

The Flying Dutchman
Student Dress Rehearsal
Classroom Kit
Performance Date: April 30, 2008
7:30 pm, DeVos Performance Hall

Thank you for joining us for our Dress Rehearsal of The Flying Dutchman, Enclosed are a variety of materials to help prepare your students for the opera.

An Act-by-Act preview of the story and the music is available as an MP3/Podcast download at www.operagr.com. This preview, narrated by the Conductor is a wonderful way to prepare students for the show.

ENCLOSED MATERIALS:

Theater Rules
Cast
Scenes
Synopsis
Dutch legend jumpstarts Wagner's career
About the Composer – Richard Wagner and his other operas
The Legend of The Flying Dutchman
Lesson Ideas
After Opera reaction sheet
Opera Tidbits
Opera Vocabulary
Opera Grand Rapids' History

General Rules for Students

It is not necessary for students to “dress up” to attend the rehearsal. The Rehearsal is LIVE, and the audience affects what happens on stage, in the orchestra, and behind the scenes. YOU are a part of the rehearsal process, please help us out with your full concentration and we will have a fabulous rehearsal!

Theater Etiquette

In order for everyone in the audience to fully enjoy the performance, it is necessary to have some basic rules. Following are some basic reminders to share with your students, so that everyone can enjoy the show.

- Do not bring outside food, drinks or gum into the theater.
- Cameras, phones and video devices are not allowed during the performance!
- Please, arrive early so you can be seated by the 7:30 pm start time. A late arrival means your class may miss the beginning during the “black out.”
- Take your seats promptly upon arrival and at the end of the intermission.
- Talking is for before and after the performance, and for intermission only. Silence in the house is necessary for the singers, orchestra and the rest of the audience to enjoy the show.
- There is no box office the night of the rehearsal, so only those with tickets in hand will be allowed into the theater. Please sit in the seats assigned to you.

The Flying Dutchman
Student Dress Rehearsal
Classroom Kit
Performance Date: April 30, 2008
7:30 pm, DeVos Performance Hall

Opera Grand Rapids Presents

The Flying Dutchman

Student Dress Rehearsal

7:30 p.m. April 30, 2008

DeVos Performance Hall, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Music by Richard Wagner

Libretto by Richard Wagner, based on Heinrich Heine's "The Memoirs of Mr. Schnabelewopski."

Premiere: Dresden, January, 1843.

Conductor and Director

Robert Lyall

Scenic Designer

John AC Despres

Lighting and Projection Designer

Don Darnutzer

Chorus Master

Duane Davis

Wig Designer

Jim McGough

Rehearsal Accompanist

Phil Pletcher

Stage Manager

Tom Mehan

We kindly request that no cameras or other recording devices be used during tonight's performance. Any form of video or audio recording of this performance is strictly prohibited.

The Flying Dutchman

Cast of Characters

(in order of vocal appearance)

Daland, Captain of a Norwegian vessel.....Philip Cokorinos
The Steersman, Mate of Daland’s vessel.....Matthew Surapine
The Dutchman.....Richard Paul Fink
Mary, Senta’s nurse.....Gwenneth Bean
Senta, Daland’s daughter.....Lise Lindstrom
Erik, a Huntsman.....Roy Cornelius Smith

The Opera Grand Rapids Chorus as Norwegian Maidens, the crew of Daland’s vessel, and the crew of the “Flying Dutchman.”

The Scenes

Setting: The coast of Norway in the 18th Century

ACT I.....The rocky coast of Norway
20 minute intermission
ACT II.....A room in Daland’s home
Brief scene change, please remain seated.
ACT III.....The bay near Daland’s home

The Flying Dutchman
Student Dress Rehearsal
Classroom Kit

Performance Date: April 30, 2008
7:30 pm, DeVos Performance Hall

The Flying Dutchman

Synopsis

Act 1: A Norwegian Harbor

A Norwegian merchant ship is driven off-course by a tempestuous storm. Safe in sheltered, but unknown waters, the sailors lament their misfortune. Daland, their captain, recognizes the familiar shore. They are only a few miles from home. He instructs his Steersman to keep watch while he and his crew rest. The exhausted Steersman sings a song about his girlfriend, then falls asleep. He is unaware that the red-sailed ship of the Flying Dutchman has dropped anchor nearby.

