

Chautauqua Opera Invasion: Bremen Town Musicians

Classroom Lesson Plan

Objectives:

- NYS Arts Learning Standard MU: Re8.1 - Through their use of elements and structures of music, creators and performers provide clues to their expressive intent.
- NYS Common Core ELA-RL5.7 Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (e.g., graphic novel, multimedia presentation of fiction, folktale, myth, poem).

Materials (provided by Arts Education):

- Pre-prepared big sticky-note pad, with pages prepared as described in the script
- Markers

Pre-Rehearsal Prep:

You will be asked to sing one line from two different arias to show how music contributes to the meaning of a text. To prepare for this part of the lesson:

- Choose two arias that you feel comfortable singing a cappella
- Choose one emotional line from each aria
 - Translate it into English if the aria is not in English
 - Please be able to sing it in English as well as the composed language
- Be able to describe the character who sings this aria simply, in a sentence or two

Step 1: Introduction – 4-5 minutes

Big Picture Idea: Introduce yourself and provide a basic overview of opera as an art form.

Artist: Hello everyone! My name is *artist first name*, and I am an (dramatic pause – dramatic drum roll on desk – then sing as loudly, boldly and obnoxiously as possible) OPERA SINGER!!!

(Pause dramatically in dramatic opera singer pose of your choice as you wait for class reaction)

(Break pose) Wait – let me try that again.

(Tragically, lyrically, sung as Rigoletto to dying Gilda) I am an opera singer...

(Compose yourself) No – wait – give me one more chance!

(In an opera buffa style of your choice – make them laugh!) I am an opera singer!

As you can hear – opera singers sing in many different ways. That’s because we tell many different stories! Opera is just that – a way to tell stories using music. By the time we get done today – you are going to learn all about how the right music really makes stories come alive – showing that the music we make is connected to the feelings we feel. And – one of you is going to get the chance to show you’ve got what it takes and join us on stage to help my friends and I tell a story for everyone!

Step 2: Emotion – Sound Connection – 7-10 minutes

Big Picture Idea: Connect the concepts of expressing emotion through sound.

Artist: So – an opera is a way to tell a story with music. And – opera is usually about people who have REALLY strong emotions! They feel things so deeply that just speaking isn’t enough to really get across how they feel – they have to sing.

Do you ever sing when you have feelings? (Wait for answer – if students volunteer answers, listen and validate.)

How about when you wake up in the middle of the night, head to the bathroom, and because it’s dark – you stub your toe? When that happens, I sing like this: (Act out stubbing toe – then howl appropriately.) The noise I make is connected to the way I feel!

Or – how about when you find out that you just aced your last math test? How would you sing then? (Accept answers – model appropriate singing style answers.) Yeah – the noise you make is connected to the way you feel!

So – you may not have thought that you sing when you feel something strongly – but I think we can agree that all of us make some emotional noise when the time is right – because the music we make is connected to the way we feel.

Step 3: Text – Emotion – Music Connection – 15 minutes

Big Picture Idea: Connect text to emotion, emotion to sounds, sounds to music.

Step 3.1: Text – Emotion – Identification of Musical Sound Use

Artist: Now – I have a few favorite stories, and they happen to be stories told in operas. I wanted to share them with you – because they mean so much to me!

First – let’s look at a line of text from one of my favorite operas, *name of first opera* by the composer *name of composer*. The character’s name is *name*, *he/she* is *describe character in a few words.*

(posts first page of big sticky tablet on the board)

Would someone in the class read this sentence nice and loud? (Select student – allow them to read – repeat loudly if necessary.)

Great! Now – how does the person who said this feel?

(Accept answers, validate, and once class agrees on an emotion – write that emotion under the line from the opera)

OK – we all agree that *character name* is feeling *emotion* when *he/she* says this. But – remember - *character name* is actually going to be singing this.

Here’s what it sounds like when *character name* sings this line. (Sing the line – heavy on the emotional emphasis, clearly emphasizing musical choices regarding dynamics, unique timbre choices and tempo – or any other musical choices made)

How did I sing these words to show the emotion we agreed *character name* is feeling? (Accept answers, validate, write bullet points under line of text. Guide them towards key musical concepts by asking, “Did I sing loud or soft?” “How would you describe how my voice sounded

(Dependent on the piece, key musical terms need to be connected to the students’ observations – see the following optional text to use when the following observations are made)

(When students observed that you sang loud or soft)

I’m glad you noticed that I sang (describe the appropriate dynamic expressions). In music, when we talk about loudness and softness in music, we use the term “dynamics.” Dynamics means how loud or soft the music goes. Dynamics really do help musicians express emotion in the music!

