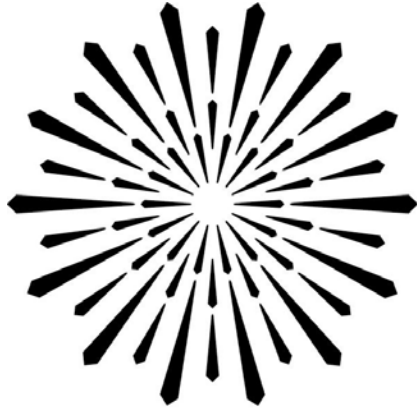


The Bonesetter's Daughter



*San Francisco Opera Guild
2008 Teachers' Guide and Resource Book*



**SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA GUILD**

The mission of San Francisco Opera Guild is to provide cultural nourishment to the Northern California community through education, outreach programs, special events and financial support to the

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Dear Educator:

Thank you for your participation in San Francisco Opera Guild's 2008-2009 education programs! The Opera Guild's Teacher's Guides for the 2008 Student Dress Rehearsals are publications that you can use as a tool to assist you in preparing your students for their exposure to opera.

Opera is a complete art form and expression of culture. It encompasses music, theatre, dance, design, literature, history, and social movement in one sweep. This guide will provide you with background on the composer, history of the source material for the opera, a synopsis of the story, a bit about the political climate of the time, and extension exercises that can be incorporated into your curriculum.

A table of contents will guide you to the information on areas you wish to cover with your students. In addition there is a guide for opera etiquette so your classes will be familiar with the expectations of an audience member. You will find a collection of assignments and activities that will engage your students in the world of the play and we hope this involvement will excite them further about seeing *The Bonesetter's Daughter*.

A World Premiere is an exciting opportunity—and one that takes place here in San Francisco with such a vital tie-in to our population and culture is an extremely rare gift.

We are eager to hear your feedback on the opera experience with your students. Please fill out the evaluation form in the back of this guide after your trip to the opera. Please feel free to include suggestions for future guides, activities that were particularly successful, and especially any student work you would like to share. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us. We hope you and your students enjoy the experiences at the opera!

Caroline Altman
Director of Education

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Vice President, Education



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A Short Introduction to Western Opera

An **opera**, like a play, is a dramatic form of theatre that includes scenery, props, and costumes. However, in opera, 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 pit.

Opera consists of many dimensions that are combined to make it a unique whole: 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 can make you cry tears of joy or sadness, produce laughter or anger, but most importantly transport you to a magical land of music and song.

Opera originated in Florence, Italy, in the late 1500's, with a small group of men who were members of a Camerata (Italian for society). They called themselves the Camerati Bardi or Camerati Fiorentini. The intellectuals, poets, and musicians of the Camerata decided they wanted words to be a featured aspect of music to coordinate thought with emotion. 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:

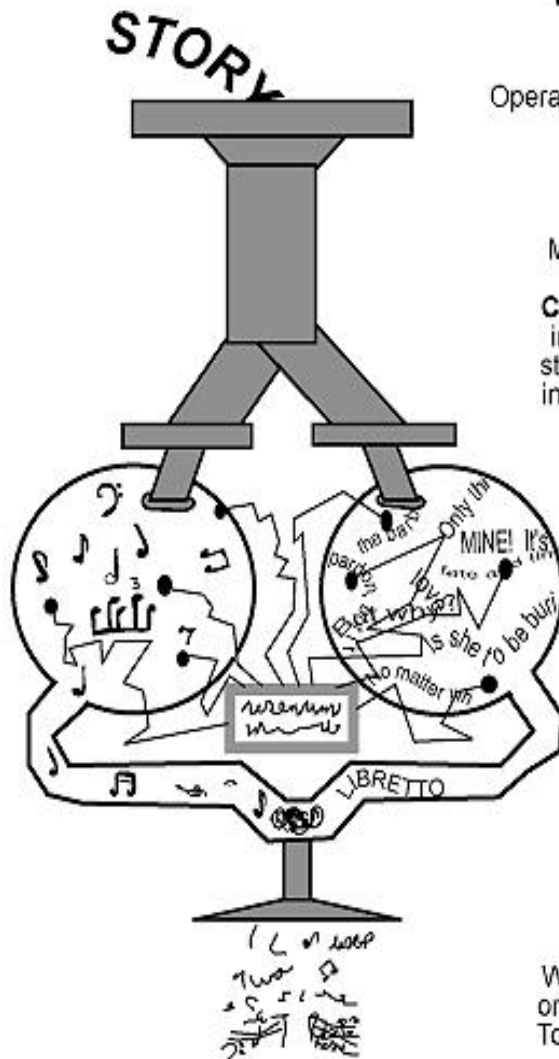
1. The text must be understood; the accompaniment must be very simple and should not distract from the words.
2. The words must be sung with correct and natural declamation, as if they were spoken and not rhyme like songs.
3. The melody must interpret the feeling of the text.

The first significant composer to fully develop the ideas of the Camerata was Jacopo Peri (1561-1633), whose opera *Dafne* was performed in 1594 and was regarded as the first opera. Some purists regard the later *L'Orfeo*, written in 1607 by Claudio Monteverdi as the first real contribution to the art form.

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 focuses on a character's emotions rather than actions. A recitative is sung dialogue or speech that occurs between arias and ensembles. Composers write the score or the music for the opera. Sometimes the composer will also write the text for the opera, but most often they work with a librettist. The story of the opera is written as a libretto, a text that is easily set to music. 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 supertitles. Supertitles are the English translation of the libretto, which are projected on the screen above the stage.

Many question the difference between an opera and a musical like *Les Miserables* or *Phantom of the Opera*. There are many differences. One, most operas are through-composed, meaning there is no spoken dialogue while musicals tend to alternate between spoken scenes and songs, using the music to comment upon and augment the dialogue. There are of course exceptions. Many present day musicals are indeed through-composed and are often referred to as "rock operas." Examples include *Rent* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. There are musical differences between the two as well. Operas require classically trained singers who must be able to sing in a distinct style, and typically without amplification, while there is more variety in the voice of a musical theatre performer and they often use microphones.

What Makes an Opera?



Opera begins with a story. The story is told with two things:

MUSIC

Music is organized sound and rhythm. **COMPOSERS** write music in the best way to tell the story. They write music for instruments, and music for singers.

WORDS

Words are written to help tell the story. **LIBRETTISTS** write the words for an opera. **LIBRETTO** means "little book" in Italian. It is the script of an opera.

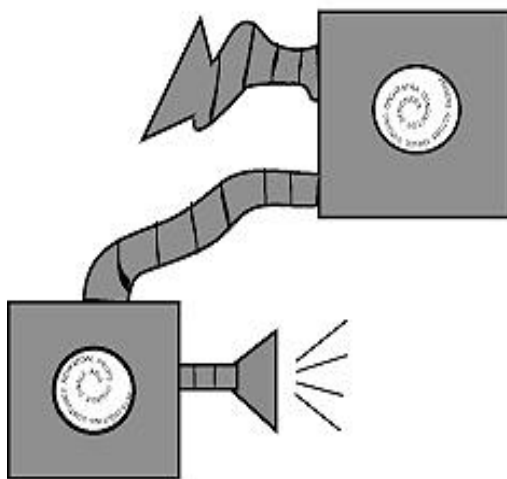
The composer and the librettist work together. They help each other so that the music will fit the words, and the words will fit the music.

All the music and words of an opera are written down in a book called the **SCORE**. Now that the opera is finished, someone needs to perform it!

When a group or company of people get together and put on an opera, their performance is called a **PRODUCTION**. To make a new production of an opera, a company needs:

- singers to perform onstage
- musicians to play in the orchestra
- carpenters to build sets
- costumers to make costumes
- electricians to work and operate lights
- ticket sellers to get an audience

...and much more!



So what really makes an opera? A good story, and a lot of people!!!

Operatic Voices



Operatic singing developed in Europe during the 17th century. The vocal demands are far greater on an opera singer than on any other singer. Opera singers rarely use microphones and therefore must develop their voices to make a sound that will project and be heard above an orchestra in a large theatre.

How do they do it?

After years of practice and study, an opera singer learns to use his or her body as an amplification device. By controlling the muscles of the diaphragm (a balloon-like muscle beneath the lungs and above the stomach) the singer can regulate the amount of breath used. By tightening the diaphragm the singer can push out the right amount of air to make the vocal cords vibrate. The speed at which the chord vibrates 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 and help amplify the sound. The shape of the mouth and the placement of the tongue near the lips contribute to the tone and sound of the words.

