

Fairy Tales in Performance: La Cenerentola – Where Music Meets Drama

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Introduction

As a chorus teacher for 20 years, I see the importance of singing as a group to facilitate happiness, consolation, entertainment and a sense of community. When the seminar of “Stories in Performance: Drama, Fable, Story and the Oral Tradition” was offered by the Delaware Teacher Institute, I immediately wondered if I could incorporate the oral tradition into my singing groups. How could I teach my students stories while I am teaching them to sing? Remembering from my years of Music History at College Misericordia, opera is the foremost expression of music and drama. As I researched various operas such as “The Magic Flute” by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, “Hansel and Gretel” by Engelbert Humperdinck and “The Flying Dutchman” by Richard Wagner, I discovered a quote from the libretto in the opera “La Cenerentola” by Rossini that sums up why drama can be so important to my students: “All of the world is a theatre, where all of us are actors.”¹

Now that I know music and drama are necessary for my music program, I had to decide which opera would have significant role for my students. Not only should this opera be meaningful but my students should be able to connect and build background. I chose “La Cenerentola” because it is similar to “Cinderella.” which most of my students know from the Disney or television version. By building on their knowledge of “Cinderella,” we can investigate the similarities and differences to Rossini’s “La Cenerentola. They can explore music in addition to tapping into the human emotions through acting out the story. Improvisation can develop their creativity. They will critique performances. Their ideas and musical performance of “La Cenerentola” will be shared with the students at The Leach School who are studying “Cinderella.” My students will share their performance while explaining “La Cenerentola” to The Leach School. These students have physical disabilities, moderate to severe mental retardation, or serious health impairments. At Leach, students with disabilities represent all levels of intellectual ability, from gifted to severe mental retardation. My students will interact and describe their study of “La Cenerentola” with them.

I am currently the music instructor at Eisenberg Elementary and Castle Hill Elementary in New Castle, Delaware. Eisenberg Elementary, my home school provides academic studies for kindergarten through fifth grade. The school reflects a culturally diverse student body of approximately 500 students. Strong academic emphasis focuses on physical, social and emotional development to create a community of learners.

Programs offered are STAR and Accelerated Reader, which enable students to succeed by addressing their reading needs. 24 Club strengthens Math skills as well as learning to work together. The Positive Behavior Support Program allows students to focus on appropriate and encouraging actions in an educational environment. Teachers use research-based methods of instruction (Learning Focus and Responsive Classroom) which are aligned with the Delaware State Standards. In the Arts, students may participate in band in grades 4 and 5. Chorus is offered for grades 3, 4 and 5. In second, third, fourth and fifth general music class, recorders, world drumming and guitars are presented as units of study. Fifth graders study the influence of music in the Civil Rights Movement. My role as a music educator is not only to develop musical skills but also relate music to other academic areas such as English Language Arts, Math, Social Studies and Science. This unit, **Fairy Tales in Performance: La Cenerentola – Where Music Meets Drama** will relate Music and Performance for fourth and/or fifth graders. These students will work with students from The Leach School in creating, performing and evaluating their performances.

Rationale/Objective

I have worked with and taught chorus for over 15 years and have always thought there is more to chorus than just singing on risers or on the stage. I am so excited to teach **Fairy Tales in Performance: La Cenerentola – Where Music Meets Drama** to my students which will expand their chorus experience. By taking the seminar “Stories in Performance: Drama, Fable, Story and the Oral Tradition,” I am looking for ways to combine performance and singing. I hope to find ways to enhance drama and then add singing to create the opera. Opera will offer the students music with drama. Students need to have some background in the history of opera. La Cenerentola (Cinderella) by Rossini was chosen as the opera. The Disney version of the fairy tale, “Cinderella,” can build background and is familiar to the students. After discussing Cinderella, they can be introduced to Rossini’s “La Cenerentola.” After hearing the story, students can improvise dialogue with movements, create songs and add scenery to turn their own story of La Cenerentola into a creative and emotional performance. By engaging the community of students in opera, I feel that there will be a more complete experience. Students will evaluate and critique their performances.

