CALGARY OPERA

PIED PIPER



INSIDER'S GUIDE

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge that we live, work and play on the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani), the Tsuut'ina, the Iyarhe Nakoda Nations, the Otipemisiwak Métis Government of the Métis Nation within Alberta Districts 5 & 6, and all people who make their homes in the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta.

CHARACTERS

CHARACTER	VOICE TYPE	ABOUT
Pied Piper A young musician wearing a ragged costume of many distinct patches of colours	baritone	An entrepreneurial young piper searching for a place to belong and to contribute his skills.
Woodland Nymph A nymph that lives in the woods and cares for all its creatures	mezzo-soprano	The nymph becomes an ally of the piper, although her fiery temper and mischievous personality can cause as many problems as she can solve them
Mayor The mayor of the town of Hamelin	soprano	Greedy and underhanded, the mayor's inward-looking rule has led to the infestation of rats in Hamelin
Town Clerk The Mayor's assistant	mezzo-soprano	Obsequious and self-serving, the town clerk enables the mayor's oppressive reign
Police Officer A member of local law enforcement	baritone	The voice of reason in the town of Hamelin, the police officer is patient, just, and wise and offers real solutions

Please note: these characters may be double-cast by voice range. For instance, the high-voice roles may be performed by a soprano or tenor, and the low-voice roles may be performed by a mezzo-soprano or baritone on a given performance.

Calgary Opera attracts world class talent to perform for our audience, including local singers and the McPhee Artists who apprentice at Calgary Opera who are featured in *Pied Piper*. For more information about the performers who bring these characters to life, please visit us here.

THE STORY



What is a Pied Piper? "Pied" comes from the word "magpie" (a bird with distinct patches of coloured feathers) and means having a patchwork outfit. A piper is a musician who plays a pipe.

A Piper wanders the forest, lamenting their multi-coloured costume and ragged appearance. A Woodland Nymph appears, and she and the Piper begin to learn more about each other. The Nymph explains how she created the forest with her magic, and the Piper shares their love of learning and knowledge. The Piper explains that books contain the seeds of knowledge and promises to find the Nymph a book in exchange for granting a wish: a way to earn money to buy a new suit. She suggests the Piper visit the nearby town of Hamelin, where the Townspeople are struggling with a pesky problem: rats!

The Nymph explains that a few days ago, the Townspeople entered her woods for a grand picnic but didn't clean up after themselves. As punishment, she transported the rats from the woods to Hamelin, where they have been plaguing the Townspeople since. Now, however, she misses her furry friends and wants them to return. Since her magic does not extend past the edge of the forest, the Nymph suggests that the Piper lead the rats away with music for the rats love to dance. She utters a magical spell that gives the Piper this power. The Piper leaves toward Hamelin, excited at the prospect of making their fortune and – even more importantly – finally finding a place to call home. But everything is not as it seems in Hamelin, and the Piper may just encounter more than was bargained for!

Check out the Piper's **"pied"** or **patchwork** outfit and the **pipe** in his hands!



The Young Patroness of the Opera's 2014 production of *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*

SPOILER ALERT: Read further for the rest of the story

Meanwhile, in Hamelin, the Mayor and Town Clerk sing their creed: selfishness and greed! When the Piper arrives and demonstrates a magic musical pipe that can lure away the rats, the Mayor and Town Clerk agree to pay the Piper one gold coin. Once the Piper's back is turned, however, they secretly agree not to pay him anything at all.

That evening, the Piper plays a magical tune and lures away the rats to the forest. In the morning, the Mayor and Town Clerk refuse to pay the Piper, stating that instead, taxes are owed to the city on those earnings. The Piper sulks back to the woods, depressed and frustrated.

The Woodland Nymph reappears and, wanting to help the Piper, shares a new incantation. This time it will let the Piper lead away the children, rather than the rats.

In the morning, the townspeople awaken to find the children have disappeared! The Police Officer confronts the Mayor and Town Clerk and urges them to give up their cruel and uncaring ways:

> "Children should be surrounded by beauty,
> but for beauty you need to have art,
> They should be given love and caring,
> but for that, you need to have heart..."

Undergoing a personal transformation, the Mayor agrees to pay the Piper, who happily brings back the children. Everyone celebrates together and reflects on the lessons they have learned through their unexpected adventure in Hamelin!

ABOUT THE COMPOSER & LIBRETTIST

The composer writes the music of an opera and the librettist writes the words (dialogue and song lyrics).

- **Seymour Barab** was an American cellist and composer, best known for his light-hearted one-act operas for children, including *Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella,* and *The Pied Piper of Hamelin.*

- Seymour Barab was born on January 9, 1921 in Chicago, Illinois to first-generation American parents.

