperity at an early age. As a young actor, he chose to study law in Leipzig and Strasbourg. Upon hearing the work of William Shakespeare, and creatively unsatisfied with his legal career, he was inspired to begin writing. In 1773, he published his first work, a play, *Goetz von Berchingen*, that garnered much attention. The following year, at age 25, Goethe published *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. He based the story on his own experiences of unrequited love with a betrothed woman named Charlotte. He expressed his strong emotions through the cathartic writing of letters, the most common form of communication at the time, never mailing them, but instead turning them into his first novel. He also used his experiences of the death of an acquaintance who died by suicide following rejection of a love interest and had borrowed Charlotte's fiancé's pistol to do so. Taking him only six weeks to write, the epistolary novel brought Goethe instant international acclaim.



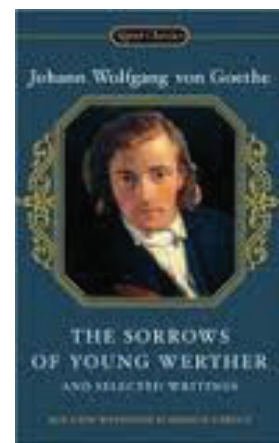
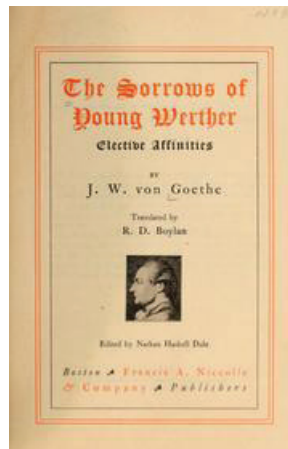
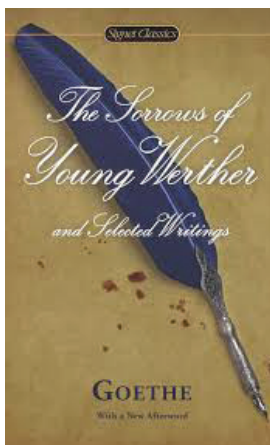
In fact, it was so popular that *The Sorrows of Young Werther* became a cultural phenomenon, perhaps the world's first "blockbuster." Goethe became something of a literary celebrity with high profile fans such as Napoleon Bonaparte and Carl August, Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, for whom Goethe later became chief advisor. The story spoke personally to many who had experienced the anguish of unrequited love and Werther was glorified as a tragic hero. Details in the novel began influencing fashion trends and popular culture, and fans began to dress like Werther in yellow pants and a blue jacket. There was even a Werther perfume and Werther china. The "Werther Fever" also influenced copycat suicides where forlorn young lovers emulated the character's desperate actions, something that brought Goethe much distress and caused the book to be banned for a period. It also inspired many imitations and parodies, including one called *The Joys of Young Werther* by Friedrich Nicolai. (Imagine Stephen Colbert creating a parody of *Werther* for The Late Show!)



Many other writers, artists, and composers, have been influenced by Goethe's novel both during his lifetime and since. *The Sorrows of Young Werther* is seen as one of the first novels of the Romantic period in literature, although specifically Goethe was a member of the *Sturm und Drang* movement, a precursor to what we now refer to as Romanticism. Mary Shelley referenced *The Sorrows of Young Werther* in her celebrated Romantic novel *Frankenstein*; the monster learns what it is to be human by reading Goethe's novel. *Werther* is often referred to as the seminal work that describes, in detail, adolescent turmoil and angst.

Goethe continued to publish the remainder of his life. His most notable novel in addition to *Werther* being *Faust*, published in 1808. He traveled extensively in Italy where he studied the natural sciences and published *Metamorphosis of Plants* in 1788 along with several other scientific treaties including a theory on colour. His work heavily influenced many ideas that became prevalent throughout the nineteenth century in both the sciences and literature. He died at the age of 81.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: *Why do you think that Goethe's novel, The Sorrows of Young Werther, was met with such instant, international fame? What circumstances are necessary to create such a strong cultural reaction?*



Covers for Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*.

### How Do You Pronounce Goethe?

Goethe is pronounced 'GU(R)-tuh.'