(When students observed that you used a certain kind of sound of your voice – ex: whiny, nasal, bold, etc.)

When you said that I sang this (use their description), you were

describing the timbre of my voice. Timbre means the unique sound of a voice or instrument. I made my voice sound (their description) to show emotion – timbre helps musicians express emotions in music.

(When students observed that you sang fast or slow)

You're right – I did sing (appropriate tempo observation.) When musicians talk about how fast or slow the music goes – we use the term “tempo.” Tempo means the speed of the music. The tempo of a piece of music really helps musicians express the emotion in a piece of music.

(When students observed that you sang high or low)

I did sing (appropriate range) when I sang that piece. When we talk about how high or low an aria goes, we can use the term “tessitura.” Say that with me - “tessitura.” This is a fancy way of saying how high or low an instrument or a voice performs in a piece of music.

(With any other observations they make, if you can use a musical term to that observation as demonstrated above, please do so.)

So – it seems, with music, when a character is feeling *emotion of selection*, *he/she* might sing (read bullet point list.) The music *he/she* makes is connected to the way *he/she* feels.

If the original selection is not in English, continue; if it is, continue to Step 3.2

Now – I'll let you in on a secret. This line was not originally written in English. It was written in *language.* Let me sing it in the original language. (Sing original line.)

Could you still hear that emotion? (listen-validate) Sure you could – that's because the way I sang the notes didn't change. The music is the key to the emotion.

Step 3.2: Text – Emotion – Predicting Musical Sounds

Artist: Let's look at a line from another of my favorite operas, *name of opera*, written by *composer*. (Move to Page 2 on Sticky Pad) The line is sung by *character name* and *he/she* is *describe character in a few words.*

Could one of you please read this line? (Encourage student to read as in Step 3.1.)

Great! Now, what do you think *character name* is feeling? (Accept answers, validate, write consensus answer below text.)

OK – this time, I want to ask what kinds of musical sounds do you feel would best show that emotion? What tempo would show that emotion? (Write down consensus) What tessitura? (Write down consensus) What dynamics? (Write down consensus) (Remind students of the meaning of the musical terms as necessary.)

Great. Let me sing this one for you, and see if you were right. (Sing the line – emphasizing musical elements as discussed)

What tempo did use when I sang? (Put checkmark if they guessed right – slash through if they didn't – if they did not, find a way to validate their answer, but explain how the correct answer best fit the emotion.)

What tessitura did I use? (Same as above)

What dynamics did I use when I sang? (Same as above)

How would you describe the timbre of my voice? (Same as above)

So – we can see again that the music we make is connected to the feelings we feel.

If the original selection is not in English, continue; if it is, continue to Step 3.3

Now – here's the line in its original language *language of original*. Notice how the way I sing the notes – even in a language you may not understand – allows us to feel what *character name* is feeling.

I have one more opera to share with you – let's see what emotions we can discover here.

Step 3.3: Text – Emotion – Demonstrating Musical Sounds

Artist: The last opera we're going to study today is "The Bremen Town Musicians" – and this is the opera you are going to see later today! The character I play in this opera is *character name*, and *he/she* is *describe character in a few words.*

Let's look at one of my favorite lines that I get to sing: (Move to Page 3 on the Sticky Pad)

Could one of you read this line? (Encourage – validate.)

What emotion is *character name* feeling here? (Accept answers – validate – write down consensus)

Now – I want to ask you to read this line – but use sounds that you think best show this emotion. What tempo should *he/she* say them? What dynamics? What tessitura? Should *he/she* use a unique timbre? Read it the way you think it should go – how can the sounds you make connect to the feelings *character name* feels? (Encourage student responses – validate.)

How fun! OK – now, I want to sing this line for you the way you will hear it later today, and we'll see how *character name* thinks *he/she* should sing it. (Sing example, emphasizing musical elements)

How did I sing it to get the emotion across? (Encourage student responses – validate – encouraging them to use the correct musical vocabulary.)

