

Opera in Schools
Study Guide 2019-20
The Bremen Town Musicians
by Dean Burry

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Introduction

The music — the artistry — the grand emotion — the spectacle! This is the fantastic world of opera.

Opera is a unique and exciting art form which combines the disciplines of music, drama, literature, dance, visual and technical arts like no other.

This guide will give you the backstage tour of all that is opera —terminology, inside info about the composers and librettists, activities and suggestions, all of which are designed to make **Bremen Town** an experience you and your students will not forget soon.

A study of the performing and fine arts helps students develop critical analysis skills, problem solving, perseverance, and a drive for excellence. The creative skills children develop through the arts carry them toward new ideas, new experiences and new challenges. Thank you for giving your students and children the opportunity to see a live opera. There is nothing like the excitement and magic of a live professional performance!

See you at the opera,

Patricia Kesler

Education and Community Outreach

Calgary Opera

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Bremen Town Musicians statue by Gerhard Marcks.

Photo by Dennis Seigel.

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About the Composer and Librettist: Dean Burry

Composer and librettist Dean Burry is one of the world's leading composers of children's opera with performances of his works across Canada, the United States, Europe, China and Brazil.

Burry was born in St. John's, Newfoundland and grew up in Gander. In his youth he spent a great deal of time out on the water and in his father's boat and it is there that he began hearing music, in the songs that the fishermen sang and in the sounds of the waves and water.

At age 10 he was encouraged to compose music. This would be the beginning of a long and successful career in the arts, writing and composing. His first produced script, *Good Gods*, won the local drama festival in 1987.

After High School, Mr. Burry attended Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick as a saxophone major. His love of theatre was strong and so he chose to combine music and theatre and began to write operas and musicals. In his first three years at Mount Allison he wrote, produced and conducted three major dramatic musical works.

He continued his studies at the University of Toronto in composition studies. After completion he began working at the Canadian Opera Company while still composing. While working there he immersed himself in the world of opera, studying in the library, attending rehearsals and talking extensively with the Education and Outreach Coordinator. In 1997, the COC hired him to run an after-school opera program in the community in order to introduce children to opera. He remained at the helm of the program until 2015.

In 1997 he was commissioned to write *The Brothers Grimm* which was a huge success and gave him international renown as a children's opera composer. *The Brothers Grimm* has been seen by over 150,000 school children across Canada, the United States and Europe in over 600 performances. His other major works are *The Hobbit* for the COC and Sarasota Opera, which recently received its European premier to sold out houses in Ljubljana, Slovenia, *The Scorpion's Sting* for the COC, *the Vinland Traveler* and *Le nez de la sorcière* for Memorial University of Newfoundland, *Pandora's Locker* for the Glenn Gould School, *The Mummies' Masque* for Toronto Masque Theatre, the CBC serial radio opera *Baby Kintyre* and *Beacon of Light* for Rising Tide Theatre. He wrote *The Bremen Town Musicians* in 2009 as an accompaniment to *The Brothers Grimm* for Opera Lyra.

During his recent engagement as Artistic Director of the Canadian Children's Opera Company, the company doubled in size and programmed the first ever Toronto Festival of Children's Opera as well as a European tour of the critically-acclaimed production of *Brundibär*. Burry is currently the director of the Opera Creation Lab at the Centre for Opera Studies in Sulmona, Italy. He holds a professorship at the Glenn Gould Professional School in Toronto and is an Assistant Professor at the Dan School of Drama and Music at Queen's University and Artistic Director at the school's Music Theatre Creation Program.



About the Director: Jessica Derventzis



Jessica Derventzis was born and raised in suburban Toronto. She began her career in the arts with studies in piano performance at Queen's University. There she simultaneously worked as an accompanist for opera productions and in collaboration with singers in the Voice Department. After her studies, she taught theatre at her old private high school, Mentor College in Mississauga, stage managed countless Fringe and Summerworks shows, and directed many musical theatre productions.

