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OPERA WESTERN RESERVE
PRESENTS



Student Study
Guide

Introduction

A beginner’s guide to opera and how it relates to classic fairy tales with a fine arts twist!

This study guide is presented by OWR’s Emerging Artists and was created by the Education Department at Henry H. Stambaugh Auditorium Association.

What is an opera?

An opera is a type of performance that is similar to a stage play, with people acting as different characters and presenting a story in front of an audience. Most often, though, every single word in an opera is sung.

What will I see and hear in this production?

This is a recording of a live performance by the 2021 troupe of Opera Western Reserve Emerging Artists. It is a retelling of the classic story of *The Three Little Pigs* using musical excerpts from famous operas by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart with a modern English libretto by John Davies. The company consists of a soprano (the classification of a female singer with the highest vocal range), a tenor (a male singer with the highest range), and two baritones (male singers with a middle to low range), accompanied by a pianist.

About *The Three Little Pigs*

The Three Little Pigs is a fable about three pigs who build three houses of different materials. A Big Bad Wolf blows down the first two pigs’ houses, made of straw and sticks respectively, but is unable to destroy the third pig’s house, made of bricks. It is a story that has been around for over 150 years and has been told in many different forms. In the version you’re about to see, a little girl pig saves her home from the wolf’s huffing and puffing by learning how to build a strong house from a book at the library! It is told using musical excerpts from four famous Mozart operas – *The Marriage of Figaro* (1786), *Don Giovanni* (1787), *Così fan tutte* (1790), and *The Magic Flute* (1791). (The three pigs are even named after characters from the first three in that list!)

Do you remember a particular aria, duet, trio, or quartet from the opera? Give an example of what was happening in the story during one of these.

Have you ever heard or seen an opera before? If so, how did this compare? If not, was this similar to what you expected? How so?

Discussion Questions

Did you know the story of *The Three Little Pigs* before seeing this opera? What were some similarities and differences between other versions that you know?

Meet the Company



- *Director* – Robert Pierce
- *Musical Director/Accompanist* – Jon Simsic

Character Name	Character Description	Actor Name	Voice Type
Despina	A little girl who loves the library	Rebecca Enlow	Soprano
Cherubino	Despina's older brother	Emilio Santiago	Tenor
Don Giovanni	Despina's younger brother	Alexander Kluchar	Baritone
Wolfgang Bigbad	The Big Bad Wolf	Robert Pierce	Baritone

About the Original Creators



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(Composer)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) was one of the most influential, popular and prolific composers of the classical period. He composed over 600 works, including some of the most famous and loved pieces of symphonic, chamber, operatic, and choral music. Mozart was born in Salzburg to a musical family. From an early age, the young Mozart showed all the signs of a prodigious musical talent.

By the age of 5 he could read and write music, and he would entertain people with his talents on the keyboard. By the age of 6 he was writing his first compositions. Mozart was generally considered to be a rare musical genius, though Mozart said that he was diligent in studying other great composers such as Haydn and Bach.



John Davies (Librettist)

John Davies has performed with opera companies throughout the United States, including the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, and the opera companies of Boston, Philadelphia, Atlanta, St. Louis, Salt Lake City, Kansas City, Omaha, Cincinnati, Phoenix, Nashville, and Anchorage. He has also performed in concert as bass-baritone soloist with the symphony orchestras of Boston, San Francisco, St. Louis, Detroit, San Antonio,

Indianapolis, Chattanooga and Syracuse.

A father of six children, and grandfather of many more, John takes an active interest in the performing arts for young people. His operas for young audiences have been presented by more than 150 opera companies and university opera programs in the United States and Canada.

Operas: What to Listen For

Different operas tell different stories, but most operas have musical similarities. For instance, the first thing that happens in an opera is the **overture** (or prelude), which is played by the instruments before anyone sings a note. It can be several minutes long or as short as a few seconds, but it is there to get the audience in the right mood (and often includes melodies the singers will perform later on). Based on the music of the overture, you can tell if what you're about to see is a happy opera, a sad opera, or something in between.

Once the singers come on stage and begin to perform, the story unfolds with the help of several different kinds of music. When one singer is performing by himself, this is called an **aria**, which is the Italian word for "air." Arias are used for characters to express their inner feelings about a moment in the story. When two singers sing together, this is called a **duet**. Mostly, the characters in a duet interact with each other in a sort of conversation, but they may also just be having separate private thoughts at the same time. In addition to duets, you may also have **trios**, where three singers perform together, or **quartets**, where four singers perform together.

The last piece of music in an opera is called the **finale**. This is usually sung by all of the performers as a way to wrap up the story and give the opera an impressive "big finish." It may tell the audience the moral (or lesson) of the story or simply celebrate the story's happy ending. Either way, it is the audience's last impression of the performance they just watched.

As you watch *The Three Little Pigs*, can you identify the overture, the finale, and all of the arias, duets, trios, and quartets?

Other Musical Words to Remember:

Composer – a person who writes music; in opera, this person sets words to music to tell a story.

Libretto (librettist) – the text/words of an opera (written by the librettist).