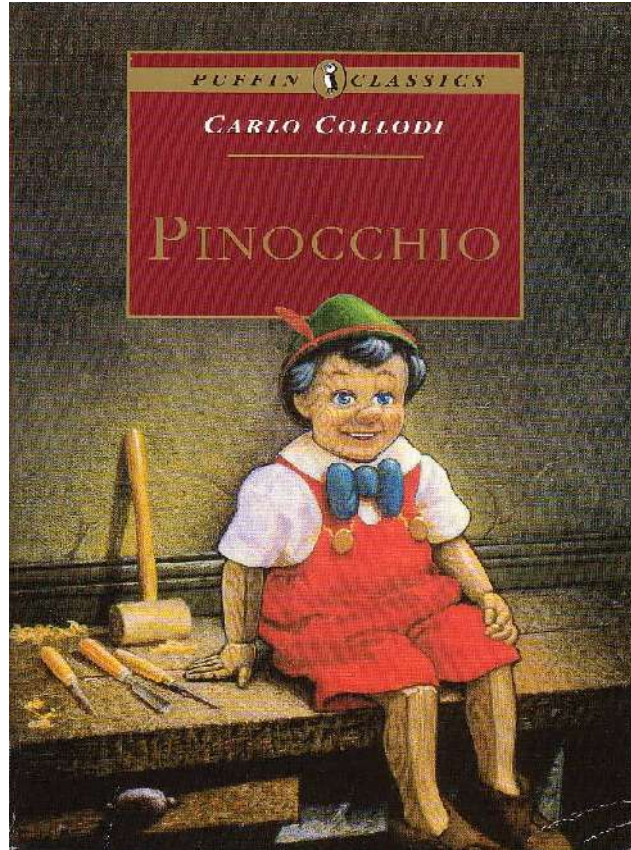


Opera Theatre of Northern Virginia

John Edward Niles, Artistic Director

Presents



Pinocchio

Based on *The Adventures of Pinocchio* by Carlo Collodi

Libretto by Composer Carl Zytowski

With Music by Giaocchino Rossini

STUDY GUIDE

Introduction to Study Guide

Dear Teachers,

Thank you for planning to bring your students to see **Opera Theatre of Northern Virginia's** production of *Pinocchio*. We are providing you with this study guide, which includes activities and discussion questions for use both before and after your class attends the opera, as well as some background information and a bibliography on opera.

Our goal is to help you make the children who will be attending “opera-friendly.” There are several ways this can happen. First, we recommend that they become familiar with the story. Although the opera **WILL NOT** contain everything that is in the book, reading the story (or, in the case a summary is included herein, of younger children, having it read to them) will increase their enjoyment of the performance because they will have some idea of who the characters are and what will be happening. This guide does include however, a synopsis of the “opera-story.”

Second, we hope that you will enlist the help of the music teacher at your school in getting the students acquainted with some of the music. Music for the finale from the opera is included with this study guide. If they can hear this music – not just once but several times, if possible – they may be able to recognize it when they hear it in the performance. This will contribute significantly to creating an opera-friendly audience, because recognition brings ownership.

Finally, going over the material on audience etiquette will help them to know what is expected of them as audience members. A prompt, quite, respectful and appreciative audience is a key ingredient in a successful performance.

The materials and worksheets contained in this study guide may be reproduced for classroom use.

We hope your students will enjoy the experience of seeing *Pinocchio* live on the stage of Opera Theatre of Northern Virginia.

Sincerely,



Miriam Miller

President, Opera Guild of Northern Virginia



This study guide was prepared by Janice Gaynor, Nancy Hall, Mimi Stevens, and Mike Becvar

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The Adventures of Pinocchio by Carlo Collodi

“Once upon a time there was ...

— A king! — that’s what my little readers would immediately say. No, children, you’re wrong. Once upon a time there was a piece of wood.”

Thus begins Collodi’s tale in which Master Cherry, a carpenter, is much disturbed by a piece of wood that laughs and cries and complains when he starts to carve it. So he decided to give it to his friend Geppetto, who carves it into a marionette that he hopes will make money for him by dancing, fencing, and turning somersaults.

He called it Pinocchio!

Alas, his creation immediately embarks on a series of pranks that land the old man in jail. This Pinocchio, you see, is a very disobedient puppet that does not like to hear good advice (when the talking cricket reproves him, he kills it with a hammer), is totally selfish, unbelievably rude, and grateful only when he gets his own way — and then only fleetingly.

Left to his own devices, Pinocchio soon grows hungry but his omelet flies out of the window. When he falls asleep with his feet on a foot warmer, he awakens the next day with his feet all burned off. He is genuinely miserable and very relieved when kindly Geppetto returns, gives his own breakfast to the marionette, and even sells his own coat to buy an A-B-C book so the puppet can go to school.