It is my hope to combine Eisenberg’s fourth and/or fifth grade students with the fourth and /or fifth grade students from The Leach School in a performance opportunity in the Eisenberg auditorium for family and friends. Laurie Bailey, the music teacher at The Leach School, is also taking “Stories in Performance: Drama, Fable, Story and the Oral Tradition” and we are working together to develop lesson plans and a performance of Cinderella and La Cenerentola. Depending on my music schedule, I will be teaching fourth graders at Castle Hills Elementary or Eisenberg Elementary, **Fairy Tales in Performance: La Cenerentola – Where Music Meets Drama** and performing for The Leach School in the spring of 2015.

Background Information

Fairy Tales

Fairy tales are stories. I chose fairy tale rather than myth or legend because it addresses primal fears in both children and adults. They can be violent, supernatural and often provoke images. From seminar, I learned that fairy tales are authored and not passed down. The stories are a journey about evil and good or dark into light. It transcends man's mortal soul of tragedy with its happy or good ending.² Aristotle's Elements of Drama can be found in all fairy tales. Aristotle (384-322 BC) was a Greek philosopher whose writings still influence us today. He was the first to write about the essential elements of drama more than 2,000 years ago. While ideas have changed slightly over the years, we still discuss Aristotle's list when talking about what makes a good drama or fairy tale. Aristotle considered the following six characteristics to be essential to good drama or fairy tale. The **plot** denotes the action or basic storyline of the play. It's what happens in the tale. The **theme** is the meaning of the play. It is the main idea to be learned. It can be subtle or very obvious. **Characters** are the people or animals throughout the tale. They move the action of the plot forward. The **dialogue** is the written words by the playwright. They are usually spoken by the characters in the play. **Music** often occurs in modern plays and fairy tales. Aristotle however referred to music as the rhythm of the actors' voices as they speak. Finally the **spectacle** is everything that the audience sees: the sets, costumes, props, lights, music or special effects.³

All fairy tales have a specific dramatic structure. The **introduction** begins the tale. Here, the plot or thought tells the sequence of events or actions. The characters help to explain the plot. Diction or speech differentiates the characters for an audience, Music and dance support the thought. It enhances the tension and supports the resolution. Other spectacles such as props and costumes give variety to the plot. Then an **inciting incident** or **conflict** causes a dilemma. Then, several **rising actions** cause apprehension. A **crisis** followed by **climax** transforms the tale. Finally, a **resolution** culminates the action.

In this paper, I will be using dramatic structure to explain the form of "Cinderella." For example, in Disney's "Cinderella", the audience is **introduced** to Cinderella after her mother dies and then lives with her father. The characters are Cinderella, stepmother, two step sisters, mice, fairy godmother, prince and stage coach with coachmen. Music was written by Rodgers and Hammerstein and fits each character. **Conflict** occurs when the father remarries and acquires two step daughters. The **rising action** takes place when the stepdaughters and stepmother are mean to Cinderella. The stepsisters are allowed to attend the ball but Cinderella has to stay home. With the help of mice to make her dress and her fairy godmother, Cinderella goes to the ball. As midnight approaches, Cinderella runs out of the ball and loses one shoe. The prince finds the shoe but is in **crisis** when he can't find who it belongs to. In the **climax**, the prince travels around the kingdom searching for the girl. He comes to Cinderella's house and the stepsister try to force their

foot into the show. The prince sees Cinderella and he slips the shoe onto her foot in **resolution**. The prince and Cinderella marry and live happily ever after.

These stories are a journey about evil and good or dark into light. It transcends man's mortal soul of tragedy with its happy or good ending.⁴ There is a transformation usually from the inner to outer experience. Getting a grasp on the apprehension causes comprehension or an understanding of the journey. Fairy tales can be acted or in narrative form. They appeal to all cultures because of their high drama. The action can involve violence, supernatural beings like witches, goblins and fairy godmothers. These thoughts address primal fears and can produce provocative images in all audiences.