Finally, Jessica made the tough decision to quit teaching and dive into the opera world. Her most recent directing credits include: *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (Opera 5, Dora Award nomination for Outstanding Opera Direction), *Book of Faces* and *The Chair* (Highlands Opera Studio), *Die Zauberflöte*, *La Bohème* (Opera Kelowna), *La Bohème*, *The Merry Widow* (Brott Opera), a selection from *Tapestry Briefs Tasting*

Shorts (Tapestry Opera), *Dido and Aeneas*, *La liberazione di Ruggiero* (Opera McGill), *The Medium*, *L'Heure Espagnole* (Stu&Jess Productions), *Our Town* (Opera Nuova, Canadian premiere), *Cinderella* (Calgary Opera School Tour), and *La Voix Humaine* (Little Opera on the Prairie).

Ms. Derventzis has also assisted many internationally acclaimed directors at major opera companies in Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Vancouver and Toronto.

Ms. Derventzis is also very active in the indie opera scene. Championing new Canadian works and female-driven projects are at the heart of her fiercest endeavours. She directed the premiere of *Book of Faces* by Kendra Harder and Michelle Telford with Musique 3 Femmes in March. Most recently, she was awarded the Metcalf Foundation Performing Arts Internship grant for 2018 to work with Tapestry Opera on directing, dramaturgy, and artistic direction. She is an executive member of the Indie Opera Toronto collective and Artistic Director of Opera 5. Coming up, Jessica will be directing *Turn of the Screw* with Opera 5.

Biography taken in part from <http://torontocityopera.com/creative-team.html>

*What does a director do?

Taken from <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles/theatre-director>

Theatre (and opera) directors have responsibility for the practical and creative interpretation of a dramatic script or musical score, from the written script or libretto, to how the singers and actors portray those words on the stage.

[They are] involved in the whole process, from the design and pre-production stages, right through to the final performance.

[They] work closely with creative and production teams, performers and the producer to create a performance which connects with the audience. [They] therefore need to be able to coordinate effectively across a range of disciplines and with artistic vision.

About the Artistic and Production Team

Costume Designer – Cathleen Gasca



Cathleen studied costume design at the Trozmer Universidad de Diseno in Mexico and at Nova Scotia College of Art & Design Halifax. She has been both stitcher and costume designer for Calgary Opera,

Theatre Calgary, Storybook Theatre and more.

***What does a costume designer do?** The costume designer works with the creative team to create the pieces that the characters in the story will wear. The pieces must fit with the story and the look of the show, as well as describing something about the character.

Set Designer—Scott Reid



Scott Reid has been designing for theatre, opera and dance for over 20 years. He is a set, lighting and projection designer. Based in Calgary, Scott's designs have been seen across North America. Scott received both his BFA and MFA in Theatre Design from the University of Alberta. He has worked with Calgary Opera many times in both set and projection design.

***What does a set designer do?** (Taken from <http://aact.org/set-designer>) All the scenery, furniture and props the audience sees at a production of a play make up the set design. The set designer's job is to design these physical surroundings in which the action will take place. A theatre set should suggest the style and tone of the whole production and give clues as to the specific time and place of the action.

Pianist/Repetiteur Evan Mounce



Pianist Evan Mounce is known for his musicality, deft sight-reading skills, and ability to bring out the best of the singers he coaches. As a vocal coach Evan worked closely with k.d. lang, preparing her for her 25th anniversary tour of *Ingénue* across Canada. He enjoys a close

sociation with Calgary Opera, Cowtown Opera, Cantaré Children's Choir and the Calgary Philharmonic Chorus. Evan holds a Masters of Music from the University of Toronto and further studies include Opera on the Avalon, the Vancouver International Song Institute, the Centre for Opera Studies in Italy, and Opera NUOVA.

***What does a repetiteur do?** The repetiteur must learn the music for the opera before the rehearsals begin, they will play the score (music of the piece) while the performers rehearse, so they must know it perfectly in order to be able to play any part instantly. The repetiteur will play for the performers until almost the final performance, when the orchestra takes over the task.

Stage Manager—Shelby-Jai Flick



Shelby-Jai is excited to be visiting schools with this wonderful company of opera singers and presenting such a fun show.

Recent credits include: *Norma*, *Christmas at the Opera*, *La Bohème* (Calgary Opera); *The Seven Wonderers* (Beakerhead 2019); *Lighting the Way*, *The Temporary* (Downstage); *We Are All Treaty People* (Quest Theatre/ Young People's Theatre); in addition to ongoing work with the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, as well as working with several national sports organizations ahead of the 2016 Olympic Games.