The mysterious Dutchman emerges and grieves his curse. While rounding a treacherous cape, he swore a blasphemous oath against God and is now cursed to sail forever. The desperate Dutchman is unable to die and can touch land for one day every seven years. To remove his curse, he must find a love that is faithful unto death.

Daland greets the Dutchman, who offers the captain abundant treasure in exchange for a night's shelter. Learning that Daland has a daughter, the Dutchman offers his entire fortune in exchange for her hand in marriage. Delighted by the Dutchman's offer, Daland invites the stranger to follow him to his home port.

Act II: A Room in Daland's House

Inside Daland's home, his daughter Senta and the village girls, led by Mary, are spinning thread to make gifts for their sweethearts at sea. Senta is lost in daydreams, transfixed by the painting of the Flying Dutchman. She sings a ballad to the girls, recounting the legend of the Dutchman's curse. Enraptured by the story herself, she vows to free the Dutchman from his torment.

Erik, her huntsman suitor, enters the house and sees Senta entranced by the portrait of The Dutchman. He rushes to her side and tells everyone that the sailors are nearing port. The women depart to greet their men, and Erik and Senta are left alone. Deeply concerned by her behavior, Erik pleads with her to come to her senses. He then tells her about a disturbing dream in which he foresees her death. The Dutchman enters with her father. Upon hearing her father's plan to have them married, she agrees at once. Left alone, Senta ecstatically pledges her love to the Dutchman.

Act III: The Bay Near Daland's House

Celebrating the return from their voyage, the Norwegian sailors carouse at the harborside. They invite the Dutchman's crew to join their revelry, but their entreaties go unanswered. The women of the village arrive to join the men in celebration; however, they are put off by the silence of the Dutchman's crew. Sensing something is amiss, they depart in fear, leaving the men to celebrate alone. Finally, the Dutchman's crewmen give their ghastly reply, and the terrified Norwegians run away from the harbor.

Erik waits by the harbor for Senta to arrive. He pleads with her to give up her infatuation with the Dutchman and reminds her she was pledged to him. The Dutchman interrupts them and mistakenly believes that Senta has broken her vow to be true unto death. Her love cannot redeem him, unless she is true unto death. The Dutchman calls for his ship to sail despite Senta's pleading and announces to all his identity. Determined to honor her pledge of faithfulness, Senta throws herself into the sea. Freed from his fateful bond, the Dutchman's ship sinks, and the lovers' souls are transfigured by death's release.

Richard Wagner 1850-1880

Developments in Opera

A towering visionary and cult figure-reviled by some, worshipped by others - Wagner revolutionizes Western art. His lengthy operas combine mythology, psychosexual undertones, spirituality, and overwhelmingly emotional music. He composes music that grows organically and doesn't distinguish between arias, duets, and ensembles.

The Masterworks

Tristan and Isolde: The tale of frustrated lovers who achieve the ultimate union by dying for love. Arguably the most important opera ever written, Wagner's masterpiece paved the way for modern art.

Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg (The Master Singers of Nuremberg): In the process of recounting a love story, Wagner's only comedy manages to illustrate art's need for new ideas and respect for older values. Its shoemaker Hans Sachs is one of opera's wisest and best-loved characters.

The Ring of the Nibelung: The Ring is a mythic, four-opera saga about a world of gods, dwarves, giants, dragons, and everyday humans all fighting for possession of a magic golden ring. Its operas (Das Rheingold, Die Walküre, Siegfried, and Götterdämmerung) can total over 16 hours in length.

Richard Wagner - The Early Years



Wagner was born in Leipzig on 22 May 1813. "Wagner's official father was the police actuary Carl Friedrich Wagner, but the boy's adoptive father, the actor-painter Ludwig Geyer, who took responsibility for the child on Carl Friedrich's death in November 1813, may possibly have been the real father" ([Sadie 1992, IV:1054](#)). The terror of war and invasion by foreign troops accompanied Wagner's first year, until "at last on 16 August, the child's christening, delayed by events of the war, was able to take place in the Thomaskirche, where he received the names Wilhelm Richard" ([Westernhagen 1981, 6](#)).

