

DAYTON PERFORMING ARTS ALLIANCE



Page 1

This program is designed to be an informal experience for about 75 to 150 students in grades 3, 4 or 5, and we need to present the opera in a gym or all-purpose room where the children can sit on the floor in front of our staging area. We have found that 4th grade is an ideal age level for our production. We will bring all the costumes, scenery and props. The children are invited to participate and become most of the characters in the opera. We will also teach all of them "Pirates", a song from the opera, so that the whole audience can be the Chorus during the performance. Student participation is an integral part of this presentation. It is common for children to hold their ears or giggle at the power and range of an operatic voice. We welcome honest reactions!

The program begins with the students being asked to do some thinking about OPERA as a musical performance. This portion of the program is greatly enhanced if the children have participated in some preparation activities prior to our arrival. We especially encourage you to go over the glossary of terms and the synopsis for this performance ahead of time with your students. Following this, we choose children for the cast, dress them in simple costumes and begin. This packet contains a comprehensive *Pirates of Penzance* unit plan with objectives.

SYNOPSIS

(Introduction of characters)

When **Frederic** was a little boy, his nurse, **Ruth**, was told to **apprentice** him to a pilot. Not hearing correctly, she apprenticed him to a band of pirates, remaining with them herself as a maid. Frederic served dutifully. As the curtain rises, his commitment is almost up and he is preparing to leave the pirate band and devote himself to the extermination of piracy.

A **group of girls**, daughters of **Major-General Stanley**, arrive on the scene to have a holiday. One of them, **Mabel**, takes an interest in Frederic, and he in her. The other girls are seized by the **pirates** and threatened with immediate marriage. When the Major-General arrives he frees the girls by lying to the pirates, saying he is an **orphan** so they will feel sorry for him.

This lie troubles Major-General Stanley as he sits brooding among the gothic ruins of his ancestral home. He is consoled by his wards and by Frederic's plan to lead a band of **police** against the pirates.

The **Pirate King** and Ruth come to Frederic to tell him that he was bound to the pirates until his twenty-first birthday and, since he was born on February 29, he has had only five birthdays. Frederic's strong sense of duty compels him to rejoin the pirates. He tells them of the Major-General's deception and they vow revenge. They overpower the police and seize the Major-General.

The police charge the pirates to yield "in the name of Queen Victoria." This they do. Ruth explains that the pirates are not really pirates but "noblemen who have gone wrong." The Major-General pardons them and permits them to marry his wards.

Glossary

Ancestors — persons from family who were born before you; relatives

Apprentice—a person who works for someone else in order to learn a trade or job

Expedition — a group of persons on a journey for a specific reason

Foeman — an enemy in war

Leap year — February 29 occurs every four years, causing 366 days in that year

Orphan — a child whose parents have passed away

Pilot — a child whose parents have passed away

Paradox — a statement that seems to contradict itself but may be true; example:
We must sometimes be cruel in order to be kind

Queen Victoria — Queen of Great Britain and Ireland June 20, 1837 - May 1, 1876

Retreat — withdraw from a battle or fight

Union Jack — national flag of United Kingdom with red and white crosses on blue background

Pirates

Piano

Sing O sing the pi-i-rate's-birth-day. 5 O 5 the-pi-i-rate's hand. Sing O

Pno.

sing the pi - i - rate's birth - day. Let the pi - rate Fred - er - ick stand.

The 5 O 5 in the song is intended for the children to do “high fives” with their neighbor during the song.

SUGGESTIONS FOR A UNIT ON OPERA

Goal is to develop an appreciation for opera.

- Objectives are correlated to the 4th and 6th grade Ohio Proficiency Test outcomes.

Purpose One: to construct and examine meaning of components of opera.

Grades 3 & 4 objective: *learners will demonstrate an understanding of language and elements of opera by responding to items in which they:

- summarize the story.
- demonstrate an understanding of the story by retelling it in writing in their own words.
- identify and interpret vocabulary critical to the meaning of the story.

Grades 5 & 6 objective: *learners will demonstrate an understanding of opera by responding to items in which they:

- analyze aspects of the story, examining, for example, characters, setting, plot problem/solution, point of view, or theme
- summarize the story based on inferences, conclusions, and interpretations they have made
- infer from the story, using evidence to grasp an idea not specifically stated
- respond to the story by relating it to personal experiences or feelings

Purpose Two: to extend meaning

Grades 3 & 4 objective: *learners will demonstrate an understanding of language and elements of opera and the story by responding to items in which they:

- analyze the story, examining, for example, actions of characters, problem/solution, plot, or point of view infer from the story
- compare and/or contrast elements such as characters, setting, or events
- respond to the story
- demonstrate an understanding of the story by predicting outcomes and actions

Grades 5 & 6 objective: *learners will demonstrate an understanding of opera by responding to items in which they:

- compare and contrast aspects of the story, for example, characters or settings
- critique and/or evaluate aspects of the story (discuss critically and/or examine and judge carefully)
- select information for a variety of purposes, including enjoyment (choose materials related to opera for a particular purpose)

Purpose Three: to elicit purposeful composition

Grades 3 – 6 objective: *learners will use the writing process to make the intended message clear, as evidenced by a response that:

- stays on topic
- exhibits a logical pattern
- uses details, supporting ideas, or examples
- communicates clarity of thought

DAYTON PERFORMING ARTS ALLIANCE



Page 6

- used appropriate word choice
- uses complete sentences
- demonstrates correct usage, spelling, capitalization and punctuation for the grade level.
- uses a variety of sentence patterns
- writes legibly in print or cursive

*objectives correlated to the 4th and 6th grade Ohio Proficiency Test outcomes

ACTIVITIES / MATERIALS

Activities for this unit may include, but certainly are not limited to, the following:

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|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| Creating a bulletin board | Paired sharing |
| Small and large group discussions | Listening to music |
| Role-playing | Making art projects |

After observing the performance, written responses (short compositions, thank-you letters, journal/thought-log comments)

Worksheets can be found at the Dayton Opera website, daytonopera.org, on the Opera Guild of Dayton.

More interesting facts about opera:

During one year of 48 performances of 8 different operas, the Chicago Lyric Opera uses:

- About 10 pounds of makeup
- 88 men and women in each chorus
- 1,230 costumes
- 30 sets with props
- 40 stagehands at each performance
- A technical staff of 23 carpenters, electricians, etc.
- 800 wigs
- 17 professional ballet dancers
- 4 guest conductors
- An orchestra of 73 musicians for each performance
- Music librarians
- A rehearsal pianist

Many people are needed to make an opera a success!

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

The following materials are available at most public libraries.

Young Person's Guide to the Opera

Comstock, Ariane Csonka

The World's Very Best Opera for Kids – in English!

Sound recording of opera arias with pamphlet inside, including *Barber of Seville* and *Carmen*

Opera: What's all the screaming about?

Roger Englander. Walker and Co., 1986.

A guide for the curious (adult) listener, with general information