

CALGARY opera

Don Giovanni Study Guide



DON GIOVANNI

By Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Directed by Glynis Leyshon

Dress Rehearsal:
Thursday, April 22nd, 2010
7pm at Jubilee Auditorium

Introduction

The music, the artistry, the grand emotion, the spectacle! This is the fantastic world of opera. Calgary Opera welcomes you and your students to *Don Giovanni* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Opera is a unique and exciting art form that combines the disciplines of music, drama, literature, dance, visual, and technical arts like no other. Calgary Opera's production of *Don Giovanni* is a contemporary reversioning of the story and is directed by Glynis Leyshon and conducted by Robert Dean. "Set in a coldly anonymous glass and steel office tower- the kind of building found in a major urban centre – the opera opens with a heart-stopping murder and ends with the destruction of an all-too-human man. This Don is a man whose boundless and self destructive appetites of all kinds fuel a heedlessly chaotic descent into death." – Stage Director, Glynis Leyshon

This guide, divided into three parts, will give you the backstage tour of all that is opera - terminology, jobs, inside information about the director and her vision, the history behind the opera and the composer, ideas for preparing students and engaging them in relevant discussions, and a link to obtain musical highlights from the opera. All of this is designed to make *Don Giovanni* an unforgettable experience for you and your students.

Through this guide you will become inspired to connect students to *Don Giovanni* in a modern, thoughtful way and to use this opera as a point of departure for their learning. A study of the performing and fine arts helps students develop critical analysis and problem solving skills, perseverance, and a drive for excellence. The creative skills students develop through the arts carry them toward new ideas, new experiences and new challenges. Plus, there's nothing like the excitement and magic of a live professional performance!

Thank you for giving your students this special opportunity.

Emily Forrest
Education and Outreach Coordinator
Calgary Opera
Phone (403) 262-7286, direct line (403) 802-3404
eforrest@calgaryopera.com

Please feel free to reproduce any of these pages for use in the classroom

PART 1 OF *DON GIOVANNI* STUDY GUIDE

THE STUDENT OPERA EXPERIENCE – preparation and follow up activities

The more students are prepared for this experience, the more they will get out of it. Knowing about the story, the life and times of the composer and the music is very important to make their opera experience a sensational one!

Before the Opera

- Teachers should review the study guide and all of the suggested activities and discussions, to decide which ones students will be engaged with. Some of the activities/discussions should be started prior to seeing the opera. Preparing students ahead of time gives them a chance to view the opera within the context of what they will be working on after i.e. history, reviewing, character studies, discussions, etc.
- Read the enclosed *Don Giovanni* synopsis, which provides a background and helps familiarize students and teachers with the story.
- Listen to the music excerpts from the opera by going to the link provided
- Read the history of the opera, composer and director, and familiarize your group with opera terms (all items in the guide can be reproduced).
- Familiarize students with the characters and their opera voice types (i.e. Soprano, Bass, and Tenor) so that students can identify which is which during the opera.
- Learn about the jobs surrounding an opera production (see the section entitled, *Pulling it Together*.)
- Discuss the characters and plot, and engage students in discussion around the suggested themes **Very Important! Prepare Students about the character of Don Giovanni (see After the Opera section below on suggested discussion topics)**
- You may wish to assign students to write a review on the opera – a guideline for writing reviews is included in this study guide.
- You may assign some students to report on singing, characters, orchestra, costumes, scenery etc. after the dress rehearsal.
- Make sure that meeting places and times are clear at the Jubilee Auditorium.
- Review the audience expectations section.

Some teachers have found it advisable to give out assigned seat tickets at a meeting place in the hall just before a performance, as lost tickets cannot be replaced.

During the Opera: Audience Expectations

When you are seated, you may be able to see the orchestra tuning their instruments in the orchestra pit. When the house lights dim, it's time to:

- Turn off all cell phones, iPods, and other electronic devices. The use of cameras or recording devices is strictly forbidden.
- Think about what makes a good audience member.

-
- Keep movement and voices down to a minimum as this is a live dress rehearsal performance.
 - Keep food and drinks outside of the auditorium – the Jubilee Auditorium has great acoustics so every sound can be heard in the theatre.
 - Applaud when the conductor enters and bows, then again after the overture.
 - After the curtain goes down and the lights go up, the intermission (usually about 20 minutes) begins. Now is the time to talk, eat (in the lobby) and use the washroom.
 - It is permissible to applaud after an aria, or ensemble (if you liked it).
 - Be silent if the performance has to stop for a few moments (this is a performance, but also a working rehearsal so it may be necessary to stop at times).
 - If you must use the washroom during the performance, please be accompanied by an adult supervisor. The ushers will let you in again but you may have to wait until there is an appropriate break in the opera.
 - Applaud the cast as they take their bows after the performance - if you feel one person did an exceptional job, it is permissible to shout “*Bravo!*” for a man, “*Brava!*” for a woman, and “*Bravi!*” for the whole performance (most people stick to “*Bravo!*”).

After-the-Opera: Student discussions and activities

1. Write a Review or Critique of the performance

- One of the best ways to encourage critical thinking of a performing arts production is to encourage students’ honesty and draw out detailed opinions. A productive evaluation session - spoken, written, visual or dramatized - should follow this basic ‘how to’ outline below.
- On the internet, students can find many reviews of *Don Giovanni* from other opera companies’ performances to use as a guideline or example.

Guidelines for writing a review:

When writing a theatre review you must remember four main components: the acting, the singing, the technical, and the overall view.

The acting and singing are probably the most important aspects of the opera. It is a good idea to familiarize yourself with the opera and its characters before you go see it. Make sure you know all of the characters’ names and the actors who are playing them; the study guide or the Calgary Opera website is an ideal place in which to find all this information. Ask yourself if the actors seemed to understand what they are saying or singing. Did they bring life to the music? Could you see and hear the emotion while they sang? Did they interact well with others on stage? Did any particular performer stand out to you and why? Also look to see if each actor is connecting well with his/her character. (However, keep in mind that everyone has a very unique style of acting and maybe even comment on that.) How well are they giving and taking focus? Is there any one person who sticks out in your head as “hogging” all the attention?

