

Acknowledgements:

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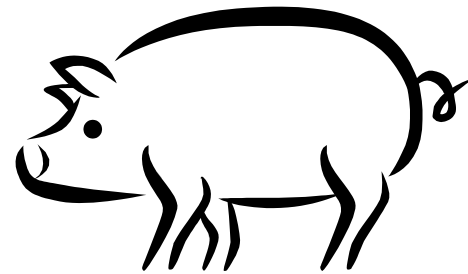
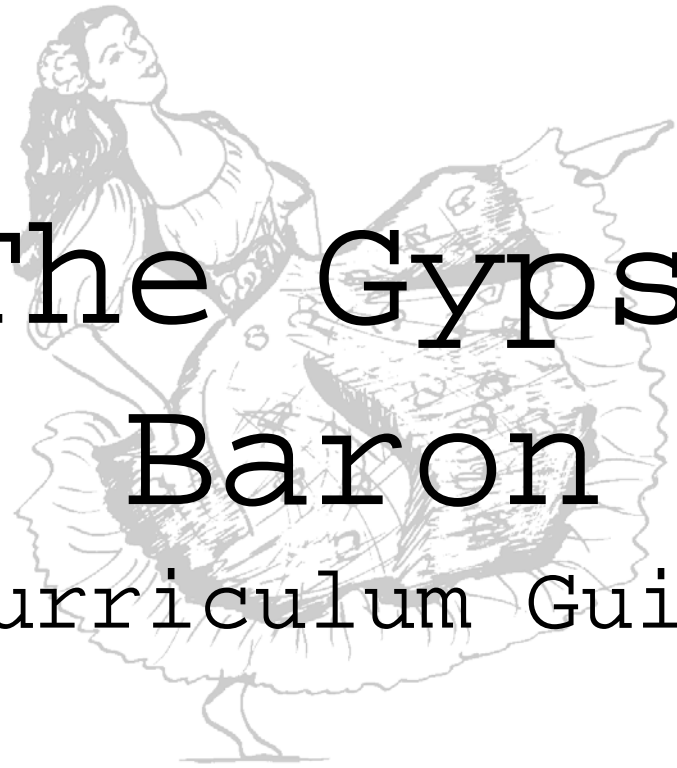
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Lobby display photographs courtesy of Todd Whitehead, David McGaughey, Kiersten Whitehead, Madeleine Smith and Denise Young.

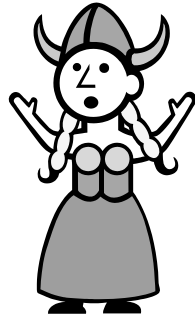
Princess Ida

Victorian Lyric Opera Company will present its student performance of *Princess Ida* on Sunday, June 11, 2006 at 2 p.m. in the F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre. Two children will be admitted for free with each paying adult. Pre-show activities, a backstage tour and post-show question and answer session with the artists and staff will be included with the performance.

The Gypsy Baron Curriculum Guide



What is Opera?



Opera is a play set to music. The characters sing about their feelings instead of speaking them. Both the orchestra and vocal music help tell the story. The music provides clues to the story: it reflects the characters' feelings, sets the mood of the scene, hints at a turn in the plot, describes an event (such as a storm), and makes the audience feel more strongly about what they see onstage. Opera uses all of the art forms. It combines singing, acting, dance, music, poetry and the visual arts (in scenery, costumes, and lights). Opera has two basic elements: the libretto (Italian for little book) which is the words or text of the opera and the score, which is the music (the vocal and instrumental parts of the music composition).

The Music



Most operas begin with an *overture*, an orchestral introduction to the music of the opera, usually played before the action begins. The overture often introduces themes heard in the opera. Operas are divided into *acts* and further subdivided into *scenes*. Each act is often divided by an *entr'acte* (French for “between the scenes”). Each scene consists of a mixture of *aria* (a song expressing the feelings of one character), *duet* (a song for two characters in which they usually express their feeling for one another), and *ensembles* (songs in which several characters sing the same lines – or different lines at the same time – to express their feelings about the story's actions). The melody that each character sings clearly describes what he or she is feeling. Larger ensembles generally appear at the finale, or end, of acts in the opera. An ensemble for three voices is a *trio*, for four voices is a *quartet*, for five voices is a *quintet*, and so on.



The Voices

Opera singers do not usually use microphones, so their voices must be developed to make a very large sound that projects over an orchestra in a large theatre. There are six major voice types. The highest female voice is the **soprano**. The heroine is usually a soprano. The middle female voice is the **mezzo-soprano**. This voice is darker and warmer sounding than the soprano. Composers use the mezzo voice for villainesses, seductresses, mothers and boys (such as Hansel in *Hansel and Gretel*). The lowest female voice is the **contralto**. This voice type is usually used by composers for older women, wise women, and witches. The highest male voice is the **tenor**. The tenor is usually the hero and/or love interest. The middle male voice is the **baritone**. Composers frequently use this voice for fathers and villains. The lowest male voice is the **bass**. Composers frequently use this voice for older, wise men. In addition to training their voices, opera singers must also train in acting, movement, dance, and foreign languages.



