

The Victorian Lyric Opera Company Presents...

Princess

Ida



Curriculum Guide

Acknowledgements:

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Lobby display photographs courtesy of Todd Whitehead, Andrea Schewe, and Kiersten Whitehead.

Ruddigore

Victorian Lyric Opera Company will present its student performance of ***Ruddigore*** on Sunday, February 18, 2007 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.

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, 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 **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 Is Who in Princess Ida

- **Princess Ida:** King Gama's daughter, married to Hilarion when she was one year old. She has begun a women's university and sworn to avoid men.
- **Hilarion:** King Hildebrand's son, married to Princess Ida when he was two years old.
- **King Gama:** Princess Ida's father. He is not well liked.
- **King Hildebrand:** Hilarion's father.
- **Cyril:** A friend of Hilarion's.
- **Florian:** A friend of Hilarion's
- **Arac:** King Gama's son. Princess Ida's brother.

- **Guron:** King Gama's son, Princess Ida's brother.
- **Scynthius:** King Gama's son, Princess Ida's brother.
- **Lady Blanche:** Professor of Abstract Science at Castle Adamant.
- **Lady Psyche:** Professor of Humanities at Castle Adamant.
- **Melissa:** Lady Blanche's daughter.
- **Sacharissa, Chloe, Ada:** Prefects of Castle Adamant University.

Background of Princess Ida

Princess Ida was first produced at the Savoy Theatre in 1884. It was based on the poem *The Princess* by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, a very popular Victorian poet. W.S. Gilbert, the librettist, had based an earlier play on this poem. He used both the poem and the play as a basis for **Princess Ida**. The dialogue is written in blank verse. The opera spoofs the poem as well as joking about women's education and evolution. These were very controversial subjects in Victorian England. This is also the only Gilbert and Sullivan opera written in three acts.

Women in the Victorian Era

In this opera, Princess Ida wants to educate women and make their lives better. Women in the Victorian era lived very differently than women do today. Women very few rights, and were treated like children. Their husbands made all the decisions in the house, and controlled all the money. A Victorian woman couldn't vote or own property. She couldn't make any legal agreements or contracts without her husband's permission. If she had any income, it belonged to her husband. Most Victorian women didn't have jobs, anyway. There were very few jobs open to women. A woman's main job was to keep house, be a good mother, and a loving wife who obeyed her husband.

Victorian Universities

In this show, Princess Ida opens a University at Castle Adamant. This is so unusual because in Victorian times, most people thought that women didn't need to go to college. Some people even thought women would get sick from the work! Around the time *Princess Ida* takes place, some women were allowed to take college courses at the men's Universities, but they couldn't earn degrees. The idea of a women's university was really radical. The University at Castle Adamant (UCA) is modeled after one of the British universities. At UCA, students earn a degree in three years. So the students who start in 1884 will graduate in 1887 if they stay in school.

Victorian Childhood

Overview

You will notice children are part of the cast of *Princess Ida*. But what was the life of a Victorian child like? Families tended to be large in Victorian times, so Victorian children usually had lots of brothers and sisters. If you grew up in a poor working family, your life was very different from that of a middle or upper class child. Children in the middle and upper classes often lived in nurseries. These were a special group of rooms in a home where children slept, ate, played, and went to school. Nurseries were run by a nanny. The nanny was like a live-in babysitter who took care of the children. In working class families, children often shared a room with their brothers, sisters, and even parents and other relatives. Children living in Victorian times played and went to school just like children do today.

Play

Victorian had less time for play during the Victorian era, especially if they were members of the working class. Computers, X-boxes, iPods, movies, television, cable, DVD's and CD's were unknown then. Children in the working class played with hoops, marbles, cat's cradle, and jump ropes.

They played games such as tag, catch, and soccer. Children in middle and upper class families had more time for play. Their toys included those played with by the working class children, as well as rocking horses, toy trains, toy soldiers, puzzles, dolls, dollhouses, scrapbooks and picture books. Most children learned to play a musical instrument and singalongs and musical evenings were common entertainments in the evening. In most large towns there were theatres and music halls which were popular and cheap forms of entertainment. Families went to fairs, parks, and gardens. Those families with money began to vacation at the beach like we do today.

