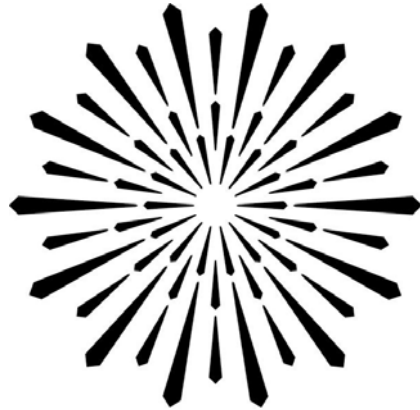


Boris Godunov



San Francisco Opera Guild
2008 Teachers' Guide and Resource Book



**SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA GUILD**

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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 *Boris Godunov*.

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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Making History—What you need to know first

Historical basis of the plot



Boris Godunov
(1551–1605)



Vasiliy Shuisky
(1552–1612)



The Pretender
(c.1582–1606)



Marina Mniszech
(1588–1614)

An understanding of the drama of *Boris Godunov* may be facilitated by a basic knowledge of the historical events surrounding the Time of Troubles, the interregnum period of relative anarchy following the end of the Rurik Dynasty (1598) and preceding the Romanov Dynasty (1613).

Key events are as follows:

- 1584 – Ivan IV "The Terrible", the first Grand Prince of Muscovy to officially adopt the title *Tsar* (Caesar), dies. Ivan's successor is his feeble son Fyodor, now Fyodor I, who cares only for spiritual matters and leaves the affairs of state to his capable brother-in-law, boyar Boris Godunov, now de facto regent.
- 1591 – Ivan's other son Dmitry dies under mysterious circumstances in Uglich. An investigation, ordered by Godunov and carried out by Prince Vasily Shuisky, determines that the Tsarevich, while playing with a knife, had an epileptic seizure, fell, and died from a self-inflicted wound to the throat. Dmitry's mother, Maria Nagaya, exiled with him to Uglich by Godunov, claims he was assassinated. Rumors linking Boris to the crime are circulated by his enemies.
- 1598 – Tsar Fyodor I dies. He is the last in a line of representatives of the Rurik Dynasty who have ruled Russia for 7 centuries. Patriarch Job of Moscow nominates Boris to succeed Fyodor I as Tsar, despite the rumors that Boris ordered the murder of Dmitry. Boris agrees to ascend the throne only if elected by the Zemsky Sobor. This the assembly does unanimously, and Boris is crowned the same year.
- 1604 – A pretender to the throne appears, claiming to be Tsarevich Dmitry, but believed to be in reality one Grigory Otrepyev. He gains the support of the Polish aristocracy, and, obtaining a force of soldiers, he marches on Moscow. Crossing into Russia, Dmitry's invasion force is joined by disaffected Cossacks. However, after a few victories, the campaign loses momentum.
- 1605 – Boris dies of unknown causes. He is succeeded by his son Fyodor, now Fyodor II. The death of Boris gives new life to the campaign of the False Dmitry, who enters Moscow. Boyars who flock to his side murder Fyodor II and his mother. The False Dmitry is crowned. Prince Shuisky begins plotting against him.
- 1606 – The Russian boyars are alarmed by Dmitri's Polish and Catholic alliances and his western habits. He is murdered shortly after wedding Marina Mniszech, and is succeeded by Vasily Shuisky, now Vasily IV.
- 1610 – Vasily IV is deposed, and dies two years later in a Polish prison. Another pretender claiming to be Dmitry Ivanovich, False Dmitry II, is murdered.
- 1611 – Yet a third pretender, False Dmitry III, appears. He is captured and executed in 1612.
- 1613 – The Time of Troubles comes to a close with the accession of Mikhail Romanov, son of Fyodor Romanov, who had been persecuted under Boris Godunov's reign.

Boris Godunov, the opera

Boris Godunov, the Tsar	Bass
Fyodor, his son	Mezzo-soprano
Xenia, his daughter	Soprano
Nurse	Mezzo-soprano
Shchelkalov, clerk of the Duma	Baritone
Pimen, an old monk	Bass
Grigory, the false Dimitri	Tenor
Prince Shuisky, advisor to Boris	Tenor
Marina, daughter of the Voivode of Sandomir	Mezzo-soprano
Hostess of the Inn	Mezzo-soprano
Varlaam	Bass
Missail	Tenor
Rangoni, a Jesuit priest	Baritone or Bass
Nikitich, Police Officer	Bass
Boyar Khruschev	Tenor

Russia and Poland 1598-1605

First performance at St. Petersburg, February 8, 1874



The Mariinsky Theater opened in 1860. *Boris Godunov* received its premiere there in 1874