Select theatre credits include: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *The Nutcracker*, *La Fille mal gardée*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *The Seagull* (National Ballet of Canada); *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, *Julius Caesar*, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Stratford Festival); *Mimi (or a Poisoner's Comedy)*, *Courageous*, *If We Were Birds* (Tarragon Theatre).

***What does a stage manager do?** (Taken from <http://aact.org/stage-manager>) Stage managers provide practical and organizational support to the director, actors, designers, stage crew and technicians throughout the production process. They are also the director's representative during performances, making sure that the production runs smoothly.

The Cast

MAIN CHARACTERS

Character	Voice Type
Miller/Wolf/Poet/Witch/Robber	Baritone
Donkey	Baritone
Dog	Mezzo-Soprano
Cat	Soprano
Rooster	Tenor

OUR SINGERS

All of the singers of our Opera School Tour are members of Calgary Opera's Emerging Artist Development program except for our special guest for this tour, former Emerging Artist David Diston, Baritone.

This is a program in which the opera engages up to eight young trained opera singers to develop their craft, skills and career at Calgary Opera for one or two years. The young singers come from across Canada and take part in opera performances at the Jubilee Auditorium and at the Mamdani Opera Centre, the school tour, community concerts and recitals, and theatrical, movement and singing coaching and training during their time with us.

Calgary Opera's 2019-2020 Emerging Artist Ensemble:



Lillian Brooks, Mezzo-Soprano

Canadian mezzo-soprano Lillian Brooks is a recent graduate of the Artist Diploma Program at the Glenn Gould School in Toronto, Ontario, and a cum laude alumna of the York University Vocal Performance program where she studied with mezzo-soprano Catherine Robbin. Ms Brooks has appeared in many operatic roles and as an oratorio soloist throughout Ontario. Most recently, she performed the role of Flora in Toronto City Opera's production of *La Traviata*. Her past operatic roles include Cornelia in *Giulio Cesare*, Filipyevna in *Eugene Onegin*, Bradamante in *Alcina*, Paoluccia in Piccini's *La Cecchina*, Mrs Nolan in Menotti's *The*

Medium, Third Lady & Spirit in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, and Cherubino in the *Le nozze di Figaro*. Ms Brooks has sung as a soloist in many prestigious venues in Ontario, including Koerner Hall, Roy Thomson Hall, and the Sony Centre for the Performing Arts. In the summer of 2018, Ms. Brooks had the privilege of joining fellow young artists in the Britten-Pears Programme in Aldeburgh, UK where she studied with renowned international faculty members including Anne Sofie von Otter. Ms. Brooks looks forward to an exciting season this year as a member of the Calgary Opera Emerging Artist Program.



Kallie Clayton, Soprano

Soprano Kallie Clayton hails from Red Deer, Alberta and is currently based in Vancouver, BC. She received a Master of Music in Opera from UBC and her undergraduate degree in voice from the University of Alberta. While at UBC she performed the title role of Massenet's *Manon*, Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*), and Mimí (*La Bohème*). Other role highlights include Noémie (*Cendrillon*), Cupidon (*Orphée aux Enfers*), Linfea (*La Calisto*), and Fifth Handmaiden (*Elektra*). Kallie has been featured as a soloist with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra and has been heard in concert with the Vancouver Philharmonic Orchestra, Burnaby Lyric Opera,

and Opera Kelowna as well as Toronto's MYOpera and Against the Grain Theatre. Most recently, Kallie made her role debut as Adina in Burnaby Lyric Opera's production of *L'elisir d'amore*. Recent engagements include the role of Mari-
anne in *Silent Light* by Paola Prestini and Royce Vavrek at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity.

