

MILLAN & FAYE

MILLAN & FAYE PRESENT:



FROM TWINKLE TO STARDOM: A
COMEDIC WELCOME TO THE OPERA!

An interactive, fun introduction to the world of singing and Opera!

In association with Prologue to the Performing Arts

PROLOGUE
to the Performing Arts
• aux arts de la scène •



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OPERA!

WHAT IS IT!?!?

The term “opera” comes from the Italian word for “work” or “piece,” and is usually applied to the European tradition of grand opera. Opera is a form of storytelling which incorporates music, drama and design.

Though its origins date back to ancient Greece, the form of opera we are familiar with today started in the late 16th century in Florence, Italy. Count Giovanni de’ Bardi was a patron and host to a group of intellectuals, poets, artists, scientists and humanists including Giulio Caccini (composer) and Vincenzo Galilei (father to the astronomer and scientist, Galileo Galilei, who was most famous for his improvements to the telescope). These individuals explored trends in the arts, focusing on music and drama in particular. They were unified in their belief that the arts had become over-embellished and that returning to the transparency of the music of the ancient Greeks, which incorporated both speech and song, and a chorus to further the plot and provide commentary on the action, would present a more pure, natural and powerful way to tell stories and express emotions.

IN SHORT:

An Opera is a “work” invented in Italy 400 years ago, and uses orchestral music, singing, and design to tell stories. Human emotions are explored in all operatic stories including love, greed, jealousy, anger and revenge. Many stories have centered on mythological characters (Wagner’s *Ring Cycle*), human relationships, actual historical events (Prokofiev’s *War and Peace*), and adaptations of fairytales (Massenet’s *Cendrillon* or Rossini’s *La Cenerentola*—French and Italian adaptations of Cinderella).

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WHO WE ARE:

Millan & Faye's partnership was born out of the Canadian Opera Company's outreach and education department in 2011. As an innovative part of the COC's strategy to invite people into the world of opera, Millan & Faye are commissioned annually to create and perform at the RBC noontime concert series at the Four Seasons Centre in Toronto. The success of these concerts has led to touring to theatres and festivals throughout the Province, including: Ottawa's International Chamberfest, Sudbury Theatre Centre, Richmond Hill Performing Arts Centre, Harboufront Voice and Strings festival, to smaller venues like Hugh's Room and the Jazz Bistro in Toronto.

Millan & Faye are always creating new shows for families, which can be seen each year, during March Break at the Four Season's Centre.



Above is a photo of Millan & Faye performing "Libiamo," one of opera's most famous choruses, with students from Market Lane Junior & Senior P.S. (TDSB) at the Jane Mallett Theatre.

Libiamo! – a party song! Try to sing along on the note 'la'! We will be singing some of this in our performance at your school, and we would love you to join us! Click here to practice: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_XD-zN3Jg8

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VIDEOS

“Millan & Faye Presents” Videos – feel free to watch these recommended videos with your class!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1tN_fFKcxaw - The Lesson

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GU3wEM6rL_k - ABC's

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KngrOMFk1rg&feature=youtu.be> - Commercial music theatre vs Opera

Our show is an interactive introduction to the world of Opera, and also the story of what it takes to become a singer in Opera.

LISTENING GUIDE:

What makes Opera singing different from Musical Theatre and other singing styles?

Have a listen to Jazz vs Opera vs Musical theatre styles:

Below is the same song: “Summertime” from the opera *Porgy and Bess* by Gershwin, sung in different styles:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2bigf337aU> - Jazz - Ella Fitzgerald

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fpV4kmMISzw> - Opera - Kiri Tekanawa-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNLbRdoB9Z8> - Musical Theatre - Audra Macdonald

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PRE-SHOW DISCUSSION

Primary Grades

- Who has seen an Opera?
- Who has heard Opera music? (Bugs bunny, commercials, movies, radio)
- What are your favourite songs to hear or to sing?
- Do any of you sing in a choir? What kind of things do you need to be able to do? (sing in unison, harmony, with facial expression, memorized, etc.)
- How can we tell a story while singing? In Opera, how do they tell the story? (with movement, facial expression, sets, lights, costumes, etc.)
- What kind of instruments are used in Opera - what is the group called?

Junior/Intermediate Grades

- Who has seen an Opera?
- Who has heard Opera music? (Bugs bunny, commercials, movies, radio)
- What are your favourite songs to hear or to sing? How would you feel singing a solo?
- Do any of you sing in a choir or take voice lessons? What kind of things do you need to be able to do? (Sing in unison, harmony, with facial expression, memorized, etc.)
- How can we tell a story while singing? In Opera, how do they tell the story? (with movement, facial expression, sets, lights, costumes, etc.)
- What comes to mind when you think: "Opera singer" (loud, silly, melodramatic)
- What kind of profession(s) are you considering when you get older? What do you think it takes to become a professional musician?
- What is the one thing that scares you most?