SYNOPSIS

1. The Courtyard of the Novodevichiy Monastery near Moscow (1598).

There is a brief introduction foreshadowing the 'Dimitri Motif'. The curtain opens on a crowd in the courtyard of the monastery, where the weary regent, Boris Godunov, has temporarily retired. Nikitich the police officer orders the assembled people to kneel. He encourages them to shout for Boris to accept the throne. They sing a chorus of supplication (*"To whom dost thou abandon us, our father?"*). The people are bewildered about their purpose and soon fall to bickering with each other, resuming their shouts only when the policeman threatens them with his club. Their chorus reaches a feverish climax. Andrey Shchelkalov, the Secretary of the Duma, appears from inside the convent, informs the people that Boris still refuses the throne of Russia (*"Orthodox folk! The boyar is implacable!"*), and requests that they pray that he will relent. An approaching procession of pilgrims sings a hymn (*"Glory to Thee, Creator on high"*), exhorting the people to crush the spirit of anarchy in the land, take up holy icons, and go to meet the Tsar. They disappear into the monastery. The people discuss the statements of the pilgrims. Many remain bewildered about the identity of this Tsar. The police officer interrupts their discussion, ordering them to appear the next day at the Moscow Kremlin. The people move on, stoically exclaiming "if we are to wail, we might as well wail at the Kremlin".

2. Cathedral Square in the Moscow Kremlin (1598).

The unforgettable orchestral introduction is based on bell motifs. From the porch of the Cathedral of the Dormition, Prince Shuisky exhorts the people to glorify Tsar Boris. As the people sing a great chorus of praise ("Like the glory of the beautiful sun in the sky"), a solemn procession of boyars exits the cathedral. The people kneel. Boris appears on the porch of the cathedral. The shouts of "Glory!" reach a crescendo and subside. Boris addresses the people with a brief monologue ("My soul grieves") betraying a feeling of ominous foreboding. He prays for God's blessing, and hopes to be a good and just ruler. He invites the people to a great feast, and then proceeds to the Cathedral of the Archangel to kneel at the tombs of Russia's past rulers. The people wish Boris a long life ("Glory! Glory! Glory!"). A crowd breaks toward the cathedral. The police officers struggle to maintain order. The people resume their shouts of "Glory!"

3. A Cell in the Chudov Monastery [within the Moscow Kremlin] (1603).

Pimen, an aged monk, writes a chronicle ("Yet one last tale") of Russian history. The young novice Grigory awakes from a horrible (and prophetic) dream, which he relates to Pimen, in which he climbed a high tower, was mocked by the people of Moscow, and fell. Pimen advises him to fast and pray. Grigory voices his regret that he retired so soon from worldly affairs to become a monk. He envies Pimen's early life of adventure. Pimen speaks approvingly of Ivan the Terrible and his son Fyodor, who both exhibited great spiritual devotion, and draws a contrast with Boris, a who is believed to be responsible for the

murder of Dmitri Ivanovich, true heir to the throne. At Grigory's request, Pimen tells the vivid details of the scene of the murder of Dimitri Ivanovich, which he witnessed in Uglich. Upon discovering the similarity in age between himself and the murdered Tsarevich, Grigory immediately conceives the idea of posing as "the Pretender." As Pimen departs for Matins, Grigory declares that Boris shall escape neither the judgment of the people, nor that of God.

4. An Inn on the Lithuanian Border (1603).

There is a brief orchestral introduction based on three prominent themes from this scene. The Hostess enters and sings the 'Song of the Drake' ("I have caught a gray drake"). It is interrupted towards the end by approaching voices. The vagrants, Varlaam and Missail, who are begging for alms, and their companion Grigory, who is in secular garb, arrive and enter. After exchanging greetings, the rascally Varlaam requests some wine. When the Hostess returns with a bottle, he drinks and launches into a ferocious song ("It happened in the city of Kazan") of Ivan the Terrible's siege of Kazan. The two monks quickly become tipsy, and soon begin to doze. Grigory quietly asks the Hostess for directions to the Lithuanian border. Policemen appear in search of a fugitive heretic monk (Grigory) who has run off from the Chudov Monastery declaring that he will become Tsar in Moscow. Noticing Varlaam's suspicious behavior, the lead policeman thinks he has found his man. He cannot read the edict he is carrying, however, so Grigory volunteers to read it. He does so, but, eyeing Varlaam carefully, he substitutes Varlaam's description for his own. The policemen quickly seize Varlaam, who protests his innocence and asks to read the edict. He haltingly reads the description of the suspect, which of course matches Grigory. Grigory brandishes a dagger, and leaps out of the window. The men set off in pursuit.