Opera

Opera is often described as all the arts in one. Elements of theme, spectacle, plot, diction, movement and music date back to Aristotle.

These people generally did not have the training or resources to write down their pieces in ways that would put some confinements on their performances. They would sing to communicate and give hope to each other as they worked in the fields or in other jobs, so it was very common for them not only to perform spontaneously, but also to change the words and melodies to suit their own needs and feelings.⁵

Fairy tales as well as myths were recited and written for both children and adults. They were made into plays that fascinated royalty, soldiers and the public. Since ancient times, singing has played an important role in drama. Opera as we know it today was created in Florence, Italy in the seventeenth century with comedies and spectacular performances using music. Opera takes the dialog and sets it to tunes. It doesn't matter if you do not understand the words because the music helps tell the story.

Some composers did not write the libretto. They wrote the music that helped lift the words in the regular story into an extraordinary opera. "Today, the sets are more splendid than ever before, the orchestras better and the choruses are very carefully trained. In order to tell the story, the performers have to use their voices and faces to express the feelings of the characters they are playing."⁶

The ancient Greeks used a combination of spoken words and songs. It was a sing-song sound in which half of the words were sung and half were spoken. It was similar to Gregorian chant, a single line of melody based on fifths, heard in most early Christian churches. This one line of melody then extended into polyphonic line creating harmony. Opera debuting in Ancient Greece frequently used singing, poetry and dance to tell a tale.

Developments in vocal and instrumental music occurred. “The origins of opera as we now know it come out of the long history of instrumental and vocal music, as well as drama.”⁷ Greek drama outlined most kinds of dramatic performances until the late 17th century. Music increased in complexity with the troubadours or minstrels. Their folk songs told love stories, heroic adventures and comedic tales. They were sung with one melodic line accompanied by guitars, harps or lutes.

Then, the first operas began to be performed as we know it today in Italy. The early operas from Florence and Naples, Italy were simple short songs with recited passages. The first opera, “Dafne” by Jacopo Peri (1561-1633) was based on Greek mythology. Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643) was considered the first great composer of operas when he composed “Orfeo” in 1607.⁸ He wrote orchestra parts in his operas where the instruments spoke without words. In Austria and Eastern Europe, composers adapted the opera form. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) wrote his first opera, “Apollo et Hyacinthus,” at the age of 12. Mozart changed the opera to reflect more of the feelings of the characters into the music. For example, in “Don Giovanni” Mozart wrote songs or arias in D major for the hero and D minor for the villain. This caused a conflict that would later be resolved at the end of the opera returning to the original key.

In the early 19th century, Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868) was best known for his cantabile or beautiful tone operas such as “La Cenerentola.” Then with roots in the Italian style opera, Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901) wrote “Aida” in 1871. Richard Wagner (1813-1883) composed operas with long fluid lines and large orchestras such as “The Flying Dutchman.” Into the 19th and 20th centuries, composers from other countries wrote famous operas. In France, Charles-Francois Gounod (1818-1893) wrote “Romeo et Juliette.” Russian composer, Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953) composed “War and Peace” which was censored by the soviet government. Finally, George Antheil (1900-1959) was the first American operatic composer. He wrote “Transatlantic” in 1930.

Gioacchino Antonio Rossini

Gioacchino Antonio Rossini, the most popular opera composer of his day, was born in Pesaro, Italy in 1792. Like many composers, Rossini learned about music from his parents. Gioacchino's father played the horn and the trumpet, and his mother was an opera singer. When Gioacchino was a little boy, he learned to play the piano and to sing. In Rossini's teenage years, wars were raging throughout Europe. He requested Empress Josephine to be excluded from the Napoleonic wars (the War of 1812). It was granted. Rossini wrote his first comic opera, “La Cambiale di Matrimonio,” when he was 18 years old. His most famous opera is “The Barber of Seville” written in 1816. Rossini met Ludwig van Beethoven who influenced Rossini's melodic writing. In 1817, Rossini wrote the music for “La Cenerentola,” his longest opera. It was based on the Cinderella story by Charles Perrault. The words or libretto was composed by Jacopo Ferretti. It contains beautiful melodic arias. Many say it was his supreme masterpiece. After composing the