Many singers begin their operatic training in university or before. Opera students study singing, music history, composition, acting, movement, and theory. In addition to performance skills, they study diction and at least one foreign language. The most popular opera languages are Italian, German, and French. After university, singers begin to work in the professional world. Their first roles are usually small parts, but if they continue to study and train, they may move on 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. Singers have voice teachers who help them refine their singing techniques and many will also have an acting coach. Even a well-established singer will have a vocal coach for specific roles.

Each person's vocal mechanism is constructed differently. The roles that a singer performs are dependent mostly upon their vocal range, but within the vocal ranges there are many colors and weights of voice that determine which roles he or she can sing safely and

artistically. Vocal color refers to the richness of the sound while vocal weight refers to how powerful a voice sounds.

After the role has been studied intensely and the singer is hired to perform, the singer arrives at the opera company for the rehearsals. This time is spent refining the music with the conductor and staging the action with the stage director. Each director has a different idea of how the character should be played, and each conductor has a different idea of how the character should sound, therefore the singer must modify his or her techniques to reach the desired result.

Physical health is a major priority to a singer. Contrary to popular belief, not all opera singers are overweight. Conventional wisdom used to state that excessive weight gave added volume and richness to the voice. However, in recent years, people have discovered that physical fitness can give similar benefits to a voice.

Six Basic Vocal Categories

Women:

Soprano: The highest female voice, similar to a flute or violin in range and tone color. Usually plays the heroine in the opera since a high, bright sound can easily suggest youth and innocence.

Mezzo-soprano: The middle-range female voice, similar to an oboe in range and tone color. Called an alto in choral arrangements, can play a wide variety of characters including gypsies, mothers, nurses, and even the part of a young man (also called a *trousers role*).

Contralto: The lowest female voice, similar to an English horn in range and tone color. Usually plays unique roles including fortune-tellers, witches, and older women.

Men:

Tenor: The highest male voice similar to a trumpet in range, tone color and acoustical “ring”. Usually plays the hero or the romantic lead in the opera. A **Countertenor** sings even higher, usually in his falsetto range.

Baritone: The middle-range male voice similar to a French horn in tone color. Often plays the leader of mischief in comic opera, or the villain in tragic opera. Is occasionally the hero.

Bass: The lowest male voice, similar to a trombone or bassoon in tone color. Usually portrays old, wise men, or foolish, comic men.

The vocal parts overlap each other. The notes that are high for a baritone to sing are low for a tenor. The notes that are low for a baritone maybe be high for a bass. For this reason you may see a high range mezzo-soprano singing a soprano’s role or a low range baritone singing a bass’ role.

Opera Glossary

Accompaniment - An instrumental or vocal part designed to support or complement a principal voice, instrument, or group of voices or instruments. In an aria, the voice is the primary focus and the orchestra is the accompaniment.

Acoustics - The science of sound. The qualities of sound in an enclosed space.

Aria - An extended musical passage performed by one singer. It is used to express feelings or comment on the action and is accompanied by the orchestra. The action usually stops while an aria is sung.

Ballet - A form of dance that tells a story.

Banda - A small group of instrumentalists who play either on the stage or backstage, not in the pit.

Bel Canto - Literally "beautiful singing," bel canto passages are lyrical, and often very florid.

Bravo - Literally "brave, courageous." A form of applause when shouted by members of the audience at the end of an especially pleasing performance. Strictly speaking, *bravo* is for a single man, *brava* for a woman, and *bravi* for more than one performer.

Cabaletta - The final section of an extended aria or duet, generally short and brilliant, to display the voice and rouse applause.

Cadenza - An elaborate unaccompanied passage near the end of an aria designed to show off the voice. Originally used to close a number and improvised on the spot.

Choreographer - The person who designs the steps of a dance.

Choreography - A dance or the making of a dance.

Chorus - A group of mixed voices, or the musical passage sung by such a group.

Claque - A group of people hired to sit in the audience and either applaud enthusiastically to ensure success or whistle or boo to create a disaster. In past years, leading singers were sometimes blackmailed to pay a claque to insure they would not create a disturbance. Even now, one is sometimes used but rarely acknowledged.

Coloratura - A kind of vocal music that requires the singer to execute a variety of technically brilliant and difficult passages. These may be fast runs (scales), trills (rapid alternation of two notes), or other devices that embellish the vocal line.

Composer - The person who writes the music of an opera or other musical work.

Comprimario - A secondary role in an opera.

Concertmaster - The "first chair" violinist who plays occasional solos and is responsible for coordinating all of the stringed instruments. The concertmaster decides on the bowing so that all of the bows move in unison.

Conductor - The person who leads the orchestra and singers.

Cover - A replacement for a role in case of illness, as with an understudy in theater.

Cue - Signal to a singer or orchestra member to start.

Curtain Call - At the end of a performance all of the members of the cast and the conductor take bows. Sometimes this is done in front of the main curtain, hence the name. Often, however, the bows are taken on the full stage with the curtain open.

Diva - Literally “goddess,” it refers to an important female opera star. The masculine form is *divo*.

Dress (a wig) - To prepare a wig for wear.

Dresser - A member of the backstage staff who helps the artists dress in their costumes. While each of the principal singers usually has his or her own dresser, supers and chorus members share dressers.

Dress Rehearsal - The final rehearsal(s), using all of the costumes, lights, etc. While sometimes it is necessary to stop for corrections, an attempt is made to make it as much like a final performance as possible.

Duet - A song for two voices.

Dynamics - The degree of loudness or softness in the music.

Encore - Literally means “again.” It used to be the custom for a singer to repeat a particularly popular aria if the audience called *Encore* loud enough. While this is still done in countries like Italy, it is rare elsewhere.

Ensemble - Any extended musical passage performed by more than one player. Very often they are all singing different words and different musical lines. *Duets*, *trios*, and *choruses* are all ensembles.

Finale - Literally “the end.” The ending segment/song of an act or scene. It usually involves many singers and is very dramatic.

Fly, or Fly Tower - Sufficient space above the stage, i.e., if there is a *fly tower*, pieces of the set are often raised up or *flown* when they are not in use.

Forte - Literally “strong.” A dynamic marking meaning loud.

Impresario - The general director of an opera company.

Interlude - An orchestral selection played between scenes in an opera. It is used to set a mood and even advance the story.

Intermission - A break between acts of an opera. The lights go on and the audience is free to move around. Intermissions usually last up to twenty minutes.

Leitmotiv or motif - A short musical phrase associated with a particular character or event.

Libretto - Literally “little book.” The text of an opera. The libretto is always shorter than a normal play because it takes so much longer to sing a line than to say it. The action is often interrupted for an aria which limits the length of the text even more.

Librettist - The person who writes the libretto, often a poet or playwright.

Maestro - Literally “master.” Used as a courtesy title for the conductor, whether a man or woman.

Mark - To sing very softly or not at full voice. A full-length opera is very hard on a singer’s voice so most mark during rehearsals.

Melody - The tune of a piece of music.

Opera - A drama set with music. Different than a play or musical for the orchestra is an equal partner with the singers. Literally the word *opera* is the plural of the Latin word *opus*, which means “work.” Like a play, an opera is acted on a stage, with costumes, wigs, scenery, etc. Almost all of it is sung, in contrast to an operetta or musical, where a great deal of the text is spoken.

Opera Buffa - A comic opera first developed in the eighteenth century. Each act usually ends with a large ensemble finale.

Orchestra - The group of musicians who are led by the conductor and accompany the singers.

Orchestra Pit - The sunken area in front of the stage where the orchestra plays.

Overture - An orchestral piece several minutes in length played before the beginning of an opera. Usually, but not always, it contains some themes from the music of the opera.

Patter Song - A song or aria in which the character sings as many words as possible in the shortest length of time.

Piano - Literally “plane.” A dynamic marking meaning soft.

Prelude - Usually short in duration and without an ending, a *prelude* leads into an act without pause, as opposed to an *overture* which is longer and can be played as a separate piece.

Principal - A leading role or character in the opera.

Prima Donna - Literally “first lady.” The leading woman singer 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, demanding and difficult fashion.

Production - The combination of sets, costumes, props, lights, etc.

Prompt - To help a singer who has forgotten a line. In some opera houses, the *prompter* sits in a box at the very front of the stage. It is not customary for opera houses in America to use a prompter.