Great! I think you all understand that the music we make connects to the feelings we feel.

Now...for the really exciting part of the day...we get to choose one person from your class to represent you and be a part of our opera! We're going to play a game – using music from The Bremen Town Musicians – that asks the question, “So, You Think You're Louder Than an Opera Singer!”

Step 4: So You Think... - 10 minutes

Big Picture Idea: Make opera singing/opera music accessible to students.

Artist: OK, we need to get into groups of 6 – count off from 1 to 6, going around the room. (Point at each student as they count 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 1...etc.)

(Point at different parts of the classroom) Ones – over there! Twos – over there (do for all 6 numbers.)

Now – everyone look at me, and do exactly what I do. (Model desired warmup

techniques – keep them engaged in doing the activity by speaking little, demonstrating lots.)

Now – we’re going to learn the line I sang for you from “The Bremen Town Musicians. This line is actually called a musical phrase. We’re going to use this phrase in our competition. First – let’s review the words. The words are “(say words).” Let’s say that together – (say words with them).

Next – let me remind you what it sounds like when I sing them. (Sing words) Let’s sing that together – (sing words with them.)

Now – the goal of this is to sing these words as loud as you can! Form a circle with your group, face the center, and take turns practicing that phrase in your groups – ready, go! (give them about 1 minute for each student in the group to try it out – remain engaged by walking around the groups, helping when necessary, encouraging involvement)

Ok – I want to know in your group which one boy and one girl are the loudest from your group! You have 2 minutes to sing for each other and for your group to nominate your two singers! (Again, keep walking around, encourage, etc.)

(After 2 minutes, step to the center of the room, and encourage them to quiet down.)

By now, you should have selected the loudest boy and girl singers from your group. Would each group please send your two singers to the center of the room, with me? The rest of the students may return to their desks. (Wait for students.)

Let’s move on to Round 2 - would all of our contestants please stand over by the classroom door? (Wait.)

(Go to the front of the classroom) Now – would the contestants from Group 1 please join me here?

We’re going to let each group’s chosen singers compete with each other. I’m going to move to the back of the room with your teacher, and s/he and I will decide who the loudest singer from each group is.

Group 1 singers - What are your names? (Students state names.) Let’s go in alphabetical order for each group – which means (first student), you’re up first!

(After both sing, confer with teacher to choose a winner.) And, the winner is – (Student name)!!! You may both be seated. (Make sure you or the teacher writes down the names of the winners.)

(Repeat for all groups)

Now – we’re down to (number of students). Each of you will sing again, and we will choose our winner!

(Have all sing, confer with teacher)

After much thought...we have decided that (Student name) is our winner!!! You will see him/her represent your class in our performance today – and you need to be sure to cheer him/her on!

Step 5: Conclusion – 5 minutes

Big Picture Idea: Summarize lesson, segue into performance

Artist: So, now, we have our new budding opera star! Let’s remember what else we learned today.

(Turn to next page on Sticky Pad) What is Opera? (Encourage them towards the answer “A way to tell stories with song and music.” – write this down)

Great! How did *first opera character name* show how *he/she* felt with the music *he/she* made? (Review – remind – validate – write down)

How did *first opera character name* show how *he/she* felt with the music *he/she* made? (Review – remind – validate – write down)

And – what sounds does *character name* from Bremen Town Musicians use to show how *he/she* feels? (Review – remind – validate)

So – remember – musical sounds help us better understand what someone is feeling in a story. When you watch Bremen Town Musicians later today, notice how the way we sing is connected to the way the characters feel.

I had a lot of fun today! I can’t wait to see all of your faces in the audience when we sing for you later! I have to get ready for the show now, but, in just a few

minutes, I'll see you from the stage! Pay attention to your teacher for the next step
– and I'll see you soon!

Post-Classroom Session:

Please speak briefly with the winner of the competition and the classroom teacher to give instructions as to what the winner should do post-performance.

Please share the following information:

Upon arriving at the performance space, please come to the stage area, where Stage Director Kaley Smith will be there to meet you and the other winner to give you your instructions.

Details as to what instructions will be given will be defined and refined during the rehearsals in early June.