The second aspect to look at is the technical. This includes everything from the lights and sound to the costumes and makeup. It has been said that if the technical aspect of the performance becomes noticeable, then it was not effective. Keep in mind that the lights, sound, makeup, etc. are there to enhance the performance, not to be the main focus. (But as the reviewer, you should be looking for it.) For instance, the lights should be prospective to the time of day, the season and so on. Also, it should not cast any

shadows on the actors' faces. The appeal of the music is often a matter of opinion because everyone likes different kinds of music; however, it should accent the style and format of the performance. The costumes and set should portray the time period and part of each character's personality. The makeup should do the same, but keep a look out for shadows and lines on the face. All these things are very important to the performance of the show. Again, familiarizing yourself with the opera before you go will assist with making these decisions.

The overall view of the theatre will give the reader a feel of exactly how well you enjoyed your experience at this production. Include ticket prices here and your opinion of the worthiness of that cost. Also, keep in mind the quality of the theatre and its facilities. The audience is also a major part of your theatre experience. Was the audience big? Were they perceptive and interactive? Remember, you shouldn't make this the main point, but it would be good to comment on it. This entire portion should convey your opinion and feeling of how the show went.

So in conclusion, remember the singing and acting, the technical, and the overall view, and you'll have written a successful theatre review. Oh, and one more thing: don't ever lie so as not to hurt someone's feelings. Constructive criticism can be helpful. Keep all these things in mind when writing your review and it will be great. Have fun!

2. Very Important! Engage students in meaningful discussions using the following points of departure:

Use the following statements about the production from Stage Director Glynis Leyshon, as points of departure for meaningful discussion and learning about Don Giovanni's character and important societal themes. You may choose to discuss some topics prior to attending the opera, particularly the first statement.

- "It's easy to love the 'bad guys' in entertainment today. Students need to gain the proper perspective on Don Giovanni **before** attending. In this modern revisioning of this show, his character is not masked in big dresses and historical flair and spectacle."
- "the cost of ego and violence is shown in the show"
- "even in this modern retelling of the story, which is a human to human revenge story, it is still a morality story – his (Don Giovanni's) actions are revenged"
- "Don Giovanni's character is about gratification of self and power, almost a sociopath"
- "His actions are revenged, he is accountable in the end to a force worse than the law"
- ".....prepare students for the assaults and drug use, talk about the male/female split, their response to the assault, their response to the drugs."
- After the opera, discuss the disintegration of Don Giovanni throughout the evening, and why this would be relevant to today
- Discuss various ways through which the director has taken this legendary story and made it relevant to today's society

3. Research and Report on one of the five main opera genres;

- There are five main opera genres; Baroque, Opera Seria, Classical, Romantic and Contemporary.

4. Find reviews or publicity materials from other productions of *Don Giovanni*

- Find some reviews from other opera companies who have presented *Don Giovanni*, and have students explore the differences among the various productions, or talk about how those productions compared to Calgary Opera's. Were there any similarities?

5. Listen to the music highlights provided on the music link in Part 2 of the guide

- Identify the various operatic voices that you hear
- Discuss the emotions or ideas that are being sung about; is it clear? How does the melody support these emotions or ideas?
- When at the opera, listen for these excerpts to see how they come to life on stage

6. Research Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

- Wolfgang Amadeus was (27 January 1756 – 5 December 1791) one of the most prolific and influential composers of the Classical era. He composed over 600 works, many acknowledged as pinnacles of symphonic, concertante, chamber, piano, operatic, and choral music. He is among the most enduringly popular of classical composers. (see full biography in Part 2 of the study guide)

7. Compare and Contrast the legend of Don Juan, the opera *Don Giovanni* and Calgary Opera's production of *Don Giovanni*

- Some information about the legend is found in the study guide, as well as the synopsis of the traditional opera and Calgary Opera's synopsis.
- You may wish to read the original legend, the operatic story, and the synopsis of this production of *Don Giovanni*, as a class, prior to attending the opera.
- Find the similarities and differences between the traditional opera and the current production by Calgary Opera
- Read the legend of Don Juan – how did the story change when adapted to an opera?

Explore Calgary Opera's interactive website to find out more about *Don Giovanni* and Calgary Opera. There are podcasts, designs, artist bios and more at www.calgaryopera.com

Enter our contest! Calgary Opera loves receiving student written comments. Please mail us your students' pictures, reviews, or comments for use in future brochures, programs, etc. We do not use student names when we quote them, and three times a year we will put your students' names in a great draw for Calgary Opera prizes; including t-shirts, posters and treats.

Mail contest entries to:

Emily Forrest
Education & Outreach Coordinator
Calgary Opera
1315-7th Street SW
Calgary, AB T2R 1A5

PART 2 OF *DON GIOVANNI* STUDY GUIDE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION, STAGE DIRECTORS NOTES, BIOGRAPHIES, HISTORY, MUSIC, AND THE COMPANY.

History of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*

"*Don Giovanni* is the most enigmatic of Mozart's operas. Is it a tragedy, as the flawed hero is carried down to hell by the stone statue, or does Don Giovanni go to the netherworld merely to continue his life-style in another place (as we half-wish, for wicked though he may be, he does command the affection we give to rogues)? It is undoubtedly an opera of seduction and abandonment, but the women in the opera, though they might rail against the hero to a suitable audience, keep getting drawn back into his orbit, just like us, and they know exactly what they are getting into. Mozart and his librettist Da Ponte don't help, as they veer between the upright and moralistic and the clear sympathy for the very contradictions of their hero and the moral problems he poses. This opera could only have been written by two geniuses at the height of their powers, because it needs their combined experience to pull off such ambiguity, to make so clear the depth of feelings, the attractions, the underside of those surface contradictions – in short, to so reflect the complexity of life and love and our own all-too-human failings. And like life, it is not just a tragedy – it mixes in the comic, the lyric, and disturbing moments of seriousness, which is why they called it a drama buffo." – by Mark Morris

Don Juan is the legendary figure from which the character of Don Giovanni evolved. He has a counterpart in the legends of many peoples, but the Spanish version of the great libertine has become the most universal. Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* (1787) is perhaps the most famous treatment of the legend.