5. The Interior of the Tsar's Terem in the Moscow Kremlin (1604).

Xenia, clutching a portrait of her betrothed who has died, sings a brief aria ("Where are you, my bridegroom?"). Her nurse and brother Fyodor attempt to cheer her up with some songs ("A gnat was chopping wood" and "A song of this and that"). Boris suddenly enters in an agitated state, briefly consoles Xenia, and then sends her and her nurse to their own quarters. After encouraging his son to resume his studies, he gives vent to his emotions in a long and fine monologue ("I have attained supreme power"). At the end of this aria he reveals that he has been disturbed by a vision of a bloody child begging for mercy. A commotion breaks out in his children's quarters. Boris sends Fyodor to ascertain the nature of the disturbance. The boyar-in-attendance brings word of the arrival of Prince Shuisky, and reports a denunciation against him for his intrigues. Fyodor returns to relate the whimsical tale ("Our little parrot was sitting") of his pet parrot's escape. Boris advises Fyodor to beware of evil and cunning advisors such as Shuisky when he becomes Tsar. Shuisky enters just at that moment, bearing grave tidings. A Pretender has appeared in Lithuania. Boris angrily demands to know his identity. Shuisky fears the Pretender might attract a following bearing the name of Dimitri. Shaken by this revelation, Boris dismisses Fyodor. Clearly on the edge of madness, he asks Shuisky whether he has ever heard of dead children rising from their graves to interrogate Tsars. Boris wants Shuisky's assurance that the dead child he had seen in Uglich was really Dimitri. Shuisky confirms this in a brief and beautiful aria ("In Uglich, in the cathedral"). But he gives hints that a miracle has occurred. Boris begins choking in a paroxysm of guilt and remorse, and gives a sign for Shuisky to depart. A clock begins chiming. Boris hallucinates (Hallucination or 'Clock' Scene). The spectre of the dead Dimitri reaches out to him. Addressing the apparition, he

denies his responsibility for the crime: "Begone, begone child! Not I... the will of the people!" He collapses, praying that God will have mercy on his guilty soul.

6. Marina's Boudoir in Sandomir, Poland (1604).

Maidens sing a delicate, sentimental song ("On the blue Vistula") to entertain Marina as her chambermaid dresses her hair. Marina declares her preference for heroic songs of chivalry. She dismisses everyone. Alone, she sings of her boredom ("How tediously and sluggishly"), of Dimitri, and of her thirst for adventure, power, and glory. The Jesuit Rangoni enters and attempts to obtain Marina's promise that when she becomes Tsaritsa she will convert the heretics of Moscow (Russian Orthodox Church) to the true faith (Roman Catholicism). When Marina wonders why this should be her burden, Rangoni angrily declares that she shall stop short of nothing, including sacrificing her honor, to obey the dictates of the church. Marina expresses contempt of his hypocritical insinuations and demands he leave. As Rangoni ominously tells her she is in the thrall of infernal forces, Marina collapses in dread. Rangoni demands her obedience.

7. Mniszech's Castle in Sandomir. A Garden. A Fountain. A Moonlit Night (1604).

Shimmering strings and harp accompany a pensive version of the 'Dimitri Motif'. The Pretender dreams of an assignation with Marina in the garden of her father's castle. However, to his annoyance, Rangoni finds him. However, he brings news from Marina. She begs to speak with him. The Pretender resolves to throw himself at Marina's feet, begging her to be his wife and Tsaritsa. He entreats Rangoni to lead him to Marina. Rangoni, however, first wants the Pretender to consider him a father, allowing him to follow his every step and thought. The Pretender agrees not to part from him if he will only allow him to see Marina. Rangoni convinces the Pretender to hide as the Polish nobles issue from the castle dancing a polonaise. Marina flirts, dancing with an older man. The Poles sing of taking the Muscovite throne, defeating the army of Boris, and capturing him. They return to the castle. The Pretender comes out of hiding. Marina appears and calls to him. He is lovesick. She, however, only wants to know when he will be Tsar, and declares she can only be seduced by a throne and a crown. The Pretender kneels at her feet. She tells him to be off, and calls him a lackey. Having reached his limit, he tells her he will depart the next day to lead his army to Moscow and to his father's throne. Furthermore, as Tsar, he will take pleasure in watching her come crawling back looking for her own lost throne, and will command everyone to laugh at her. She quickly changes her tune, and as they sing a duet ("O Tsarevich, I implore you"), she tells him she loves him. Rangoni slithers out of hiding to savor his accomplishment.