But then the ungrateful boy succumbs to the lure of the stage, sells his A-B-C book and heads for the marionette theater where the puppets hail him as their brother Pinocchio. Then the director, Fire Eater, happens along, and Pinocchio almost gets used as firewood. Pinocchio pleads his cause so well that Fire Eater takes pity on him, hands him five gold pieces for his father Geppetto, and sends him home. On the way, the marionette meets a fox and a cat and, against the advice of the ghost of the talking cricket, follows them to the City of Simple Simons. On the way, they stop at the Inn of the Red Lobster where he falls into the hands of assassins who chase him, catch him, and hang him from the branch of a giant oak tree.

Fortunately, the Lovely Maiden with Azure Hair saves him, puts him to bed and calls three doctors. However, Pinocchio lies about the whereabouts of his gold pieces and discovers to his horror that his nose grows longer and longer. The fairy of course is well aware of what he is doing.

“How do you know I am lying?”

“Lies, my boy, are known in a moment. There are two kinds of lies, lies with short legs and lies



with long noses. Yours, just now, happen to have long noses.”

The incorrigible Pinocchio runs into the fox and the cat again. The pair convince him to come with them to the Field of Wonders to sow the gold pieces he has been given. Supposedly they will turn into many times that number. Not surprisingly Pinocchio loses his gold pieces, lands in jail, and is later released. Meanwhile, Geppetto has set out in a little boat to find his beloved wooden son in the New World, and is swallowed by a shark.

After a series of misadventures, Pinocchio eludes pursuers by jumping into the sea, where a shark swallows him. Now who should live inside that shark besides a friendly tunny fish? Geppetto, Pinocchio’s beloved father, that’s who! After a few false starts they manage to exit from the shark’s mouth. Alas, they are exhausted and in danger of drowning. Just when they are ready to give up, along comes the tunny who copied their escape and now gives them a ride to shore. On land they pass the fox and the cat, both fallen on hard times; when they reach a straw cottage there is the cricket who did not after all die.

From now on, Pinocchio is a model son to Geppetto, and everything goes right for him. He makes sacrifices for all who need him, among them the Blue Fairy who is near death. One night he dreams that she approves of him; next morning he discovers that he has become a handsome boy living in a beautiful house, with beautiful clothes and enough money to keep himself and a rejuvenated happy Geppetto.

Over in the corner a marionette droops over a chair, a reminder of the Pinocchio that used to be, because...

“When bad boys become good and kind, they have the power of making their homes gay and new with happiness.”

In Collodi’s complex story, there are many stimuli for diverse emotional and intellectual responses, which careful readers, including prominent Italian and American authors, inspired by the world’s most persistent puppet, have experienced and used in order to shape Pinocchios of their own.



The Opera *Pinocchio*

In Carl Zytowski's libretto, Geppetto, a woodworker, sings as he carves a puppet. He is sad because he doesn't have a son to keep him company and carry on his name. As Geppetto puts the finishing touches on the puppet, which he calls Pinocchio, the puppet suddenly comes alive. Geppetto decides to sell his good coat so he'll have money to buy a spelling book for Pinocchio and send him to school with money in his pocket.

As Pinocchio leaves for school with the spelling book and four silver coins, Geppetto warns him "Never talk to strangers." On the way, Pinocchio decides to skip school and run away. Walking down a country road, he meets a cricket, who tells him it is "very, very wrong to disobey and run away." Pinocchio ignores the cricket's warning and keeps on walking. Soon he meets a lame fox and a blind cat. They tell Pinocchio that they know how he can double his money, but first they'd like Pinocchio to take them to lunch at a nearby inn where they know the hostess. After buying a big lunch for everyone, Pinocchio decides to take a nap. While he is asleep, the fox and cat, in disguise, steal Pinocchio's purse. When Pinocchio awakes and finds his purse is gone, they tie him to a tree and abandon him. Pinocchio is rescued by a blue-haired fairy, the cricket, an owl, and a crow. When the fairy asks Pinocchio what happened to him, he begins to tell her lies, and with each lie, his nose grows longer and longer. The fairy scolds Pinocchio for lying, and tells him that if he stops lying and goes back home to Geppetto, he will become a "real" boy. She also promises that if he does an unselfish deed, his nose will return to normal size.

Pinocchio promises to stop lying and sets out to find his father. Walking along the seashore, he again meets the cat and fox, who tell him that Geppetto was lost at sea while searching for him. Pinocchio is determined to find his father no matter what the danger, but the fox and cat throw him into the sea, where he is swallowed by a whale. Inside the whale, Pinocchio finds Geppetto sitting in his rowboat and fishing! The two build a fire to cook fish for dinner, and the smoke causes the whale to sneeze so hard that he blows them out onto the shore. The blue-haired fairy turns Pinocchio into a real boy and rewards him for finding his father by returning his nose to normal size. All then join in a happy song of farewell to the audience.