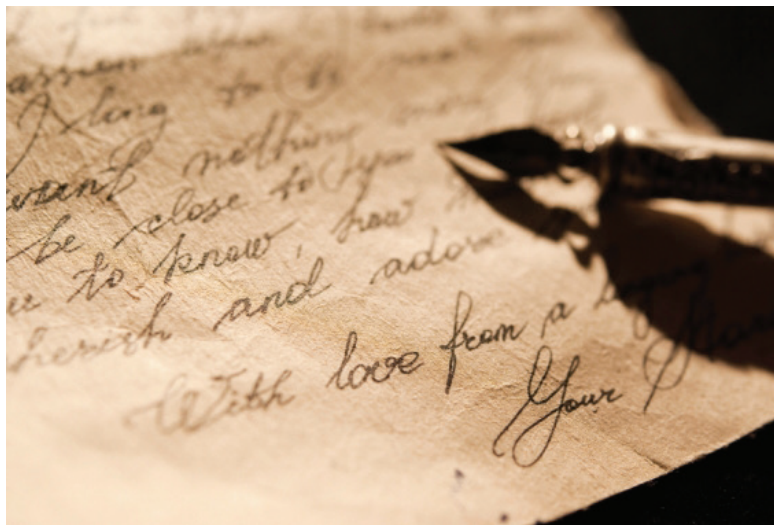
To hear an audio sample of the pronunciation, visit <http://goethesociety.org/>

## What is a the Epistolary Novel?

Epistles, or letters, are one of the oldest forms of communication, both official and personal. Many of the New Testament books in the Bible are in fact a form of published letters. As a literary device for novels, however, the first recognized epistolary novel is *Parnela*, written in 1740 by Samuel Richardson. The form grew in popularity throughout the remainder of the 18th century and throughout the 19th century, increasing as literacy became more widespread.

There are three main types of epistolary novels: monologic, dialogic, and polylogic. Each term refers to the number of first-person perspectives the story is recounted from. For the first time in popular fiction writing, this new form was conclusive to the recounting of more ordinary, even intimate experiences. The strong first person voice revealing inner-most thoughts and advancing the plot without a narrator, drew readers in. They would connect to the characters in a more personal way, identifying with them and their struggles, as opposed to the grandiose historic romances that were also popular at the time. Often these novels centred around themes of morality and romance with a focus on description of domestic and personal details of everyday life. Because of this, they not only appealed to many women readers, but the epistolary novel became a literary form where female authors found success. Following the popularity of *Wether* in 1773, Mary Shelley employed the form in *Frankenstein* in 1818, as did Bram Stoker in *Dracula* in 1897.

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** *What contemporary works can you think of that employ the epistolary form? Are there publications that use this form in an updated way? If so, where is the line between communication or social media and literary arts?*



# 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](http://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 *Werther*, 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 *Werther*.
- Have the students write a press release about *Werther*, 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:

WERTHER / CHARLOTTE / ALBERT / SOPHIE / LE BAILLI

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: Create a Poem Inspired by Personal Experience

The character of Werther was a poet and found self-expression through the written word. Introduce your students to a variety of poetry or focus on one particular type. What poems do they already know that may speak to their feelings?

Encourage each student to find a feeling that is resonating with them, and have them free write for two minutes. Their pencil or pen should not stop moving during this time, and they do not have to put their words into a specific format.

After the free write, have students examine what they wrote. Which pieces can they paste together to create two lines of poetry? Students can also add to the ideas they had during the free write. Have students share their poems either with a partner, or if any would like to volunteer, with the class.

Language Arts Curriculum Connections:

Drama Curriculum Connections:



## Activity #6: 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 #7: Cast *Werther*

Have the students cast modern-day singers or bands as the performers in *Werther*. 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 #8: Research and Report

Have the students study the history and politics of Massenet's time, particularly the year when *Werther* premiered (1892). 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 #9: *Werther* 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 *Werther*. 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 #10: 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 #11: Active Listening

Play the first few minutes of the *Werther* 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

**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.

*Werther*

1. Who is the composer? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the name of the novel that inspired the opera? \_\_\_\_\_
3. In what year did the premiere performance take place? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is the name of Charlotte's younger sister? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Werther is a \_\_\_\_\_ (name his profession).
6. Who does Werther acquire pistols from? \_\_\_\_\_
7. The Bailliff's neighbours are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
8. What is the title of Massenet's other well-known opera? \_\_\_\_\_
9. In what language was *Werther* first premiered? \_\_\_\_\_
10. The role of Werther is sung by a \_\_\_\_\_ (name the singing voice).
11. In what language is the opera performed? \_\_\_\_\_
12. What is sung by the children at the end of *Werther*? \_\_\_\_\_

## The 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

## *Werther*

1. Jules Massenet
2. *The Sorrows of Young Werther*
3. 1892
4. Sophie
5. Poet
6. Albert
7. Schmidt; Johann
8. *Manon*
9. German
10. Tenor
11. French
12. A Christmas hymn

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](mailto:education@manitobaopera.mb.ca)



# Suicide: There is Always Hope

*Prepared by Mood Disorders of Manitoba*

**In Manitoba, there is a suicide every other day. Mental illness is the most important risk factor for suicide; and the majority of people who die by suicide have a mental or addictive disorder.**

## SIGNS OF SUICIDE

Signs of suicide include a sense of hopelessness and a lack of purpose or belonging. There may be increased use of drugs or alcohol. An individual may be more agitated, nervous, and show signs of increased anger or irritability. They may be withdrawn. Signs of differences in mood, depression, sadness, anxiety or elation may occur. Impulsive or risky behaviour could happen.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

If you or someone you know has suicidal thoughts, do not be afraid to ask for help. It is important to take all threats seriously. When someone is struggling it is important to listen to the person in a non-judgmental and compassionate manner. It is alright to ask if there is a plan. When you determine that someone needs help, seek out support from the appropriate social networks, community resources and professional clinicians. If you determine the risk is immediate call 911.