8. The Square before St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow (1605).

A crowd mills about before the Cathedral of the Intercession (Vasiliiy the Blessed) in Red Square. Many are beggars, and policemen occasionally appear. A group of men enters, discussing the anathema the deacon had declared on Grishka (Grigoryy) Otrepyev in the mass. They identify Grishka as being the Tsarevich. With growing excitement they sing of the advance of his forces to Kromi, of his intent to retake his father's throne, and of the death he will mete out to the Godunovs. A yuródiviy enters, pursued by urchins. He sings a nonsensical song ("The moon is flying, the kitten is crying"). The boys (urchins) greet him

and rap on his metal hat. The yuródiviĭy has a kopek, which the urchins promptly steal. He whines pathetically. The Tsar's retinue issues from the Cathedral. The boyars distribute alms. In a powerful chorus ("Benefactor father (Give us bread)"), the hungry people beg for bread. As the chorus subsides, the yuródiviĭy's cries are heard. Boris asks why he cries. The yuródiviĭy reports the theft of his kopek and asks Boris to order the boys' slaughter, just as he did in the case of the Tsarevich. Shuisky wants the yuródiviĭy seized, but Boris instead asks for the holy man's prayers. As Boris exits, the yuródiviĭy declares he cannot pray for Tsar Herod. The yuródiviĭy then sings his lament ("Flow, flow, bitter tears!") about the fate of Russia.

9. The Faceted Palace in the Moscow Kremlin (1605).

A session of the Duma is in progress. [The assembled boyars listen as Shchelkalov informs them of the Pretender's advance and requests they decide his fate.] After some arguments, the boyars agree ("Well, let's put it to a vote, boyars"), in a powerful chorus, that the Pretender and his sympathizers should be executed. Shuisky, whom they distrust, arrives with an interesting story. Upon leaving the Tsar's presence, he observed Boris attempting to drive away the ghost of the dead Tsarevich, exclaiming: "Begone, begone child!" The boyars accuse Shuisky of spreading lies. However, just at that moment, Boris enters, echoing Shuisky: "Begone child!" The boyars are horrified. After Boris comes to his senses, Shuisky informs him that a humble old man craves an audience. Pimen enters and tells the story ("One day, at the evening hour") of a blind man who heard the voice of the Tsarevich in a dream. Dmitry instructed him to go to Uglich and pray at his grave, for he has become a miracle worker in heaven. The man did as instructed and regained his sight. This story is the final blow for Boris. He calls for his son, declares he is dying ("Farewell, my son, I am dying"), and gives him final counsel. In a very dramatic and moving scene ("*The bell! The funeral bell!*"), he dies.

10. A Forest Glade near Kromĭ (1605).

Tempestuous music accompanies the entry of a crowd of vagabonds who have captured the boyar Khrushchev. The crowd taunts him, then bows in mock homage ("Not a falcon flying in the heavens"). The yuródiviĭy enters, pursued by urchins. He sings a nonsensical song ("The moon is flying, the kitten is crying"). The urchins greet him and rap on his metal hat. The yuródiviĭy has a kopek, which the urchins promptly steal. He whines pathetically. Varlaam and Missail are heard in the distance singing of the crimes of Boris and his henchmen ("The sun and moon have gone dark"). They enter. The crowd gets worked up to a frenzy ("Broken free, gone on a rampage") denouncing Boris. Two Jesuits are heard in the distance chanting in Latin ("Domine, Domine, salvum fac"), praying that God will save Dmitriy. They enter. At the instigation of Varlaam and Missail, the vagabonds prepare to hang the Jesuits, who appeal to the Holy Virgin for aid. Processional music heralds the arrival of Dmitriy and his forces. Varlaam and Missail evidently do not recognize him as the companion they chased into Lithuania, and glorify him ("Glory to thee, Tsarevich!") along with the crowd. The Pretender calls those persecuted by Godunov to his side. He frees Khrushchev, and calls on all to march on Moscow. All exeunt except the Yuródiviĭy, who sings a plaintive song ("Flow, flow, bitter tears!") of the arrival of the enemy, of darkness coming, and of woe to Russia.