The Legend of Don Juan (Spanish version)

Don Juan, the "Seducer of Seville," originated as a hero-villain of Spanish folk legend, and his fame spread through the rest of Europe in the 17th century. The many versions of his story include a play by Moliere (*The Stone Feast*, 1665), a long poem by Byron (*Don Juan*, 1819-24), and an opera by Mozart (*Don Giovanni*, 1787).

In the legend, Don Juan is a famous lover and scoundrel who has made more than a thousand sexual conquests. While preparing to seduce the young noble lady Donna Anna, he is discovered by her father, the Commander, who challenges him to a duel. Don Juan kills the Commander and escapes. Donna Anna and her fiancé Don Ottavio attempt to hunt down Don Juan, but he is too wily to be caught.

Later, Don Juan passes by the tomb of the dead Commander. A voice comes from the statue on the tomb, warning Don Juan that he will be punished for his wicked deeds. The unrepentant Don Juan jokingly invites the statue to have dinner with him. However, the joke is on Don Juan when the haunted statue comes to life and arrives at Don Juan's house at the promised time.

The statue puts out his hand and offers to take Don Juan to a different banquet. Don Juan, fearless to the last, takes the statue's hand, but finds himself caught in an unbreakable grip that fills him with freezing cold. A fiery pit opens and the statue drags Don Juan down to Hell.

Synopsis of Calgary Opera's *Don Giovanni*

ACT I

The story takes place during an intense 12 hour period – from dusk to dawn - and is set within an enormous glass office tower. Frustrated that he has not been invited to a high level Board meeting convened by Il Commendatore to discuss the upcoming merger of his corporation with that of Don Ottavio's father, an angry Don Giovanni instructs his assistant Leporello to wait for him in his office while he goes silently into the office of Donna Anna. She is working on some papers relating to the merger. There he attacks her, and when she calls for help, Giovanni runs from her office to the Atrium where Leporello has been waiting. Both her father and Don Ottavio arrive from the Board Room and in the fight that follows, Giovanni kills Il Commendatore. He and Leporello escape quickly into the darkened offices. As Anna mourns her dead father, the Corporation goes into immediate damage control mode and instead of calling the police, Anna demands that Ottavio help her to find her father's murderer and that together they will avenge his death. The hunt for Giovanni is on.

Donna Elvira, whose PR firm will be handling the merger, now arrives for the Board meeting. In addition to the business meeting, she is expecting to meet and denounce Don Giovanni, with whom she had an unhappy affair. Instead, Giovanni slips away and Leporello is left to explain the long list of women Don Giovanni has used. Unable to bear this proof of Giovanni's true character, she runs off.

The cleaning staff is celebrating the engagement of Masetto and Zerlina. The happy group enters the Atrium for an impromptu after hours party. Immediately captivated by Zerlina, Giovanni has Leporello take the staff off to the corporate dining room, while he attempts to seduce Zerlina. Elvira returns in time to save Zerlina and to denounce Giovanni. She then tries to convince Anna and Ottavio of Giovanni's true nature but both Anna and Ottavio cannot believe that their friend and colleague can be guilty as charged by the obviously hysterical Elvira. Just as Giovanni drags off Zerlina, Anna recognizes him as her attacker, and demands that Ottavio join her in avenging her father's death. Although still filled with doubt Ottavio agrees to help and joins Anna and Elvira in pursuit of Giovanni.

ACT II

Fuelled by ego, adrenalin, drugs and alcohol Giovanni refuses to escape the building and instead continues to pursue Zerlina by pretending to host an impromptu engagement party and invites all the members of the cleaning staff. In disguise, Anna, Elvira and Ottavio arrive at the Party, determined to confront Giovanni. At the climax of the party, Giovanni attempts to rape Zerlina and he only escapes by pretending that Leporello is the guilty party.

As the evening progresses, the disintegration of Giovanni continues. Led by Masetto, he is actively in hiding from enraged members of the staff. Beyond rational thought at this point Giovanni refuses to leave and convinces Leporello to remain with him. His victims, now including Zerlina and Masetto, plot to reduce Giovanni to madness. Using the body of Il Commendatore, they convince Giovanni and Leporello that his 'ghost' has come back to haunt them. Anna, Elvira and Ottavio manipulate the body of the "ghost" to appear and force a final confrontation between the ghost of the Commendatore and an increasingly crazed Giovanni. In

the final scene, Giovanni confronts his ghosts in the darkened parking garage of the building. He has physically and emotionally reached rock bottom and he imagines that instead of the dirty concrete basement he is in fact in a sumptuous dining room. Crazy with fear, Leporello acts out this last supper committed to Giovanni even to the end. Elvira makes one last attempt to save Giovanni but failing to move him, and insulted by him for the last time, she joins those he has wronged – and watches as Giovanni meets the ‘ghost’ of the Commendatore for a final defiant confrontation before committing suicide.

His enemies rejoice in his downfall. While all seems to have ended happily a cloud hangs over the proceedings and we are invited to consider the high cost of revenge.

Traditional Synopsis of the opera *Don Giovanni*

ACT I

Spain, 1600s. At night, outside the Commendatore's palace, Leporello grumbles about his duties as servant to Don Giovanni, a dissolute nobleman. Soon the masked Don appears, pursued by Donna Anna, the Commendatore's daughter, whom he has tried to seduce. When the Commendatore himself answers Anna's cries, he is killed in a duel by Giovanni, who escapes. Anna now returns with her fiancé, Don Ottavio. Finding her father dead, she makes Ottavio swear vengeance on the assassin. At dawn, Giovanni flirts with a high-strung traveler outside a tavern. She turns out to be Donna Elvira, a woman he once seduced in Burgos, who is on his trail. Giovanni escapes while Leporello distracts Elvira by reciting his master's long catalog of conquests. Peasants arrive, celebrating the nuptials of their friends Zerlina and Masetto; when Giovanni joins in, he pursues the bride, angering the groom, who is removed by Leporello. Alone with Zerlina, the Don applies his charm, but Elvira interrupts and protectively whisks the girl away. When Elvira returns to denounce him as a seducer, Giovanni is stymied further while greeting Anna, now in mourning, and Ottavio. Declaring Elvira mad, he leads her off. Anna, having recognized his voice, realizes Giovanni was her attacker.