- Barab began his studies early on in piano and cello, and quickly realized he had a passion for **performing the unplayed work of talented contemporary composers**.



Seymour Barab

- As a musician, he was gifted with intuitively understanding others composers' thought process and emotional intentions—and **could play the music from the composer's point of view** and not just by reading the notes on a page.

- Barab was an important member of the new music scene in New York: he was always ready to learn and perform other composers' works, as well as to write his own.

- Barab's first opera, *Chanticleer,* was about a wily fox that outwits a rooster. He continued to write tuneful operas that were **pleasing to audiences, with a sense of playfulness and humour.**

- His opera *Pied Piper* is among his most popular,, thanks to school touring productions and the lasting enjoyment of fairy tales brought to life as musical stories for young audiences.

(RE)TELLING PIED PIPER

Like many folk tales, *Pied Piper* has historical roots and can be told in different ways, depending on who is telling the story.

- **Did you know that Hamelin is a real town?** It is located in Lower Saxony, Germany. The story of the Pied Piper may in fact be based on a real life mystery that took place in Hamelin centuries ago. A plaque in Hamelin reads:

> A.D. 1284 – on the 26th of June – the day of St John and St Paul – 130 children – born in Hamelin – were led out of the town by a piper wearing multicoloured clothes. After passing the Calvary near the Koppenberg they disappeared forever.

- **Historians have several theories on where the story originated.** One is a mass migration of settlers from Hamelin, fuelled by an economic depression. Recruiters were responsible for organising migrations and "were said to have worn colourful garments and played an instrument to attract the attention of possible settlers," shares historian Wibke Reimer.

- **Another possibility was a tragedy linked to pagan festivities occurring near midsummer's day,** where groups of people were known to light fires on hills. Read this article to learn more theories of the children's disappearance. (The rats appear only in a later re-telling of the story.)



Map of Germany,
showing position of town of Hamelin



The Pied Piper of Hamelin
Detail of painting by Augustin von Mörsperg

- **Another version of the story was captured and shared by the Brothers Grimm**. **Jacob** (prounounced YAH-kob) (1785–1863) and **Wilhelm** (pronounced VIL-helm) (1786–1859) were two brothers whose tellings of familiar folktales included *Hansel and Gretel, Rapunzel, Rumpelstiltskin, Snow White,* and *Cinderella.*

- The Brothers Grimm shared a curiosity for folklore and helped establish a methodology for collecting and recording folk stories that became the basis for folklore studies.

- **In the version of *Pied Piper* captured by the Brothers Grimm,** after having rid the town of rats only to be thwarted out of payment, **the Piper returns dressed as a Huntsman and lures the children away, who disappear forever in the nearby hills.**



Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm

- **In this operatic adaptation of *Pied Piper,* composer and writer Seymour Barab adds characters including the character of the Woodland Nymph,** allowing for an innovative backstory as to why the rats have infested Hamelin. **Barab also preferred to soften the darker aspects of the traditional story, with an emphasis placed on the moral growth of the characters in the story.**

- In the activity on the following page, consider an alternate ending of the story for yourself!



Illustration by Kate Greenaway, 1888

CAREERS IN OPERA

Once an opera has been written, it takes many people to bring it to the stage, including:

Stage Director:	Determines the artistic vision; leads staging rehearsals
Conductor:	Directs music rehearsals; conducts performances
Principal Artists:	Prepare their parts; often travel from outside Calgary to perform
Orchestra:	Play instruments in orchestral rehearsals and performances
Chorus Master:	Prepares the chorus; supports off-stage singing
Chorus:	Mainly living in Calgary, these singers are auditioned each year
Rehearsal Pianist:	Plays piano for music and staging rehearsals
Supernumeraries:	Performers who have no spoken or sung lines
Production Manager:	Hires production team; secures all technical aspects of production
Set Designer:	Designs the scenery and scenic elements, and drafts the design
Lighting Designer:	Decides where lights go and creates different lighting looks
Costume Designer:	Designs costumes for all performers
Hair & Wig Designer:	Designs wigs and hairstyles for all performers
Makeup Designer:	Designs makeup looks for all performers
Fight Director:	Stages fight sequences, ensuring performer safety
Stage Manager:	Coordinates rehearsals; calls cues for cast and crew
Ass't Stage Manager:	Supports stage manager; assists cueing performers backstage
Stage Crew:	Move scenery and stage props during shows
Electrician:	Hangs lights, programs lighting board, and wires electrical fixtures
Carpenter:	Builds and installs scenery
Head of Wardrobe:	Directs all costume creation, fittings, alterations, and repairs
Head of Wigs:	Directs all wig creation, fittings, alterations, and repairs
Head of Makeup:	Directs all makeup application for performers
Head of Props:	Builds or sources all furniture and portable, non-costume items
Dresser:	Helps performers change in and out of costumes and repairs them
Make-Up Artist:	Applies make-up for all performers
General Director:	Leads and manages an opera company
Development Team:	Secures donations, sponsorships, and grant funding
Marketing Team:	Promotes the opera to the general public
Operations Team:	Coordinates day-to-day operations needs of an opera company
Finance Team:	Tracks financial operations of an opera company
Audience Serv. Team:	Sells tickets and answers public queries
Education Team:	Leads opera discovery programs for schools and communities

Stage Managers are in high demand!