Note: The text for the opera is based on the original 1883 story by Carlo Collodi.

Setting for *Pinocchio*

There are seven locations:

- The carpentry shop
- A roadside or countryside
- The Inn
- The forest
- The seaside
- Inside the whale
- The shore

Characters in *Pinocchio*

Geppetto – a poor, hard working, village carpenter who is good at what he does and under-appreciated for his long life of good deeds to society.

Pinocchio – a puppet who is characterized several times as “foolish.” Naively rebellious – wants to “discover the world” and “have fun.” He is like most kids! He does not realize the consequences of his actions. He makes promises easily but has a hard time following through. And, he genuinely wants to be a good boy, though, and eventually finds his way.

Hostess – trying to earn a decent living in a part of the forest where few customers are seen. Nice enough, but gives nothing away for free.

Fairy – the “spirit of the forest” with blue or turquoise hair. Commands the animals and is Pinocchio's guide.

Creatures of the forest:

- **Cricket** – a wise advisor
- **Fox and Cat** – thieves, crooks, and eventually try to hang Pinocchio
- **Owl and Crow** – reputed doctors
- **Mice** – the fairy's little minions or servants

Whale – swallows Pinocchio



About the Music included in this Study Guide

The following pages give a sample of the music of *Pinocchio*. The original scoring called for two pianos and harmonium, a combination favored by Rossini. For this study material the piano parts have been combined where possible, and the harmonium part eliminated, so that it is possible to play the accompaniment on a single piano. If a pianist is available who can read open vocal score, it may be possible to play the vocal quartet parts as a quartet. There was no way, within the scope of this study guide, to provide a playable version incorporating both vocal and instrumental parts, but even hearing the vocal and piano parts separately may help give the students some idea of the style of the music.

16. Finale - The Company

Allegretto (♩ = 76)

Fairy Cricket
Pinocchio Hostess
Cat Owl
Gepetto Fox Crow
Pf. I

On then, to new ad - ven - tures, now that our tale is
On then to new ad - ven - tures, now that our tale is
On then to new ad - ven - tures, now that our tale is
On then to new ad - ven - tures, now that our tale is

Allegretto (♩ = 76)

F./Cr.
P./H.
C./O.
F./Cw
Pf. I

end - ed. Was - n't the sto - ry splen - did? Was - n't the sto - ry fun? Glad that you came a -
end - ed. Was - n't the sto - ry splen - did? Was - n't the sto - ry fun? Glad that you came a -
end - ed. Was - n't the sto - ry splen - did? Was - n't the sto - ry fun? Glad that you came a -
end - ed/ Was - n't the sto - ry splen - did? Was - n't the sto - ry fun? Glad that you came a -

6

F./Cr. long! Come join in hap - py song, join us in

P./H. long! Come join in hap - py song, join us in

C./O. long! Come join in hap - py song, join us in

G./F./Cw long! Come join in hap - py song, join us in

Pf.I *mf* *8va*

8

F./Cr. song! Sing on, sing on, sing on, sing

P./H. song! Sing on, sing on, sing on, sing on, sing on, sing

C./O. song! Sing on, sing on, sing on, sing on, sing on, sing on, sing

F./Cw song! Sing on, sing on, sing on, sing on, sing on, sing on, sing

Pf.I *mf staccato*

10

cresc.

F./Cr. *f*

P./H. *cresc.* *f*

C./O. *cresc.* *f*

i./F./Cw *cresc.* *f*

Pf.I *cresc.* *f* *fz* *fz* *fz* *fz* *fz* *fz*

on. Come, join our mer - ry, our mer - ry throng, make mus - ic with us the whole day

12

ff

F./Cr. *mf*

P./H. *ff* *mf*

C./O. *ff* *mf*

i./F./Cw *ff* *mf*

Pf.I *ff* *mf staccato*

long, whole day long, sing on! Sing —

long, whole day long, sing on! Sing — on, sing —

long, whole day long, sing on! Sing — on, sing — on, sing —

long, whole day long, sing on! Sing — on, sing — on, sing on, sing

14

F./Cr. *cresc.* on, sing on, sing on, sing on, sing on! Come, join our mer - ry, our mer - ry

P./H. *cresc.* on, sing on, sing on, sing on, sing on! Come, join our mer - ry, our mer - ry

C./O. *cresc.* on, sing on, sing on, sing on, sing on! Come, join our mer - ry, our mer - ry

i./F./Cw *cresc.* on, sing on, sing on, sing on, sing on! Come, join our mer - ry, our mer - ry

Pf.I *cresc.* *f*

16

F./Cr. *cresc.* through, make mus - ic with us the whole day long, whole day long, sing *ff*

P./H. *cresc.* through, make mus - ic with us the whole day long, whole day long, sing *ff*

C./O. *cresc.* through, make mus - ic with us the whole day long, whole day long, sing *ff*

i./F./Cw *cresc.* through, make mus - ic with us the whole day long, whole day long, sing *ff*

Pf.I *fz* *fz* *cresc.* *fz* *fz* *ff*

(All wave goodbye; the WHALE appears and winks to the audience.)