Dressing for the wedding feast he has planned for the peasants, Giovanni exuberantly downs champagne. Outside the palace, Zerlina begs Masetto to forgive her apparent infidelity. Masetto hides when the Don appears, emerging from the shadows as Giovanni corners Zerlina. The three enter the palace together. Elvira, Anna and Ottavio arrive in dominoes and masks and are invited to the feast by Leporello. During the festivities, Leporello entices Masetto into the dance as Giovanni draws Zerlina out of the room. When the girl's cries for help put him on the spot, Giovanni tries to blame Leporello. But no one is convinced; Elvira, Anna and Ottavio unmask and confront Giovanni, who barely escapes Ottavio's drawn sword.

ACT II

Under Elvira's balcony, Leporello exchanges cloaks with Giovanni to woo the lady in his master's stead. Leporello leads Elvira off, leaving the Don free to serenade Elvira's maid. When Masetto passes with a band of armed peasants bent on punishing Giovanni, the disguised rake gives them false directions, and then beats up Masetto. Zerlina arrives and tenderly consoles her betrothed. In a passageway, Elvira and Leporello are surprised by Anna, Ottavio, Zerlina and Masetto, who, mistaking servant for master, threaten Leporello. Frightened, he unmask and escapes. When Anna departs, Ottavio affirms his confidence in their love. Elvira, frustrated at her second betrayal by the Don, voices her rage. Leporello catches up with his master in a cemetery, where a voice warns Giovanni of his doom. This is the statue of the Commendatore, which the Don proposes Leporello invite to dinner. When the servant reluctantly stammers an

invitation, the statue accepts. In her home, Anna, still in mourning, puts off Ottavio's offer of marriage until her father is avenged. Leporello is serving Giovanni's dinner when Elvira rushes in, begging the Don, whom she still loves, to reform. But he waves her out contemptuously. At the door, her screams announce the Commendatore's statue. Giovanni boldly refuses warnings to repent, even in the face of death. Flames engulf his house, and the sinner is dragged to hell. Among the castle ruins, the others plan their future and recite the moral: such is the fate of a wrongdoer.

Stage Director's Notes, by Glynis Leyshon

Introduction

In western literature, our stories contain endless possibilities for variation and nuance. At heart however, we have only a handful of plots. The story of Don Juan – a man who has pursued and won countless women - is one of the most enduring and engaging of these archetypes. For centuries great artists like Pushkin, Byron and Shaw have refined and explored this story – the romantic poet Nikolaus Lenau even melded the myths of Don Juan and Faust- creating an enormous body of work dedicated to this unforgettable study of passion and the power. Today we remain fascinated by the charismatic nature of this all too human anti hero and Don Giovanni remains an inspiring source for great storytelling.

Like all true archetypes – the power of the Don Juan myth lies not in any specificity of time or place but rather in the enduring truths it reveals to us...truths that relate directly to our post Freudian understanding of human nature. It is no accident that the term 'Don Juan' has passed from the fictional realms into contemporary psychiatric practice. And it is no accident that Mozart's great *Don Giovanni* remains in many ways the most intriguing yet elusive of the composer's mature operatic works. Unsentimental and uncompromising in its exploration of dark themes, the compelling figure of Don Giovanni flashes with both charismatic lightness of being and a devastating darkness of heart.

Even the description of the piece used by librettist da Ponte – “drama giocoso” or comedy-drama – hints at the complexity of this richly layered story. The central character of Don Giovanni remains an enigma to all the characters around him. From the many women who love him to his enthralled servant Leporello...he is a man no one can claim to truly understand. This essential elusiveness is key to his enduring attraction. We want to know more but, like Fitzgerald's *Gatsby*, we never will be able to reach into the heart of the man. He is a chameleon giving each man and woman a tantalizing glimpse of something they desperately want to connect to and share.

Calgary Opera's *Don Giovanni*

It has been my distinct pleasure to work on *Don Giovanni* in two previous and very different productions and yet I have never felt that I had in any way exhausted the possibilities offered by this magnificent masterwork. So when approached by Bob McPhee and Calgary Opera to reimagine the opera in a new production that would feature a contemporary setting I immediately responded with enormous enthusiasm to the idea. *Don Giovanni* is an opera singularly well suited to a contemporary revisioning. The characters that inhabit this story go far beyond commedia stereotypes, allowing Mozart and Da Ponte to create an opera full of complex and believable human beings. They are men and women who seek power, love, even revenge with a single mindedness that would fuel any number of stories on CNN and Larry King.

Most importantly, this contemporary interpretation takes the opera from its roots as a 'ghost' story into a shockingly relevant psychological study of greed and mindless consumption. The death of the Commendatore is avenged not by supernatural powers but rather is actively plotted by the Don's victims... creating within the opera a revenge plot that fuels the increasingly erratic and disassociative mental state of Don Giovanni. As the Don slides recklessly to his inevitable destruction we are forced to witness this cautionary tale in the uncomfortable light of today's multinational financial corporations.

The Characters of *Don Giovanni*

DON GIOVANNI - Baritone

A "Golden Boy" and corporate rainmaker, who has risen quickly to upper management in a large multinational corporation. A marketing expert, he is used to manipulating and discarding people with careless self confidences, always more interested in the "hunt" for a new diversion than in maintaining an ongoing relationship. He has an instinct for understanding intuitively what other people want and uses that understanding to manipulate situations to his advantage. Currently, he is frustrated that he seems stalled at his current level within the corporation.

