



The Magic Flute



Photo: Lynn Lane/Houston Grand Opera



Photo: Marie-Noëlle Robert/Théâtre du Châtelet

Lyric Opera Performances for Students 2016/17 Teacher Edition

The Magic Flute

by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Carmen

by Georges Bizet

My Fair Lady

Book and lyrics by Alan Jay Lerner
Music by Frederick Loewe

Lyric Unlimited is Lyric Opera of Chicago's department dedicated to education, community engagement, and new artistic initiatives.

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Dear Educator,

Welcome to the 2016/17 edition of Lyric Unlimited's *Backstage Pass!* This is your ticket to the world of opera and your insider's guide to Lyric's student performances this season. Thank you for joining us and for sharing this experience with your students.

We have designed *Backstage Pass!* to prepare young people to better understand opera, musical theatre, and enjoy the performance more. These resources are designed to enhance your curriculum and can, ideally, be seamlessly incorporated into your regular, daily learning objectives.

Please review the materials in this guide and online and consider how they can be used in your classroom. We recommend setting aside small blocks of time to share this content with your students over several days or weeks before and after the performance. The more students know about the piece, the more rewarding the experience.

It is our sincere hope that you enjoy the performance, and we look forward to seeing you and your students at the Civic Opera House!

Sincerely,
Lyric Unlimited

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Preparing Students for the Performance

These activities are designed to help you quickly and easily develop effective lesson plans built around clear objectives.

Objectives are written in "I Can" statements using student-friendly language, and all activities can be used to address state and national learning standards found on [page 9](#).

Objectives:

- I can tell the story of the performance I am about to see.
- I can recognize major musical themes from the opera.
- I can understand the historical, cultural, and social context of the opera.
- I can use the essential vocabulary associated with the production of modern opera and musical theater.

Activities:

I can tell the story of the performance I am about to see.

- Refer to the *Synopsis of the Opera* in the student version of the *Backstage Pass!*
- Ask students to read the synopsis, then discuss the time period, setting, characters, and story with the class.
- As a class, or individually, use the [Opera Plot Analysis Worksheet](#) on page 4 of this guide to help students understand the setting, mood, and basic action of the work.
- Have students write narrative predictions or create artwork reflecting what they think the set and costumes will look like.
- Ask students to wear headbands with the names of the characters. Next, provide brief descriptions of each character and encourage students to determine how their character should stand, speak, and behave. Read the synopsis aloud while students act out the story.
- Working in small groups, have students choose celebrities they would cast in each role if they were making a modern movie of the opera. Encourage groups to present their choices to the class and make an argument for why their celebrity would be a good fit for the role.

I can recognize major musical themes from the opera.

Refer to the "[Musical Highlights](#)" section of the online teacher resources.