He was an intelligent child who had an early interest in the theatre. Thanks to his stepfather Geyer, Wagner got to know Carl Maria von Weber. Wagner saw von Weber conduct *Der Freischütz*, which had a lasting impression on him. "What attracted him to the theatre was, by Wagner's own account, not so much the search for entertainment as the pleasurable excitement of a purely imaginary world" ([Westernhagen 1981, 19](#)).

Early on Wagner wanted to be a composer and "On 23 February 1831 he matriculated at the university in Leipzig as a music student" ([Westernhagen 1981, 27](#)). His first important music teacher was Christian Theodor Weinlig, the cantor at Thomaskirche (J.S. Bach's old job). Wagner studied counterpoint with Weinlig and much attention was paid to the form of the works of Mozart.

Wagner was impressed with von Weber, but Beethoven, Wagner was always to admit, formed the most inspiring influence in his youth. Reflecting back on rehearsals for a performance of Beethoven's Ninth

The Flying Dutchman
Student Dress Rehearsal
Classroom Kit

Performance Date: April 30, 2008
7:30 pm, DeVos Performance Hall

Symphony, Wagner said, "If I look back on my life as a whole, I can find no event that produced so profound an impression on me".

Wagner's first professional appointment, secured by his bother Albert, was as chorus master at the theatre in Wurzburg. There he encountered repertory works by Marschner, Weber, Cherubini, Rossini and Auber, of which composers the first two influenced him most strongly in his music setting of *Die Feen* (1833-4), a working by Wagner himself (he was to write his own librettos) of Gozzi's *La donna serpente* ([Sadie 1992, IV:1054](#)).

With his first three operas, *Die Feen*, *Das Liebesverbot* and *Rienzi* Wagner experimented with different styles before he formed his mature operatic style of composition.

His first effort occurred in 1833-34, when he composed *Die Feen*. Even a casual examination of this opera reveals how closely Wagner tried to correlate his style to the German world of Mozart, Beethoven and Weber. . . . In composing *Das Liebesverbot*, Wagner modeled the opera after the Italian bel canto school of Bellini and Rossini. . . . Wagner's third attempt to carve a niche in the firmament and to find a meaning for his life, as well as economic survival, came with *Rienzi*

which he began in 1838, at the age of twenty-five. Wagner now tried the third opera idiom of his day -- French grand opera. . . . *Rienzi* achieved some success, but Wagner recoiled when a critic pointed out the not so subtle musical influence of Meyerbeer. ([Aberbach 1988, 1-2](#))

It was at the time of the composition of *Rienzi* and his appointment as musical director at the Konigsberg theatre in 1837, that Wagner had some difficulties in his personal life.

He returned home from rehearsals one evening to make the dreadful discovery that Minna [his wife] had run off with a rich merchant . . . 'Death in his heart', he hurried after her . . . 'With that I knew enough to ask my fate why, when I was still so young, was I doomed to undergo so frightful an experience, one, it seemed, that would poison the whole of my life.' ([Westernhagen 1981, 6](#))

Operas of Wagner

The chronology of Wagner's works is a problem because he began work on a project then took up another. The libretto for the Ring operas was begun in 1848 and the project ended in 1874.

1. *Die Feen* 1833-34 (1888)
2. *Das Liebesverbot* 1836
3. *Rienzi* 1842
4. *The Flying Dutchman* 1843
5. *Tannhauser* 1845
6. *Lohengrin* 1845-48 (1850)
7. *Tristan und Isolde* 1857-59
8. *Die Meistersinger* 1865 (1868) *DER RING DES NIBELUNGEN* 1848-74
9. *Das Rheingold*
10. *Die Walkure*
11. *Siegfried*
12. *Gotterdammerung*
13. *Parsifal*

The Flying Dutchman
Student Dress Rehearsal
Classroom Kit

Performance Date: April 30, 2008
7:30 pm, DeVos Performance Hall

The legend of The Flying Dutchman



The Legend of the Flying Dutchman is said to have started in 1641 when a Dutch ship sank off the coast of the Cape of Good Hope:

Captain van der Decken was pleased. The trip to the Far East had been highly successful and at last, they were on their way home to Holland. As the ship approached the tip of Africa, the captain thought that he should make a suggestion to the Dutch East India Company (his employers) to start a settlement at the Cape on the tip of Africa, thereby providing a welcome respite to ships at

sea.