LEPORELLO - Bass

Personal assistant to Don Giovanni since joining the Corporation a decade ago, Leporello is a man from a working class background who has received a Business degree through hard work at various junior colleges. He is still in awe of his boss, admiring him even as he resents the ease with which Giovanni manipulates people and situations to fulfill his own needs. He has a classic love/hate relationship with Giovanni, ultimately needing his approval more than he needs his own self respect.

IL COMMENDATORE - Bass

A self made man - in many ways an old school industrialist like Commander Vanderbilt, he serves as Chairman of the Board and is still very much in control of a diverse, multinational financial empire. With no son to take his place, he is grooming his Daughter, Anna, to take his place.

DONNA ANNA - Soprano

Strong, driven and extremely focused, Donna Anna is determined to prove herself in the high powered world of corporate finance, thus justifying her father's faith in her abilities to succeed in a very male dominated world. Vice President in charge of acquisitions, she works long hours and even her personal life has a business focus, as her fiancé is the son of a rival corporate head and the marriage will most likely result in a high level corporate merger.

DON OTTAVIO - Tenor

Son and heir apparent to a rival industrialist, Ottavio is a well educated, if somewhat conventional young man. He is content to work for his father as a financial risk analyst. He is in awe (and perhaps even a little afraid) of the passion and drive of his childhood friend Donna Anna and is delighted to fulfill his father's desire for a high level corporate merger.

DONNA ELVIRA - Soprano

Head of her own public relations firm, Elvira is a warm attractive woman used to working with corporate executives on a wide variety of projects. Long ago she decided to keep her business and personal lives completely separate, thus adding to her enormous frustration and anger when she finds herself seduced and then abandoned by Giovanni. Her intense anger at herself – her sense that she is an intelligent woman who should know better – fuels her anger at Giovanni, who she still finds enormously attractive.

ZERLINA AND MASETTO – Soprano, Baritone

Part of the staff who are contracted to clean the corporate headquarters after working hours, Zerlina and Masetto, who are newly arrived immigrants to Canada, are very much in love and have just recently become engaged. Both are hardworking and Zerlina in particular is an

ambitious young woman, delighted to be able to work in a culture that promises equality of opportunity to all its citizens.

Biography of Glynis Leyshon, Stage Director

Glynis Leyshon, former Artistic Director of the Vancouver Playhouse

and Victoria's Belfrey Theatre, has directed for theatre and opera companies across the country. Productions include *The Devil's Disciple* and *Lady Be Good* for the Shaw Festival, *Falstaff* and *Le Nozze di Figaro* for Opera Lyra Ottawa, the world premiere of *Game Misconduct* for Festival Vancouver, and *Rigoletto* for Vancouver Opera. Most recently, she directed *The Magic Flute* for Pacific Opera Victoria and Orchestra London, *Die Fledermaus* for Opera Hamilton and a new production of *The Rake's Progress* for Pacific Opera Victoria. Her last production for Calgary Opera was *Rigoletto* (2007).



Biography of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (27 January 1756 – 5 December 1791) was a prolific and influential composer of the Classical era. He composed over 600 works, many acknowledged as pinnacles of symphonic, concertante, chamber, piano, operatic, and choral music. He is among the most enduringly popular of classical composers.

Mozart showed prodigious ability from his earliest childhood in Salzburg. Already competent on keyboard and violin, he composed from the age of five and performed before European royalty. At 17 he was engaged as a court musician in Salzburg, but grew restless and traveled in search of a better position, always composing abundantly. While visiting Vienna in 1781, he was dismissed from his Salzburg position. He chose to stay in the capital, where he achieved fame but little financial security. During his final years in Vienna, he composed many of his best-known symphonies, concertos, and operas, and the *Requiem*. The circumstances of his early death have been much mythologized. He was survived by his wife Constanze and two sons.

Mozart learned voraciously from others, and developed a brilliance and maturity of style that encompassed the light and graceful along with the dark and passionate. His influence on subsequent Western art music is profound.

Musical Highlights of *Don Giovanni*

Please note the events described with each song relate to the traditional opera and is not necessarily reflective of Calgary Opera's production of *Don Giovanni*, however the music and lyrics will remain unchanged.

Excerpts from Act One:

1. **Aria:** "*Madamina, il catalogo e questo*" (My little lady, this is the catalogue), sung by Leporello (Bass).

Leporello tries to comfort Donna Elvira by telling her not to think on Don Giovanni; she isn't the first and certainly won't be the last. Leporello colorfully describes Don Giovanni's strategies when it comes to women.

2. **Quartet:** "*Non ti fidar*" (*Don't trust him*), sung by Donna Elvira, Donna Anna, Don Ottavio, and Don Giovanni.

Donna Anna and Don Ottavio are caught in the middle of a public showdown between Donna Elvira and Don Giovanni. Donna Elvira shouts to anyone who will listen that Don Giovanni is an evil maniac, while Don Giovanni tries to discredit her by calling her crazy and sick with love for him. Donna Anna and Don Ottavio are unsure of whom to believe.

3. **Aria:** "*Or sai chi l'onore*" (He is the one who tried to rob me of my honour), sung by Donna Anna (Soprano).

Donna Anna suddenly recognizes Don Giovanni as the masked man who killed her father and assaulted her. She demands that Don Ottavio avenge her.

4. **Duet:** "*La ci darem la mano*" (There we will entwine our hands), sung by Don Giovanni and Zerlina (Baritone and Soprano).

After Don Giovanni ensures Masetto, the groom, is lured away to his wedding celebrations, Don Giovanni and Zerlina, the bride, find themselves alone. Don Giovanni immediately begins his seductive arts.

Excerpts from Act Two:

5. **Aria:** "*Deh, vieni alla finestra*" (Come to the window), sung by Don Giovanni (Baritone).

Determined with a new project of wooing Donna Elvira's maid, Don Giovanni puts his charms to use in a seductive serenade outside the window.

6. **Aria:** "*Vedrai, carino*" (Come dear one), sung by Zerlina (Soprano).