opera William Tell in 1829 when he was 37, Rossini stopped writing operas. He became very depressed. Rossini died in Passy, France on November 13, 1868, following a short illness. Having initially been buried in Paris (where his original tomb survives), his remains were subsequently moved to Florence, Italy. For us, he left a legacy of memorable operas and gorgeous melodies. Some of his final advice was: "Let us not forget, Italians, that musical art is all ideal and expressive... that enjoyment must be the purpose of this art. Simple melody-clear rhythm."⁹

History of "*Cinderella*"

After choosing "Cinderella" as my fairy tale, I did not realize until this seminar that there is such a long history and variations of the story of "Cinderella." I will only discuss "Yeh-shen", the first known story of Cinderella, Grimm's "Cinderella," probably the most famous version and Rossini's "La Cenerentola," the opera. This tale fascinated countless other countries throughout centuries. There are over 900 recorded version of the story from virtually every continent and culture in hundreds of languages.¹⁰ All the stories have the same criteria: a family member in a desolate state, the intervention of a helper (possibly supernatural), a glimpse of a better life, recognition by some object or person and an improvement or resolution of the condition (usually a perfect union like a marriage).

"Yeh-Shen"

Long before Rossini wrote the music for "La Cenerentola" in 1817, Cinderella appeared in 860 A.D. in the T`sang Dynasty in China as "Yeh-Shen." Yeh-Shen is orphaned when her father dies. She is treated badly by her stepmother and stepsisters. Befriended by a magical fish, Yeh-shen shares her sparse food with it. The stepmother discovers the friendship and kills the fish when Yeh-shen is out of the house and serves the fish for dinner. The bones of the fish are buried. Yeh-shen is inconsolable when a magic man magically comes down from the sky. He tells her where the bones are and that she should dig them up and hid them in her room. If she needs anything she can wish on the bones. There is a festival in the town and the step mother and step sisters attend leaving Yeh-shen at home. She wishes for a dress and golden shoes from the fish bones. Magically, they appear just as the mysterious man promised. Yeh-shen goes to the festival but is confronted by her stepfamily. She runs home leaving her small golden slipper. The King of T`o-han finds it. He searches the islands for months for the owner of the tiny shoe. Finally, the king visits Yeh-shen's village. Yeh-shen slips her tiny foot into the slipper and it fits. She marries the King and they live happily ever after.

Grimm's "*Cinderella*"

In Grimm's "Cinderella," shortly after Cinderella's mother dies, a new stepmother moves in. Cinderella is in turmoil. The stepmother and her two daughters torment Cinderella and

essentially enslave her. Then, word comes that the King is throwing a three day festival for the prince, who will be choosing a wife from among the females of the kingdom that attend. The stepmother assigns Cinderella two impossible tasks of picking out lentils to perform as a condition for attending the festival. Cinderella, with the help of the local birds with whom she has a magical relationship, performs the impossible chores. The stepmother does not keep her promises. She and the stepsisters head to the festival without Cinderella. Cinderella calls upon her bird friends, who provide her a most beautiful outfit. Cinderella attends Night One of the festival, and the prince is enchanted. At the end of the night, Cinderella runs out on him! Cinderella does the same thing on Nights Two and Three, showing up each time in a more beautiful outfit. On Night Three though, the Prince is ready for her. He connives to smear the staircase with tar thus causing her to leave her shoe behind. He comes looking for the girl whose foot fits the shoe. Cinderella's stepsisters are actually willing to chop off parts of their feet as their mother suggested in order fitting into the shoe. It is Cinderella's foot that fits perfectly! Cinderella marries the Prince, and the evil stepsisters have their eyes plucked out...by birds!¹¹

“La Cenerentola”

Rossini's opera “La Cenerentola” was set in Salerno, Italy in the eighteenth century. “It is one to the most famous fairy tales ever, which perhaps you know as Cinderella.”¹² The fairy tale was originally written in French by Charles Perrault. The librettist, Jacopo Ferretti, did not write about a fairy godmother or the magic of a pumpkin turning into a carriage. These spectacles would have been difficult to perform in 1817.

