

# *Die Tote Stadt*



By Erich Korngold

## **STUDY GUIDE**

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## **Welcome to the Canadian premier of *Die Tote Stadt*!**

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

This guide will give you a backstage tour of all that is opera - terminology, inside information on the production, the history behind the opera and the composer, as well as ideas for including opera in your classroom learning.

We hope that this guide will assist you in making opera connections in fun and interesting ways as well as to use *Die Tote Stadt* as a point of departure for learning. Exposure to performing and fine arts helps students develop critical analysis and problem solving skills, perseverance, and a drive for excellence. The creative skills developed through the arts carry us toward new ideas, new experiences and new challenges.

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## Part 1: Die Tote Stadt “did you know”

- Erich Korngold is one of the founders of movie music
- Erich Korngold won an Oscar for *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. It was the first time the Oscar was awarded to a composer – not the head of the studio music department
- Erich Korngold was a child prodigy who composed his first, highly acclaimed, ballet at 11.
- Erich Korngold credits *The Adventures of Robin Hood* for saving his life. He was in Hollywood composing it when the Anschluss began in Austria.
- Bramwell Tovey, *Die tote Stadt* conductor, has guest conducted the New York Philharmonic and the Los Angeles Philharmonic at Hollywood Bowl
- Bramwell Tovey, *Die tote Stadt* conductor, has been the recipient of 4 honorary doctorates
- Bramwell Tovey, *Die tote Stadt* conductor, has won both a GRAMMY® and JUNO Award
- The libretto of *Die tote Stadt* was written by Erich Korngold and his father under the pseudonym Paul Schott
- *Die tote Stadt* was one of the biggest hits of its day, and had circled the globe within two years after opening
- *Die tote Stadt* was banned by the Nazi regime due to Korngold’s Jewish ancestry and fell into obscurity
- David Pomeroy, who plays Paul, has recently received rave reviews for this same role in Oper Frankfurt’s *Die tote Stadt*

## Part 2: Expert thoughts on Die Tote Stadt

**By: Mel Kirby, Emerging Artist Program Coordinator  
Calgary Opera**

My personal connection to Erich Wolfgang Korngold’s *Die tote Stadt* unites a number of my passions for travel, literature and above all movie music. In fact my first interest in music came through the scores to classic movies with Korngold always referenced as a major influence on the film composers of Hollywood’s golden age of movie music. While others in my childhood were growing up on the Beatles and the Stones, I obsessively collected the vinyl LP albums for and played the grooves off of scores by Maurice Jarre (*Doctor Zhivago*, *Lawrence of Arabia*),

Miklos Rozsa (*Ben-Hur*, *King of Kings*, *Quo Vadis*), Alfred Newman (*How the West Was Won*), and Max Steiner (*Gone With the Wind*). Although it was more difficult to see the much earlier films associated with Korngold's famous scores (*The Sea Hawk*, *The Adventures of Robin Hood*), I was able to hear the recordings prior to finally being able to view these films decades later on home video.



Knowing that Korngold was a respected Austrian composer of such lauded late arch-Romantic chromatic tonal works as *Die tote Stadt*, his *Symphony in F-sharp Major*, and his *Violin Concerto* only added to his prestige in my mind. I heard *Die tote Stadt* for the first time on a 1970s RCA

vinyl set, the first 'modern' recording available since its premiere in the 1920s and was enthralled. I played the soaring highlights of Marietta's Lied and the Pierrot Tanzlied over and over certain that I was driving my neighbours crazy. And I was thrilled to finally see it fully staged in 2008 at the Salzburg Festival. I'm sure there will be many in Calgary Opera's audience who will be as overwhelmed at hearing and seeing it for the first time.



As a passionate traveller and tourist, I finally had the opportunity last summer in 2014 to visit the city of Bruges in Belgium, the setting for the opera. The novel which was the source for the plot of the opera, *Bruges-la-Morte* by the Belgian symbolist writer Georges Rodenbach, is a celebration of the city itself as much as of the tale of obsession which it relates. One can easily sense that the mystery and the magic of the locale infuses not only the novel but also the libretto and the music by Korngold.



Once known as the Venice of the North and a major port, Bruges was a business and economic center of trade, shipping and commerce in the 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. However it fell into obscurity with the loss of its access to the sea. As late as the early 1900s it was forgotten to the modern world though it did draw the interest of Rodenbach and later Korngold – *Die tote Stadt* translating literally as ‘The Dead City’, but poetically as the ‘Abandoned’ or ‘Lost City’. Rediscovered by tourists since the 1950s and now a UNESCO Heritage Site, its city center is one of the best preserved examples of medieval architecture in Europe.