The Cast, Continued



Eden Tremayne, Soprano

Canadian soprano Eden Tremayne is recognized for her heartfelt singing and dynamic stage portrayals. For the 2018/19 season, Ms. Tremayne returned for her second year as an Apprentice Artist with the San Diego Opera. Ms. Tremayne sang the role of Countess Ceprano and understudied the role of Gilda in Verdi's *Rigoletto*, studied the roles of Susanna in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* and Frasquita in Bizet's *Carmen*, and performed in staged scenes as Sophie in Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier*, Musetta in Puccini's *La bohème* and the title role in Massenet's *Manon* with her fellow San Diego Opera Apprentice Artists. Concert work for the 2018/19 season included performing as the soprano soloist for Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Dona nobis pacem* with The La Jolla Symphony and Chorus. Other notable operatic performances include touring Central and Eastern Canada performing the role of Violetta in Verdi's *La Traviata* as part of Jeunesses Musicales du Canada's Emerging Artists. Ms. Tremayne was also a member of the Yulanda M. Faris Young Artist Program at Vancouver Opera, where her roles performed included Kate Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*, Countess Ceprano and the Page in Verdi's *Rigoletto*, and Lucinda in the Canadian premiere of Nico Muhly's *Dark Sisters*. Additionally, Ms. Tremayne performed the role of Soprano in Tom Johnson's *The Four Note Opera* alongside fellow members of the Yulanda M. Faris Young Artists Program. She made her Bodhi Tree Concerts debut as Rowan in Benjamin Britten's *The Little Sweep*.



Emma Mansell, Mezzo-Soprano

Known for her captivating performances, passionate musicality, and arresting stage presence, mezzo-soprano Emma Mansell has performed many operatic roles, both classical and modern, including the lovable Cherubino in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Nancy in Britten's *Albert Herring*, and the heroine, Noodin-Kwe, in the new Canadian opera, *Giiwedín*, by Spy Dénommé-Welch and Catherine Magowan. Other notable performances include Dritte Dame/*Die Zauberflöte*, Mrs. Demers/*City Workers in Love*, and La Tasse Chinoise/*L'enfant et les sortilèges*. Emma has sung roles in excerpts such as Dinah in Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti*, Jo/*Little Women*, Dorabella/*Così fan tutte*, Sesto/*La Clemenza di Tito*, Hänsel/*Hänsel und Gretel*, and Hermia/*A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Emma has been a featured soloist with distinguished choral groups such as the Peterborough Singers, Choral Connection of St. Thomas, and the Canadian National Youth Choir. Emma earned a Bachelor of Music and a Diploma in Opera from Wilfrid Laurier University, and a Master of Music from the Manhattan School of Music. She has had the pleasure of studying with widely acclaimed sopranos Leslie Fagan, Ashley Putnam, and most recently, Cindy Townsend.



Jeffrey Strand, Tenor

Jeffrey recently covered Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte* at Sarasota Opera as a Studio Artist, covered Manrico in *Il trovatore* as a Bonfils-Stanton Apprentice Artist at Central City Opera, won First Prize in the Southwest Vocal Competition, covered Don José in *Carmen* at the Brott Opera Festival in Hamilton, Ontario, and performed Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte* as a Young Artist at the National Arts Centre. Jeffrey covered Lennie in Floyd's *Of Mice and Men* as a Young Artist at Tulsa Opera and has performed frequently with Phoenix Opera. He regularly performs oratorio and concert music, appearing as the Tenor Soloist in Beethoven's *9th Symphony* with the Chandler Symphony, as the Tenor Soloist in Beethoven's *Mass in C* and *Choral Fantasy* and as the Evangelist in Bach's *St. John Passion* with the Canyon Symphony Orchestra, and as the Tenor Soloist in Puccini's *Messa di Gloria* with the San Tan Orchestra and Chorale. He has also appeared as the Tenor Soloist in Vaughan Williams' *Hodie* with the Tulsa Oratorio Chorus, and in Handel's *Messiah* with the Phoenix Opera Orchestra, the Canyon Symphony Orchestra, and others.

The Cast, Continued



Jonah Spungin, Baritone

Ottawa baritone Jonah Spungin holds a Master's in Voice and Opera from McGill University, where he performed many roles with Opera McGill and the McGill Savoy Society, notably Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus*, Gideon March in *Little Women*, Baron Mirko Zeta in *The Merry Widow*, and Captain Corcoran in *HMS Pinafore*. Also appearing frequently on the concert stage, he sang the title role of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with the McGill Symphony Orchestra and the baritone solos in the Fauré *Requiem* and Goodall *Eternal Light Requiem* with the

Ottawa Choral Society. As an Emerging Artist with Calgary Opera, he has performed Mike Groom in *Everest*, King Melchior in *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, and Paris in *Roméo et Juliette*.