Scenes in Pictures

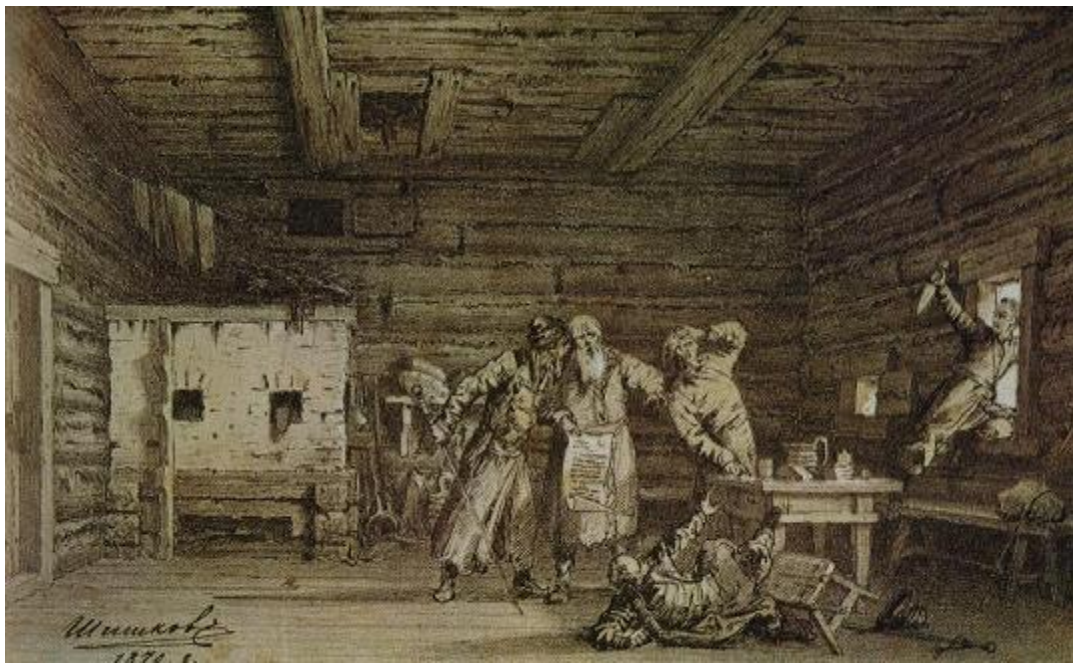
These were drawings designed for the Opera setting in the 1870's



Shishkov's design for the Novodevichiy Monastery Scene (1870)



Bocharov's design for Cathedral Square scene



Shishkov's design for the Inn Scene (1870)



Shishkov's design for the scene in Marina's boudoir



Shishkov's design for the Scene in the Garden of Mniszech's Castle (1870)



Shishkov's design for the Faceted Palace Scene (1870)



Modest Mussorgsky 1839-1881

Modest Petrovich Mussorgsky, one of the Russian composers known as the Five, was an innovator of Russian music. He strove to achieve a uniquely Russian musical identity, often in deliberate defiance of the established conventions of Western music.

Like his literary contemporary Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Mussorgsky depicts in his music "the insulted and the injured" with all their passion and pain. He raises these characters to tragic heights until the grotesque and majestic coexist. Mussorgsky could accomplish this not simply out of compassion or guilt towards them, but because in his works he almost becomes them. Mussorgsky's music is vivid, confused, feverish and ultimately hypnotizing.

Many of his major works were inspired by Russian history, Russian folklore, and other nationalist themes, including the opera *Boris Godunov*, the orchestral tone poem *Night on Bald Mountain*, and the piano suite *Pictures at an Exhibition*. However, while Mussorgsky's music can be vivid and nationalistic, it does not glorify the powerful and is at times antimilitaristic. For this reason, it was perceived as being directed against the state and its composer "under suspicion." He, like the others in The Russian Five, were considered dangerous extremists by the emperor and his court. This may have been the reason Tsar Alexander III personally crossed off *Boris Godounov* from the list of proposed pieces for the imperial opera in 1888.

Mussorgsky was born in Kraevo, in north Russia, March 21, the son of a landowner. He studied piano as a child but often rebelled against his teachers. At 9 years old, he brilliantly performed a piano concerto by composer John Field.

Originally aiming for the army, aged 10, he entered the military academy at St Petersburg, and joined as cadet officer at the Guards Regiment, however, continued to study music and composition.



When he was 18, he began music lessons from Mily Balakirev, a fellow member of 'The Five' (or 'The Mighty Handful'), a 19th-century's group of nationalist Russian composers including Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov and Cui. They were inspired by Mikhail Glinka, the father of the Russian nationalist tradition in music. Together, 'The Five' created the 'nationalist' school of Russian music.

Mussorgsky resigned from the army commission in 1858. Few years later, aged 25, the Russian liberation of the serfs impoverished Mussorgsky's family. Losing their fortune, he was forced to take a job back in the civil service. Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov offered to share a room with him.

A habit that eventually killed Mussorgsky was his heavy drinking. At 26, he had his first attack of delirium tremens.

He toured Russia playing piano for singer Darya Leonova. In 1880 he resigned from the civil service. A year later, he suffered fits from alcohol abuse and was committed to a military hospital in St. Petersburg where his portrait was painted by Ilya Repin (see below.) His operas were not well received, his drinking increased.



Mussorgsky died on March 28 1881. Although he enjoyed some recognition and fame as composer of opera Boris Godunov and as a pianist, most of his work was posthumously published, either revised or completed by Rimsky-Korsakov.

His most famous work is 'Pictures at an Exhibition' which was inspired by a posthumous exhibition of painting by Mussorgsky's friend Victor Harmann. Each piece is a masterpiece of descriptive music. Originally written for the piano, the work is best known in Ravel's brilliant orchestral version.