He was so deep in thought that he failed to notice the dark clouds looming and only when he heard the lookout scream out in terror, did he realise that they had sailed straight into a fierce storm. The captain and his crew battled for hours to get out of the storm and at one stage it looked like they would make it. Then they heard a sickening crunch - the ship had hit treacherous rocks and began to sink. As the ship plunged downwards, Captain VandeDecken knew that death was approaching. He was not ready to die and screamed out a curse: "I WILL round this Cape even if I have to keep sailing until doomsday!"

So, even today whenever a storm brews off the Cape of Good Hope, if you look into the eye of the storm, you will be able to see the ship and its captain - The Flying Dutchman. Don't look too carefully, for the old folk claim that whoever sights the ship will die a terrible death.

Many people have claimed to have seen The Flying Dutchman, including the crew of a German submarine boat during World War II and holidaymakers.

On 11 July 1881, the Royal Navy ship, the *Bacchante* was rounding the tip of Africa, when they were confronted with the sight of The Flying Dutchman. The midshipman, a prince who later became King George V, recorded that the lookout man and the officer of the watch had seen the Flying Dutchman and he used these words to describe the ship: "A strange red light as of a phantom ship all aglow, in the midst of which light the mast, spars and sails of a brig 200 yards distant stood out in strong relief."

It's pity that the lookout saw the Flying Dutchman, for soon after on the same trip, he accidentally fell from a mast and died. Fortunately for the English royal family, the young midshipman survived the curse.

The Flying Dutchman Lesson Ideas

In order to get your students thinking about opera, consider the following activities as preparation for their viewing of *The Flying Dutchman*.

1. Create a Personal Synopsis. Use the enclosed synopsis or the MP3/Podcasts on our website to share the story of the show with your class. Then have the students write a summary of the story in their own words.
2. Create a Flipbook that illustrates the story the students created in their Personal Synopsis.
3. Create a Day in the Life of a specific character. Have your students imagine what an average day of one of the opera's characters would be like. Boring? Exciting? Confusing? Do they get tired of singing everything they want to say? Get creative and don't be afraid to have fun!
4. Lead a discussion about the advantages of opera. What does the music do to convey the intense emotions of this story?
5. Discuss and read the original myth of "The Flying Dutchman" that the opera is based on. What roles do myths play in a culture. Does the myth of "The Flying Dutchman" have a moral message? What is it? Have students discuss modern myths or urban myths. Have students write their own myth.

After the Opera:

1. Fill out attached Reaction Sheet to help students articulate their thoughts and opinions about the opera. This can also be used as pre-writing for a longer Response Paper on the topic.
2. Lead a discussion about any of the topics on the Reaction Sheet.

After-Opera Reaction Sheet

1. What was the theater like? Was it different than what you were expecting?
2. Was the music the same or different than you were expecting? How so?
3. Which was your favorite character? Why?
4. What was your favorite part of the opera? Why?
5. Were there any events or situations in the opera that you related to? Describe.
6. How did the different elements of the opera (characters, music, scenery) work together as a whole? Did you like it? Why or why not?
7. What was the most important thing you learned from seeing this opera?

Opera Tidbits

Vocalists in opera are categorized by their range

Highest:

Male = Counter tenor Female = Coloratura soprano

High:

Male = Tenor Female = Soprano

Mid:

Male = Baritone, Bass baritone Female = Mezzo soprano

Low:

Male = Bass (Basso profundo) Female = Contralto

The Language Barrier

Most operas are sung in the language in which they were composed, such as Italian, German, or French. All of Opera Grand Rapids' productions, even those in English, are presented with titles above the stage.

What makes an opera different from a musical?

The biggest difference is in the musical style. Also, singers in a musical usually have microphones hidden in their wig or costume, while singers who perform in operas do not. To fill a hall, this means opera singers must have the ability to project their voices. The style we refer to as "operatic" or "classical singing" developed in Europe. This style crystallized during the seventeenth century, as operatic music became increasingly complex and demanding. Its particular characteristics are a greatly extended range, especially at the top of the voice, and increased volume and projection. In a musical, the story is told by interweaving songs and music with spoken dialogue. While most operas are sung throughout with little or no spoken dialogue, an operetta, does have some spoken words.

Opera Vocabulary

Act. One of the main divisions of a drama, opera or ballet, usually completing a part of the action and often having a climax of its own.