“La Cenerentola” begins at the castle of Cenerentola's stepfather (Don Magnifico). Angelina (known as “Cenerentola”) is working for her stepsisters, Clorinda and Tisbe. Cenerentola sings a simple melodic ballad: “Once upon a time a king, tired of living, bored with living all alone, looked for one to share his own: but he found three who sought his ring.”¹³ A knock at the door brings Alidoro, the prince's tutor and advisor, disguised as a beggar. Cenerentola's stepsisters ignore him, but Cenerentola offers him food and coffee. Courtiers arrive and announce that on that very evening at the ball, the Prince will choose a bride. All the commotion has awakened the Baron, Don Magnifico. Clorinda and Tisbe relate the news of the ball to their father. Don Magnifico sings: “I have daughters, I have daughters, female offspring!”¹⁴ Soon thereafter, Prince Ramiro enters, disguised as his own valet and finds Cenerentola alone. It is love at first sight, but then her family calls, and Cenerentola rushes to their aid. Don Ramiro and Cenerentola sing a graceful duet with mixing harmonization to show their growing interest. “Ramiro: I know not what seemed so sweet in the sparkle of her eye. Cenerentola: How my heart began to beat, I was faint, I wonder why.”¹⁵ Dandini arrives, disguised as Prince Ramiro, to escort Don Magnifico's daughters to the ball. Cenerentola asks permission to attend the ball, but Don Magnifico dismisses her. Cenerentola sings: “Oh sir, One word I beg you, only listen. Oh sir, in that great Prince's royal residence, one hour, one hour only, allow

me to dance, in that great royal residence.”¹⁶

They set out, leaving Cenerentola behind. Alidoro returns and tells Cenerentola that she will go to the ball, but that she must not tell anyone who she is. Dandini, continuing his charade, tells Clorinda and Tisbe that he can marry only one young woman, but the other may marry his valet. The sisters reject this proposal. Meanwhile, Don Magnifico has managed to get himself appointed Royal Wine Steward. After providing Cenerentola with a gown and jewels, Alidoro announces the arrival of a mystery lady. Alidoro sings: “All of the world is a theatre.”¹⁷ Cenerentola enters the ball with her face veiled. When the veil is lifted, the sisters feel that she looks like their Cenerentola but are not sure. Dandini and Romero discuss which of the sisters should be queen. They sing in a fast-paced and breathless duet: “Whisper to me, softly, softly; with no noise and with discretion. Of the two, what’s your impression? Tell the truth and be exact.”¹⁸

Don Magnifico and his daughters are discussing the mysterious lady at the ball. He sings: “Come, whichever one, my daughters, sits upon the throne tomorrow, don’t abandon, don’t abandon in his sorrow.”¹⁹ Meanwhile, the Prince, also remembering his mysterious guest, hides when Cenerentola hurries in with Dandini (posing as the Prince) behind her. Dandini professes his love for Cenerentola. Dandini sings: “There’s a secret of importance, full of intrigue, suspense and mystery, I am ready to reveal.”²⁰