The genius of Modest Mussorgsky was recognized by later composers of the early part of the 20th century including Debussy, Ravel and Stravinsky.



Courtesy: http://classical-composers.suite101.com/article.cfm/modest_mussorgsky

Modest Mussorgsky's major works:

Orchestral, 'St John's Night on the Bare Mountain' (later revised by Rimsky-Korsakov and Mussorgsky) 1867

Song, 'Gathering Mushrooms' 1867

Song cycle, 'The Nursery' 1870

Opera, Boris Godunov 1874 (later revised by Rimsky-Korsakov)

Orchestral, 'Pictures at an Exhibition', for piano (orchestrated later by Ravel) 1874

Song cycle, Songs and Dances of Death 1875

'The song of the Flea' 1879

Opera, Khovanshchina (completed by Rimsky-Korsakov) 1880

Opera, Sorochintsky Fair (completed by Anatol Lyadov) 1880



Statue of Mussorgsky near his native village

From Page to Stage

By the close of 1868, Mussorgsky had already started and abandoned two important opera projects. In the autumn of 1868, Vladimir Nikolsky, a professor of Russian literature and an authority on Pushkin, suggested to Mussorgsky the idea of composing an opera on the subject of Pushkin's drama Boris Godunov. Boris had finally been approved for performance by the state censors in 1866.



Aleksandr Pushkin
(1799–1837)

Mussorgsky began work in October 1868 preparing his own libretto. Pushkin's drama consists of 24 scenes, written predominantly in blank verse. Mussorgsky adapted the most theatrically effective scenes, often preserving Pushkin's verses, and augmented these with his own lyrics. He was assisted by a study of History of the Russian State by Karamzin, to whom Pushkin's drama is dedicated.

Mussorgsky worked rapidly, composing first the vocal score, and then the full score in about 14 months, at the same time working as a civil servant. The Original Version was completed by December 15, 1869. The score was submitted to a committee of the Imperial Theaters in 1870, but was rejected for performance, ostensibly for its lack of conventional prima donna and first tenor roles, but also, it is believed, for its novelty.

"...Mussorgsky submitted his completed Boris Godunov to the Board of Directors of the Imperial Theatres ... The freshness and originality of the music nonplussed the honorable members of the committee, who reproved the composer, among other things, for the absence of a reasonably important female role."

—Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov, *Chronicle of My Musical Life*, 1909

Mussorgsky began recasting and expanding Boris in 1871, adding three scenes, cutting one, and recomposing another. The modifications resulted in the addition of an important female role (Marina Mniszech), the expansion of existing female, and the expansion of the role of the Pretender. The Revised Version was finished June 23, 1872, and submitted to the Imperial Theaters in the autumn.

Mussorgsky's friends took matters into their own hands, arranging the performance of three scenes (the Inn and both Sandomir scenes) at the Mariinsky Theater on February 5, 1873. The response of the public and critics was enthusiastic:

"The success was enormous and complete; never, within my memory, had such ovations been given to a composer at the Mariinsky."

—César Cui, *Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti*, 1873

This triumph paved the way for the first complete performance of the opera, which took place on January 27, 1874. The Mariinsky Theatre was sold out, and the performance was a great success with the public. Students sang choruses from the opera in the street. This time, however, the critical reaction was exceedingly hostile.

"I consign [Boris Godunov] from the bottom of my heart to the devil – it is the most insipid and base parody of music... Mussorgsky is a narrow-minded individual devoid of any desire to educate himself, blindly putting his faith in the preposterous theories of his circle and in his own genius... his is a low nature, rough, crude and coarse... [he] flaunts his illiteracy and is proud of his ignorance."

—Pyotr Tchaikovsky

Reviews of the premiere performance of Boris Godunov were for the most part hostile. Some critics dismissed the work as "noisy", "chaotic", and "a cacophony". Unable to overlook Mussorgsky's "trespasses against the conventional musical grammar of the time" (Calvocoressi), they failed to recognize the giant step forward in musical and dramatic expression that Boris Godunov represented.

Of the critics who evaluated the new opera, only one fully recognized Mussorgsky's particular genius and skill:

"Dramatization in music could go no farther. Mussorgsky has proved himself to be a philosopher-musician, capable of expressing with rare truth the mind and soul of his characters. He also has a thorough understanding of musical resources. He is a master of the orchestra; his working-out is fluent, his vocal and chorus parts are beautifully written."