Props (properties) - Small items carried or used by singers during a performance, such as fans, letters or a rope.

Proscenium - The front opening of the stage which frames the action.

Recitative - Sung dialogue that moves the action along by providing information. A recitative (or recit) usually has no recognizable melody and the singing is generally faster with a rhythm more like normal speech. *Recitativo secco* is accompanied only by a keyboard instrument such as a harpsichord, sometimes with added cello or bass.

Roulade or Run - A quick succession of notes sung to one syllable.

Score - The written music for a piece or group of pieces with separate lines for each instrument and each singer's voice.

Set - The decoration on stage that indicates the place and overall world of the opera.

Sitzprobe - Literally "sitting rehearsal." It is the first rehearsal of the singers with the orchestra, with the former seated, and no acting.

Solo - A piece or portion of music where only one performer has the melody.

Stage Director - The person responsible for directing the movement of the characters and creating the story on stage.

Supernumerary or Super - An "extra." Someone who is part of a group on stage but does not sing.

Supertitles - Translations into English of the original words, projected on a screen above the stage.

Synopsis - A short version of the story of the opera, usually one or two pages.

Tempo - Literally "time." The speed at which the music is played.

Trouser role - A role which depicts a young man or boy, but sung by a woman. Also called a *Pants Role*

Verismo - Describes the realistic style of opera that started in Italy at the end of the nineteenth century.



The Bonesetter's Daughter

SYNOPSIS

Prologue—Dragon Dance (A timeless void)

Amid the braying call of two Chinese trumpets, a water dragon and a fire dragon leap and swoop in the air. Out of their wake of fog, three women emerge: Ruth, a modern American-born Chinese woman; LuLing, Ruth's mother, an immigrant woman from a previous generation; and Precious Auntie, a disfigured ghost from another world, who clutches a dragon bone.

Act I, Scene 1 (Fountain Court Restaurant, San Francisco, 1997)

For Chinese New Year, a family has gathered for a festive dinner: Ruth, her husband Art, her mother LuLing, her stepdaughters Fia and Dory, her in-laws Marty and Arlene, and an unseen ghost with a disfigured face. Ruth has chosen a menu of dishes symbolizing a lucky and harmonious family, but each dish is rejected as hideous by her husband's family. LuLing privately despairs at her daughter's inability to speak up for herself. Sensing her mother's agitation, Ruth unveils the gift she bought for her birthday, a mink coat, which her relatives immediately condemn as inappropriate. But LuLing is overjoyed by the gift, as well as by Ruth's recounting of her mother's special devotion: her warnings of the disasters, insanity, and early death that awaited Ruth if she disobeyed. Her in-laws are impressed with how clearly a writer like Ruth has expressed her thanks. Art then proudly announces that Ruth is ghostwriting a book with one of the lawyers from the O. J. Simpson trial. LuLing offers to help Ruth write, claiming she was with O.J. when he slit the throats of his wife and her friend. As she re-enacts what she saw, everyone realizes LuLing is losing her mind. Angered that no one believes her, LuLing threatens to kill herself. As she storms away, she falls and is mortally injured. Ruth, now feeling guilty, cradles her until the ambulance takes her away. Art assures Ruth she is not to blame, that her mother has been making suicidal threats since Ruth was a child. When he balks at Ruth's suggestion to let her mother live with them, Ruth becomes overwrought and speaks of killing herself. Art worries that Ruth is becoming like her mother. He offers to get the car and leaves Ruth utterly alone. Suddenly, an unknown woman caresses her cheek. It is the ghost, her face now unblemished. She cloaks Ruth in the garb of another era, and Ruth becomes her mother as a young woman.

Together they follow a retinue of dead bodies leaping to the music of a Taoist monk exhorting, "The dead must return home." And so, the ghost, Precious Auntie, and Young LuLing return to the village of Immortal Heart, where they can relive the tragedy that binds all three.

Act I, Scene 2 (Immortal Heart, a village outside Beijing, 1930s)

Chang the coffin maker extorts money from mourners, claiming that ancestor ghosts will haunt the cheapskates. He then goes to the Wang household's ink-making studio, where he sells wood used to make ash, an ingredient of "long-lasting ink." Chang leers at a slave girl, Young LuLing, who is delighted by the attention. Another maid known as Faceless One, spits at Chang and drags Young LuLing away. She is the woman Young LuLing calls Precious Auntie, a woman who claims she saved LuLing as a baby from an icy gutter. Chang secretly boasts that he's had his way with this faceless woman, the daughter of the late bonesetter. Now he desires not only Young LuLing but what Precious Auntie has: a dragon bone, her inheritance from her father, her future gift to LuLing. When ground into medicine, it guarantees "longest-lasting life," immortality. He had failed to obtain the bone when he murdered the bonesetter. Young LuLing, he schemes, will now be the means to his getting all that he desires. He strikes a bargain with Madame Wang, a good price on the wood in exchange for the slave girl as his concubine. Precious Auntie sees the secret barter and warns Young LuLing. She shows LuLing her scars to remind her of all the pains she has endured to raise her. But Young LuLing dreams only of a new life as the respected wife of an important man. She cites village gossip that Precious Auntie seduced Chang. Precious Auntie then offers Young LuLing what is as genuine as her words, the coveted dragon bone; Young LuLing gladly accepts it—as part of her dowry, exactly what her future husband wants. Senseless with despair, Precious Auntie grabs back the dragon bone and puts it to Young LuLing's throat. When Young LuLing screams for her life, Precious Auntie drops the bone, horrified at herself, and runs out of the room. Soon wedding guests and Chang's many wives arrive at the wedding banquet. As the marriage rituals begin, Precious Auntie suddenly appears. She warns that if Chang marries LuLing, a curse will fall upon his family for generations to come and she will be the ghost to carry out the litany of horrors. With that, she drinks a ladle of boiling ink. As her body burns from within, flames rise and the whole world is destroyed.

Act II, Scene 1 (Hong Kong Harbor, 1940s)

Young LuLing, now a destitute young woman, joins a crowd of people who have lost their fate in the war and fled to Hong Kong. Men barter for tickets on a ship leaving for America. To earn her living, LuLing sets up shop on the harbor, writing letters for abandoned wives, pleading that their husbands send for them. A storm blows in and the crowd scatters home. Homeless, LuLing seeks shelter among the crates. A man's sweet voice calls to her, asking for a love letter with perverse promises. Precious Auntie screams unheard, trapped in a void, and Old LuLing, in the present world, rises from her hospital bed and watches her past unfold. Young LuLing soon recognizes that the voice belongs to Chang and the crates around her are his coffins. He throws her atop a coffin and as she defends herself with the dragon bone, Chang is delighted to finally have all that he desired. When he commences the rape, Precious Auntie's fury is enough for her to break out of her confines. She throws Chang to the ground. With the sharp dragon bone, she extracts his confession while slicing his face, chest, and crotch: that he murdered her father, raped her, and was about to rape his own daughter. Young LuLing now realizes Precious Auntie is her mother and Chang her father. As Precious Auntie comforts Young LuLing, Old LuLing joins them in a moment in which three generations broken by pain have become whole again, unified and inseparable in their understanding.

Act II, Scene 2 (A hospital room, San Francisco, 1997)

Young LuLing enters the present and becomes Ruth again. She goes to her mother, Old LuLing, who is disoriented as she approaches death. In a moment of lucidity she begs Ruth to forgive her for hurting her when she was a child. Precious Auntie, now a luminous vision, approaches Old LuLing, who calls to her long-lost mother, also asking her for forgiveness. She tells Ruth to let Precious Auntie wear the mink coat which Ruth had given her. As Ruth puts the mink coat on Precious Auntie, Precious Auntie places the dragon bone in Ruth's hand so that the pain of the past is transformed into the strength of Ruth's future. Ruth watches as her mother and grandmother merge into the fog and return to Immortal Heart.