Ramiro sees Dandini and Cenerentola talking and then hides. When the still disguised Dandini tells her that he loves her, she tells him that she loves his servant the valet. Upon listening to their conversation, Ramiro is overjoyed because he knows that Cenerentola is not after his wealth. He comes out of hiding and asks her to marry him. She replies that he must see her as she really is. If he isn’t disappointed, she will marry him. Cenerentola gives him a bracelet and tells him to search for the young woman wearing a matching bracelet on her right hand. She leaves. Ramiro then assumes his rightful role as the Prince. Dandini tells Don Magnifico that a choice has been made regarding a bride and then confesses that he is really the Prince’s valet. Enraged, Don Magnifico storms off. Don Magnifico, Clorinda, and Tisbe return home and vent their anger on Cenerentola. Dandini appears with news that the Prince’s carriage has overturned outside their house. Ramiro enters. Cenerentola suddenly realizes that he is the Prince, and the Prince recognizes the matching bracelet on her right hand. Dandini, Ramiro, Cenerentola, Magnifico, Clorinda and Tisbe sing: “Here’s a knot with many tangles, it deceives with endless angles, it deceives you, it deceived with endless angles.”²¹

The two go off together, leaving everyone else to make sense of what has happened. In the joyous final scene, Cenerentola pardons her stepfather and stepsisters. Cenerentola and the Prince are to be married and become the king and queen. Cenerentola and all sing a grand finale to the end of sadness. “Always my life had been tragic, condemned to tears by

some power; but by some wondrous magic, just as my youth came to flower, lightning has struck me.”²²

In the dramatic structure for “La Cenerentola,” the audience is **introduced** to the stepfather and Cenerentola who is doing work for her two stepsisters. The characters are Angelina also known as Cenerentola, Don Magnifico- a baron, father to Clorinda and Tisbe and stepfather to Cenerentola, Alidoro-an advisor and the prince’s tutor (disguised as a beggar), Don Ramiro-Prince of Salerno (disguised as his valet) and Dandini- royal valet (disguised as the prince). Music, diction or props is an essential element of this opera. **Conflict** occurs when a beggar (Alidoro) asks for food and only Cenerentola would help. The **rising action** takes place when messengers announce a ball where the Prince will choose a bride. Soon thereafter, Prince Ramiro enters, disguised as his own valet, and finds Cenerentola alone. He falls in love. Everyone sets out, leaving Cenerentola behind. Alidoro returns and tells Cenerentola that she will go to the ball and provides a dress and jewels. At the ball, Alidoro announces the arrival of a mystery lady with her face veiled. She confesses to loving the prince’s “valet” (who is really the Prince). Ramiro is thrilled when Cenerentola wants to marry the valet and not the prince for his wealth. He asks her to marry him. Cenerentola gives him a bracelet and tells him to search for the young woman wearing a matching bracelet. If he still wants her when he finds out whom she really is, she will marry him. She leaves. The prince is in **crisis** trying to find the matching bracelet. In the **climax**, Dandini appears with news that the Prince’s carriage has overturned outside their house. Ramiro enters. Cenerentola suddenly realizes that he is the prince, and the prince recognizes her bracelet. In **resolution**, Cenerentola and the prince go off together to be married. She forgives her stepfather and stepsisters.

In conclusion, the students will discuss the story that they know about Cinderella. They will learn about how Cinderella changed over the years. I will introduce the opera, “La Cenerentola.” We will read the story and listen to the arias. The students will then work together to compose, act out and sing their version of “La Cenerentola.” As a community, they will evaluate their play. Then after many months of practice, the students will perform for the students of the Leach School. My students will then discuss the steps that they took to create their own Cinderella. They will assist and interact with the students of The Leach School and help them sing or play an instrument or act out part of a scene.

Music Strategies

Students need to use 4 specific musical strategies in **Fairy Tales in Performance: La Cenerentola – Where Music Meets Drama**: Call/Response, improvisation, long-phrased melody and active listening are musical skills that will assist the students in better understanding the opera “La Cenerentola.” Of course other approaches such as collaborative learning, working in small groups and think/pair/share will be used. Fourth graders use these strategies in other classes. I want to incorporate those strategies as well

as add musical methods when learning and analyzing the songs. These strategies may be used to study other operas in upcoming units.