—'Foma Pizzicato', pen-name of the critic Baskin, *Peterburgsky Listok*, 1874

Although Boris Godunov is usually praised for its originality, for the dramatic power of its choruses, for its sharply delineated characters, and for the powerful psychological portrayal of Tsar Boris, it has received an inordinate amount of criticism for technical shortcomings: weak or faulty harmony, counterpoint, part-writing, and orchestration. The perception that Boris needed correction due to Mussorgsky's poverty of technique prompted his friend Rimsky-Korsakov to revise it after his death. His edition supplanted the composer's Revised Version of 1872 in Russia, and launched the work in the world's opera houses, remaining the preferred edition for some 75 years. Recently, however, a new appreciation for the rugged individuality of Mussorgsky's style has resulted in increasing performances and recording of his original versions.

Boris Godunov in San Francisco

This opera was first produced by San Francisco Opera on October 12, 1945

Why you already know Mussorgsky...



At the Movies: **Night on Bald Mountain**—an orchestral piece by Mussorgsky. This segment of Disney's *Fantasia* (1940) shows the demon Chernabog (above left) who has a power and intensity rarely seen in Disney films. The nocturnal Chernabog summons from their graves empowered restless souls, until driven away by the sound of a church bell. Noted actor Bela Lugosi (above right) served as a live action model for Chernabog, and spent several days at the Disney studio, where he was filmed doing evil, demon-like poses for animators to use as a reference.

Suggested Listening: **Pictures at an Exhibition**—an orchestral piece by Mussorgsky.

The ten pictures Mussorgsky depicts are: a gnome-shaped nutcracker; a troubadour plaintively singing outside an ancient castle; children vigorously playing and quarrelling in a park; a lumbering wooden Polish ox-cart; a ballet of peeping chicks as they hatch from their shells; an argument between two Warsaw Jews, one haughty and vain, the other poor and garrulous; shrill women and vendors in a crowded marketplace; the eerie, echoing gloom of catacombs beneath Paris; the hut of a grotesque bone-chomping witch of Russian folk-lore; and a design for an entrance gate to Kiev. Mussorgsky clearly chose these subjects for the variety of moods they invoked and the opportunities they presented for a wide array of musical depictions.

Cartoon inspiration: **Boris Badenov** is a fictional character in the 1960s animated cartoons *Rocky and His Friends* and *The Bullwinkle Show*, collectively referred to as *Rocky and Bullwinkle* for short. He is voiced by Paul Frees.



Curricular Connections



Chaliapin F. (Шаляпин Ф. И.) 1916 as Boris Godunov

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:

Director of Education,
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:

Boris
Shuisky
Marina
Xenia
Dimitri
Pimen

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/apartment/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. Do you think Boris Godunov murdered Dimitri? What about his character makes you think he did nor did not commit this crime? Plan a mock trial in your classroom to decide!
2. We see many examples of dreams and visions in this story. Who is haunted by dreams? Who is haunted by visions? What actions do they inspire?
3. Mussorgsky was often criticized for being anti-Nationalist. Why do you think the heads of state might have had a problem with the story of *Boris Godunov*?
4. Can you think of any other stories in which a character's guilt takes the form of strange visions or ghostly visitations? Do they usually bring about change?
5. Can you name any other plays or stories in which characters have become leaders by killing off the people that stand in their way? Are they successful in the end?
6. Mussorgsky's music in *Boris Godunov* is different from popular music from the 1870's. He used instrumentation and folk music from traditional Russia. Why do you think this might be successful in this piece. How might it challenge the audiences of the 1870's?
7. The "Five" were popular Russian composers of the late 19th century. How did they revolutionize music in Russia? Research the culture and see what you can find!
8. Wagner (Austria/Germany) and Verdi (Italy) were very popular and controversial composers who lived around the same time as Mussorgsky. They definitely influenced and expressed their European cultures. How does Mussorgsky fit in to his culture?
9. Go back to Pushkin's source material—a comedy—how did Mussorgsky change it when he wrote the libretto for his opera?
10. What is Mussorgsky's point of view of the incidents that he relates? Do the themes of the music tell us something about the sort of character he creates? How about the words and deeds of each character?
11. Which character do you most identify with? Why?
12. Think of other historical dramas. Can you find any connections between *Boris Godunov* and *Macbeth*? *Hamlet*? *Richard III*?

Beyond the story...

Summary of Activity

Follow up from *Boris Godunov* 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 *Boris Godunov*.

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 2: What could have been done differently?
 - Ask them:
 - What was the point of no return that led to the ending?
 - What different choices could have been made at that time?
 - How would the story have ended differently?
 - How many people would that have affected?
- Option 1: Ask what happens *after* the very end of the story? How would they continue the story?
 - 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!

Boris Godunov began life as a play based on history. 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 or 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!

Boris Godunov takes place in Russia and Poland in the 16th century. The story is tied in to the *setting*. However, the story can be adapted to fit the circumstances of other cultures and time periods. 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?