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GLOSSARY

- **ARIA:** Italian word for Song
- **CONDUCTOR:** The primary responsibility of the conductor is to unify performers (singers and orchestra) set the tempo, listen critically and shape the sound of everyone, and control the interpretation and pacing of the music.
- **ORCHESTRA:** a group of typically classical instruments grouped in musical families; strings, woodwinds, brass, percussion.
- **OVERTURE:** Music that is played only by the orchestra before the opera begins.
- **COLLABORATIVE PIANIST:** Often classical singers will not always bring an orchestra with them, and they will instead sing with a pianist who specializes in playing with other instruments instead of solo piano work.
- **PRIMA DONNA:** Originally meant “First Lady”, whomever it was that played the lead, usually a soprano
- **CHORUS:** A choir in an Opera, who has to act, move, and sing just like the soloists do.
- **OPERA:** Italian word for “work,” as in a dramatic work in one or more acts, set to music for singers and instrumentalists. There are many kinds of Operas: grand opera, light opera, opéra bouffe, operetta, Opera Seria.
- **BRAVO! BRAVI! BRAVA!:** Cheers meaning “well done” can be hollered at the end of an opera, depending on if you are a fan of the male performers (Bravo), Everyone (Bravi) or the female performer (Brava). Since Opera was born in Italy, many words associated with opera are Italian.

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DID YOU KNOW?

1. **Fear** - most people are terrified of singing in public
2. **Lessons** - singers in opera train a long time before they can sing operatic music, and then continue training as long as they are working!
3. Singers can sing a span of up to **three and a half to four octaves** depending on their voice type
4. **You are born with your voice type**, and that determines what roles you get to play. In movies you are cast by how you look and act, in Opera you are cast by your voice type and how you sing!
5. There are too many to list but some of the **most performed operas** are:
 - *Madama Butterfly* (Puccini)
 - *La Bohème* (Puccini)
 - *La Traviata* (Verdi)
 - *Carmen* (Bizet)
 - *The Barber of Seville* (Rossini)
 - *The Marriage of Figaro* (Mozart)
 - *Don Giovanni* (Mozart)
 - *Tosca* (Puccini)
 - *Rigoletto* (Verdi)
 - *The Magic Flute* (Mozart)

Clearly some of the musical heavyweights in opera are Mozart, Puccini, Verdi, and Rossini but Wagner, Britten, Donizetti, and other composers have also contributed a significant amount to the art form.

Don't be fooled that some operas were written long ago. The genre is still living and developing today. Toni Morrison's acclaimed book *Beloved* was recently turned into an opera, as was David Cronenberg's cult classic movie, *The Fly*.

6. OPERA VS MUSICAL THEATRE:

- a. Musical theatre generally has spoken dialogue with musical numbers inserted in between.
- b. Opera, instead, uses a style of writing dialogue on specific pitches, called recitative, making the entire piece more sung through.

Singers in musical theatre use microphones, and can sing in a variety of styles, often where the sung text sounds as clear as speech. Opera singers sing in many languages and have to project their voices without a microphone, over an orchestra.

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7. VOICE TYPES:

All singers have different voice types and colours. “**Type**” refers to their vocal range and can be broken down to the overall flexibility and quality of the singer. “**Colour**” refers to the texture of their sound.

Female Voice Types:

- **Soprano:** Highest female voice. Famous sopranos include Maria Callas, Renée Fleming, Anna Netrebko and Canadian Adrienne Pieczonka.
- **Mezzo Soprano:** Middle female voice. Famous mezzos include Cecilia Bartoli and Canadians Judith Forst and Krisztina Szabó.

Male Voice Types:

- **Tenor:** Highest male voice. Famous tenors include Luciano Pavarotti, Plácido Domingo, Rolando Villazón and Canadian Michael Schade.
- **Baritone:** Middle male voice. Famous baritones include Canadian Russell Braun and Welsh opera singer Bryn Terfel.
- **Bass:** Lowest male voice. Famous basses include Canadians Alain Coulombe and Robert Pomakov.