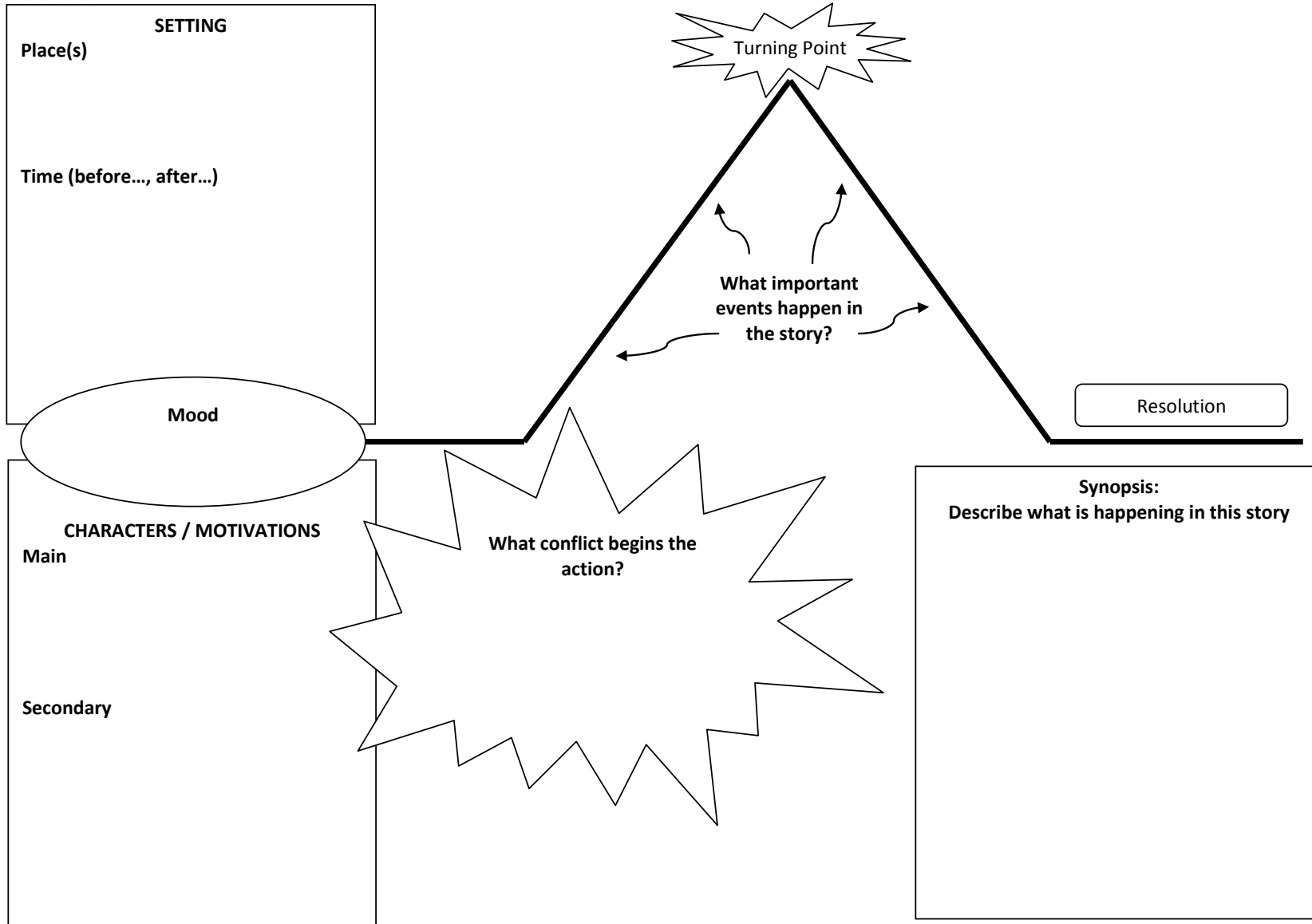
- Play the musical examples in class and use the commentaries provided online to familiarize your students with the music, its significance, and its context within the opera.
- Play these selections many times over multiple classes so students become familiar with the music.

I can understand the historical, cultural, and social context of the opera.

- Refer to the *Cultural and Historical Timeline* in the student version of the *Backstage Pass!*
- Lead a discussion on which events on the timeline students feel have had the most impact on their own lives and why.
- Ask students to research three historical events to add to the timeline. Have them explain their choices and their connection with the opera.
- Encourage students to choose a work of literature or art and make their own cultural/historical timeline of events relevant to the selected work. As a class, explore similarities and differences of works from the same time period. What influences can be found across genres or specific works?

I can use the essential vocabulary associated with the production of modern opera and musical theater.

- Refer to the [Opera Terminology](#) on page 6 of this guide.
- Encourage students to research and define these terms, then compose sentences using them appropriately.
- Give each student a card with either a term or a definition. Have students find the partner who matches their card.



In addition to the student *Backstage Pass!* and this teacher resource guide, we have provided a series of online resources for you to explore and share with your students. Point your browser to www.lyricopera.org/schooltickets to learn more about the following:

Musical Highlights

All operas and musicals have a few special musical high points that become everybody's favorites—or the “hits” of the show. We have provided audio files and commentaries to these musical highlights online.

If all you do is play these examples in class once a day for even just a few days, your students will get much more out of the performance. Hearing a familiar tune makes all the difference!

You can extend learning by orienting your students with the story and the locations of these musical moments in the action and by sharing some of the observations noted in the commentaries online.

Composer and Librettist Biographies

Learn more about the lives and times of the composers and librettists who brought these timeless stories to the stage. Online, students can see pictures of these artistic giants and read more about their childhood, their important works, and how they collaborated on projects.