Call/ Response

In music, call /response is a technique where one musician sings or plays a phrase and a second player answers with an exact or improvisational response to the phrase either sung or played on an instrument. Call/Response depicts and AB form using a solo/chorus, solo/solo or chorus/chorus. For example, students sit in a circle and one calls, “Who has a beard that’s long and white?” All respond “Santa has a beard that’s long and white” from the song, “Must Be Santa.” Students can also individually take turns singing the call and response. Another example of call/response would be for me to sing “Whisper to me.” The class then sings “softly, softly.” An exact echo call/response would be for me to chant “We are the Eagles, the mighty, mighty Eagles” and the class then would echo, “We are the Eagles, the mighty, mighty Eagles.” One of the great elements of call and response is that it can be a powerful unifying tool. Those who respond learn to listen carefully to the leader, and in many cases, they gain a sense of belonging by completing or repeating the call. Sometimes, people use it as a way to get collective ideas across to others.²³

Improvisation

In many cases, particularly in spirituals when call and response involves a choir or ensemble, the director or caller often improvises once he’s established the main melody. Changes usually get more intense and complex as the music progresses to the climax of the composition. The answer remains fairly unchanged, providing a framework to fit the harmonic, rhythmic and phrasing structure of the piece. The leader often sings with what he’s feeling in the moment. However, he has to use a basic knowledge of how the song goes or musical order to make everything line up and sound good. Students create chants and percussion accompaniments. They improvise simple melodies. Often students create movements to emphasize the meaning of the words. Improvisation strengthens and nurtures a child’s creativity.

Slow, long-phrased melody

Long phrased melody is more common than call/response, improvisation or syncopation. This strategy includes long lyrical flowing lines in a composition that were very popular in arias of operas. Instead of short fragmented lines, long complete sentences were sung. Students who do not like to sing will probably not like this strategy. Choral singing best demonstrates long-phrased melody. Melodic contour can be analyzed for duration, upward and downward motion, repetition, imitation, sequence, steps and leaps and modulation. Examples of La Cenerentola’s grand finale can be viewed on **you tube** for the students to experience this approach. An effective method to feel long phrases is to

have students move their arms in long arcs to the musical expressions.

Active Listening

Active listening means listening to music with focus and intensity, without diverting attention to any other activity. Active listening can be any form of listening activity where the students are engaged in the music one hundred percent of the time. Being engaged in the music means that, while they are listening to music, the students are committed and fully present. By listening, they are immersed in, captivated by, and preoccupied with the music. In other words, they are interacting with the music.

Classroom Activities

This unit is divided into three lessons discussing opera, creating a fairy tale and performing.

Lesson One - Opera

What are the elements of opera?

This introductory lesson gives students the opportunity to learn about the dramatic structure of opera and fairy tales. The six elements of dramatic structure are Introduction, Inciting Incident, Rising Action, Crisis, Climax and Resolution.

Anticipatory Set: KWL chart for the opera “La Cenerentola” by Rossini. Students fill in the K “Think I Know” and W “Think I’ll Learn.”

Directed Instruction: Introduce the six elements of Dramatic Structure. Tell the story of “Cinderella”. Encourage students to predict how these elements fit with the story.

Activity: Pair students to complete a Frayer model (definition, characteristics, examples and non-examples) for each element of dramatic structure. Then ask the group to share their answers and make revisions.

Assessment: Acrostic Summary: In groups, students complete an acrostic for the work OPERA using each letter to tell something the students think about fairy tales, stories or opera.

Lesson Two - Improvisation

How can students be creative when developing a fairy tale with music?

This lesson focuses on developing their fairy tale “Cinderella” with imagination, improvisation, creativity, originality and meaningful dialogue.

Anticipatory Set: Students activate “What’s Already in my Head?” They fill in a thought bubble with words or pictures to show their story of “Cinderella.” These pictures are divided into the six dramatic structures: Introduction, Inciting Incident, Rising Action, Crisis, Climax and Resolution.

Directed Instruction: Students listen to the music of Rossini’s “LaCenerentola”. They discuss in pairs how the music is used to depict the Cinderella story.