Aria. [ah-ree-ah] A song sung by one person. In Italian, aria means "air," "style," "manner." The aria had a central place in early opera and throughout operatic history, arias have been used to highlight an emotional state of mind and accentuate the main characters.

Baritone. The most common category of the male voice; lower than a tenor, but higher than a bass. Baritones were more commonly used in during the Romantic opera era.
Bass. The lowest male voice. Many bass roles are associated with characters of authority or comedy.

Finale. The ending segment of an act or scene.

Librettist. The person who writes the text (words) of the opera.

Libretto. [lih-breh-toh] The text of the opera. In Italian, it means "little book."

Lyrics. Words of an opera or of a song.

Mezzo-soprano. The mid-range female voice. Mezzo-sopranos usually play either older women or young boys.

Orchestra. A group of musicians led by the conductor who accompany the singers.

Overture. An orchestral introduction played before the action begins. The overture is often used to set the mood of the opera. Many composers used the overture to introduce themes or arias within the opera and sometimes the overture became more well known than the opera itself.

Recitative. Dialogue which is "sing-speak." The recitative helps get through a lot of text quickly and moves the action along. Often precedes an aria or ensemble.

Soprano. The highest female voice. The soprano is commonly the lead female character.
Tenor. The highest natural male voice. Often the lead male character within the opera.

Sections of the Opera – What You’ll Hear

Overture. Instrumental introduction or prelude to the opera which takes place before the curtain rises. Occasionally, overtures may be staged, but there is no singing involved.

Aria. Song sung by a solo singer. Arias are generally very melodic and used to showcase the singer’s vocal abilities.

Duet. Song sung by two singers.

Trio. Song sung by three singers.

Recitative. Musical passages composed to imitate speech. Recitatives are usually full of dialogue and are used to quickly move the plot along. Many times a recitative will come before an aria.

Chorus. Name for both a large group of singers as well as the songs they sing.

Entr’acte. Instrumental music played between the acts while the curtain is closed.

Opera Grand Rapids; The Early Years

By John Peter Jeffries

As Opera Grand Rapids celebrates its 40th anniversary, let's take a quick look at how the company got started.

In the years following the Second World War, West Michigan was home to several community and civic theater companies that occasionally produced musical comedies and operettas. During this period, the only grand opera in the region was presented by touring companies that passed through infrequently. By the middle 1950s things had begun to change.

Opera in West Michigan started at the St. Cecelia Music Society. During the late 1950s and into the early 1960s, the Society staged a number of small-scale opera productions. Some of these early productions, which were sung to the accompaniment of a solo piano, went on tour to Battle Creek and other area communities. Although they were modestly produced, the operas at St. Cecelia became home to a dedicated group of participants, who wanted to bring grand opera to the region.

By the middle of the 1960s, the group was ready to formalize its efforts. Although the first performance didn't take place until 1967, the company that would eventually become Opera Grand Rapids was actually formed in May of 1966.



At that time, a group called the Opera Association Committee, with Joan White (now Joan Gillett) as temporary chairperson, began to lay the groundwork. Discussions were held with Grand Rapids Civic Theater and the Grand Rapids Symphony, both of which offered their strong support, and with Calvin College, which offered the use of its Fine Arts Center on the Knollcrest Campus.

By July of 1966, the Opera Association of Western Michigan was officially incorporated. Founding officers included John F. Gilmore as president, Joan White as executive vice president, Marnie Houseman as secretary, and R. Edwin Owen as treasurer. Carl Karapetian, musical director of the Grand Rapids Symphony, and Paul Dreher, director of Civic Theater, agreed to serve as artistic directors. They would also serve as conductor and stage director, respectively, for the Association's productions.

In February of 1967, the Opera Association kicked off its first fundraising drive and announced plans for its first production, Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, to be given five performances the following June. On April 20, The Grand Rapids Press reported that the Association had announced ticket prices for the production. The best orchestra seats would sell for \$7.50 for opening night and \$4.00 for other evening performances.

The Flying Dutchman
Student Dress Rehearsal
Classroom Kit

Performance Date: April 30, 2008
7:30 pm, DeVos Performance Hall

An evening musicale with a special introduction to *The Marriage of Figaro* was planned for April 21. However, the event was sparsely attended when tornadoes struck the region. One unnamed board member, who spent the evening in his tuxedo under his kitchen table waiting for the all clear, described the evening as the "dressiest tornado anyone has ever seen."