CREATE AN ALTERNATE ENDING

Work independently or as a group to imagine what might have happened if:

- The Pied Piper had decided not to accept the Nymph's suggestion to help the Townspeople of Hamelin
- The Mayor and Town Clerk had kept their word and paid the Piper
- The Piper had not been able to bring back the children
- or another scenario that is different from the opera!

In 6-8 phrases, you can create an alternate ending to the opera with drama, excitement, and humour.

As a class or with other friends, take turns deciding:

- What would happen next
- Which character would speak and what they might say
- How they might sing those words (create a melody for simple phrases)
- What the accompaniment might be to those melodies
- Incorporate improvised accompaniments or other incidental music from your favourite operas, symphonies, or musical examples to underscore the stage action.

  Some of our favourites include:
  - Rossini's Overture to *The Barber of Seville*
  - Bizet's Overture to *Carmen*
  - Grieg's *In the Hall of the Mountain King*
  - Verdi's Overture to *Macbeth*

- Keep track of your ideas, allow multiple students to try out the parts as you rehearse, and then act and sing them with your biggest operatic energy!



Cover image from Manhattan School's *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* Original Recording

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Use discussion and class activities to explore the questions the opera *Pied Piper* poses to listeners of all ages:

What did you notice in this opera? Use prompts like these to share your thoughts with others:

- I was most intrigued by...
- I wondered about...
- I really loved...
- I wish I had...

Fairy tales and folk tales like *Pied Piper* have important life lessons embedded in the stories. Consider the following questions:

- Which character did you identify with most, and why?
- What did the Mayor and Clerk learn about the importance of keeping their word?
- Rats aren't just pesky rodents! In folk tales, they can also represent the things that "bug" us in everyday life: problems, worries, bad habits, misunderstandings, or challenges we'd rather avoid. The Townspeople want the rats gone as quickly as possible, but what does this opera suggest about how we ought to solve problems?
- It's no coincidence that in this opera, music has magical powers: the Piper's flute can capture attention, spark imagination, and inspire action. What kind of music do you listen to? What can music make you feel or do?
- The Police Officer shares several important lessons about how to govern a town. What should the Mayor and Town Clerk have done differently from the start if they cared about the health and happiness of the Townspeople?

·**Additional Lesson Plans & Resources:**

- The Young Patroness Pied Piper Study Guide
- Articles about Seymour Barab here and here
- Pied Piper: Folk Tale Lesson Plans

For more information, contact:
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DISCOVERING OPERA

Opera is a vibrant and ever-changing artform that combines the dramatic intensity of the theatre, heightened through music and singing.

- Operas can be long or short, with any number of people involved.
- Operas can be sung in any language.
- Operas can tell stories about any time, place, person, or issue.
- Operas are still being written today.

Operas are created by the cast, crew, and artistic production team including:

- composers, who write the music
- librettists, who write the words or “libretto”
- directors
- conductors
- singers
- instrumentalists
- dancers
- set, lighting, special effects designers
- costume and makeup designers
- fight and intimacy coordinators
- choreographers
- stage managers and technical crew
- and the audience



Each person brings who they are as a person to the creation of an opera. Their individual contributions shape the performance.



Operas are not typically autobiographical, although they do use stories and music to express the personal struggles and ideals of the creators. They often also comment on important social concerns of the creators' time.

Sometimes stories from cultures not of the creators' own were used to convey universal themes. In these cases, the creators relied on imagination and empathy to enter the emotional world of someone whose specific experiences they never lived through.

When this is the case, there are also important ideas to reflect on, including:

- Who is telling whose story?
- How are they telling it?
- For what purpose?

In recent years, opera creators prefer to share their own stories or to collaborate with those whose stories they would like to tell. As such, opera also presents an important opportunity to think critically about art, as well as to go beyond the opera itself and learn more about the history, language, traditions, and stories of those represented.



UNDERSTANDING THE MUSIC OF OPERA

We understand music on its own terms by making music! By singing its melodies and harmonies, playing it and especially by improvising, we bring the music into our ears, bodies, and spirits.

To increase our musical understanding, we begin by learning by heart the melodies and rhythms we encounter. As the music of more artists becomes familiar, we begin to encounter unfamiliar music with more musical understanding.