- Amy Tan



Amy Tan

Librettist AMY TAN makes her operatic debut with *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, based on her novel of the same title. Born in the United States to immigrant parents from China, she has also written the *New York Times* bestseller novels *The Joy Luck Club*, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, *The Hundred Secret Senses*, *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, and *Saving Fish from Drowning*. Her other works include the memoir *The Opposite of Fate*; the children's books *The Moon Lady* and *Sagwa*; and numerous articles for magazines such as *The New Yorker*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *National Geographic*. Her work has been translated into thirty-five languages, from Spanish, French, and Finnish to Chinese, Arabic, and Hebrew. Tan served as co-producer and co-screenwriter with Ron Bass for the film adaptation of *The Joy Luck Club* and was the creative consultant for *Sagwa*, the Emmy Award winning television series for children, which has aired worldwide, including in the UK, Latin America, Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, and Singapore. Her story "Immortal Hearth," published in the *New Yorker*, was dramatized on stages throughout the U.S. and in France. She appeared as herself in the animated series *The Simpsons*, and narrated performances of Nathan Wang's original score for *Sagwa* with the San Francisco Symphony and the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra. Her essays and stories are found in hundreds of anthologies and textbooks, and they are assigned as required reading in many high schools and universities. Tan's awards and prizes include a Bay Area Book Reviewers' Award and a Commonwealth Gold Award for *The Joy Luck Club*, which was selected for the 2007 National Endowment of the Arts *Big Read* program. *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, and *The Opposite of Fate* were all named *New York Times* Notable Books, and the latter two novels, along with *Saving Fish from Drowning*, were given *Booklist* magazine's Editor's Choice award. Amy Tan has lectured at universities around the world including Stanford, Oxford, Jagellonium, Beijing, and Georgetown both in Washington D.C. and Doha, Qatar. She also serves as the literary editor for the *Los Angeles Times* magazine, *West*.

Adapted from longer *Bonesetter* biography. July 30, 2008. ECS



Stewart Wallace

COMPOSER STEWART WALLACE's widely acclaimed opera *Harvey Milk* was acclaimed in 1996 at San Francisco Opera where it was recorded in 1996 for Teldec Classics. Discussed and debated in every major American and European newspaper, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Vanity Fair* and CNN, *The Washington Post* called it “an astounding achievement...deeply satisfying to ear, eye and mind.” In addition to his seven operas, Wallace has written orchestral and chamber music, ballets and film scores, collaborating with a diverse group of artists including Evelyn Glennie, Marc Ribot, Icebreaker, Richard Foreman, Christopher Alden and Michael Korie. His collaboration with Amy Tan has included extended research in China, including field work in rural villages and ongoing collaborations with a number of Chinese musicians who are featured in *The Bonesetter's Daughter*.



Chinese Opera

Chinese Opera (Chinese: 戏曲/戲曲; Pinyin: xìqǔ) is a popular form of drama and musical theatre in China. There are numerous regional branches of opera with its original root starting in the dynastic periods. The Beijing opera is one of the most famous Chinese Opera.

As early as the Three Kingdoms period, *Canjun opera* was one of the first form of opera available. Though in general, the more organized form of Chinese opera began in the Tang Dynasty with Emperor Xuanzong (712–755), who founded the "Pear Garden" (梨园/梨園; líyuán), the first known opera troupe in China. The troupe mostly performed for the emperors' personal pleasure. To this day operatic professionals are still referred to as "Disciples of the Pear Garden" (梨园弟子/梨園弟子, líyuán dìzǐ). In the Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368), forms like the *Zaju* (雜劇, zájù, variety plays), which acts based on rhyming schemes plus the innovation of having specialized roles like "Dan" (旦, dàn, female), "Sheng" (生, shēng, male), "Hua" (花, huā, painted-face) and "Chou" (丑, chǒu, clown) were introduced into the opera. Although actors in theatrical performances of the Song Dynasty (960–1279) strictly adhered to speaking in Classical Chinese onstage, it was during the Yuan Dynasty that actors speaking in the vernacular tongue gained precedence on stage.

The dominant form of the Ming and early Qing dynasties was Kunqu, which came from the Wu cultural area. It later evolved into a longer form of play called *chuanqi*, which became one of the 5 melodies that made up Sichuan opera. Chinese operas continue to exist in 368 different forms now, the best known of which is Beijing opera, which assumed its present form in the mid-19th century and was extremely popular in the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911).



19th century Chinese opera

In Beijing opera, traditional Chinese string and percussion instruments provide a strong rhythmic accompaniment to the acting. The acting is based on allusion: gestures, footwork, and other body movements express such actions as riding a horse, rowing a boat, or opening a door. Spoken dialogue is divided into recitative and Beijing colloquial speech, the former employed by serious characters and the latter by young females and clowns. Character roles are strictly defined. Elaborate make-up designs portray which character is acting. The traditional repertoire of Beijing opera includes more than 1,000 works, mostly taken from historical novels about political and military struggles.

In traditional Chinese theater, no plays were performed in the vernacular Chinese or without singing. But at the turn of the 20th century, Chinese students returning from abroad began to experiment with Western plays. Following the May Fourth Movement of 1919, a number of Western plays were staged in China, and Chinese playwrights began to imitate this form. The most notable of the new-style playwrights was Cao Yu (b. 1910). His major works — *Thunderstorm*, *Sunrise*, *Wilderness*, and *Peking Man* — written between 1934 and 1940, have been widely read in China.

In the 1930s, theatrical productions performed by traveling Red Army cultural troupes in Communist-controlled areas were consciously used to promote party goals and political philosophy. By the 1940s, theater was well established in the Communist-controlled areas.



Chinese Opera costumes

In the early years of the People's Republic of China, the development of Beijing opera was encouraged; many new operas on historical and modern themes were written, and earlier operas continued to be performed. As a popular art form, opera has usually been the first of the arts to reflect changes in Chinese policy. In the mid-1950s, for example, it was the first to benefit under the Hundred Flowers Campaign. Similarly, the attack in November 1965 on Beijing deputy mayor Wu Han and his historical play, *Hai Rui's Dismissal from Office*,

signaled the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. During the Cultural Revolution, most opera troupes were disbanded, performers and scriptwriters were persecuted, and all operas except the eight "model operas" approved by Jiang Qing and her associates were banned. Western-style plays were condemned as "dead drama" and "poisonous weeds" and were not performed. After the fall of the Gang of Four in 1976, Beijing Opera enjoyed a revival and continued to be a very popular form of entertainment both in theaters and on television.

Following the Cultural Revolution, both older and new works reappeared. Revised and banned plays from China and abroad were reinstated in the national repertoire. Many of the new plays strained at the limits of creative freedom were alternately commended and condemned, depending on the political atmosphere. One of the most outspoken of the new breed of playwrights was Sha Yexin. His controversial play "The Imposter" which dealt harshly with the favoritism and perquisites accorded party members, was first produced in 1979. In early 1980 the play was roundly criticized by Secretary General Hu Yaobang - the first public intervention in the arts since the Cultural Revolution. In the campaign against bourgeois liberalism in 1981 and the anti-spiritual pollution campaign in 1983, Sha and his works were again criticized. Through it all Sha continued to write for the stage and to defend himself and his works in the press. In late 1985 Sha Yexin was accepted into the Chinese Communist Party and appointed head of the Shanghai People's Art Theater, where he continued to produce controversial plays. Since then, he has again fallen into disfavor.



From Page to Stage

The Bonesetter's Daughter first began life as a novel by Amy Tan, published in 2001. Like much of her work, this novel deals with the relationship between an American-born Chinese woman and her immigrant mother.

The Bonesetter's Daughter—the novel—is divided into two major stories. The first is about Ruth, a Chinese-American woman living in San Francisco. She worries that her elderly mother, LuLing, is gradually becoming more and more demented. LuLing seems increasingly forgetful, and makes bizarre comments about her family and her own past. The second story is that of LuLing herself, as written for Ruth. Several years earlier, LuLing had written out her life story in Chinese. Ruth arranges to have the document translated, and learns the truth about her mother's life in China.

A major theme in the book is one of *translation*. When LuLing was a girl, her caretaker/mother could not speak and had to use sign language and a series of noises to get her meaning across. Only the young LuLing understood her. When LuLing moves to America she learns English, but must use her young daughter, Ruth, to translate most of the time. Ruth also loses her voice in the story and communicates by writing in the sand. These writings her mother believes express the visitations and concerns of her own deceased mother. Finally Ruth must translate LuLing's story from Chinese to fully understand the mysteries of the family's past. Perhaps it is in the translation of a thought or an idea that makes us truly understand it.

So how does a novel *translate* to an opera? The composer and librettist must figure out what to edit, enhance, and stylize with music. The designers must create costumes, sets, props, and lighting that express the moods, themes, actions, and ideas of the opera.

In the end it is the story lifting off the page into the performance space that transports us to a different place. The opera is structured differently from the book. The focus is more upon the relationship between all three women and some details and specifics are changed. This is nature of adaptation—changing one thing into another.