A Short Introduction to 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:

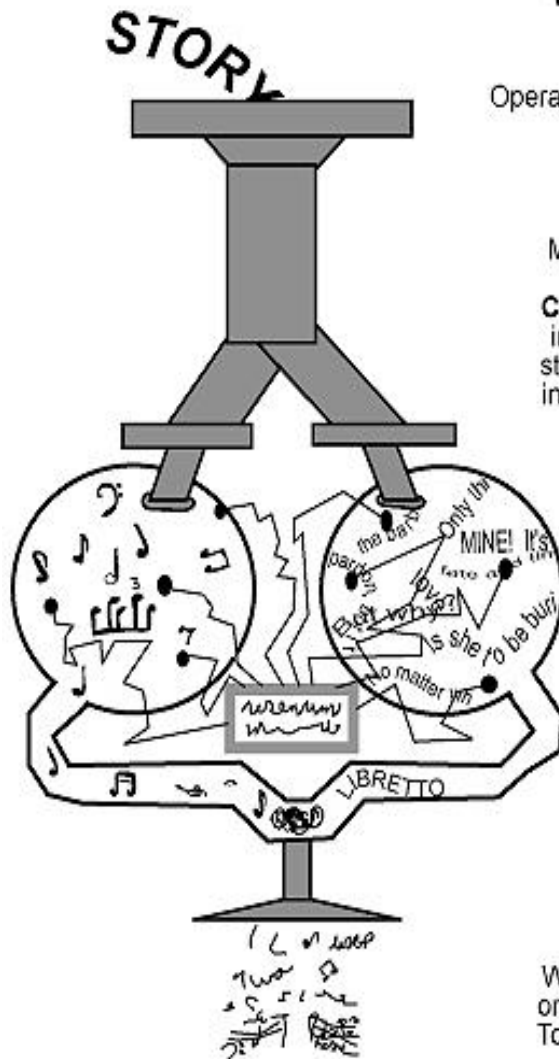
1. The text must be understood; the accompaniment must be very simple and should not distract from the words.
2. The words must be sung with correct and natural declamation, as if they were spoken and not rhyme like songs.
3. The melody must interpret the feeling of the text.

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.

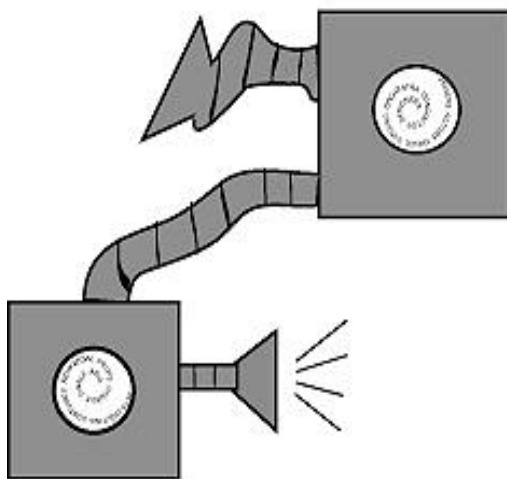
The composer and the librettist work together. They help each other so that the music will fit the words, and the words will fit the music.

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.

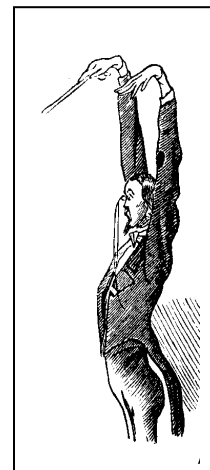


Careers in Opera

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.

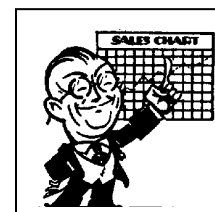
San Francisco Opera is run by the **General Director**. The General Director has the final word on the Company's policies and decisions from artistic to business planning. A General Director needs to travel to other companies in order to stay informed as to what is happening within the opera industry. 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.



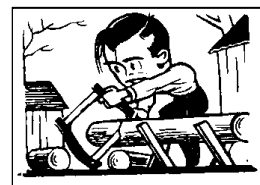
The educational pages on the website are developed and maintained in collaboration with the **Education Director**. This person is responsible for ensuring that opera is part of the arts education in schools, community centers and other venues where people gather to learn. The Education Director creates 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!

Production 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 *Boris Godunov*? 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 *Boris Godunov*. 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 *Boris Godunov*, what would it look like? Who would it reach? Who would be the “audience”?

Marketing

Create an advertisement for *Boris Godunov*. 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 dynamics. 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.

Bruton, Sheila, (Ed.), et al., (1996), Visual and performing Arts Framework for California Public Schools: Kindergarten through Grade Twelve. California Department of Education, Sacramento, CA



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.

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Cover art: Boris Godunov—A wine label collage by Valentino Monticello

**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***