



OPERA UNLIMITED STUDY GUIDE For TEACHERS

Dear Teacher,

We are delighted that you will be bringing your class to see Seymour Barab's ***LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD***, a child-size (40 minutes) opera adapted from the fairy tale. After the performance, our cast will spend a few more minutes listening to your students' comments and answering their questions.

As with all OPERA UNLIMITED productions, we have created simple sets and costumes to help students identify with the characters. Sometimes our performers step outside the story to connect with the audience, an unusual happening in an adult opera performance.

Studies show that students who are well-prepared before attending an opera and who engage in follow-up activities have an enhanced experience. To assist you, OPERA UNLIMITED has prepared this Guide, incorporating the New Mexico Public School standards, including "Character Counts" issues, which offer kids a framework for ethical living. Please use the vocabularies, suggested activities, and discussion topics to help prepare your class for their experience and to spark further learning afterwards.

We need to know what kind of impact our performance makes on you and your students, since we incorporate audience comments and suggestions in our future programming. Please complete the evaluation form and return it to OU in the addressed envelope we have provided for your school. Consider having your students draw a picture or write about their favorite part of the opera and send it to us. We'd love to see what they think!

This handout includes the following:

- General information about behavior at a live performance
- General opera terms and terms specific to this opera, to be used to understand music concepts and as vocabulary builders
- Information about today's opera, including background, composer, names of characters and a synopsis
- Moral lessons that show the importance of "Character Counts" issues
- Suggested follow-up activities, relating the opera to literature, speech, body movement, art, and foreign languages.
- Evaluation form

This project is made possible in part by New Mexico Arts, a division of the Department of Cultural Affairs, and the National Endowment for the Arts

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Preparing Before the Performance Please review the enclosed materials before preparing your class for its opera experience. If you have time, review the original fairy tale with your students. Remind your class that being at a live performance differs from watching television at home.

How Opera Differs from TV and Movies

Many students will never have attended a live performance before and must be reminded that the performers are aware of their reactions. The singers work hard to keep their viewers involved and they appreciate an enthusiastic response. However, they are also aware of disturbances, such as people talking to their neighbors or otherwise not paying attention.

Suggested Rules of Audience Courtesy

- No talking: other people want to hear and see what is going on
- Stay seated until the opera is over
- Laugh if you think something is funny
- Clap if you have enjoyed the performance and think it was done well
- Take your things with you when you leave

Voice Types

Voices range from high to low. Each voice is appropriate to certain types of singing and characters. This opera features three voice types: a baritone, a mezzo-soprano and a soprano. Note that the girl has the highest voice, the woman has a lower voice and the wolf has a medium low male voice. There are other vocal types, but they are not heard in this opera.

- **Soprano**—the highest female voice; generally the heroine of the story
- **Mezzo-Soprano** (Alto)—the lower female voice; usually play older women or young boys
- **Baritone**—the middle range for men; often the hero's best friend or a villain.

Opera Terms

Accompanist: pianist who plays music for the singers

Composer: person who writes the music for the opera

Costumes: clothing worn by singers to evoke a period, place or person

Dialogue: words in an opera, may be spoken or sung

Libretto: the words spoken or sung by each character; the librettist may also be the composer

Make-up: wigs and cosmetics worn to help create the character

Opera: a story set to music including arias (solos), duets, and choruses

Score: written record of notes and words

Set: painted or otherwise created background that identifies the scene in an opera

Synopsis: summary of the story as it unfolds onstage through Acts and Scenes

Theme: underlying message or moral; what the story is really about

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Background

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD was written in 1965 by Seymour Barab especially for children. However, the libretto contains humor that an adult will appreciate. Barab has written over 100 short operas for children. The opera has a prologue and one act, which contains three scenes.

Characters

The Wolf	Baritone
Little Red Riding Hood (a 10-year old girl)	Soprano
Her Mother	Mezzo-soprano
Her Grandmother	Mezzo-soprano

Synopsis

Prologue: The children in the audience meet the singer who plays the wolf and watch him put on his costume and make-up for the role. They also learn about his sensitive digestive tract.

Scene 1: *At Little Red Riding Hood's Home.* Mother sends her off with a basket of goodies to take to her sick grandmother, but warns her not to pick any strawberries in the woods or to talk to strangers.

Scene 2: *In the Woods.* Little Red Riding Hood meets a hungry wolf who wants to eat her but pretends he is her friend. When she describes the delicious food in her basket, the wolf gets sick and leaves. She stops to pick strawberries, while the wolf takes a short cut to her Grandma's house.

Scene 3: *Grandma's House.* Grandma foolishly lets the wolf into her house, but realizes he is dangerous and hides in a closet. The wolf puts on her cap and jumps into bed. When Red arrives, he invites her in and attacks her. Grandma rushes out of the closet and tries to protect her. Grandma and Red talk about strawberries and other sweets to make the wolf sick and send him away. They hail a passing woodsman to catch the villain.

Moral

Listen to your mother's advice. Don't talk to strangers. Be kind to your elderly relatives. Take care of each other. Make safe and sensible choices. Bad things can happen to you, but you can overcome them.

Vocabulary Builders (Before or after the performance - select according to grade level)

adieux: good-byes (French)

ancient aggravation: old annoyance

compensations: pay

cunning: sly, clever in deceiving

curious: strange, odd

daintily: elegantly, delicately

delicate digestive tract: easily upset stomach

dawdle: to waste time

dunce: a stupid person

fancy free: carefree

ferocious: savagely cruel

furious: very angry, violent

in transit: in passing through

irritation: annoyance

linger: delay, stay on, dawdle

nourishment: food, sustenance

nutritious: good, healthy food

outwitted: outsmarted

partake of: to share, participate

prologue: introduction

rejoice: to be glad

relapse: to slip back into a former state

rendezvous: pre-arranged meeting

shirk: to avoid doing

such a lark: a merry adventure

untimely: at the wrong time

vegetarian: eats only vegetables, not meat

villain: the bad person

wealth: riches

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Post-performance Suggested Activities as appropriate for grade level

- Have students compare the opera's story to the fairy tale
- Ask students to draw a picture of their favorite part of the opera and send the pictures to Opera Unlimited
- Ask students to write about what one of the characters was feeling
- Ask students to write a letter to one of the characters and send it to Opera Unlimited
- Have students act out a modern-day version of the story

Discussion Topics (in addition to the moral and vocabulary)

- How did the music help you understand the story? (For example, did the music get loud when the story got scary?) In what ways does the music make the story different from the fairy tale?
- **LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD** is based on a fairy tale. How does a fairy tale differ from a true story?
- Fairy tales take place a long time ago. Is there anything about this one that seems to apply to the world we live in?
- Was there anything realistic about the story?
- Have you every felt like you did the wrong thing by not listening to your parents?
- Have you ever felt like you were in trouble? What did you do?
- Do you think that LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD did anything wrong by talking to the wolf?
- Was it okay for Red and Grandma to make the wolf sick by talking about sweet things to eat?
- Did they do the right thing by asking the woodsman for help, even though he was also a stranger?
- Have you ever taken a "get-well gift" to a friend or relative? Did they enjoy it? Why do you think this is a good thing to do?