In this production the composers chose to express history and culture in the music. We hear three different styles of music: Traditional opera, Chinese opera, and modern pop. We also hear instruments from the different cultures.



The **suona** is a Han Chinese shawn (oboe). It has a distinctively loud and high-pitched sound, and is used frequently in Chinese traditional music ensembles, particularly those that perform outdoors. It is an important instrument in the folk music of northern China, particularly the provinces of Shandong and Henan, where it has long been used for festival and military purposes.

In addition to that, you will see a magnificent troupe of acrobats and aetherial movement.

Since *ghosts* and traditions play an important role in this piece, the other-worldly visual is key. Look at some of the design images in the following pages!



These are design models. They are the 3-D mini models of the set that are presented to the production staff so the Director knows how to move the singers around the playing area. The white cut-outs represent the performers.



Notice the use of the back screen for projection



In these two scenes you can see a sample of how the acrobats fly in!



In this scene in a modern Chinese restaurant, we see how the design combines many elements at once to show the ancient traditions of the family.

Chinese Elements

In *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, Ruth, along with her mother Luling, tells us in the opening of the opera:

*She (her mother, Luling) is a fire dragon.
I am a water dragon
We were both born in dragon years
We are the same for different reasons.
Together
We make fog*

The “dragon” refers to the years they were born in Chinese astrology. The elements, “fire” and “water” refer to the elements of Chinese philosophy.



www.beautymark.com

In traditional Chinese philosophy, natural phenomena can be classified into the **Wu Xing** (Chinese: 五行; pinyin: wǔxíng), or the **Five Phases**, usually translated as **five elements**. The elements are:

metal (Chinese: 金, pinyin: jīn,) (literal translation meaning "gold")

wood (Chinese: 木, pinyin: mù)

water (Chinese: 水, pinyin: shuǐ)

fire (Chinese: 火, pinyin: huǒ), and

earth (Chinese: 土, pinyin: tǔ,).

The system of five phases was used for describing interactions and relationships between phenomena. It was employed as a device in many fields of early Chinese thought, including seemingly disparate fields such as geomancy or Feng shui, astrology, traditional Chinese medicine, music, military strategy and martial arts.

According to Wu Xing theory, the structure of the cosmos mirrors the five elements. Each "element" has a complex series of associations with different aspects of nature, as can be seen in the following table.

The elements and their corresponding connections

Element	Wood	Fire	Earth	Metal	Water
Color	Green	Red	Yellow	White	Black
Direction	east	south	center / zenith	west	north
Planet	Jupiter	Mars	Saturn	Venus	Mercury
Heavenly creature	Azure Dragon 蒼龍 or 青龍	Vermilion Bird 朱雀	Yellow Dragon or Yellow Qilin 黃龍 or 黃麟	White Tiger 白虎	Black Tortoise 玄武
Heavenly Stems	甲, 乙	丙, 丁	戊, 己	庚, 辛	壬, 癸
Phase	New Yang	Full Yang	Yin/Yang balance	New Yin	Full Yin
Energy	Generative	Expansive	Stabilizing	Contracting	Conserving
Season	Spring	Summer	Change of seasons (Every third month)	Autumn	Winter
Climate	Windy	Hot	Damp	Dry	Cold
Development	Sprouting	Blooming	Ripening	Withering	Dormant
Livestock	dog	sheep/goat	cattle	chicken	pig
Fruit	plum	apricot	jujube(dates)	peach	chestnut
Grain	wheat	beans	rice	hemp	millet

Chinese Astrology

<i>Year</i>	<i>dates</i>	<i>animal</i>	<i>element</i>	<i>aspect</i>
1984	2 February 1984 - 19 February 1985	<u>Rat</u>	Wood	(+)
1985	20 February 1985 - 8 February 1986	<u>Ox</u>	Wood	(-)
1986	9 February 1986 - 28 January 1987	<u>Tiger</u>	Fire	(+)
1987	29 January 1987 - 16 February 1988	<u>Rabbit</u>	Fire	(-)
1988	17 February 1988 - 5 February 1989	<u>Dragon</u>	Earth	(+)
1989	6 February 1989 - 26 January 1990	<u>Snake</u>	Earth	(-)
1990	27 January 1990 - 14 February 1991	<u>Horse</u>	Metal	(+)
1991	15 February 1991 - 3 February 1992	<u>Sheep</u>	Metal	(-)
1992	4 February 1992 - 22 January 1993	<u>Monkey</u>	Water	(+)
1993	23 January 1993 - 9 February 1994	<u>Rooster</u>	Water	(-)
1994	10 February 1994 - 30 January 1995	<u>Dog</u>	Wood	(+)
1995	31 January 1995 - 18 February 1996	<u>Pig</u>	Wood	(-)
1996	19 February 1996 - 7 February 1997	<u>Rat</u>	Fire	(+)
1997	8 February 1997 - 27 January 1998	<u>Ox</u>	Fire	(-)
1998	28 January 1998 - 15 February 1999	<u>Tiger</u>	Earth	(+)
1999	16 February 1999 - 4 February 2000	<u>Rabbit</u>	Earth	(-)
2000	5 February 2000 - 23 January 2001	<u>Dragon</u>	Metal	(+)
2001	24 January 2001 - 11 February 2002	<u>Snake</u>	Metal	(-)
2002	12 February 2002 - 31 January 2003	<u>Horse</u>	Water	(+)
2003	1 February 2003 - 21 January 2004	<u>Sheep</u>	Water	(-)
2004	22 January 2004 - 8 February 2005	<u>Monkey</u>	Wood	(+)
2005	9 February 2005 - 28 January 2006	<u>Rooster</u>	Wood	(-)
2006	29 January 2006 - 17 February 2007	<u>Dog</u>	Fire	(+)
2007	18 February 2007 - 6 February 2008	<u>Pig</u>	Fire	(-)

courtesy www.holymtn.com

Which one are you?

Women in China

The Following will give a bit of information on the way the lives of Luling and Precious Auntie might have been limited by the social and political situations in their country.

Up until the Communist Revolution, Chinese women occupied the bottom rung of the social ladder. Undesirable from birth, women were treated much like property, first by their fathers and then by their husbands. Women were forced into arranged marriages and were not entitled to divorce or to own property.

In the early 1950's, with the declaration that "women hold up half the sky", Mao Zedong and the new communist government dramatically changed the status of women in China. At least in theory, women were given equal rights in economic, cultural and family life and equal pay for equal work. A new marriage law granted the right for women to choose their partners, get divorced and inherit property. However, the legacy of thousands of years of servitude did not wear off overnight and only now are some women starting to achieve true equality.

Today in China's modern cities, the status of women is higher than it has ever been. Certainly compared to many other developing nations, modern Chinese women enjoy a high degree of respect and rights. While Chinese society is still, at times, chauvinistic, women have started to enter the upper echelons of the business world and government. The next generation of young women will, no doubt, enjoy even more equality and play an invaluable role in shaping the China of the 21st century.

Courtesy picturechina.net



Gu Hong Zhong's "Han Xizai Evening Banquet " from the Tang Dynasty (709-960)

Professions in The Bonesetter's Daughter



A **bonesetter** is a practitioner of joint manipulation. Before the advent of chiropractors, osteopaths and physical therapists, bonesetters were the main providers of this type of treatment in the world. Bonesetters would also reduce joint dislocations and 're-set' bone fractures. The original spinal adjustment was a variation of a procedure known today as spinal manipulation. This form of treatment has documented use as far back as Hippocrates, the ancient Egyptians and Asian Cultures and was carried through the ages by families of bonesetters. The modern form of spinal manipulation techniques have characteristic biomechanical features, and are usually associated with an audible "popping" sound. In some older Eastern families and communities bonesetting was learned in conjunction with acupressure / acupuncture as the main healing art and treatment for family members. For many years this type of training was normal practice in these families and communities being passed on from generation to generation. This type of ancient formal training has almost completely vanished due to the modern chiropractic / medical boards and certifications. However you can still find a small number of classically trained martial arts practitioners practicing this art in traditional ways today.



Inkmakers. Approximately 5000 years ago, an ink for blacking the raised surfaces of pictures and texts carved in stone was developed in China. This early ink was a mixture of soot from pine smoke, lamp oil, and gelatin from animal skins and musk. Other early cultures also developed many colors of ink from available berries, plants and minerals.