18

F./Cr. on!

P./H. on!

C./O. on!

G./F./Cw on!

Pf.I

20

F./Cr.

P./H.

C./O.

G./F./Cw

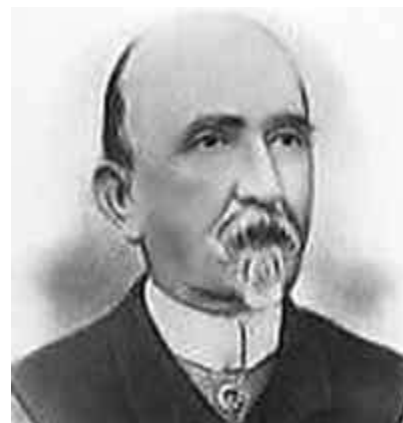
Pf.I

End of the Opera

About Carlo Collodi

The Author of the Book *The Adventures of Pinocchio*

Carlo Collodi is the pen-name of Carlo Lorenzini, who lived from 1826 until 1890. Although he created one of the most famous father and son pairings, Carlo Lorenzini was a lifelong bachelor. Born in Florence, the son of a cook and a servant, he called himself Collodi, which is the name of his mother's native town near Pescia in Tuscany. Most of his childhood was spent in the rough and tumble of the streets of his native Florence, but he acquired a broad literary and musical education in a seminary, frequented lively cultural circles, and traveled extensively.



In his early twenties, Collodi became a writer. When the movement for Italian national unification spread, he gravitated toward politics. Twice he served as a soldier — once in 1848 when Tuscany rose in revolt against its Hapsburg rulers, and again in the war between Italy and Austria in 1859. Journalist, playwright, author, reviewer, newspaper editor and founder, he had many strings to his bow.

Children's fantasy had always attracted him. In the 1850s, he had already begun to have a variety of both fiction and non-fiction books published. In 1876 he translated some French literary fables such as "Little Red Riding Hood", "Sleeping Beauty", and "Puss in Boots". Then he began to write his own children's stories.

In 1881 he sent a story to a newspaper editor / friend in Rome: a short episode in the life of a wooden puppet. With it went a letter asking whether the editor would be interested in publishing this "bit of foolishness" in his children's section. The editor did and the children loved it, although the church fathers expressed fear that the naughty puppet might encourage rebelliousness in children.

Collodi died in 1890. His fame didn't really begin to grow until *Pinocchio* was first translated into English in 1892. In Italy his fortunes were bolstered by the powerful philosopher-critic Benedetto Croce, who said of *Pinocchio* that "the wood out of which Pinocchio is carved is humanity itself."

About Carl Zytowski

The Librettist for the Opera *Pinocchio*

Carl Zytowski is Professor of Music, Emeritus, University of California, Santa Barbara, where he joined the faculty in 1951, teaching voice, conducting and directing the UCSB Opera Theater. He is a composer and arranger of a number of published works for chorus, composer of three operas, author of four operas for children, and has authored performing translations of a number of operas and artsongs. For the opera *Pinocchio* he has adapted the music from songs written by the composer Gioacchino Rossini.

About Gioacchino Rossini

The Composer of the Opera *Pinocchio*

For the score, librettist Carl Zytowski has turned to one of the most melodious, charming, energizing composers of all time: Gioacchino Rossini, who lived from 1792 until 1868. His *Barber of Seville* is opera's best known character — with a bit of help from Bugs Bunny, of course. And his *William Tell Overture* is the most familiar piece of music, with a bit of help from the Lone Ranger ...

Rossini is also history's most famous case of "burnout". After finishing his 39th opera *William Tell* in 1829, he dropped out of the operatic rat race to become Paris' Grand Old Man. There he presided over the most famous salon in the city, frequented by everybody who was anybody in the world of music.

The only compositions dribbling from his pen were little songs and piano pieces which he collectively called his *Sins of Old Age*: over 150 charming little works that delighted the visitors, performers and participants gathered at his famous Saturday evenings. From these Carl Zytowski selected a few that he then transformed into 16 numbers with recitative to create the opera *Pinocchio*.