Zerlina finds Masetto broken and badly beaten by Don Giovanni (who has been disguised as Leporello). She sings to him that her love is a more potent cure for what ails him than what any doctor may prescribe.

7. **Sextet:** "*Sola, sola in buio loco*" (Alone in this dark place), sung by Zerlina, Donna Elvira, Donna Anna, Don Ottavio, Masetto, and Leporello.

Everyone closes in on a figure in the darkness--it looks like they have finally caught Don Giovanni! But just as they are preparing to take vengeance on him, he removes his hat and cloak, revealing that it is in fact Leporello, who has been forced by his master to dress up as Don Giovanni in order to distract Donna Elvira.

8. **Aria:** "*Il mio tesoro*" (My treasure), sung by Don Ottavio (Tenor).

Finally convinced that he must avenge the death of Donna Anna's father, Don Ottavio tells his friends to dry the eyes of Anna and take care of her while he searches for vengeance.

The Company



Robert Dean, Conductor

After a successful international singing career, Robert Dean made his conducting debut at the Batignano Festival in the Italian premieres of Beethoven's *Leonora* and JC Bach's *Temistocle*. He was Head of Music at Scottish Opera, conducting with Luciano Pavarotti, Dennis O'Neill and Jane Eaglan. He conducted *Albert Herring*, *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *L'Elisir d'Amore* (Kentucky), *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (San Francisco), *Così fan tutte* and *Iolanthe* (Grange Park Opera), *La Bohème*, *La Fille du Régiment* and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (Opera Holland Park), *Pearl Fishers* in Edmonton (Canadian debut), followed by *Die Fledermaus* and *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. For Calgary Opera he last conducted *Tosca* (2008).



Nathan Berg, Bass Leporello

With a "first-class voice" (The Boston Globe), Nathan Berg has emerged as one of the most in-demand Bass-Baritones of his generation. Berg enjoys a versatile career that incorporates a balance of concert, recital and operatic performances. With repertoire ranging from Bach to Mahler, he has traveled extensively to perform with conductors around the world. His repertoire in opera includes Figaro, Leporello, Ferrando (*Il Trovatore*), Mercurio (*L'Incoronazione di Poppea*), Schaunard and Colline (*La Bohème*), Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*) with companies including the Canadian Opera Company, English National Opera, Glyndebourne, New York City Opera, Opera de Paris, Bayerische Staatsoper, Vancouver Opera and Netherlands Opera. This is his debut with Calgary Opera.



Lyne Fortin, Soprano Donna Anna

Lyne Fortin is one of Canada's leading Sopranos, with appearances in Europe with the Scottish Opera and Vlaamse Opera, in the U.S.A. with Seattle Opera, Michigan Opera, and the Baltimore Opera, and in Canada with L'Opera de Montréal, Vancouver Opera, Opera Saskatchewan, Calgary Opera, Edmonton Opera, l'Opera de Quebec. Her repertoire includes the title roles of *Agrippina*, *Thaïs*, *La Traviata*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Romeo et Juliette*, Anna and Elvira in *Don Giovanni*, the Countess and Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Mimi in *La Bohème*, Antonia in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, Leila in *Les Pêcheurs des Perles*, Gilda in *Rigoletto*, and Micaela in *Carmen*. She last performed *La Traviata* (1995) for Calgary Opera.



Brett Polegato, Baritone
Don Giovanni

Brett Polegato has earned the highest praise from audiences and critics alike. At the Inaugural Gala Concert for the Canadian Opera Company's new home, the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, he "nearly stole the show with a strong and characterful performance of Figaro's cocky "Largo al factotum." He has appeared on stages in 19 countries, including Lincoln Center, La Scala, the Concertgebouw,

Opéra National de Paris, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, Teatro Real, Roy Thomson Hall, Kennedy Center and Carnegie Hall. For Calgary Opera, Mr. Polegato most recently appeared in *Cinderella* (2006).



Valerian Ruminski, Bass
Commendatore

Valerian Ruminski is a graduate of the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia. He made his Metropolitan Opera debut as Zuniga in *Carmen* and has also appeared in the HD broadcast of *I Puritani*. He has performed with many companies including – l'Opera de Montréal, Opera Lyra Ottawa, Vancouver Opera, New York City Opera, Dallas Opera, Florida Grand

Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Seattle Opera, Opera de Monte Carlo and Opera Ireland. His upcoming roles include Nikitisch in *Boris Godunov* for the Metropolitan Opera, Sparafucile in *Rigoletto* for Nickel City Opera (Buffalo) and Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* for Hawaii Opera. He last performed Timur in Calgary Opera's *Turandot* (2005).



Benjamin Butterfield, Tenor
Don Ottavio

Benjamin Butterfield's opera credits include performances in Arizona (*Don Giovanni*), Toulouse (*Mignon*), Toronto (*Cunning Little Vixen*), Vancouver (*Rake's Progress*) and Victoria (*Semele*) as well as touring with the New York City Opera (*Die Zauberflöte*), Welsh National Opera (*Barber of Seville*), the San Carlo in Naples (*Persephone*), Canterbury Opera, New Zealand (*Eugene*

Onegin) and with Opera Atelier (*Dido and Aeneas*). Recent performances include Messiaen's *St. Francois d'Assise* with Kent Nagano in Montreal and *The Magic Flute* with Bernard Labadie in Toronto. He has recorded for CBC, Koch, Dorion, Marquis, Timpani and Musicaleopolis and he is head of voice at the University of Victoria. For Calgary Opera he last performed in *The Magic Flute* (2006).



Laura Whalen, Soprano
Donna Elvira

Lyric Soprano Laura Whalen is often noted for her command, precision, and elegance in operatic, orchestral and recital appearances throughout North America. Recent engagements: title role in *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Arizona Opera and Pacific Opera, Violetta in *La Traviata* with Edmonton Opera and Opera Lyra Ottawa, Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro* and Norina in *Don Pasquale* with Opera Ontario, and Juliette in *Roméo et Juliette* with Opera Lyra Ottawa and Opera Ontario. Recently, with Calgary Opera she performed Marguerite in *Faust*, and two world premieres by composer John Estacio and librettist John Murrell: the title role in *Filumena* (2003) and Anna in *Frobisher* (2007).