## HELP IS AVAILABLE

For some people who are hurting, suicide may seem like the only option. But it never is. Even if you feel like you have no one, you are not alone. This is where organizations such as Mood Disorders of Manitoba (MDAM) can help.



Listening to music, including opera, is an important tool in the treatment of depression and in the role of recovery.

At MDAM we believe that suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. We provide peer support for anyone who is struggling. We meet you where you are – there is no judgement. We have a dedicated group of staff and volunteers with lived experience who are happy to speak with you about anything you are going through. We provide peer support in many forms: one-on-one drop-in interactions; phone conversations; email support; and peer support group meetings. We will accommodate what is best for you, and we will do whatever we can to make sure you know you are not on your own. **There is always hope.** And when there is hope, there is recovery. MDAM has helped hundreds of thousands of Manitobans deal with mood disorders, and we are happy to help more.

## THE ROLE OF MUSIC AND THE ARTS

Music is important to the treatment of depression and can be used as a therapy. Listening to music such as opera can facilitate the non-verbal expression of

emotion, and it allows people's inner emotions and feelings to be expressed without being threatened or vulnerable. Music plays an important role in recovery. It is through art that we as humans learn about life's adversities.

That is why MDAM is so grateful to Manitoba Opera for being part of this conversation through its performances of *Werther* and the associated community engagement initiatives that were created around the opera and its subject matter.



MDAM Let It Out Band participants who use music to build community and make friends.

## Mood Disorders of Manitoba

The Mood Disorders Association of Manitoba is a non-profit organization founded in 1983. Today, MDAM operates throughout the province helping over 95,000 Manitobans, supporting those affected by mood disorders, as well as their friends, families, caregivers, and supporters.

## Resources

### CRISIS LINES:

#### **Manitoba Suicide Prevention & Support Line (24/7)**

Toll free: 1-877-435-7170

TTY: (204) 784-4097

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

#### **Klinic Crisis Line (24/7)**

Phone: (204) 786-8686

Toll free: 1-888-322-3019

TTY: (204) 784-4097

#### **Manitoba Farm, Rural & Northern Support Services**

204-571-4180

Toll free: 1-866-367-3276

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

Monday to Friday: 10am – 9pm

### SELF-HELP AGENCIES:

#### **Mood Disorders Association of Manitoba**

Peer Support Line

204-786-0987

Toll-Free: 1-800-263-1460

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

#### **Manitoba Schizophrenia Society**

204-786-1616

[info@mss.mb.ca](mailto:info@mss.mb.ca)

#### **Anxiety Disorders Association of Manitoba**

204-925-0600

1-800-805-8885

<http://www.adam.mb.ca/>

# Winnipeg Public Library Resources

## Books

The Sufferings of Young Werther  
[by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe]  
New York : W. W. Norton & Company, [2012]  
Call Number FICTION GOETHE

Goethe  
[by Irmgard, Wagner]  
New York: Twyne Publishers c1999.  
Call No.:831.6 GOETHE

Massenet: a chronicle of his life and times  
[by Demar Irvine]  
Portland: Amadeus Press c1994.  
Call No.: B MASSENET

Werther: an opera in four acts (after Goethe)  
vocal score  
[by Jules Massenet]  
New York: International Music, c1971  
Call No.: SCORE 782.1 MAS 1971

## Sound Recordings

Massenet: werther [electronic resource]  
Decca, p2012.  
Call No.: STREAMING

Werther [sound recording]  
Decca/Sugar, p2005.  
Call No.: CD OPERA MASSENET WER

## Sounds Recordings - Other Works by Massenet

Massenet: esclarmonde [electronic resource]  
Decca, c2006.  
Call No.: STREAMING

Manon [sound recording]  
EMI Classics, p2000.  
Call No.: CD OPERA MASSENET MAN

Don Quichotte [sound recording]  
EMI Classics, p1993.  
Call No.: CD OPERA MASSENET DON



*Werther*, Metropolitan Opera, 2014.  
Photo: K. Howard

## **Works Cited**

*(Werther)*

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Werther Educator Guide. Metropolitan Opera. 29 July 2016. <<https://www.metopera.org/metoperafiles/education/Educator%20Guides/Ed%20Guide%20pdfs/Werther.13-14.guide.pdf>>

## Works Cited

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*This study guide was compiled accumulatively and includes information from the following sources accessed 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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