Behind the Scenes

When an audience sees an opera, they are viewing the tip of the production iceberg. Many people are involved in writing, performing, and producing an opera. Most of these people are not seen by the audience.

- A **composer** writes the vocal and orchestral music (called a score) for the opera.
- The **librettist** writes the words (called the libretto) for the opera.
- The **conductor** is responsible for what you hear in an opera. The conductor rehearses both the singers and the orchestra and presides over the performance. This is a complex job, because the conductor must coordinate the work of all the performers.

- The **rehearsal accompanist** plays the piano for music and staging rehearsals when the orchestra is not required.
- The **orchestra** is a group of instrumentalists who provide accompaniment for the voices and play the orchestral score.
- The **director** is responsible for what you see in an opera. The director assists the performers in interpreting their characters as well as determining where and how these characters move throughout the stage area (this is called blocking). The director also coordinates all of the visual elements in a performance, collaborating with the designers to create a unified vision of the opera.
- The **designers** create the visual effects and the visual mood of the opera. The **set designer** is responsible for characterizing and defining the performance space through the placement of scenic elements (such as walls, doors, windows, and furniture). The **lighting designer** is responsible for enhancing the visual elements of the performance. The lighting establishes the mood, atmosphere, time of day, source of light (sun, lamps, fire, etc.) and special effects (such as lightning, stars, and so on). The **costume designer** is responsible for the visual appearance of the performers. The costumes establish the time period, locale, and socioeconomic status of the characters as well as the mood and style of the production. The **makeup designer** is also responsible for the visual appearance of the performer. The makeup is used to create an image of the character. It can be used to age a performer, add facial hair, scars, birthmarks and other features to the performer's body, and to heighten the performer's features. The makeup designer is usually responsible for any wigs used by performers. The props designer collects or creates objects (such as furniture, tools, dishes, and so on) that help convey the time and place of the opera. The word "props" is short for properties.
- The **choreographer** works with the director to create the dances found in some operas. The choreographer designs the dances and teaches the performers how to execute the dances.

- The **stage manager** is the director's most valuable assistant. The stage manager coordinates all aspects of the technical production, attending all rehearsals, recording all blocking, organizing rehearsals, assembling the prompt book and running the show at each performance.



Meet the Orchestra

There are four basic families of instruments in the orchestra:

Strings: violin, viola, cello, double bass

Woodwinds: piccolo, flute, clarinet, bass clarinet, English horn, oboe, bassoon, contrabassoon

Brass: trumpet, trombone, French horn, tuba

Percussion: drums, xylophone, castanets, gong, triangle, cymbals, chimes, and tambourine

In addition to these instruments there are keyboards (such as the piano and harpsichord), and plucked instruments (such as the harp).

Opera orchestras vary in size, both in number of different types of instruments and the number of instruments within each instrument group. The opera orchestra will often perform from the pit. This is a space which is lower than and in front of the stage. The orchestra is led by the conductor.

Who's Who in *The Gypsy Baron*

- **Sandor Barinkay:** Rightful owner of Castle Barinkay. He has returned to claim his lands to find that they are inhabited by a band of gypsies and a local pig farmer, the farmer's family and 5,000 pigs!
- **Czipra:** Gypsy fortune teller, mother of Saffi.
- **Saffi:** Daughter of Czipra, and in love with Barinkay. She has waited a long time for him to return.
- **Pali and Joszi:** Gypsy blacksmiths.
- **Julesa:** Gypsy girl.

- **Zsupan:** Pig farmer who has turned the castle and grounds into a swamp for his pigs.
- **Arsena:** Zsupan's daughter. She is in love with Ottokar.
- **Ottokar:** A local farm boy. He is searching for the rumored treasure on Barinkay's lands.
- **Mirabella:** Arsena's governess. She was once married to Carnero. She is Ottokar's mother.
- **Ilka, Etelka, Jolan and Irma:** Friends of Arsena
- **Carnero:** Deputy Chairman of the Imperial Privy Commission for Morals. Translation: stuck-in-the-mud government official. Once married to Mirabella.
- **Count Homonay:** The governor of the State.

Western Europe History

Long before our opera takes place, the countries of Austria, Hungary, and Turkey were constantly at war over land. At times, Austria and Hungary would win, at other times the Turks would win. Whenever Turkey invaded and ruled Hungary, they installed a **pasha**, or king. At the time the opera takes place, Austria has recently won a war with Turkey and Queen Maria Theresa rules in Vienna.

During the war between Austria and the Ottoman Empire, many of the landowners of the Temesvar Province in Southeastern Hungary sided with the Turks. After the Turks were driven out, these landowners were exiled. When Maria-Theresa took the throne in 1840, she declared a general amnesty, allowing the exiled men to come home. She did this in hope of rallying Hungary to the defense of her beleaguered empire.