Scott Rumble, Tenor

Tenor Scott Rumble was a member of the Yulanda M. Faris Young Artist Program for Vancouver Opera's 2018/19 season. He holds a Master of Music in Opera Performance from the University of British Columbia, and an Artist Diploma and Bachelor of Music (Honours) in Voice Performance from the University of Western Ontario. During his time with Vancouver Opera, Mr. Rumble sang the role of St. Brioche in *The Merry Widow* and covered both the title role in Gounod's *Faust* and Rodolfo in *La Bohème*. Other recent credits include Bacchus in *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Highlands Opera Studio), Bob Boles in *Peter Grimes* (Vancouver Symphony Orchestra), Luigi in *Il Tabarro*, Lensky in *Eugene Onegin* (University of British Columbia) and Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* (La Musica Lirica in Novafeltria, Italy). Mr. Rumble has also performed as the tenor soloist for Mozart's *Requiem*, Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*, and Handel's *Messiah*.

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Former Emerging Artist:



David Diston, Baritone

David Diston's rapidly developing artistry is quickly gaining him recognition as a "sonorous baritone" (Huffington Post) with "full-throated and characterful singing" (Calgary Herald). Mr. Diston holds a Master of Music in Opera Performance from the University of Toronto and is a graduate of the Calgary Opera Emerging Artist Program. Notable roles include Ping (*Turandot*), Frederic (*Lakmé*), Pish-Tush (*The Mikado*), Count Almaviva (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Dr. Malatesta (*Don Pasquale*), and Schaunard (*La Bohème*). He has also had the pleasure of creating roles in new operatic works including Dr. Mann in Vehear's *SHOT!*, Young Rattenbury with Pacific Opera Victoria in Stokes' *Rattenbury*, and premiering concert works including

Kositsky's new oratorio *A Mighty Cry*, and most recently *Lover's Dusk* by Matthias McIntire. On the concert stage, Mr. Diston recently made his Toronto Symphony Orchestra debut in C. Nielsen's *Symphony No. 3*, and his debut with the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra. Mr. Diston is excited to make his debut with the London Symphonia in 2020 as Jesus in Bach's *Johannes-Passion*. Mr. Diston currently lives and works in Berlin, Germany.

Synopsis

SYNOPSIS—"a condensed statement or outline (as of a narrative)" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary) is the outline of the story of the opera.

The Bremen Town Musicians

Once upon a time, a Miller had a Donkey. After many years of hard work, the Donkey became slow and tired, and therefore, less and less useful to his master. Frustrated and angry, the Miller berates his Donkey for being so slow. The Donkey fights back, embarrassing the Miller in front of the townspeople. When the Miller speaks with one of the townspeople about how to get rid of the Donkey, the Donkey realizes it's time for him to run away.

As the Donkey is escaping, he meets a Dog who is howling mournfully. The Donkey asks her why she is howling. The Dog tells her story—she was once a great hunter, and her goal had been to bring down the Great Wolf for her master. Last night, she had the Wolf cornered—but he fought her and won, getting away. When her master found out, he was ashamed of her and loaded his gun. She ran away.

The Donkey invites the Dog to join him—he has decided to go to Bremen Town, where everyone is free, to become a town musician. The Dog agrees, and they continue on their journey.

Soon, they meet a Cat, who looks very sad. The Donkey and the Dog ask her to tell them her story. Her master is a Poet, and her job was to protect his library from mice. She was very good at it. However, now that she is getting older, she gets distracted. She got so distracted that a mouse got in and chewed on all of her master's books. Her master was furious and threatened to throw her in the river.

The Donkey and Dog invite her to join them on their journey. She agrees, and they set off once again. Soon they meet a loudly crowing Rooster, who seems upset. He says that he is crowing loudly now because he's retiring tomorrow, due to the fact that he will no longer have a head! The others ask him to explain.

The Rooster's mistress is a Witch, and it was his job to wake her up to tend her vegetable garden. That is, until he slept in. The Witch was furious, as her magical garden was ruined. She threatened to turn him into stew.

