



CREATE YOUR OWN OPERA PRODUCTION OR EXHIBITION

Hundreds of students and teachers have found creating their own productions and exhibitions through *Opera is Elementary* to be a richly rewarding and fun experience. The material on the next pages will help you get started. More advice and answers to your specific questions are available from teachers who have produced student operas at City Opera's Teachers' Orientation Retreat each fall or by calling the City Opera Education Department at (212) 870-5642.

City Opera will also provide one visit from a teaching artist to help with specific needs or questions you have related to your production. This visit can be from 2 hours to one day in length, depending on the complexity of your needs and number of participating classes at your school.

START WITH A SCRIPT AND A SETTING

City Opera provides the Script/Libretto to facilitate student productions of *Don Pasquale* in its entirety.

For the most educational value, have students write scenes themselves, or write additional scenes to use with the ones provided in this Guide. Don't forget to consider a different culture. Setting *Don Pasquale* in a different historical period or in another culture that you have studied in class would demonstrate the multicultural and interdisciplinary connections.

STAGING, MUSIC, SETS AND COSTUMES

Choose from many options to create a production as simple or elaborate as you desire. Try to use music in some way in your performance, if only playing excerpts from a tape or CD as an overture or between scenes.

Performance possibilities include:

- Perform scenes with sets and/or costumes, without music
- Perform scenes with students singing excerpts from *Don Pasquale* taught in Workshop #2 and on the CD
- Use the Overture as music for a dance/pantomime enactment of the story

- Create a music video from one number or a montage of songs
- Have students who play instruments accompany the singing using the SHEET MUSIC provided in supplementary materials.
- Have students make and play instruments, particularly percussion instruments for the climactic pieces

Potential sources of music include:

- Selections from *Don Pasquale*
- Other examples of Opera Buffa, such as Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*, or other examples of *bel canto*, such as Donizetti's *Lucia de Lammermoor*.
- Music composed by your students (use a tape recorder to capture melodies they sing)

Useful scenery materials range from rolls of brown paper and paints to stacked refrigerator boxes, taped together for stability. Don't let scenery take too much time and effort; a single mural is plenty.

Teaching artists can be helpful in many ways, including:

- leading a demonstration class on basic stage techniques
- staging portions of your production, e.g., group scenes, entrances, exits, the finale
- coaching lead performers on the finer points
- helping with the dance scene/providing additional, simple choreography
- leading music rehearsal with the tape or a faculty/student pianist
- working with the stage crew on organizational tips for handling props, setting the stage, moving scenery, handling costume changes, stage safety, etc.
- coaching students on presentation techniques
- providing tips on turning your room into an art gallery

Send a short description of your production and a copy of your script
(if you are not using the Script/Libretto) to:
Teresa McKinney, NYCO Education, New York State Theater, 20 Lincoln Center, New York, NY 10023
Or fax it to (212) 724-1120.
The teaching artist will review your materials before the support session visit.

STUDENTS CAN PLAY MANY ROLES

Putting together a performance offers students the chance to grow, to try new things, to realize a dream, to feel part of a team, to shine in front of others -- both onstage and behind-the-scenes. Teachers can help guide students into roles which are in sync with their skills but still challenging; a list of potential roles follows. Consider having students write about the artistic and other choices they made in personal journals or an essay.

Actors/Singers/ Dancers

Perform roles as assigned; develop a point of view about the character being portrayed

Choreographer

Design dance movements for the servants in Scene III of Act III, or dance interludes during the overture.

Chorus

Sing or speak in unison all music or dialogue calling for several voices

Composer

Create the musical score, either by selecting music, which already exists, or by writing original music

Conductor

Lead the musicians or run the tape player; rehearse musicians

Designers

Sketch -- as desired -- sets, costumes, makeup, wigs, light designs. Set designs that are to scale, either in the form of perspective drawings or three-dimensional models, are wonderful vehicles for interdisciplinary learning

Director

Design the actions for each character, lead rehearsals, and help actor/singers understand their character's motivations and feelings and translate them into action

Librettist/writer

Write the dialogue and stage directions for the actor/singers; make choices about the setting and character (for example, the writers may choose to change the gender of the characters)

Marketing/Public Relations' Staff

Design a poster or program for the production; create a larger campaign to include video "ads," announcements over the P.A., roving actors in costume during lunch to promote interest in the production.

Orchestra

Perform selected music as assigned

Production crew

Build sets and props, sew costumes, make wigs, put on makeup; stagehands set up the scenery and move it as called for in the stage directions; manage props; if lighting is available, run the lights on cue

Supernumeraries (supers)

Perform non-speaking roles as assigned (similar to extras in a movie)

Stage Manager

Give all cues to actors and production crew during the performance, including when to begin, when to change the scenery, when actors should enter, when lighting should change, when music should begin

Ushers

Let the audience in; pass out programs, show people to their seats