Teaching Ideas

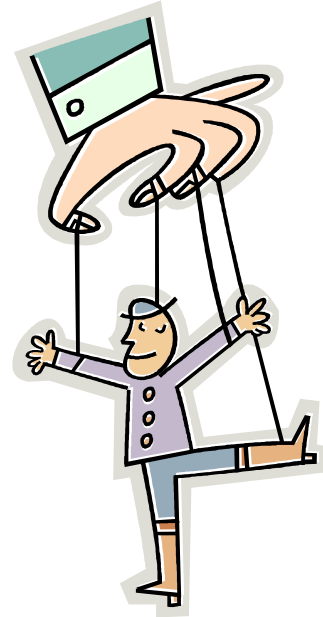
Discussion points

- While Pinocchio was a puppet, he had many of the characteristics of a real boy. Examples: sense of adventure, concern (and sometimes lack of concern) for his father and friends; a desire to get rich quick. Identify one of Pinocchio's most important characteristics. Use examples from the story to justify your selection.
- During his adventures Pinocchio learned that some traits, such as selfishness, naivete, dishonesty, and stubbornness, can get you into trouble. Has that happened to you? Compare your experience with Pinocchio's.
- Pinocchio didn't realize that the cat and the fox were up to no good when he met them. However, the author gave the reader several hints about their evil intent. What were they?
- When Pinocchio told a lie, his nose grew longer. Do real people sometimes change their appearance when they are not telling the truth? Describe some examples.
- The author gave the cat, fox, cricket, owl and crow human characteristics. They could talk, think, and act like people. Why did the author do that? Giving animals human traits is called personification. Can you name other stories in which the author uses personification?
- Geppetto, Pinocchio's father, showed his love for the puppet in many ways. Name some of them. How did Pinocchio respond?
- Some of the characters in Pinocchio were either all good or all bad. We call them stereotypes. Others were more like real people and showed both good and bad traits. Which characters were stereotypes? Which seemed more like real people? Why?
- If you could make a puppet who would be your friend, what would he look like? Would the puppet be a boy or a girl? Would he or she be smiling or serious? Describe your ideal puppet and tell why you would design him that way.
- As a result of his adventures, Pinocchio learned some important lessons. What were they? Do you recall having an experience in which you learned something important?



Activities

- Create a puppet show. Divide the class into three or four groups. Have each group plan and present its version of Pinocchio. Students can use any type of puppet—regular, hand, finger, etc. The entire class can make the puppet stage and basic scenery.
- Make a diorama (shoe box size). Students should make believe they are scene designers for a stage show of Pinocchio. They are to design and build their favorite scene from the story. Or, after seeing the opera, they can create their favorite scene from the opera.
- Make a jointed puppet. Each student can make the puppet of cardboard and use brass paper fasteners for joints. Attach string for movement. Clothing can be paper or cloth.
- Select a game the class plays at recess or in gym. First, students should play the game as regular boys and girls. Then they can try to play as if they are puppets like Pinocchio. Which way is easier? Why? Which would they rather be?
- Five extra minutes? Try having the class, as seated puppets, do the following:
 - raise hand, arm
 - stand up
 - walk
 - sit down
 - put head down



Audience Etiquette

Your students may not have experienced attending a live theater performance before. Please take time in class to prepare your students and chaperones by reviewing the following keys to being a good audience member.

ARRIVE EARLY.

Please schedule time for your class to use the restrooms BEFORE the performance begins. To have groups or individuals leave during the performance is very distracting and inconsiderate for other audience members and performers alike.

QUIET PLEASE.

Explain the difference between “live theater” and television to your students. Singers and actors need to be heard by everyone, so this means the audience must help them out by remaining silent. Whispering, talking to your neighbor, kicking seats, etc. can hinder everyone’s concentration, including the performers.



BE RESPECTFUL.

Inform your students that running, pushing, throwing and yelling are not proper behavior at the theater. Classes should enter the building in a single file accompanied by chaperones. Follow the instructions of the ushers: they are there to assist you. No food, gum, cameras, radios, toys or recording devices are allowed in the theater.

THINGS THAT GO BEEP.

For the enjoyment of the entire audience you should turn off cell phones, pagers, and beeping watches, etc...

SHOW APPRECIATION.

Each performer has worked very hard to bring you the best possible production. Encourage your students to show their appreciation to the cast by applauding at the end of a scene or musical number. Performers bow at the end of the production to show their appreciation to the audience. The audience may shout “Bravo!” to thank the performers for a job well done.



WHEN TO CLAP.