Whether you've heard an opera once or a hundred times, there's always more to discover.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE THEATRE

Whether you're brand new, or have been a subscriber for years, you're welcome at the opera. Here's how you can get the most out of your visit:

WHAT TIME SHOULD I ARRIVE?
We recommend you plan to arrive at the venue 15-30 minutes prior to the show start time. This will allow for time to find parking and take your seat without risk of missing any part of the performance.

WHAT TIME DOES THE SHOW START?
For more information about *Pied Piper* showtimes, please visit our website.

WHERE IS THE THEATRE?
Visit our Getting Here page for more information about the Mamdani Opera Centre.

WHERE DO I PARK?
Visit our Getting Here page for more information about parking at our various venues.

ARE FOOD AND DRINKS ALLOWED INTO THE THEATRE?
Food and beverages are available for purchase in the Gallery before the show and during intermission, and may be taken into the theatre. We ask that patrons be mindful of noise levels and keep the space tidy.



WHAT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE AT THE THEATRE?
The Mamdani Opera Centre is a heritage building and regretfully not wheelchair accessible. Patrons are required to ascend two sets of stairs to enter the building.

WHAT DO I WEAR?
You'll find people at the opera wearing a variety of styles, from jeans to jewels. Although many people enjoy dressing up when they go to the opera, there's no mandatory dress code.

HOW WILL I KNOW WHAT THEY'RE SAYING?
Pied Piper is sung in English in a small theatre, with the vocalists performing close to the audience. The songs are also sung in a vocal range that is close to the speaking voice, and the story is familiar, all of which helps with understanding what is being performed.

DO OPERA SINGERS USE MICROPHONES?
In almost all operas, microphones are not needed. Instead, opera singers use their voices and bodies to naturally amplify the resonance of their vocal folds.

To learn more, visit calgaryopera.com/faq.

ABOUT CALGARY OPERA

Founded in 1972, Calgary Opera is one of Canada's most innovative and ambitious professional opera companies. With more than 50 events during the 2026/27 season, curious listeners of all ages can experience the wonder of opera all throughout the school year, whether as grand events at the Jubilee Auditorium or in diverse community experiences throughout our city and beyond.



Since 2007, we've offered an annual school tour production, performing for young audiences around Southern Alberta.

For over 25 years, we've offered the in-school music program Let's Create an Opera, reaching over 60,000 students.

This season, we are thrilled to partner with teachers and students at three schools for Let's Create an Opera, which will culminate in an original children's operas performed in English, French, and Blackfoot.



Throughout its 54-year history, Calgary Opera has championed new works and Canadian artists and stories. We have produced:

- 8 new works, including the internationally acclaimed opera "Filumena"
- 30 new productions (new versions of existing operas), and
- 8 Canadian premieres.

Calgary Opera's mission is to serve its entire community with innovative and inspiring stories told through the bold medium of opera. We're thrilled you'll be joining us!

To stay connected and learn more, sign up for our newsletter here.

CINDERELLA

DRESS REHEARSAL

FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, CHOIRS & LIFELONG LEARNING GROUPS

Bring a friend or guest for **$20** each



WED JAN 27 - 7:00 PM

Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium, Calgary AB

To purchase tickets for groups or individuals, please call the Calgary Opera Audience Services Team at 403-262-7286, ext 1, or email info@calgaryopera.com.

calgaryopera.com/student-dress-rehearsal

PHOTO CREDITS

Page 4 The Young Patroness of the Opera's 2014 production of Seymour Barab's *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*. https://www.ypo-miami.org/news/ypo-continues-in-school-opera-program-with-the-pied-piper-of-hamelin.

Page 6 Portrait of composer Seymour Barab. Stone Studio. New York Times.

Page 7 Bottom left: Map of town of Hamelin in Lower Saxony, Germany. https://www.freecountrymaps.com/map/towns/germany/1409665812/. Bottom right: Detail of painting of The Pied PIper of Hamelin by Augustin von Mörsperg.

Page 8 Right: Dageurreotype of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, 1847. Bottom: Illustration by Kate Greenaway, https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20200902-the-grim-truth-behind-the-pied-piper.

Page 9 Album cover of 1999 recording of Nicolas Flagello's *The Pied Piper of Hamelin.* https://www.flagello.com/records.htm.

Page 11 *Right:* Lucia Cesaroni and Talise Trevigne in Calgary Opera's *The Marriage of Figaro.* HarderLee Photography. 2023. *Bottom:* Audience members attending Calgary Opera's WonderLand. 2024.

Page 12 Students participate in Calgary Opera's *Let's Create an Opera.*

Page 13 Canva image used with permission.

Page 15 *Upper right:* Calgary Opera's Amahl and the Night Visitors
Lower left: Young audience member at Calgary Opera's *Witty Squirrel.*

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