Kathleen Brett, Soprano
Zerlina

Canadian Soprano Kathleen Brett is cherished by audiences in America and Europe, not only for the beauty of her tone and stylistic instinct but also for her natural stage presence and dramatic skills. She has performed around the world, including San Francisco, Los Angeles, Dallas, New York (City Opera), London (Covent Garden) and Antwerp (Vlaamse Opera). Recent engagements include Birdie Hubbard in Pacific Opera Victoria's acclaimed production of Bltstein's *Regina; Messiah* with the National Arts Centre, Ottawa; and *Mozart Requiem* with Vancouver Symphony. Featured soloist on tour with Boston Pops, this season she appears with Cincinnati Pops and Toronto Symphony. With Calgary Opera she last performed in *Romeo and Juliet* (2003).



Alexander Dobson, Baritone
Masetto

British-Canadian Alexander Dobson has been praised for his musicality and dramatic awareness on both opera and concert stages. Recent highlights include his riveting portrayal of Wozzek conducted by Yannick Nezet-Seguin, Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte* with Opera Hamilton, Mercutio in *Roméo et Juliette* for l'Opéra de Montréal, Silvio in Opera Quebec's *Pagliacci*, Marcello in both Saskatoon Opera's production and BRAVO's TV rendition of *La Bohème*, De Retz in Bard Summerscape's production of *Les Huguenots* and made his Royal Opera Covent Garden debut with *The Midnight Court*. Upcoming engagements include the title role in *Don Giovanni* with Orchestre Metropolitain and Marcello in Pacific Opera Victoria's *La Bohème*. With Calgary Opera he last performed in *Ariadne auf Naxos* (2009)

**Bretta Gerecke, Set Designer**

Bretta Gerecke grew up in Winnipeg and has resided in Edmonton for the past 14 years. She is resident designer at Catalyst Theatre where she has designed many world premieres that have toured internationally. She also works regularly with Citadel Theatre, CanStage, Edmonton Opera, Theatre Calgary and the Globe Theatre. Ms. Gerecke is the recipient of 15 Elizabeth Sterling Haynes Awards for Outstanding Achievement in Set, Lighting Design and Costume Design, the Enbridge Emerging Artist Award, and was short-listed in 2006 for the prestigious Siminovitch Prize. Ms. Gerecke previously designed *Rigoletto* (2007) for Calgary Opera.

PART 3 OF *DON GIOVANNI* STUDY GUIDE

GENERAL OPERA INFORMATION

What is Opera

Opera is an outlet for story telling. Opera was created in Italy about 400 years ago by a group of aristocratic musicians, poets and philosophers called the **Florentine Camerata**. For many centuries before that, people had combined music, drama and dance to entertain, communicate and honor their gods. **Claudio Monteverdi**, the first great composer of opera, and **Vincenzo Galilei**, the father of the famous astronomer, **Galileo Galilei**, were among this group who looked back to the dramas of the Greeks for their inspiration. Because opera was first popular in Italy, many of the words used with it are from the Italian language. The word *opera* means “work,” as in “work of art.” Opera was first performed in the homes of the aristocracy. When opera moved into public theatres, it became as popular as movies are today. In 1800, **Venice** was a city of 140,000 people (about 1/7 the size of Calgary), and it had 11 opera houses! Each one scheduled a new opera almost every week. People in the streets would hum a melody from the opera the way we might hum a song we hear on the radio. **Giuseppe Verdi**, for example, who composed during the period 1832 to 1893, was so popular that after the premiere of one of his operas, his admirers unhooked the horses from his carriage and dragged it through the streets, while the crowd cheered and filled the carriage with flowers. Some of the more famous artists even needed bodyguards to protect them from their fans.

Opera lovers believe that opera is the art form with the greatest power to move the human heart because it is such a rich artistic tapestry. Opera combines singing, symphonic music, theatre, visual artistry and dance to create a breathtaking spectacle on stage. The music and stories of opera remain with us long after the final curtain.

Opera Terms

The word 'opera' is Italian, derived from the plural of the Latin *opus*, meaning 'work.' Opera, in Italian is called *opera lirica*, or lyric work. 'Lyric' is defined as 'appropriate song,' so *opera lirica* is a work of theatre that is set to song. Opera combines the best of the arts: singing, orchestra, drama, dance, sets, costumes, lighting and special effects. All of these characteristics combine to make opera one of the most powerful art forms. Opera is just as entertaining now as it was when it was first created. If you like a good story, you'll like opera. Here are a few things to help you figure it all out.

Libretto: Italian for "little book"; the words of an opera written by a librettist.

Aria: Italian for an air or song; the big number where the singer expresses feelings and shows off the voice.

Recitative: Speech-singing where the singer may adopt the rhythms of ordinary speech. Used to further the plot or set up an aria.

Duet: An aria built for two. Singers express feelings to each other or the audience.

Ensemble: Principal singers singing mostly together, expressing similar or different opinions and emotions. There are many ensemble pieces in *Don Giovanni*. An example of a Sextet and a Quartet are provided in the music selections found in this study guide.

Fach or Voice Category: German for "compartment." A voice category or range of notes and voice quality in individual singers.

Coloratura Soprano: The highest female voice. This soprano is the 'tweety bird' of opera, singing the highest range of notes with great flexibility. There are no coloratura soprano roles in *Don Giovanni*.

Soprano: The voice has a high range of notes. Voice quality can be dramatic or lyric. The roles of Donna Anna and Donna Elvira are soprano roles.

Mezzo-Soprano: Mezzo-Sopranos have the middle range of the female voice.

Tenor: The highest range in the male voice. For example, the role of Don Ottavio, in *Don Giovanni*.

Baritone: The middle range of the male voice. In *Don Giovanni*, Don Giovanni and Masetto are baritone roles.