The others invite the Rooster to join them, and he happily agrees. The Donkey, Dog, Cat, and Rooster continue on their journey. But it is getting late, and they become lost in the forest. They decide to stop and get some sleep. While they're resting, the Rooster spots a light flickering in the woods. The Cat sees it too—it is a small cabin, with a fireplace and a light in the window. The animals decide to head towards it.

In the cabin there is a Robber, with food and wine and bags of gold. The animals are hungry too. Too old and tired to fight the Robber, they decide to practice for becoming Bremen Town Musicians by singing for their supper.

The animals fall through the window and into the cabin. The Robber runs away, terrified. The animals eat the food and then, using the tablecloth as a blanket, settle down for the night.

While they're asleep, the Robber sneaks back in. He wakes up the animals, who rise up, still covered by the tablecloth. The Robber thinks they are a monster! They throw the tablecloth over the Robber, push him into a chair and bop him on the head, knocking him out.

The animals consider getting revenge on their masters and every human who has ever hurt them by harming the Robber. The Robber awakens and begs for his life, offering to be their servant. But the Donkey refuses to harm him. He encourages the others to learn to forgive and forget, as that is the only way to be free.

The animals get the Robber to swear that he will never rob again, that he will treat animals well, and will never return to the house. They realize that they no longer need to go to Bremen Town, as they have new friends and a very comfortable home right there in the cabin. They kick out the Robber and toast to their friendship and new beginnings.

The Brothers Grimm and *the Bremen Town Musicians*

The original story of *the Bremen Town Musicians* was written by two brothers—the Brothers Grimm!

Although fairy tales such as *Hansel and Gretel*, *Snow White* and *Rumpelstiltskin* are read the world over, few people know the two German scholars who collected and published them. Jacob (1785-1863) and Wilhelm (1786-1859) Grimm were born in the German city of Hanau and were the oldest in a family of nine children. Their father Philipp was employed as a local magistrate, a position which came with a large house, servants and a high social standing. All this changed upon Philipp's death in 1796 and the family was forced to move to more modest accommodations and rely on the charity of relatives.

Despite financial challenges, Jacob and Wilhelm excelled in school, studying law, philology (the study of words and language) and medieval German literature at the university of in Marburg. It was these latter two subjects which inspired their life-long love of folk tales and in 1806, encouraged by their friend Clemens Brentano, the two set out to systematically collect and record the oral storytelling tradition of the local countryside. Contrary to what many believe, Jacob and Wilhelm were not really the authors of these fairy tales, unlike another famous writer of tales, Hans Christian Andersen. Andersen's works, while certainly appearing to be folktales, are defined as literary tales. His stories, including *The Little Mermaid* and *Thumbelina*, came from his imagination. As folklorists, the Grimm brothers sought to record common stories that were told around campfires or to children at night—some of which had been passed down for centuries. Travelling around the local district and inviting individuals into their home allowed them to accumulate an vast amount of raw material which included everything from magical fairy tales to parables, local legends, fables and other moral lessons. The resulting book, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* or *Children's and Household Tales*, was published on December 20, 1812 and contained 86 stories including *Rapunzel*, *The Frog Prince*, *Cinderella*, *The Fisherman and His Wife*, *The Bremen Town Musicians* and *The Elves and the Shoemaker*. By 1857, seven editions had been released and the publication had grown to include 211 entries.

It is interesting to note, that although the brothers' original goal was to produce an accurate account of German folk tales, they found it irresistible to modify some of the story fragments they received to create a more satisfying narrative. Through the various editions they also revised many of the tales to be more reflective of trends in religion, social appropriateness and children's literature.



Image taken from: www.nationalgeographic.com/content/dam/archaeologyandhistory/rights-exempt/history-magazine/2019/09-10/grimm/02-grimm-og.ngsversion.1569257115618.adapt.1900.1.jpg

Children's and Household Tales has been translated into over 100 languages and served as the inspirations for some of the world's most enduring operas, plays, movies and even video games.



Image taken from <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2014/english-literature-history-childrens-books-illustrations-114404/lot.658.html>

Image of 2nd Edition, 1st illustrated edition of the Brothers' Grimm *Kinder- und HausMärchen* from 1819, which included the first time *The Bremen Town Musicians* was put in print.