This is always a fear for someone who is spending a night at the opera for the first time. As a general rule of thumb, there are a few key places when clapping is a good idea, assuming that the level of the performance warrants clapping:

- When the conductor comes out to start the overture.
- When everyone else around you is clapping.
- At the end of an act or the end of the opera and the opera singers are taking bows.

Follow-up Activities

After you attend the opera:

- Have students write letters of thanks to the performers, or to Opera Guild of Northern Virginia, describing their reaction to the opera.

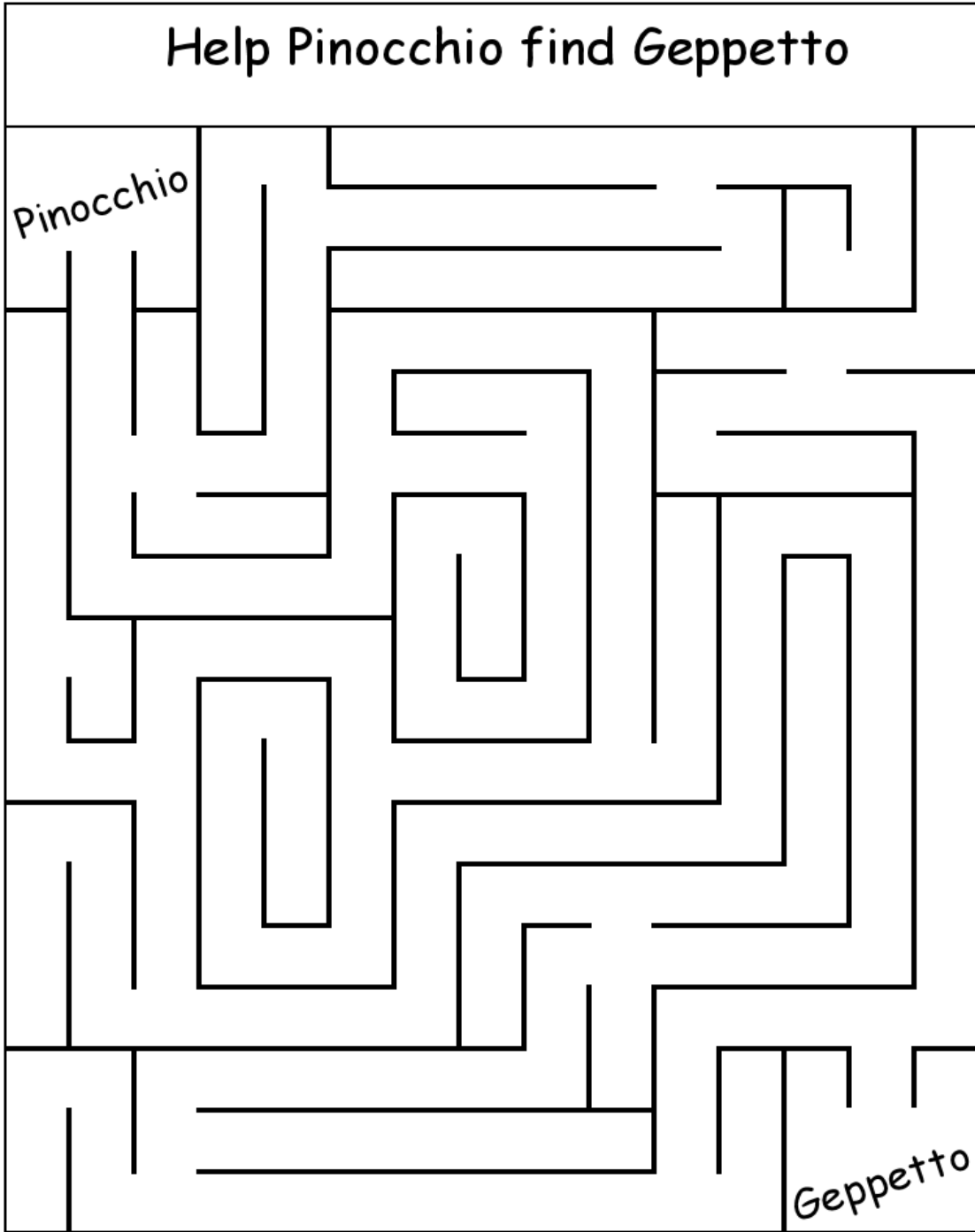
Send your letters, pictures or other creations to
Opera Guild of Northern Virginia
4620 Lee Highway, Suite 212
Arlington, VA 22207

- Discuss with students the use of the voice, the discipline of the opera singers (they sing, dance, and act; they read music fluently, they speak several different languages, and practice every day.)
- Discuss the characters of *Pinocchio*.
- Talk about the set and costumes: how did these elements help the audience understand who the characters were?
- Talk about the use of lights: what would the opera have looked like without theatrical lighting?
- Have students pretend they work for a newspaper and write a review of the performance.