School

Before 1870, children were not required to go to school. Most children from poor working class families worked instead of going to school. Working class children who did go to school attended a Village School or Dame School. After 1870 the Education Act required that there had to be a school in every town and village and all children were required to attend. Classes in these schools were very large. Boys and girls sat in separate rows facing the front. Teachers were allowed to discipline children using a cane or ruler. Children wrote on slates and copied work off the blackboard. The content of their lessons was usually religious or moral in nature. Children were expected to memorize facts. Everybody learned reading, writing, arithmetic and spelling. Boys also learned technological writing, additional math, science, technology and woodworking. Girls learned needlework and housework. Middle class and wealthy children either had governesses or tutors or went to expensive private schools. Boys were sent on to private boarding schools and then to the university to finish their educations. Girls were sometimes sent to boarding schools or finishing schools to learn how to act and dress appropriately in society.

Clothes

Clothes for children in poor working class families were often hand-me-downs or bought used from a shop. They were made from coarsely woven

wool or cotton cloth. They would be patched and mended when they were torn in order to make them last a long time. If a family had enough money, children would have a nicer set of clothes that were kept for church and special occasions. Children who lived in middle and upper class families wore clothes made of nicer fabrics, and had more outfits than poorer children. Children from wealthier families wore very formal clothes. Girls wore dresses that looked like shorter versions of their mother's gowns. Boys wore clothes that look dressy to us today, such as sailor suits and velvet suits. Children sent to private boarding schools often wore uniforms at school. Early on in Victorian times, boys wore dresses until they were about five or six years old! Around the time that Gilbert and Sullivan were writing their operas, special clothes designed for children started to be designed and made. These clothes did not look like smaller versions of adult outfits. They were designed to allow children to move and play.

For Further Information:

If you want to know more about living in Victorian times, visit these websites:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/victorians>

This website features short films about different aspects of children's lives during Victorian times.

<http://telematics.ex.ac.uk/virvic/day/home.htm>

This website features a day in the life of a Victorian working class family. You can follow family members through an entire week of their lives, exploring Victorian childhood, education, domestic life, leisure, and factory working life, among other things. There is also a place to send any further questions you may have. The place on the site is called "Ask a Victorian."

Glossary of Terms

- **Anacreon:** Ancient Greek poet.
- **Aristophanes:** Ancient Greek playwright who wrote comedies.
- **Cribbage Pegs:** Cribbage is a card game and score is kept track of by moving pegs on a cribbage board.
- **Darwinian Man:** According to Darwin, men and apes descended from a common ancestor.
- **Etui:** A case for small articles such as needles.
- **Helicon:** Mountain in Boetia near the Gulf of Corinth in Greece, sacred to Apollo and the Muses.
- **Hipparcus:** Ancient Greek Tyrant of Athens and patron of literature and astronomy.
- **Hurdy-Gurdy:** A street organ played by turning a handle.
- **Juvenal:** A Roman satirist.
- **Mistress Lalage:** girlfriend of Juvenal
- **Metamorphoses:** collection of Roman myths written by Ovid, a Roman poet.
- **Minerva:** Roman goddess of wisdom
- **Paynim foe:** a pagan or heathen enemy
- **Plantagenet:** name of the family that ruled England from 1154-1485.
- **Dr. Isaac Watts:** one of the greatest English hymn writers.

Princess Ida Word Search

The words below the puzzle are related to VLOC's production of *Princess Ida*. See how many words you can find in the puzzle.

N O I R A L I H T E N O R R O
I P J C B R G I L B E R T O P
S O R A H B O S S X L R C T E
D D S I A U A M V Z A O E C R
N S N U N I V E R S I T Y U E
H O W I O C O A O A P C S D T
S I S J W L E R G L E E O N T
M T L Y Q D C S Q T R R P O A
G Q R D N H O K S O C I R C Q
N A Q I E N W O M T U D A D I
A V M S N B E K W P S R N S H
Y R T A U G R T G G S N O S J
J R Y Y N Z S A D N I W R A D
A S U L L I V A N Q O W Y R J
N A I R O T C I V D N L Y B I

ALTO
ARMOR
BASS
BRASS
CONDUCTOR
DARWIN
DIRECTOR
GAMA
GILBERT
HILARION
HILDEBRAND
IDA
OPERETTA

OPERETTA
ORCHESTRA
PERCUSSION
PRINCESS
SOPRANO
STRINGS
SULLIVAN
TENNYSON
TENOR
UNIVERSITY
VICTORIAN
WOODWINDS