

OPERA THEATRE OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA

John Edward Niles, Artistic Director and Conductor

with the support of

The Opera Guild of Northern Virginia

PRESENTS

The 2008 Opera for Students and Families

Cinderella

(La Cenerentola)

by

GIOACHINO ROSSINI



“Cinderella”
John Everett Millais

STUDY GUIDE

PREPARED BY

THE OPERA GUILD OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA

Opera Theatre of Northern Virginia

P.O. Box 7027, Arlington, VA 22207
703-528-1433 www.novaopera.org

First organized by Arlington music lovers in 1961, the company has grown from amateur productions by volunteers to innovative, professional opera productions. Incorporated in 1967, Opera Theatre is the second oldest opera company in continuous production in the Greater Washington Metropolitan Area. OTNV presents quality opera productions at affordable prices. Many of its operas are sung in English. John Edward Niles became the Artistic Director/Conductor of OTNV in 1981. Since then, he has been at the forefront of producing operas not previously heard in the Greater Washington area--over 75 percent of OTNV's productions have been area premieres.

Opera Guild of Northern Virginia

4620 Lee Highway, Suite 212, Arlington, VA 22207
703-536-7557 www.operaguildnova.org

Founded in 1992 and closely affiliated with the Opera Theatre of Northern Virginia, this volunteer non-profit organization seeks to bring the joy of opera to the local Virginia community and develop regional support for the performing arts through fostering an appreciation for local theater across generations. Introducing children to opera through outreach to parochial, private and public school systems, OGNV helps assemble audiences for OTNV's annual children's production and works with various non-profit groups to develop additional programs related to bringing underprivileged, elderly and new immigrants into the community via an universal appreciation for the arts.

Cinderella by Gioachino Rossini

The Opera Theatre of Northern Virginia will produce *Cinderella*, an abridged English version of Rossini's *La Cenerentola* adapted by the Chicago Lyric Opera for students. The 60-minute production is accompanied by orchestra. An opening narration by one of the characters will help students follow the story, and overheads will enable students to follow the words being sung. A pre-show presentation will help students learn about set construction, opera audience demeanor, operatic voices, and the many skills and crafts that are needed to produce an opera.

<u>School Group Performances:</u>	<u>Tickets:</u>
Tuesday, October 28 at 10 am	\$5 per seat during the school week
Wednesday, October 29 at 10 am	\$6 for students on weekends
Thursday, October 30 at 10 am	\$12 for adults on weekends

All performances are at the
Thomas Jefferson Community Theatre
125 S. Old Glebe Road, Arlington, VA 22204

Reservations and further information:

Make your reservations as soon as possible by contacting Mimi Miller by fax at 703-536-5028, or by e-mail at mcdm1@verizon.net. If you have questions, please call 703-536-7557. When making reservations, please indicate whether you wish information on the Guild's Poster or Art contests, and if you wish a copy of the Guild's Study Guide to the Opera.

A Cautionary Note

The story of Rossini's *Cinderella* is one of many versions of the Cinderella story. It is quite different from the version popularized by the Disney film. Students and parents should be aware of this fact before they see the opera.

Cinderella

The Story of the Opera.

Characters:

Don Magnifico.....	baritone
Clorinda, his daughter.....	soprano
Tisbe, his daughter.....	soprano
Cinderella, his stepdaughter.....	mezzo-soprano
Prince Ramiro.....	tenor
Dandini, the Prince's valet.....	baritone
Alidoro, the Prince's tutor.....	bass-baritone

The Story:

Scene 1. Don Magnifico's house. Alidoro, Prince Ramiro's tutor and a magician, tells us: "Once upon a time, a man named Don Magnifico lived with his two daughters, Clorinda and Tisbe, and a stepdaughter named Cinderella. Cinderella was a sweet, kind, good-natured girl, but her two half-sisters were selfish, foolish, and often mean to her. They liked to make fun of her, and while she did the housework, they would spend their time in front of the mirror, admiring themselves."

As Clorinda and Tisbe try on fancy clothing and jewelry, Cinderella sings a song about a king who found a wife among the common people. Clorinda and Tisbe make fun of her.