Activity: Students in groups of eight begin developing their version of “Cinderella by

acting, singing and improvising from their story board pictures. They practice within their group.

Assessment: Learning Log: Students responds to the prompt on post-it notes the answer to “Something new I learned today is.....”

Lesson Three: Active Listening

What makes the performance outstanding?

This lesson focuses on listening to performances of “Cinderella’ by the groups for clarity, collaboration, creativity and style.

Anticipatory Set: Have students finish practicing “Cinderella”. Students can make any props needed like bracelets used in “La Cenerentola”.

Directed Instruction: Students define style, clarity, creativity and collaboration. They discuss in their group of eight how those characteristics look in their fairy tale.

Activity: Students perform “Cinderella” for the class. Have students complete a graphic organizer showing how the groups are the same or different.

Assessment: Have student Think, Pair and then Share their ideas on “I would like to learn more about...”

Final Assessment: Students will be able to perform “Cinderella”. The fairy tale was written, sung and directed by the fourth grade students. Students will then write a short critique on the performance. Also, the class will give ideas for the L “I Learned” on the KWL chart. They then review the KWL chart.

Please check my website for Fairy Tales in Performance: La Cenerentola – Where Music Meets Drama updates.

<http://cmhann.weebly.com>

Notes

¹ <http://www.mnopera.org>, *Minnesota Opera*, 51.

² Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 20.

³ http://www.eluprogram.com/Elements_of_Drama.pdf.

⁴ Campbell, 20.

⁵ <http://www.mnopera.org>, *Minnesota Opera*, 96.

⁶ Mayhew, *The Barefoot book of stories from the opera*, 5.

⁷ <http://www.operaphilly.com>, *Opera Philadelphia*, 4.

⁸ Sadie, *The Grove book of operas*, 447.

⁹ Steen, *The lives and times of the great composers*, 272.

¹⁰ <http://www.operaphilly.com>, *Opera Philadelphia*, 71.

¹¹ Grimm, *Grimms' Fairy tales*, 121.

¹² Mayhew, *The Barefoot book of stories from the opera*, 50.

¹³ <http://www.mnopera.org>, *Minnesota Opera*, 48.

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- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Ibid, 49.
- ¹⁶ Ibid, 50.
- ¹⁷ Ibid, 51.
- ¹⁸ Ibid, 52.
- ¹⁹ Ibid, 53.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Ibid, 54.
- ²² Ibid, 55.
- ²³ <http://www.wisegeek.org/what-is-call-and-response.htm> , accessed November 30, 2013.

Resources for Teachers

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Curriculum Unit
Title

Fairy Tales in Performance: La Cenerentola – Where Music Meets Drama

Author

Cecilia Hann

KEY LEARNING, ENDURING UNDERSTANDING, ETC.

Students create “Cinderella” through movement, singing and dialogue after studying the opera “La Cenerentola” by Rossini.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) for the UNIT

What are the elements of opera?
How can students be creative when developing a fairy tale with music?
What makes the performance outstanding?

CONCEPT A

Dramatic structure

CONCEPT B

Improvisation

CONCEPT C

Active Listening

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS A

What are the elements of opera?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS B

How can students be creative when developing a fairy tale with music?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS C

What makes the performance outstanding?

VOCABULARY A

Opera
Inciting Incident
Rising Action
Climax

VOCABULARY B

Imagination
Improvisation
Originality
Meaningful

VOCABULARY C

Style
Clarity
Creativity
Collaboration

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/MATERIAL/TEXT/FILM/RESOURCES

Dramatic Structure: Explanation of Dramatic Structure: http://www.eluprogram.com/Elements_of_Drama.pdf. Life of Rossini: Steen, M. (2004). *The Lives and Times of the Great Composers*. Oxford: Oxford

Improvisation: “Cinderella”: Mayhew, J. (1999). *The Barefoot Book of Stories from the Opera*. Story of Rossini’s “La Cenerentola” <http://www.mnopera.org>

Listening: Listen to <http://www.operaphilly.com>