Follow up Discussions

When Collodi was writing *Pinocchio* in 1881, times were very bad in Italy and people were starving. There were multiple states in Italy and multiple languages in each of those states. Part of Collodi's work assignments were to promote the universal use of what became the common Italian language we know today. In his book, hunger often comes up. Once, *Pinocchio* eats the only food in the house---3 pears. He eats the stems, seeds, and skin, leaving nothing for his father to eat.

Discuss how those times compare with our lives in 2009. Is hunger an issue today in your life? Do you hear more about "feed the hungry" or about "childhood obesity"? Is one language encouraged over the others? Which one? Is that a good idea?



Pinocchio Maze

Pinocchio Word Search

A O T J E M E Z G U V A P U J T B A Y M T X
M U S E T S K M S G W R C P U Z C S F O R B
Y M D C K Q O Z I H Z X T T R S T O R Y U Y
E S E I L C F N A H X O R E O C Q B F A T P
G G B A E A I L A W N A E G N R D G T R H B
K I Z I T N E R R Y D W Y R M O S B J E U J
C P H H H E C E C I D T F R Y V R S K P N O
D K E X U O T E R T E P I N O C C H I O X T
V R T T T N G E A C R I D O L L O C O F A T
Q K F N E A C Y J Y U T G P V L F N W Z K E
E L U P T T P F Y U T B J W F U A G O K M P
N T R S O E R N M X N A Q T U R D V S N L P
P A M R D N A S Y V E R Z C P C L G I P U E
C W Q P H D Y H V U V I N O G B W K S Y X G
I V A K V I T R K E D T S E B O S P V P Y H
V N U F X N Y M I O A O W A S T R I N G S R
C F L F D G L B V A F N N T E P P U P F J U
O Y W I U X L O R W F E W V O G S D E G V Y

Find the following words

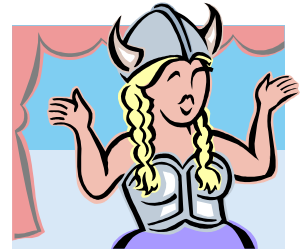
ACTORS
ADVENTURE
AUDIENCE
BARITONE
CARPENTER
COLLODI
CRICKET
DIRECTOR

ENDING
FAIRY
FATHER
GEPETTO
LIES
NOSE
OPERA
PINOCCHIO

PUPPET
SOPRANO
STAGE
STORY
STRINGS
TENOR
TRUTH
WHALE

History of Opera

Opera is an Italian word that means *work* and it comes from the Latin plural *opus*. This word origin suggests the combination of several “works” including music, drama, and dance. Opera is music *and* theater. Opera is a play in which all (or nearly all) the words are sung instead of spoken. In an opera, both the **composer** (the person who writes the music) and the **librettist** (the person who writes the words) are equally important. Sometimes dancers and a chorus (a large group of people who sing together) are added to create a grander theatrical experience.



Opera began in the late sixteenth century in Florence, Italy. A group of men known as the Camerata Society wanted to recreate music theater as they believed it was done in ancient Greece. Opera became very popular, spreading from Italy to France, England and Germany. Its popularity grew until it peaked during the early and mid-nineteenth century. It became known as “grand opera” because the sets and costumes were elaborate and spectacular. Giuseppe Verdi, who wrote operas such as *Otello*, based on a story by Shakespeare, and *La Traviata*, and Giacomo Puccini, who wrote *Madama Butterfly* and *La Boheme*, remain two of the most popular opera composers who ever lived.

Some well-known twentieth century composers include George Gershwin (American, 1898-1937), Richard Strauss (German, 1864-1949) and the American composers John Adams and Philip Glass, who write operas about events happening today.

Opera is more popular today than ever before. Many people all over the world attend theaters where new and old operas are performed.

WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE?

- A **play** is a staged story told through spoken dialogue. *Romeo and Juliet* is a play written by William Shakespeare.
- A **musical** is a staged story told by interweaving songs and music with spoken dialogue. *Beauty and the Beast* is a musical.
- An **opera** is a staged story that is sung throughout. There is little or no spoken dialogue. *Pinocchio* is an opera.



The Voice

When we think of operatic voices, we think of voices that are big and powerful. Opera singers, unlike popular music singers, do not use microphones. They use their diaphragms (the muscle that helps breathing) to generate a big sound. The voices are very well trained, and it takes many years of hard work to perfect the style.