Origins of the Story and the Real Bremen Town

ORIGINS OF THE STORY

The story of *The Bremen Town Musicians* is said to have come from a historic region of northwestern Germany called Westphalia, though the tale of animals fleeing from their masters has been around for centuries. It was said that Wilhelm Grimm collected the story from Baron August Franz of the von Haxthausen family from Paderborn. A family friend and regular guest at their castle, Wilhelm likely heard the tale from the Baron who travelled often and recounted stories upon his return. *The Bremen Town*



Musicians was included in the second publication of the Grimm fairy tales in 1819.

Image of August von Haxthausen.

Taken from https://www.nw.de/lokal/kreis_hoexter/brakel/21536695_Das-Leben-und-Wirken-von-August-von-Haxthausen.html

THE REAL BREMEN TOWN

Bremen is not just a made-up place in a folktale—it is an actual city in Germany! Part of the Bremen/Oldenburg Metropolitan Region, Bremen is the tenth most-populated city in Germany and currently home to 2.4 million people.

Monuments and structures dedicated to the story of *The Bremen Town Musicians* are located all over Bremen and the surrounding region. The most famous is the bronze statue at town hall. It features the animals standing atop one another, as they did to scare the robber. Seeing photos of this statue, you may notice that the donkey's hooves are shinier than the rest of the sculpture—there is a legend that rubbing them brings good luck, and so tourists and residents alike have rubbed them that way! This statue is one of Bremen's signature attractions.

The statue was commissioned by the city and created by artist Gerhard Marcks. Installed in 1953, it was initially on loan from the artist, but the tourism organization collected donation to make it a permanent fixture.

Gerhard Marcks (1889-1982) was one of the most influential German sculptors of the 20th century. He



Gerhard Marcks, c. 1924-25
Photo: Unknown, Bauhaus Archiv Berlin

faced many obstacles during his time as an artist—first during World War I, when he served with the military, and again during World War II, when several of his pieces were melted down for munitions and his Berlin studio was hit by a bomb. After the war, he taught at the School of Art in Hamburg and later pursued his career as a freelance artist. It was during this period that he created the famous *Bremen Town Musicians* statue.

Some of the other landmarks and monuments commemorating *The Bremen Town Musicians* include a sculpture and fresco in a restaurant, a mural on a house, a wooden statue carved from 160-year-old oak, two playgrounds, and a cycling path in nearby Kirchlinteln which allows you to follow the path said to be taken by the animals. It ends at the supposed former location of the cottage, where a monument pays tribute to the animals.



The Bremen Town Musicians statue by Gerhard Marcks.

Photo by Dennis Siegel.

Development of the Costumes for our Production

The costume designer for Calgary Opera's production of *The Bremen Town Musicians* is Cathleen Gasca. There is a brief bio on page 6 about her. We know that the costume designer works with the Director and the rest of the artistic team to create costumes for the characters that fit the time and location of the story, that fit the feeling and descriptions within the story and that also reflect the personalities of the characters themselves. Here we have a behind-the-scenes peek at the work of the costume designer—her initial ideas about the characters, as well as some preliminary sketches of what the characters would look like. When you watch the performance, see if you can pick out these inspirations in the final costumes that the singers wear:



The Donkey

These were images she originally pulled that matched what she wanted to portray with the Donkey costume.

The Cat

These photos were her inspiration for the cat costume.



These are the rough sketches for (from left to right) Donkey, Rooster, Dog, Cat. Original artwork by Cathleen Gasca, 2019.



Lessons in the Bremen Town Musicians

The Bremen Town Musicians was written and composed by Mr. Dean Burry for the Canadian Opera Company. When it first toured schools in the Toronto area, the Education staff at the COC put together a study guide which they shared parts of with me, and I'm now sharing it with you. These are the lessons they felt were the most prominent when they first saw the opera and read the libretto—or story—of *The Bremen Town Musicians*, and also ones that I felt was really important. See if you notice these lessons in the story, or if you notice some different ones!

Respect your elders. The animals are treated poorly and are cast away to die because of their physical weakness and age. What the animals lack physically they make up for with their deep wisdom. It's important to remember that just because something or someone is old and can't do what they used to do, they remain valuable and significant.