A **ghostwriter** is a professional writer who is paid to write books, articles, stories, reports, or other content which are officially credited to another person. Celebrities, executives, and political leaders often hire ghostwriters to draft or edit autobiographies, magazine articles, or other written material. In music, ghostwriters are used in classical music, film composition, and popular music such as top 40, country, and hip-hop. The ghostwriter is sometimes acknowledged by the author or publisher for his or her assistance.

Curricular Connections



Courtesy asianamericanmedia.org

and Activities

The Five C's: More to the story

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?

IN THE CLASSROOM

- 👥 Give the students the synopsis in your own words, by making copies for them to read, or by having them re-tell the story after they have read it to their classmates.
- 👥 Ask comprehensive questions.
- 👥 Present and discuss composer and librettists.
- 👥 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.
- 👥 Assign topics for written reports related to the opera. Essays can be written on historical aspects, as well as ethical questions raised by plot or character.
- 👥 Listen to excerpts from the opera. Watch a video of the opera!
- 👥 Have the students watch for references to themes in the opera in their everyday lives. Radio, TV, magazines, and movies often refer back to classics.

AFTER THE OPERA

- 👥 Have the students write a review of what you saw. Was the production a good representation of the five C'S?
- 👥 Have the students create their own designs for sets, costumes, wigs, make-up, etc.
- 👥 Have them listen to another opera, read the libretto and design it. Stress the importance of historical accuracy.
- 👥 Have your students write a letter to one of the characters giving them advice for the future.
- 👥 Any creations that your students come up with are most welcomed by the Education Department! You may send your creations to: Education Director, San Francisco Opera Guild, War Memorial Opera House, 301 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94102

Character Creation

Think about the characters and the role they play in the story.
Choose one from the following:

Ruth
LuLing
Precious Auntie
Chang
Wang Tai-Tai

If you were going to play this character, you would have to discover, create, and imagine the background, personality, physical qualities of him or her. 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. How old are you?
2. Do you have brothers and sisters?
3. What sort of home do you have (a house/castle/cave?) Describe it.
4. What do you really want in the story? This is called your character's objective.
5. What obstacles stand in your way?
6. What steps in the opera do you take to achieve this objective? What are the results?

7. What obstacles are beyond your control (laws, social status, others' actions)?

8. What are your (character's) greatest strengths?

9. Greatest weaknesses?

10. Can you think of a modern day character that has similar characteristics and traits?

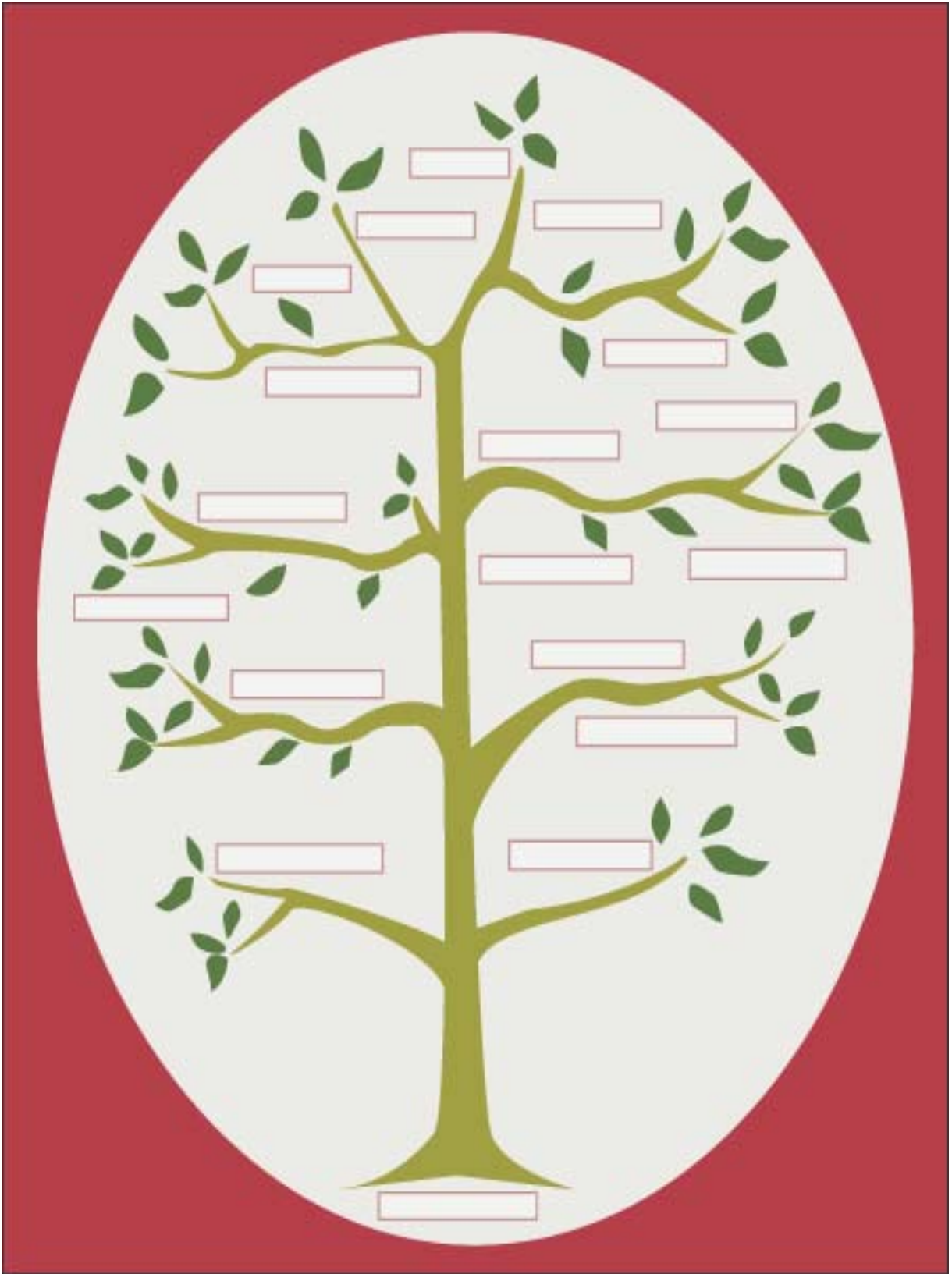
11. If this character were alive today, how would he she be more or less successful in the world?

12. What different steps would he or she take to achieve an objective?

Get up and walk around the room. How does your character walk? It should be different than you. How does this character sit?

Prompts for Discussion and Activities

1. This is a story about family secrets and history. We learn about the lives of three generations of women. Besides family, what do these women share? How are they different? How are they alike?
2. Precious Auntie appears as herself and as a ghost. What does that tell us about the time period in the opera?
3. How could the designers and composer represent the “ghost” element in the opera?
4. The secrets of past generations are still things we try to uncover. How can knowledge of the past help us in the future?
5. Ruth sometimes fights with her mother, Luling, just as Luling fought with her mother, Precious Auntie. Why do mothers and daughters argue?
6. Look at the list of professions in the opera earlier in this book. How are “bonesetters”, “ink makers” and “ghost writers” connected. Does this contribute to theme?
7. The opera begins: “These are the things I know are true.” Make a list of how many things you know are true—what things do you doubt?
8. Why do you think the composer decided to use both modern and ancient instruments and musical styles?
9. The designers have used many projections and arial performers. What is the connection between projection, memory, flying, and ghosts?
10. What is your earliest family memory?
11. Look at the charts in the preceding pages and find your Chinese animal sign and your element. How does it compare to others in your classroom. Make a chart of everyone’s element and sign.
12. This is the story of a family that transported from Ancient China to modern America. The youngest daughter, Ruth, is married to an American and cannot read Chinese. What do you think of that?
13. There are many cultures that have immigrated to the United States in the same way. How many are represented in your classroom?
14. Family is extremely important, it helps us indentify ourselves. Use the template on the following page to create a family tree for yourself!



Courtesy nalw.org

Beyond the story...

Summary of Activity

Follow up from *The Bonesetter's Daughter* performance. Students will be able to demonstrate understanding of plot and use of imagination through writing, art and/or dramatic play.

Objective: Students will verbally, physically and visually re-interpret the ending of *The Bonesetter's Daughter*.

Procedures:

❖ **Drama/ Storytelling:**

- Making a scene
 - Pick a scene out of the story (see synopsis.)
 - Choose one student to portray each character.
 - Reread/ paraphrase the scene as a narrator.
 - Encourage the students to act out their part of the scene as it comes along.