Behind the Scenes at Lyric Opera

Have you ever wondered how an opera is produced at Lyric, what ‘tech week’ is, or when the Civic Opera House was built? Go online to check out a series of articles that pull back the curtain on what happens behind the scenes at Lyric. Topics include:

- **History of the Civic Opera House**
- **Tech Week and the Production Process**
- **Sets**
- **Costumes**
- **The Rehearsal Process**
- **Running the Show and ‘Calling’ the Performance**



Photo: Lynn Lane/Houston Grand Opera

Opera shares many of the same words and terminology found in theatre and other musical forms. However, there are a few terms that are unique to opera and operatic singing that may be helpful when trying to understand, interpret, and speak about the art form.

act - a group of scenes with a common theme, such as a specific time or place, forming a major section of the opera

aria - a musical piece sung by one person, usually about the emotions a character is feeling; arias are the songs in opera

baritone - the middle-range male voice; often plays the villain or a second hero who loses to the main hero

bass - the lowest male voice; often plays an older man or a comic role

bravo - Italian for "nicely done"; audience members who really like a performance often shout "bravo!" while applauding

chorus - a musical piece sung by a group of people; also a name for a large group of singers

coloratura - singing long, fast, rapid strings of notes; usually a soprano technique

composer - a person who writes music

conductor - the person who leads the musical performance

duet - a musical piece sung by two people

finale - the final musical number in an opera (or an act), often involving multiple people

libretto - the words or script of an opera

mezzo-soprano - the middle range female voice; often plays the female villain or a young boy

opera - a play in which the story is told through music and singing

operetta - literally a "small opera," usually comic, generally shorter than an opera, with popular-style music (for its time) that stops for spoken dialogue

overture - a musical introduction to an opera played by the orchestra

production - the scenery, staging, and costumes of an opera

quartet - a musical piece sung by four people

recitative - sung dialogue, usually more about telling the story than about emotions; recitatives are the conversations in opera

score - a book of all the vocal and instrumental music for an opera

soprano - highest female voice; often plays the heroine of the story

supernumerary - a performer with a non-singing role, like an "extra" in a movie

tenor - the highest male voice (usually); often plays the hero of the story

titles - English translations of what's being sung projected on a screen above the stage

trio - a musical piece sung by three people

trouser role - a boy's role played by a woman

A great audience is essential to a great performance experience. Opera performances can be very powerful and moving, especially when the audience members are fully engaged in what they are seeing and hearing.

Here are some tips to make sure you and the other 3,562 audience members at the Civic Opera House are able to fully enjoy a day at the opera:

- **There is no dress code.** Dressing up can be fun though, and lots of people do it when they go to the opera.
- **Be in your seat on time.** The opera curtain waits for no one! Be sure you are in your seat before the show begins.
- **Turn off your phone and other devices.** Sounds and light put off by cell phones or other electronic devices are very distracting to other audience members and the performers.
- **Remain quiet during the performance.** The opera house has stellar acoustics, and even very quiet sounds may be heard throughout the theater.
- **Photography and audio/video recording during the performance is strictly prohibited.** Before and after are OK.
- **If you enjoy what you're hearing, let the singers know!** Besides the usual applause, opera goers really do shout, "bravo!" at the end of a great number. (Or brava if the singer is a woman or bravi if more than one singer is involved.)
- **The Civic Opera House is a part of Chicago's cultural history.** Please help us keep it beautiful so the community can enjoy it for many years to come.