Teamwork. When the animals find themselves in an adverse situation at the Robber's house, their strength in unity and strength in numbers help them persevere through their challenges.

Change can be hard, but it can also result in new opportunities. Leaving their masters causes the animals a lot of grief and anxiety, but in choosing to leave, they are able to find each other and start better lives together.

Forgiveness is the way. The animals have the opportunity to punish the robber for all of the wrongs committed towards them, but the Donkey knows, wisely, that to carry the wrongdoing forward onto the Robber is not a good solution. The best way is to forgive and move on.

Preparation & Follow-Up Before, During and After the Opera

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

The Bremen Town Musicians is sung in English.

Before the Opera:

- Read *The Bremen Town Musicians* synopsis, as it provides a background for teachers in familiarizing students with the story.
- Read the history of the opera and Bremen Town, and familiarize your group with the opera terms on the last page.
- Learn about the different roles in the production by reading the biographies of all of the people involved. You will find brief descriptions of what different production and artistic staff do and how it adds to the whole of the production.
- You may assign some students to report on singing, characters, orchestra, costumes, scenery etc. after the performance at your school.
- Go over audience expectations.

During the Opera: Audience Expectations

When you are seated it is time to:

Turn off all cell phones, iPods, and other electronic devices.

Preparation & Follow Up Before, During and After the Opera

During the Opera, continued

- Think about what makes a good audience member and discuss with your class.
- Keep movement and voices down to a minimum as this is a live performance.
- We encourage students to quietly listen to the performance. If they have questions or comments, there will be a question and answer period with the performers after the performance.
- If you must use the washroom during the performance, please do so very quietly.
- 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

After the Opera Activities:

One of the best ways to encourage critical thinking in the arts is to encourage students' honesty and draw out the details of their opinions. A productive evaluation session, spoken, written, visual or dramatized, may include the following activities:

Sing Like an Opera Star! Anywhere, everywhere! This is just fun. Try different tones, low to high, high to low. Think like a composer, if you change the way you sing something does it change the meaning? Is it more interesting to ask your parents for something if you sing it to them? Maybe they will be more likely to say yes! Try it out. Sing for your supper like the animals in the opera tried to do. Will you have the same effect with your parents?

Write, draw or a record a newspaper, radio, television or web review!

- Did you find the opera entertaining? Moving? Funny? When? Why?
- Was there an outstanding performance for you? Describe.
- What parts of the opera engaged you? What parts did not? Why? Be specific.
- Did you notice a particular element of the opera? (Costumes, scenery, music, etc.)
- Present your review with a partner in the form of Ebert and Roeper show and give it thumbs up or down.
- Write a newspaper review for your school or community newspaper. Record a radio review or podcast about the opera.

Create your own mini-opera. *Bremen Town* is an opera about the importance of respecting our elders and working together. Do you have an elderly person in your life that you could talk to, call or visit? Do you know someone who has an older animal that would like a visit or some help? Create an opera based on a human or animal you care about, starring you! Start by writing the words (libretto) and then add some music using instruments you have at home or school.

Calgary Opera is known for its outstanding sets. Design your own interesting set for this play. Designer Scott Reid's set design for *The Bremen Town Musicians* reflect librettist Dean Burry's and director Jessica Dervetzi's vision. Mr. Reid would have started by sketching out his ideas and then creating a 3D diorama for the director to look over. Create your own! Think about a story that exists or the mini-opera you wrote in the previous exercise. Where does the story take place? How can you make the set reflect the action of the story?

Opera Terms and Voice Types

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 all worlds: awesome singing, great-sounding orchestra, riveting drama, stunning dance, spectacular sets, lavish costumes, fancy 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", a libretto is the words of an opera written by a librettist.

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

Recitative: Speech-singing where the singer chants the words in rhythm of free speech. Used to further the plot or set up an aria. It could be considered a forerunner of rap music.

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.

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. For example, the Queen of the Night role in *The Magic Flute*.

Soprano: The voice has a high range of notes. Voice quality can be dramatic or lyric.

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

Tenor: The highest range in the male voice.

Baritone: The middle range of the male voice.

Bass: The lowest of the male voices.

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.

Supernumeraries: A group of community-based actors who support the story by playing extra characters. They do not sing.