❖ **Art and/or Writing:**

- Option 1: Ask what happens *after* the very end of the story? How would they continue the story? How will Luling's life change by telling her story? How will Ruth's life be changed?
 - Ask them to:
 - Tell their ending and/or,
 - Write down their ending and/or,
 - Make a picture for it and/or,
 - Act out the ending.



Composition and Design

Be a Composer!

The Bonesetter's Daughter began life as a novel. Almost every stage piece (opera, musical, play) started as some other story. This story is called the *source material*. Choose a novel you have read or a good story and think about how you would go about adapting it into an opera or piece of musical theatre. You would have to choose which parts of the drama would be highlighted with which sorts of music. When would there be duets, or trios, or quartets? Or big soaring arias? How would you set your opening scene? Would you have a big chorus to set up the place and time or would it begin in a more quiet way? Write out an outline and try to structure the beginnings of an opera.



Be a Designer!

The Bonesetter's Daughter takes place in modern day San Francisco and in an early 20th century village in China. The story is tied in to the *setting*. What if the design could be up to you? How would you set this story? What colors would you use? What sort of performance space? What colors would stand out on the set, in the costumes and lighting? Which actors or singers would you cast in each role? What if this were made into a movie? What other choices would be available?



Audience Etiquette

The following list of DO's and DON'TS will help you (and those around you) enjoy the experience of attending the opera:

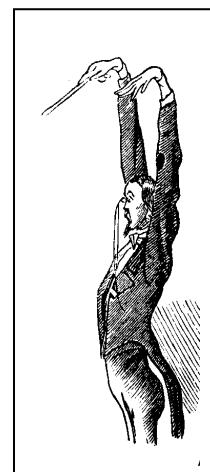
- ◆ DO dress in whatever you are comfortable. However going to the opera can be an opportunity to get dressed up and snazzy.
- ◆ DO be on time! Latecomers disturb everyone. They will only be seated at suitable breaks and often not until intermission.
- ◆ DO find your seat with the help of your teacher or an usher.
- ◆ DO not block your neighbors—if you are wearing a hat, take it off.
- ◆ DO turn off cell phones, pagers, and all electronic devices (no texting, sorry!)
- ◆ DO NOT take photos (even with your phone).
- ◆ DO NOT chew gum, eat, drink, or talk. Be aware that you are an active participant in the theatre magic.
- ◆ DO get settled and comfortable prior to the performance beginning.
- ◆ DO clap as the lights dim and the conductor appears and bows to the audience.
- ◆ DO have a great time! Laugh when something is funny and applaud after an aria or suitable pause in the action.

Careers in Opera

San Francisco Opera, just like many companies, operates like a well-oiled machine: no one department functions alone. Instead, many departments have areas that overlap with one another and it is necessary for each department to do its share of the work in order for all the others to function.

When you attend an opera, you will see and hear the work of the performers: singers, orchestra, chorus, and orchestra, but there are many behind-the-scenes jobs that are necessary to make opera.

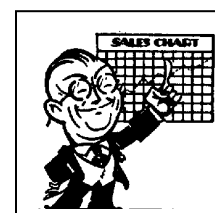
San Francisco Opera is run by the **General Director**. The General Director has the final word on the Company's policies and decisions from artistic to business planning. A General Director needs to travel to other companies in order to stay informed as to what is happening within the opera industry. He or she needs to know which new singers are becoming popular, which sets and costumes are the most striking to rent, and which operas the audience might enjoy. The General Director is the ambassador for the opera company, both within the community and abroad.



At home in San Francisco, the General Director makes decisions about which operas should be part of the season schedule, called the **season repertoire**. Many of these decisions are made along with the **Music Director**. The Music Director in an opera company has the very important job of overseeing all musical aspects associated with the Opera. The Music Director not only needs to make decisions about the season repertoire and stay informed about singers who are performing, but also oversees the orchestra and the chorus. Sometimes the Music Director may act as the **Conductor** to an opera, one of the most important components of a performance.

The **Music Administrator** functions as a researcher, historian and walking human encyclopedia for the company. When we produce a new opera, he is responsible for bringing together the composer and librettist and managing workshops on the piece. When we produce classic operas, he makes recommendations as to which version of the opera we should produce, and oversees orchestration and music library work.

The **Artistic Administrator** works with the Music Director and the General Director in the hiring of singers. The Artistic Administrator deals with individual leading artists and their agents, making sure that they are available to sing with the Company and negotiating a salary and **contract**. Contracts are very important in opera because once the contract has been signed, it legally binds a singer to perform with the Company.



Equally important as all of the artistic decisions, are the business choices that a company makes. The **Managing Director** of a company is the person in charge of the business aspects. San Francisco Opera, like most performing arts groups, is a **non-profit** company. This means that the organization does not exist as a money-making business, but instead is a company that exists to present art, essentially

functioning on a combination of ticket sales and fund-raising. Grand Opera is very expensive to produce. It is impossible to make enough money from ticket sales to cover the actual costs of producing it. Each year, budgets are formed to decide the guidelines that determine where money will be spent, so that no department exceeds the amount of money that the company can afford to spend.

The Senior Director of Finance and Administration, along with the General Director and heads of the various departments, is responsible for making sure that budgets are formed and followed, and for keeping track of finances throughout the year, as well as generally overseeing the business end of the company.

The **Director of Development** and the **Director of Marketing** work with the **Managing Director** to actively keep track of what money is raised. The **Director of Development** heads the **Development Department**. This department raises money through donations, and government grants.

Of course, the other source of income for an opera company comes from **Box Office** sales. The War Memorial Opera House has 3,148 seats and averages more than 75 performances each year - which totals more than 236,100 seats that have to be sold every year! That's a lot of seats!

The **Marketing Department** is the division that makes sure the seats are sold each year. There are many different parts of marketing opera. One is placing advertisements so that people know that the opera is around. Any ads that you see in the newspaper, at bus stops, on television, or hear on the radio, the Marketing Department put there. The Marketing Department works with an outside advertising agency to determine what type of ad will be most successful in reaching the Company's target audience, and to determine the costs of specifically placing ads in newspapers or with radio or television stations.

A department that works closely with Marketing is the **Communications Department**. The Communications Department makes sure that everyone knows what is going on at the Opera. One way to do this is by writing a **press release**. A press release is a news article that explains an event that is happening with the company, such as the opening of a show. Press releases usually contain lots of information about places, times, people and other details that people are interested to know.



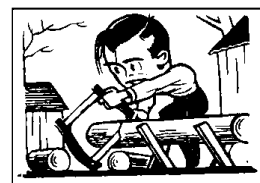
The educational pages on the website are developed and maintained in collaboration with the **Education Director**. This person is responsible for ensuring that opera is part of the arts education in schools, community centers and other venues where people gather to learn. The Education Director creates programs for students and other people in the community, and is responsible for helping teachers bring opera into their classrooms. By being exposed to opera at a younger age, young people have more opportunity to learn about the art form and understand the music and history of opera. By bringing the art of opera out to the community, people of all ages get a chance to experience the thrill of live opera, often for the first time.



Another big part of San Francisco Opera that is not found at all opera companies is the **San Francisco Opera Center**. The Opera Center is dedicated to providing training for young artists and each year auditions young singers to take part in their programs. Once accepted, singers receive quality vocal training and are given exciting performance opportunities that nurture their careers. These opportunities start in the Merola Opera summer training program. The Merola Opera Program is an independent organization that trains young opera singers. Once the singers have completed the Merola program, they may be considered for further training within the San Francisco Opera Center in the Adler Fellows Program.

Before operas may be sold or marketed, they must be created and staged. Each opera has a **Director** who is hired by the opera company. The Director is responsible for making decisions about what the themes will be and how the production will look, from the design of the set to the movement of the singers on stage. In preparing the production, the Director works with the set, lighting, sound, costume, and prop designers, who function as a creative team. Each designer then works with their own **crew**, a team of crafts people who actually **build** the show.

The **Set Designer** is trained in the creative and technical process of designing backdrops, large props and general background pieces for the opera. The Set Designer drafts plans and then a model of the set, which is given to the carpenters and scenic artists who build, paint, and decorate the full-sized set.



The **Lighting Designer** works with the Director to create the lighting for the production. Lighting is central to the mood of the opera; a scene set in bright white light has a different feeling than one set in softer blue lighting, which may denote evening or a romantic scene.

The **Costume Designer** is responsible for working with the rest of the creative team to decide what the dress for the characters will be. In a historically based production, the Costume Designers do background research into the time period to make sure that the dress is as appropriate as the sets are. A team of sewing experts, or **stitchers**, then measures the performers and assembles the costumes.