Prince Ramiro arrives disguised as a servant. He brings a message that Prince Ramiro has decided to marry and is combing the countryside to find the right girl. Tonight he is giving a ball at his royal palace, and all are invited.

Clorinda and Tisbe order Cinderella to help them prepare for the ball. They wake up their father, who is most annoyed at them until he learns about the ball. He, too, orders Cinderella to help the sisters get ready.

After Clorinda, Tisbe, and Don Magnifico leave the room, Prince Ramiro meets Cinderella. The two young people fall in love.

The Prince's valet, Dandini arrives, disguised as the Prince. Clorinda, Tisbe, and Don Magnifico greet him excitedly. When Cinderella says that she, too, would like to go the ball, they make fun of her. Don Magnifico even denies that Cinderella is his stepdaughter. The Prince is furious at Don Magnifico and full of sympathy for Cinderella. After the

Prince, Dandini, and Don Magnifico leave for the palace, Alidoro arranges to take Cinderella to the ball.

Scene 2. The palace. Dandini, still disguised as the Prince, and Prince Ramiro discuss how unsuitable Clorinda or Tisbe would be as the Prince's bride. When Clorinda and Tisbe arrive, Dandini says that he will marry one of them and the other will marry his servant. As Clorinda and Tisbe protest, Cinderella enters. Her stepsisters do not recognize her. Don Magnifico, however, thinks that she looks familiar. In an ensemble, everyone says they feel they are in a dream.

Dandini sends Don Magnifico and his daughters to the dining room.

Dandini tells Cinderella that he will marry her. Cinderella declines, telling him she is in love with someone else—his servant. Just as Prince Ramiro comes forward and greets Cinderella, the clock strikes midnight and Cinderella runs off.

Dandini returns with a glass slipper Cinderella dropped as she was leaving.

Scene 3. A room in the palace. Don Magnifico confronts Dandini, still thinking that he is the prince. He insists that Dandini decide which daughter he will marry. Dandini reveals that he is the prince's valet. Magnifico is furious. Dandini orders him out of the palace.

Scene 4. Don Magnifico's house. Cinderella is tending the fire. Don Magnifico, Clorinda, and Tisbe return. They are angry and order Cinderella to prepare supper. As a thunderstorm rages, she does so.

Dandini, no longer in disguise, arrives with the Prince. He has Clorinda and Tisbe try on the glass slipper, which, of course, does not fit either of them. When Cinderella arrives, Alidoro insists that she try on the slipper, as well. She does so, and it fits. Prince Ramiro recognizes Cinderella and asks her to marry him and share his kingdom.

Cinderella says that more than a kingdom, she wants a family. She embraces her father and her stepsisters with forgiveness for their mistreatment of her. The opera ends as Cinderella rejoices in her marriage and her reconciliation with her family.

The Music of *Cinderella*

Several selections from Rossini's *La Cenerentola* can be found on YouTube. A Google search for "La Cenerentola" will lead you to these.

Duet between Cinderella and the Prince in which they fall in love.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Awzsisx64eQ&feature=related>

Finale to Act I.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJjsWplxqt8&feature=related>

Cinderella's final arias sung by Federica von Stade

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J67vh5DRURY&feature=related>

A copy of the piano-vocal score (Italian text only) of *La Cenerentola* can be found online at: <http://www.dlib.indiana.edu/variations/scores/scores/html>.

The Composer: Gioachino Rossini*

Gioachino Rossini, one of the most successful Italian opera composers of the 19th century, was born in Pesaro, Italy, on February 29, 1792, into a musical family. His parents began his musical training early, and, by age 6, he was playing the triangle in his father's band. He learned to play the horn, the harpsichord, and the cello. At 10, he began singing solo parts in church; at 13, he appeared for the only time as a singer in an opera. Most importantly, he acquired the skills of musical composition, counterpoint, and scoring.

His talent as a composer was recognized while he was still quite young. He won a prize for one of his compositions at the Conservatory of Bologna when he was only 16. He scored a triumph with his opera *Tancredi* when he was only 21. Shortly afterwards, he was appointed musical director of two opera houses in Naples, including the prestigious Teatro San Carlo. Rossini was renowned for composing quickly. He is said to have composed *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (*The Barber of Seville*), his most famous opera, in two weeks; he later claimed to have written it in ten days. In 1817 at age 25, Rossini composed *La Cenerentola* (*Cinderella*).