There are three types of female and three types of male voices, each with its own range. The range is every note that a singer can sing, from the lowest to the highest. These are the names of the voice types:

Soprano	the highest female voice (often the “leading lady”)
Mezzo-soprano	the middle female voice
Contralto	the lowest female voice
Tenor	the highest male voice ((often the “leading man”)
Baritone	the middle male voice
Bass	the lowest male voice (often the villain)

By learning and practicing special techniques, the opera singer can perform for an audience of 10,000 people, be accompanied by choruses and orchestras, go from loud to soft, high to low, and always be heard — without a microphone!

Why don’t opera singers sound like pop or rock singers?

Volume	Opera singers never use microphones. By using controlled breathing, focus of tone, and the resonance of their sinus cavities, they can project their voices naturally. Pop singers use microphones. They project their voices artificially.
Range	Opera singers have developed to the fullest every possible note their voices can reach. Pop singers usually sing in the lower part of their range, called the “chest” voice, which is sometimes called belting.

Can opera singers break glass with their voices?

No. It is impossible for any singer to break glass with his or her own natural voice. Glass can be broken only by focusing the vibrations of sound waves electronically. Your voice would have to be processed through special equipment and machinery to break glass.

How would you categorize your singing voice?



Glossary of Opera Terms

Acoustics

The science of sound. The qualities of sound in an enclosed space.

Aficionado

A devoted fan or enthusiast.

Apron

The front part of the stage between the curtain and the orchestra pit.

Aria

A solo song that a character uses to express feelings or comment on the action.

Baritone

Middle-range male voice. Often used for characters who act as helpful companions, villains, and sometimes, heroes.

Bass

Lowest male voice. Often used for kings, priests, villains, and sometimes for comic characters.

Bass-Baritone

A male voice which combines the quality of the baritone with the depth of the bass, avoiding the extremes of either range.

Basso Profundo

The most serious bass voice.

Bel Canto

Italian for "beautiful singing." In a *bel canto* style opera, the beauty of singing is more important than the plot or the words.

Blocking

The moving of people around the stage by the stage director to set up the patterns that will be followed during the performance of the opera

Bravo

An Italian word meaning "well done".

Cantata

A piece of vocal music with solos and choruses, often religious.

Chorus

A group of singers usually divided into sections of sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses.

Coloratura

A showy style of singing in which there are many rapid, high passages designed to show off the singer's voice.

Composer

The person who writes music.

Conductor

The person responsible for the musical interpretation of the opera. He or she leads the orchestra and the singers during a performance.

Conservatory

A music school.

Contralto

The lowest female singing voice.

Cover

A replacement for a role in case of illness, also called an "understudy".

Crescendo

Getting progressively louder.

Diminuendo

Getting progressively softer.

Director

The person responsible for the dramatic interpretation of the opera. He or she plans the movement and action of the characters.

Duet

A song for two voices.

Dynamics

The degrees of loudness and softness in music.

Ensemble

A French word that means "together". A group performing together at one time.

Finale

The ending segment of an act or scene. Often very lively.

Gallop

A piece of music in very rapid time. Usually 2/4 time.

Grand Opera

Opera that combines soloists, orchestra, chorus, and ballet with other elements of spectacle. Verdi's *Aida* is an example of grand opera.

Libretto

Literally, “little book”. The text of an opera or musical.

Librettist

The person who writes the libretto.

Mezzo-Soprano

Middle range female voice, between soprano and contralto. Often an older woman, a servant, or a “scarlet” woman. The role of Carmen in Bizet’s opera is for a mezzo-soprano.

Musical

A staged story told by interweaving songs and music with spoken dialogue.

Opera

A play which is all or mostly sung.

Orchestra

The group of musicians who, led by the conductor, accompanies the singers.

Orchestra Pit

The sunken area in front of the stage where the orchestra plays.

Overture

An introduction to an opera or musical played by the orchestra. It often sets the mood for the opera. It may use melodies from the opera.

Patter

Very rapidly sung passages in an opera or musical, often comic.

Pitch

The location of a sound on a scale ranging from high to low.

Play

A staged story told through spoken dialogue.

Plot

The story or main idea.

Quartet

Four people singing together.

Range

Every note that a singer can sing.

Recitative

A sung speech that moves the action along by providing information. It is usually not melodic. It is often accompanied by a harpsichord or piano.

Score

The written music of the opera or other musical composition.

Scenery

The decoration on the stage designed to indicate where the action is taking place.

Set

The decoration on stage.

Set Designer

The person who creates the scenery for the opera.

Solo

Music sung by one performer.

Soprano

The highest female voice. Usually the heroine of the opera.

Staging

The physical movement of characters during a stage production.

Supernumerary

A performer who appears in a non-singing role.

Tempo

The speed of the music.

Tenor

The highest male voice. Usually the hero of the opera.

Trio

Three people singing together.

Upstage/Downstage

The position on stage farthest or nearest the audience. when a performer moves downstage, he goes toward the audience.

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