The **Props Master** is responsible for finding, designing and/or constructing the props that will be used on stage. This can include everything from clothing accessories like purses, to swords, to wall lamps, to giant puppets. The Props Designer also works with a crew of craftspeople who take care of the properties after they have assembled them.



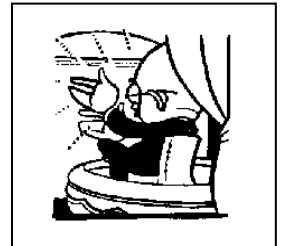
Backstage there are sometimes hundreds of people working to make sure that the people on stage are under the right lighting and have the right props and backdrops. These are the **Stage Crews**; they are responsible for running the show-- making sure everything happens in the right place, at the right time.

The **Stage Manager** is the conductor of movement on and off stage. The Stage Manager runs the show backstage, usually connected to several different areas on a headset. He/She often relies on video monitors, as well as audio communication, to keep on top of what is happening at any moment during the production. In opera, the Stage Manager must know how to read music and follow a **score**, the book containing the music and text for the opera. This way, he or she can follow along with the Conductor and understand where the opera is going, in order to be prepared for the next scene at all times. The Stage Manager's score is usually filled with notes and markings so that they remember all the cues that fill the opera. The people on the other end of headsets attached to the stage manager can range from electricians, to sound specialists, to carpenters who have built the sets, to costume staff waiting to help the artists change in the **wings** (the area off-stage to the sides).



The **Wig and Make-up** crews follow the Director's vision. They make up the singers before each performance and are also always available between scenes to touch up the artists as they come off-stage. They are often the ones responsible for the same artist playing a teenager in the first act, aging to an adult in the second and finishing as an old man in the final act!

Behind the scenes, there is another team of people working to make every opera season happen. These people are the **Volunteers**, and they give their time to the opera without pay, simply because they feel passionately about opera and want to make sure it continues. Volunteers work almost daily with the San Francisco Opera Association, the San Francisco Opera Guild and with Merola Opera.



As you can see, there are a variety of different jobs at the opera - something for everyone - and we can never forget the most important people in making the opera happen - you! The **audience** is responsible for buying tickets and enjoying the performance, as well as providing feedback about whether or not they liked the particular performance so that the company knows if it is pleasing the public or not. Just like all the departments at the opera, the audience is very important because without you, there is no reason for all of it to happen!

Questions and Activities

Which department do you think you would like to work with at the opera?

Development

Which product or company do you think should sponsor *The Bonesetter's Daughter*? Write a proposal to the president of the company explaining why you think it would be beneficial for them to give funding to a production of *The Bonesetter's Daughter*. Remember to tell the president what benefits there are for her or his company!

General Director

If you were running a company, which aspect do you think would be more important to you, spending money on artistic expenses or maintaining a balanced budget? Do you think one outweighs the other? Write a statement of your philosophy as if you were the General Director and had been asked how you make your decisions.

Information Services

If you were to design a website for *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, what would it look like? Who would it reach? Who would be the "audience"?

Marketing

Create an advertisement for *The Bonesetter's Daughter*. Decide whether you should put it on TV, radio, newspaper, a bus, etc. Include whatever you feel is the biggest "selling point" of the opera-- what makes it exciting? Why should people come to see it? Write it as a presentation that you might make if you wanted San Francisco Opera to use your ad. Then act it out!

The Opera Orchestra

Used by permission of San Diego Opera and Elizabeth Otten



The Opera Orchestra is an integral part of the opera, and is much like a symphony orchestra. The orchestra is made up of four instrumental families, plus a group of miscellaneous instruments. Within each family, one of the instruments corresponds to each of the four main voice categories. The orchestra is led by the conductor, or *maestro*, who stands in the pit in front and below the stage. The conductor is fully responsible for the progress of the opera. He or she must blend and balance the music at all times, keep proper tempo and regulate the dynamics¹. The conductor also cues each singer when they are to begin singing. In some opera houses, video screens placed around the stage and auditorium transmit a live picture of the conductor in the pit. This keeps the singers from having to look down into the pit all the time.

While the orchestra may be used simply to accompany a singer or singers, it usually enhances the drama by being an independent and equal partner with the singers. Though it is not visible to many of the audience members, it is an extremely important contributor to the impact of the production.

Musical instruments have been around since prehistoric times, and there is hardly a civilization that did not have, at least, a drum or flute of some sort. Music has been used to accompany performances as long as they have existed. The first operas were usually accompanied by whatever instruments were available and parts were not specifically written for the orchestra. Instead, the instruments *doubled* the voices, that is, they played the same melodies. The composer Monteverdi is often given the honor of having created the beginning of the orchestra as we know it. The musicians of the time were given an indication of chords to be played, called a *figured bass*, and they improvised from that. By the time of Bach and Handel in the 18th century, there were still no prescribed parts for the keyboard instruments. In the late 18th century, at the time of Mozart, most orchestras used a variety of instruments, and parts were especially written for them. Many of the instruments in a modern orchestra started in opera orchestras.

Opera and the California State Frameworks

Aesthetic perception: Opera is a visual and aural experience. The work of the designers, director and conductor all affect the way the work is perceived. Students should be able to discuss the effectiveness of their contributions to the production.

Creative expression: Students can create their own opera (with music), telling the same stories in modern setting, or stories relating to their own experiences.

Arts heritage: Studying the lives of the composers and others should include the cultural climate of the time and how the individuals were related to it.

Aesthetic value: Opera is a form of aesthetic expression which includes all of the arts: visual, musical, dramatic, etc. Students should compare these facets of opera to contemporary counterparts. How does art affect their lives?

Goals for Music Education

Artistic Perception Component

Goal 1: Students listen to and analyze music critically, using vocabulary and language of music.

Goal 2: Students read and notate music.

Creative Expression Component

Goal 3: Students sing or perform on instruments a varied repertoire of music.

Goal 4: Students improvise melodies, variations, and accompaniments.

Goal 5: Students compose and arrange music.

Historical and Cultural Context Component

Goal 6: Students develop knowledge and skills necessary to understand and perform music from all parts of the world.

Goal 7: Students develop knowledge and understanding of the relationship of music to history and culture.

Aesthetic Valuing Component

Goal 8: Students apply knowledge, skill, and understanding to make critical judgements about and determine the quality of music experiences and performances.

Goals for Theatre Education

Artistic Perception Component

Goal 1: Students observe the environment and respond, using movement and voice.

Goal 2: Students observe informal productions, theatrical productions, films and electronic media and respond to them, using the vocabulary and language of the theatre.

Creative Expression Component

Goal 3: Students develop knowledge and skills in acting and directing through their own experience and imagination as well as through their research of literature and history.

Goal 4: Students explore the elements and technology of theatrical production through varied media.

Goal 5: Students write scripts based on experience, heritage, imagination, literature, and history.

Historical and Cultural Context Component

Goal 6: Students research relationships between theatre, history, and culture.

Goal 7: Students investigate major themes and historical periods and styles of theatre in different cultures.

Aesthetic Valuing Component

Goal 8: Students develop and use criteria for judging and evaluating informal production, formal productions, film and electronic media.

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Cover art: San Francisco Opera Production design, The Bonesetter's Daughter 2008

**Guide Prepared by Caroline Altman
Director of Education, San Francisco Opera Guild
2008**

**SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
TEACHER EVALUATION FORM**

One of our most valuable tools for assessing the effectiveness of our education programs here at San Francisco Opera is to go to the source and get your input. We would appreciate your taking a few minutes to think about these programs and let us know what you think. Our goal is to continually strive to improve our programs and make it easier for you to bring opera into your classroom. Thank you for your participation and your help!

Date: _____

Name: _____

School: _____

District: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Alternate
Phone: _____ Principal: _____

Email: _____

Student Grade
level: _____

Is this your first time participating in San Francisco Opera Guild's Education programs?

If NO, how many years have you been a participant?

If YES, what made you begin to participate this year?

In which program(s) did your students participate?

Is this the first time the majority of your students have been exposed to opera?

Did you use the offered activities in the Teacher's Guide? Were any particularly helpful?

Do you have additional comments/suggestions for the Teacher's Guide?

Do you have additional comments/suggestions for the Student Dress Rehearsals?

Other comments:

***Please mail this form to:
Caroline Altman, Director of Education
San Francisco Opera Guild
301 Van Ness Ave., S.F., CA 94102***