Undaunted, the Association moved ahead with plans for *The Marriage of Figaro*. Musical rehearsals were held in Maestro Karapetian's home. A cast of talented local artists was assembled. A volunteer stage crew, with considerable help from the staff at Civic Theater, began to assemble the settings, properties and costumes.

As opening night approached, the local press was very supportive. The Grand Rapids Press and The Grand Rapids Times both ran large spreads of photos taken in rehearsal. On May 30, 1967, two days before the opening performance, The Press ran an editorial that proudly announced "Opera Comes to Grand Rapids". The editorial went on to praise the efforts of the Association and to encourage area music lovers to buy up the 5,000 seats available for the five scheduled performances.

On June 2, 1967, the long-awaited day finally arrived. *The Marriage of Figaro* opened at the Calvin College Fine Arts Center Auditorium. The cast, including Richard Sjoerdsma, Julianne Kelly, Edward J. Huls, Catherine Barrow, Thixton Sprenger, Lois Poppen, Judith Coulter and James Drummond, acquitted itself admirably. The five performances were played to enthusiastic audiences and rave reviews.

Under the headline "Local Opera Unqualified Success", Gerald A. Elliot's review in The Grand Rapids Press described the production, musically, as being of "consistently high caliber". Mr. Elliot went on to praise Paul Dreher's staging, which abridged the lengthy recitatives by substituting a clever narration provided by Paul Drummond in the character of Don Basilio. He concluded his review by offering the opinion that, "In the Opera Association of Western Michigan this part of the state has something of outstanding musical merit to preserve and nurture."



A review in The Almanac echoed these sentiments, saying, "Some of West Michigan's best singers were cast in the roles and they sang and acted very well indeed", and that "Special praise should be given to the orchestra that Karapetian put together." The Almanac opined that, "The Opera Association of Western Michigan should be congratulated for this first outstanding achievement."

Flush from their inaugural success, the members of the company celebrated in fine style. In a column called "Judy Jots it Down", The Grand Rapids Press reported that, following the final performance, cast and crew adjourned to the Fisk Lake home of Dorothy and John Champion for a party dubbed "Figaro à Go-Go". (Don't forget, this was 1967.) The partiers assembled on the Champion's dock for a celebration that included awards to company members and skits parodying the production. The Press soberly reported that the "Exit for each performer was off the dock, right into the water."

The Marriage of Figaro marked an auspicious beginning to grand opera in West Michigan. In all, about 3,500 people bought tickets to hear that initial production. Although the revenue generated from the sale

The Flying Dutchman
Student Dress Rehearsal
Classroom Kit

Performance Date: April 30, 2008
7:30 pm, DeVos Performance Hall

of those tickets was barely enough to pay the bills, it was enough to encourage the intrepid pioneers of the Opera Association to persevere in their endeavors. They and their successors would continue to produce grand opera in West Michigan for the next thirty-seven years. Thanks to those trailblazers and to those that followed them, the Opera Association of Western Michigan would eventually blossom into Opera Grand Rapids, a proud regional company with a strong national reputation.

Opera Grand Rapids . . . A Contemporary Overview

By John Peter Jeffries

Today, forty seasons after its founding, Opera Grand Rapids is a proud member of an international community of about 138 opera companies in the United States and Canada. With an annual budget of around \$1,000,000, OGR is a smallish to medium-sized company, by North American standards.



Opera Grand Rapids produces a season of three main stage productions each year.

Opera Grand Rapids has season ticket holders in 23 Michigan counties. Single ticket buyers come from an even broader geographical range, adding another 25 counties. In all, OGR serves opera goers in dozens of communities and in 48 counties across the state. Each year a total of 16,000 to 17,000 people attend Opera Grand Rapids' events. Between 10,000 and 12,000 patrons enjoy the company's performances, while another 4,000 to 5,000, most of them young people, attend its educational and outreach events.

OGR is the older of the two professional opera companies in the State of Michigan. Michigan Opera Theater in Detroit has a budget about ten times the size of Opera Grand Rapids, but since it was founded in 1971, OGR is, the senior company.