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CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS:

Music - Primary

C2. Reflecting, Responding, and Analysing: apply the critical analysis process to communicate their feelings, ideas, and understandings in response to a variety of music and musical experiences;

C2.1 Express personal responses to musical performances in a variety of ways

C3.2 Identify, through performing and/or listening, a variety of musical forms or pieces from different communities, times, and places

Music - Junior

C2.1 Express detailed personal responses to musical performances in a variety of ways

C3.2 Compare some aspects of the music of one culture and/or historical period with aspects of the music of another culture and/or historical period

Music - Intermediate

C2.2 Analyse, using musical terminology, ways in which the elements of music are used in various styles and genres they perform, listen to, and create

C3.1 Analyse some of the social, political, and economic factors that affect the creation of music

Drama - Primary and Junior

B1. Creating and Presenting: apply the creative process (see pages 19–22) to dramatic play and process drama, using the elements and conventions of drama to communicate feelings, ideas, and stories;

B2. Reflecting, Responding, and Analysing: apply the critical analysis process (see pages 23–28) to communicate feelings, ideas, and understandings in response to a variety of drama works and experiences;

B3. Exploring Forms and Cultural Contexts: demonstrate an understanding of a variety of drama and theatre forms and styles from the past and present, and their social and/or community contexts.

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POST-SHOW CLASS ACTIVITY

“Create-an-Opera-Scene”

Teacher Prompts – use these concepts below as a framework for the activity

1. **Discuss the elements of a story with your students.** Speak about the term ‘conflict’ in a story – why are conflicts so compelling? How do conflicts move a story forward?
2. **Teach the students ‘Tableaux’:** students create a scene and ‘freeze’ the action to create a dramatic picture. Students will use physical poses, gestures, and facial expressions to convey characters, action, and significance of a moment in the story.
Note: You may have already taught this in class! Practice a few Tableaux as a reminder.
3. **Teach the students about Recitative:** sung text, or pitched dialogue, without long sustained notes, usually at the normal rate of speech. Remind them of when one student came up on stage to do recitative with Kyra in the performance they just saw. Note the differences between recitative and an aria.

Activity – Step-by-Step:

1. **Primarys:** Choose a well-known, existing story that the students like.
Juniors/Intermediates: Create a short story as a class (using any method – writing it down on sticky notes, placing on flip chart, etc.)
2. Establish the main elements of the story with students – create characters, conflict, etc.
3. If the students have not done tableaux in class before, invite some volunteers to demonstrate by freezing an action in a scene they are familiar with (i.e. Three Little Pigs and the wolf – the wolf could be blowing the house down, the three pigs hiding for shelter, one child playing the frame of the house, etc.)
4. Split the students into small groups (4-5 students per group) and give them a few minutes to come up with 3 tableaux to represent different parts of the story.
5. For **Primarys**, establish a cue to move them from one presentation of one tableaux to another (i.e. 1, 2, 3, change).
For **Junior/Intermediates**, ask them to watch one another and cue one another through eye contact, or have one of them leading the movement into the next tableaux.
6. Each group gets up and presents their three tableaux. Once they have presented, have the class reflect on how they are telling the story, and use positive feedback about how the gestures, use of their bodies, and facial expressions helped in the telling of the story.

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7. Next round: invite each group to do their tableaux again.
 - a. **Primaries:** in each tableaux, ‘activate’ each student, one at a time, to say a line – whatever their character might be thinking. If they can sing it, even better!
 - b. **Juniors:** Choose ONE of the best of the three tableaux per group, and have them present it again. While they are frozen, ‘activate’ one student at a time (either by tapping them, or calling them by name), and have them SING whatever their character might be thinking (i.e. Three Little Pigs “oh no, it’s the wolf” or Wolf singing “I will blow your house down”).

Hint: If the students start to speak, sing to them as a reminder that they are to sing their response.

8. **Juniors and older:** If you have time, or a group that is enthusiastic, have them present that same choice of tableaux, only without any frozen action – have them improvise the scene that begins with that tableaux moment and SING the text.

REFLECTION:

How was it? What did you notice in the other student's performances? How did singing the text change/not change things? How did it feel to sing the text?

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POST-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What was your favourite part of the performance and why?
- Do you remember the different styles Kyra demonstrated in the first song? (Musical Theatre, Jazz, Opera)
- What does it take to become a musician? (Practice, courage, training, failure, etc.)
- How did Tina and Kyra work together? Who was leading musically? Who followed?
- What sounds did you hear that are unique to classical music? To Opera?
- How high do you think Kyra sang? How high can you sing?
- How do you feel about singing now? How do you feel about Opera now?
- What three things stick in your mind about the show? What did you learn?
- If you were to bring a friend to an Opera, what would you tell them about it?



Questions? Want to write the artists a letter?

Contact Prologue to the Performing Arts

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