Bass: The lowest of the male voices. In *Don Giovanni*, Leporello and Il Commendatore are bass roles.

Chorus: A group of community-based singers who provide support to the principal singers, set the scene and create the mood for an opera. The chorus includes all voice categories.

Opera in Canada

At Calgary Opera, we have been more than fortunate to be able to expose our patrons to several new Canadian operas. New operas, though not rare, are expensive and very labor intensive to create. In Canada, Calgary Opera is a leading company in the creation of new operas. Please visit our website to read more about the Canadian Operas we have presented and the exciting original opera *The Inventor* coming up in our 2010-2011 season.

Opera came to Canada with the first French settlements. **Champlain** organized an opera performance even before he founded Quebec in 1608. As the railroads moved westward in the 19th Century, so did opera. Each province eventually established at least one opera company.

There is evidence of light operas being performed in Canada from 1914 onward, but there was a real outburst of activity in the early 1940s due to the patronage of the burgeoning Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Many operas were written for radio, such as Healy Willan's *Transit Through Fire*, which was broadcast in 1942. Canada's 100th birthday in 1967 marked a high moment of Canadian nationalism, so it is not surprising that opera flourished. Government money through the Canada Council was made available for new commissions and there was an explosion of new operatic productions, such as Murray Adaskin's *Grant, Warden of the Plains*, Raymond Pannell's *The Luck of Ginger Coffey*, and perhaps the best known, Mavor Moore and Harry Somers' *Louis Riel*.

Louis Riel was first performed at the O'Keefe Centre in Toronto in 1967 and had a revival as a McGill University student production in 2005. Harry Somers, in collaboration with Rod Anderson, has also written *Mario and the Magicians* based on Thomas Mann's novel of the same name, which was performed by the Canadian Opera Company at the Elgin Theatre in Toronto in 1992.

The Golden Ass, written by Randolph Peters and the late Robertson Davies, was performed at the O'Keefe Centre to great acclaim in 1999. Pacific Opera Victoria produced Mavor Moore and Louis Applebaum's *Erewhon* in 2000. Tapestry Music Theatre produced Chan Ka Nin's *The Iron Road*, an opera about Chinese labourers on the Western Canadian Railway. Another exciting operatic venture about Canada's little discussed history of slavery is the passionate tale of *Beatrice Chancy* by James Rolfe and George Elliot Clarke. Expanding beyond the traditional Opera House, the influential composer R. Murray Schafer has played a large role in shaping the growth of new opera in Canada through his successful experimental works, most notably the 1981 'music drama' *The Princess of the Stars* (which also acts as the Prologue to Schafer's epic 12-part opera series *Patria*). The opera begins one hour before dawn, is performed entirely in canoes on a lake, and is improvisational with elements of dance and puppetry throughout. Though the productions are unconventional, and the music within them continually subject to change with its surroundings, Schafer's works are also highly emotive, romantic even, and hold strong ties to the grandeur of opera with their ornate design and dramatic mythological tales. In 2007 Calgary Opera and The Banff Centre co-commissioned and co-produced *Frobisher*. *Frobisher* was the second full-length original opera created by John Estacio and John Murrell. *Frobisher* tells a story of love, loss, and adventure in Canada's North. Set against the backdrop of the Northern Lights and the forbiddingly beautiful Arctic landscape, the story weaves back and forth in time, with powerful parallel stories of exploration and discovery, 500 years apart.

Who best to receive new Canadian works but children? Many new works that have been created are geared towards the younger generation, an audience virtually ignored in the history of opera. Dean Burry's *The Hobbit* and *The Brothers Grimm* have been produced across Canada, and *The Brothers Grimm* was recently toured by our own Emerging Artists in spring

2007. Vancouver Opera has toured *Naomi's Road* and the Canadian Children's Opera chorus has generated *Dr. Cannon's Cure* and *A Mid-Winter Night's Dream*. Last season, Calgary Opera performed the Vancouver Opera's production of *The Barber of Seville*, a Canadian adaptation of the infamous *Barber of Seville*.

In the landscape of opera, new Canadian operas are alive and well, and we hope that they will continue to flourish.

Pulling it Together

It takes a lot of people to produce an opera! An opera production not only involves soloists, chorus and orchestra, but many other people involved in planning, working behind the scenes, in the auditorium and marketing the performance. Here are some of the jobs with brief descriptions.

Conductor:	Directs all music rehearsals; conducts performances
Chorus Master:	Prepares the chorus for performance
Chorus:	Community members - auditioned every year
Rehearsal Pianist:	Plays for all rehearsals
Repetiteur:	Plays for all main stage opera rehearsals.
Stage Director:	Moves all performers on stage; works with characterization
Production Manager:	In charge of all aspects of technical production
Head Make-Up Artist:	Responsible for applying make up for all performers
Costume Designer:	Design, and make costumes for all performers
Dressers:	Fit and alter costumes for performers
Stage Manager:	In charge of rehearsal operations and calls cues for cast and crew during the performance.
Ass't Stage Manger:	Assists stage manager with specific responsibilities
Set Designer:	Draws a design for the set, scenery and props
Stage Crew:	Moves scenery and stage props
Lighting Designer:	Devises a lighting plan, set by electrician
Electrician:	Responsible for setting stage lights and electrical installations
Title Operator:	Operates computer for English translations projected above the stage
Property Master:	Works with set designer/director on props; keeps them safe
Front of House Mgr:	In charge of auditorium seating, lobby, ushers
Marketing Director:	Responsible for marketing the opera to the public
Development Director:	Responsible for acquiring opera donors
Education Director:	Designs Education programs for the community, for schools, study guides
Volunteer Director:	Responsible for recruiting, assigning and recognizing volunteers
Web designer:	Designs the opera web site
Graphic Designer:	Designs ads, brochures, show programs and more.
Executive Ass't:	Assists the General Director
General Director:	Responsible for all aspects of managing an opera company
Publicist:	Writes text for website and print materials, responsible for coordinating media including newspaper, TV and radio stories