Although Rossini's particular gift was for writing comic operas such as *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and *La Cenerentola*, he also composed serious operas, including *Mosé in Egitto* (*Moses in Egypt*), based on the Bible, and *Otello*, based on Shakespeare's tragedy *Othello*.

Wealthy but plagued by serious illness, Rossini went into semi-retirement at age 32 in Paris. He still composed, although not regularly. His last opera, *Guglielmo Tell* (*William Tell*), dates from 1829 when he was only 37 years old. He died at his country home in 1868.

More information about Rossini's life and career can be found at:
<http://w3.rz-berlin.mpg.de/cmp/rossini.html>
http://www.naxos.com/composerinfo/Gioachino_Rossini/26313.htm

Other Music by Rossini

Some of Rossini's music has remained enormously popular to this day. Two frequently performed pieces are the aria "Largo al factotum" from *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (*The Barber of Seville*), and the overture to his opera *Guglielmo Tell* (*William Tell*).

Largo al factotum. In this aria, Figaro, the barber of Seville, brags about how necessary he is to the people of the city because of all the services he provides them, cutting and styling their hair, running errands for them, and helping them with their romantic affairs. Much of the aria is written in the *patter* style typical of comic operas of Rossini's time. The aria includes the famous section in which he repeats his name rapidly as if in many voices, imitating people calling upon him for his help.

Performances of "Largo al factotum" can be found on YouTube.

William Tell Overture. The opera *Guglielmo Tell* tells the story of the legendary Swiss archer. The overture has four parts: 1) a slow passage for low string instruments; 2) a storm section played by the full orchestra; 3) the *ranz des vaches* (call to the cows) featuring the English horn; and 4) a dynamic *gallop* played by the full orchestra, featuring the trumpets. The overture has remained popular, in part because the last section was used as the theme music for the Lone Ranger radio and television programs. The *ranz des vaches* section is frequently used in cartoons to suggest daybreak.

Performances of the *William Tell* Overture can be seen and heard on YouTube.

* Pronounced: Joe-ah-KEY-no Roh-SEE-nee.

Teaching Suggestions

1. The Cinderella story. Many cultures have their own version of the Cinderella story. Have students research some of these.
2. Read the story of Rossini's *Cinderella* to the students, or have the students read it. It may be helpful to do this in sections, checking to see whether the students have grasped what is happening and have a chance to ask clarifying questions.
3. Have students mime the story as it is read to them.
4. Have students act out the story, making up dialogue.
5. Why does the Prince fall in love with Cinderella? Does it help to know that the subtitle of Rossini's opera is "Goodness Triumphant"?
6. Disguises. Disguises play a major role in Rossini's opera *Cinderella*. Have students talk about the use of disguises in stories, films, and television programs they can recall. What purposes do disguises serve? Why do characters in *Cinderella* use disguises? Do their disguises help them achieve their goals?
7. Musical storms. Have students listen to the storm sequence in *Cinderella* and the *William Tell* Overture and compare them. How does Rossini use music to suggest a storm?
8. Costumes. Have students draw costumes for the characters in *Cinderella*. Costumes for Cinderella, Prince Ramiro, Dandini, and Alidoro should take into account that these characters are disguised for at least part of the opera.
9. Have students watch selections from *La Cenerentola* on YouTube.
10. Have students research what else was going on in 1817, the year *La Cenerentola* was first performed.
11. Review. After students have seen a performance, ask them to write a review as if they were newspaper reviewers. Encourage them to comment on all aspects of the performance, including the music, individual performers, acting, scenery, and costumes.

Glossary

acoustics	The science of sound. The qualities of sound in an enclosed space.
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.
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”.
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 <i>Aida</i> 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.
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. Note: The recitative in Rossini’s opera <i>La Cenerentola</i> has been cut in this production.
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.
tempo	The speed of the music.
tenor	The highest male voice. Usually the hero of the opera.
trio	Three people singing together.