About the Composer



Strauss

Johann Strauss II (1825-1899) was born to a musical family. His father didn't want him to go into music, but he showed so much talent that he was composing by the age of six. He was named "The Waltz King" because he was famous for his dance music. He was best known for his waltzes and polkas (both of which are in *Gypsy Baron*). In the 1870's he began to write music for the stage and wrote *The Gypsy Baron* in 1880. His other famous operettas are *Die Fledermaus*, *A Night in Venice*, and *Wiener Blut* (Vienna Blood).

Gypsy Culture

Throughout the opera, the old gypsy, Czipra, has lines that tell us about the gypsies and how they are treated by the rest of the world...

"We gypsies have a legend of one who will end our wandering, who will bring a new life for us."

"The Hungarians will treat us like dirt, just like the Hungarians, the Romanians, and the Ottomans all have. We are equal-opportunity dirt."

"...An end to wandering, an end to persecution." (In response to Count Homonay asking what they want.)

Throughout the world today, there are many tribes of people who call themselves gypsies but all are very different. Many maintain traditions of their

cultural heritage and are considered "outsiders" by the rest of society. Historically gypsies were enslaved, imprisoned, and blamed for indiscretions and crimes they had never taken part in. Even today, they are often discriminated against, and not always treated humanely.

Our gypsies are Hungarian. They are often called Roma, and are people with a long heritage. Their ancestors arrived in Europe around the 14th century. Today, there is no single Roma culture. Romani groups around the world hold different traditions, customs and beliefs. A lot of these are seen in the music and dance.

Our gypsies are fishermen, metalworkers, and blacksmiths. They work with tools to forge and create scissors, kettles and the like. During times of war (as is the case during the opera), they create sabers, swords, cannons and other weapons.

Things to Look/Listen for in VLOC's production of *The Gypsy Baron*

The Pasha's Treasure. Ottokar spends most of his days searching for buried treasure. He tells Czipra "Old man Zsupan, the pig farmer, won't let me near his beautiful daughter Arsena...unless I have money, and lots of it!" Rumor has it that the last Pasha hid a treasure on Barinkay's land before fleeing. Ottokar hopes to find it to win Arsena's hand.

Czipra's Fortune Telling Cloak. "We tell your fortunes, patch up your teapots." This line is said by Pali in response to Ottokar stating that the gypsies should be thrown off the land. Gypsies often make a living by telling fortunes by reading palms, tea leaves and tarot cards.

In our opera, Czipra tells Saffi to get her fortune telling cloak so she can make predictions. In the first act, she tells Barinkay that he will marry a beautiful wife and find the Pasha's treasure, which comes true in the second act. She also tells

Carnero that he once lost a little treasure, meaning his love for Mirabella. The two are reunited and Carnero is introduced to his son Ottokar.

Czipra doesn't always have to wear this cloak to see the future. In the beginning of act 2, she sees a vision of Barinkay's father, who tells her how to find the treasure.

Wedding Candy. A European tradition at weddings is to serve the guests fresh, hot candy. This is served by Arsenia's friends before her marriage to Barinkay takes place. Unfortunately, the candy is taken away when the wedding is called off.

Gypsy wedding. In act one, Czipra officiates a gypsy wedding. The bride and groom appear before Czipra, who cuts each of their hands so they can create a bond of marriage. The other gypsies dance around in celebration. The marriage contract is a tradition that varies vastly among gypsy tribes, but is important because it carries on the bloodline. For a gypsy man to marry a non-gypsy woman, she would be accepted eventually into the band, as long as she adopted the gypsy ways. However, if a gypsy woman married a non-gypsy man, it was a loss to the gypsies because it was someone that could not carry on the gypsy line.

Not all tribes had marriage customs or ceremonies. In some tribes, the formal agreement between the families and exchange of dowry is enough, and there is no actual ceremony. In others, the ceremony is very important. For example, in some other tribes, there is a tradition where the bride and groom sit, surrounded by their friends and family. A small amount of salt and bread is then placed on the knees of the bride. The groom takes some of the bread, puts salt on it, and eats it. The bride does the same. The union of salt and bread symbolizes a harmonious future together for the groom and bride.



The Pigs. Zsupan is a local pig farmer. We are told early in the opera that he has over 5,000 pigs living on Barkinkay's lands. The actor playing Zsupan took his role very seriously, and began collecting pigs and things with pigs on them early on in the rehearsal process. Some of these items are used in our production today. See how many you can see.

The **waltz** is a couples dance, danced to special "waltz" music that is in 3/4 time. When it was introduced in Europe in 1800, its fast spinning of partners holding each other close shocked the society people. Years later, it became the most popular ballroom dance. Watch for the waltz in our production. In act two, the couples are dancing in a style called the Viennese waltz. This style is faster than other waltzes, and the couple makes a complete 360 degree turn over the course of six beats. See if you can see movement of "one, two, three" as the couples dance.

Glossary of Terms

- **Baron:** Term of nobility.
- **Belgrade:** A capital in Eastern Europe – often a site of war battles. Was overtaken many times during these wars.
- **Budapest:** The capital of Hungary.
- **Pasha:** The ruler when the Turks had invaded Hungary and were in command.
- **Temesvar:** A state in Hungary.
- **Vienna:** City in Austria.
- **Voyvoda:** Leader of the gypsies.