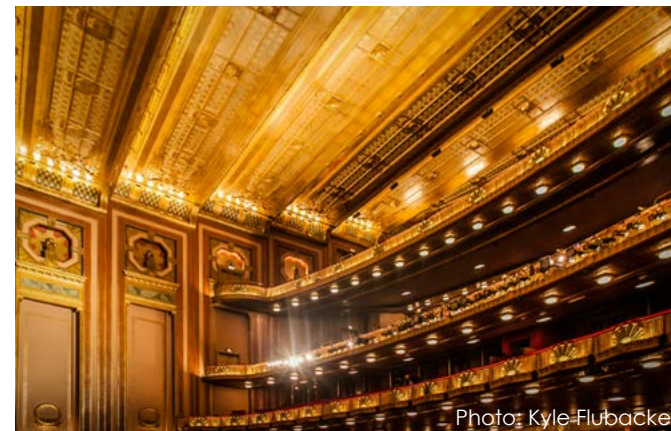


Photo: Kyle-Flubacker

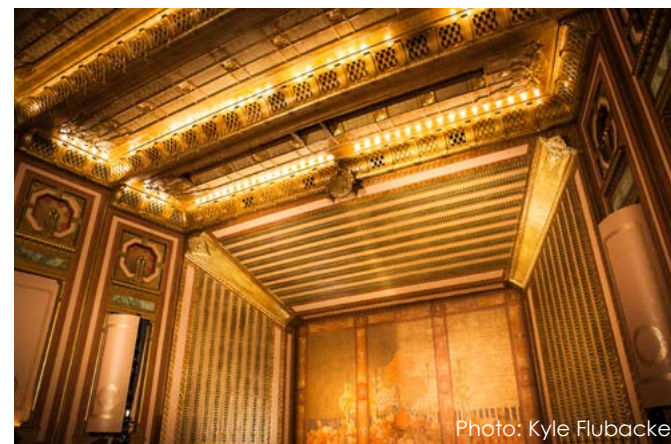


Photo: Kyle Flubacker

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Civic Opera House Quick Facts:

- The building was completed in 1929.
- The current opera company, Lyric Opera of Chicago, was founded in 1954.
- The theater seats 3,563 people.
- The theater is so tall it occupies 6 stories of building space and the flyspace above the stage goes up 12 stories!
- The fire curtain (the big painted sliding door that closes off the stage—in the upper photo) is 9 inches thick at its narrowest point and weighs more than 20 tons!

These activities are designed to help you quickly and easily develop effective lesson plans built around clear objectives. Objectives are written in "I Can" statements using student-friendly language, and all activities can be used to address state and national learning standards found on page 9 of this guide.

Objectives:

- I can describe the experience of attending a Lyric performance.
- I can explain to others what aspect of the performance impacted me the most.
- I can write a critical review of the performance.

Activities:

I can describe the experience of attending a Lyric performance.

Ask students to write a paragraph reflecting on:

- Their favorite part of the performance
- Something new they learned about opera from the experience
- What part of the experience differed from their expectations

I can explain to others what aspect of the performance impacted me the most.

1. Make a list with the class of parts of the experience that interested them: sets, costumes, dramatic themes, music, audience etiquette, building architecture, etc.
2. Divide the class into groups according to the listed categories and ask each group to come up with a creative way, *other than a lecture presentation*, to reflect on their experiences with content in that category.



Photo: Jaelyn Simpson

I can write a critical review of the performance.

1. First, ask students to create two lists:
 - 1) Facts about the performance: who sang which roles, what the costumes looked like, the setting, etc.
 - 2) Opinions they felt about the performance: how well the singers sang, if they liked the costumes, and whether or not they felt the setting was appropriate for the story. Be sure students address what they saw and *heard* at the performance.
2. Next, guide students to use their lists to write a brief description of the performance (facts) and what they thought about it (opinions).
3. Then, encourage students to write about what they liked best about the performance and if they would recommend the opera to other people.
4. Have students organize these components into one coherent critical review.
5. To extend this activity, ask students to come up with five new adjectives to describe what they saw and heard at the performance. Encourage students to revise their first draft to include this more descriptive language where appropriate.
6. Share the reviews with the school media team and [Lyric Unlimited](#).

Preparing for, and attending, a performance at Lyric Opera may address the following state and national student learning standards:

Illinois Arts Learning Standards

Music

Responding – MU:Re7.1.8b. Describe how understanding context and the elements of music inform the response to music.
Responding – MU:Re8.1.7a. Identify the meaning of musical selections, referring to the elements of music and context.
Responding – MU:Re9.1.8. Explain the influence of experience, analysis, and context on interest in and evaluation of music.
Connecting – MU:Cn11.1.8a. Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life as developmentally appropriate.

Theatre

Responding/Interpret – Pr8.b. Interpret how culture influences a performance.
Responding/Evaluate – Pr9.a. Develop and apply criteria to evaluate a drama/theatre work.
Responding/Evaluate – Pr9.b. Evaluate the effectiveness of the technical elements.
Responding/Evaluate – Pr9.c. Establish an active relationship between audience and performer.
Connecting/Empathize – Pr10.a. Explore the connections of theatre artists to their community and the world at large.
Connecting/Research – Pr11.2.a. Research societal, historical, and cultural context for a performance.

Common Core English Language Arts Anchor Standards

Reading

R.2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
R.3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Writing

W.4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Speaking and Listening

SL.1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Social Emotional Learning Standards

3A.5b. Examine how the norms of different societies and cultures influence their members' decisions and behaviors.