Traipsing through the narrow streets inaccessible to traffic, alongside its countless canals, only occasionally traversable by bridges, Bruges' nooks and crannies prompts the imagination to create stories and characters of one's own. The city's many historic treasures include a Madonna and Child by Michelangelo, the only example of the sculptor's work north of the Alps. Another is the Chapel of the Holy Blood which houses a sacred relic – a rock crystal vial brought to Bruges after the Second Crusade which is said to contain a sample of the blood of Christ collected when His body was washed after the descent from the Cross. Like so much about the city, it's only one indication of how much the themes of death and rebirth so prevalent in *Die tote Stadt* arise from the unique locale and history of Bruges itself

**By: Stephen Bonfield**  
**University of Calgary**

When I first heard the dreamscape opera *Die Tote Stadt*, I was moved by its story as much as by its music. *Die tote Stadt* is a melodist's dream set in a nightmare of suffering and grief. The opera's theme, which had strong appeal with audiences at that time, concerns a man (Paul) who cannot recover from the ongoing trauma he continues to suffer over the loss of his wife Marie, an apt storyline for a 1920s post-First World War audience. Paul meets Marietta (a shadowy version of Marie) and believes her to be a kind of re-incarnation of his lost wife. He struggles through a series of Marietta's flirtations, with him and with others.

Marietta's striking resemblance to Marie drives Paul to the brink of madness, then to acceptance of the delusion's power, and finally to rejection of the ghostly imitation. He finally awakens from his dream to realize that he is alive in a dead city where he has made his delusions of torment thrive, the very ones he must now leave behind.

Korngold's deep involvement with the Viennese circle of composers, his wunderkind talent, a splendid sense of dramatic execution and melodic turn-of-phrase made him the ideal composer for such a serious work. Criticized for his openly tonal and all-too-accessible melodies, Korngold's youthful masterpiece nevertheless revealed an appeal not only to the popular taste that he would go on to mine considerably when he moved to Hollywood, but also to a remarkable capacity to paint the richly sophisticated, inner psychological drama unfolding within, via a detailed orchestration technique that earned him the praise of every great composer who heard him.

Korngold's gripping, internally-told story arc is not mere Debussyan dream. The expressionist brightness of the musical language, including an orchestral brilliance crossing somewhere between Wagner, Mahler and Strauss, remains uniquely the young composer's own and was rightly considered to be tremendous accomplishment for such a fledging work. Blending story and sound, melody and orchestration, while skillfully representing these features with the outer with the inner worlds of Paul's grief was taken to be something of a miracle for a young composer at the age of 23. But such an accomplishment in compositional technique was also the fashion of the time: Korngold was only following in the footsteps of many a Viennese composer such as Schönberg and Zemlinsky (his teacher, in fact) by seeking innovative new ways to paint the psychological canvas in musical terms.

Like most everyone, I love the solo and duet of Marietta's *Lautenlied* 20 minutes into the opera, its dreamy invitation seducing a mentally very vulnerable Paul to delve deeper into his dream-state. My two favourite parts of the opera are the end of the second act, in which Paul finally embraces Marietta, his dream, falling into his delusion even deeper, and the last twenty minutes of the opera, in which Paul finally escapes his dream-state. Some of the most powerful singing of the post-First World War period may be found here, especially when Paul reprises



the final verses of the *Lautenlied* at the end of the opera to show his calm acceptance of reality: Marie is gone, and he won't see her again. It was all a fantasy, a dream that Marietta showed him, in the end to heal his grief.

The opera's conclusion is heartbreaking and tragic, but oddly purging and freeing of our own pent-up feelings of the many losses we have all endured of loved ones. The opera reaches its goal admirably - we can all be cured by Korngold's densely colourful psychological tone palette of complexity lensing our own grief, but only if we willingly allow his music do its work. Lyrical, violent, pounding, aggressive, ecstatic, tectonic, rainbowed, then sublime, liberating, and blissfully illuminative -- *Die Tote Stadt* has it all.

### **By: Maggie Stephenson, Development Coordinator Calgary Opera**

Opera is often the story of great genius seldom recognized, and in that way the story of Erich Wolfgang Korngold truly fits the operatic mold. Born in the Czech Republic in 1897 to a well-known Viennese music critic, Julius Korngold, Erich quickly became recognized as an outstanding child prodigy in the style of his namesake, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (composer of Calgary Opera's upcoming production of *The Magic Flute*). Other well-known composers of his time (Gustav Mahler, Richard Strauss and Giacomo Puccini, among others) considered him a genius and important up-and-comer. At just 11 years of age, Korngold premiered his first ballet, *Der Schneemann*, and received rave reviews, including special command performances for the Emperor Franz Joseph. Only three years later, at 14 years, Korngold composed his first orchestral score, and three years after that, he composed his first opera.

*Die Tote Stadt*, Korngold's first international success, follows a man's fight for his sanity as he's tormented by desire for a seductress who bears striking resemblance to his ghostly love Marie. Torn between devotion and desire, Paul must choose to either leave his dead love behind in purity of memory, or tarnish her spirit by clinging to poisoned, unholy imperfection.

At only 23, Erich was at the height of his fame as a composer of operatic and concert music, receiving rave reviews and substantial attention for his talent. Not only had the young composer unveiled yet another hit opera, he also wrote the libretto with his father Julius, under the pseudonym of "Paul Schott" (Paul being the main character's name, and Schott being the name of the publisher).

In 1934 the well-known actor Max Reinhart (who had previously collaborated with Korngold in other projects) approached Korngold to come to Hollywood to adapt Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for Reinhart's film version of the Shakespearean play, which was Korngold's first taste of Hollywood, cinematic music and American culture. When Warner Brothers approached Korngold in 1938 to compose a new score for *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, he agreed and set out for the United States.

Not only did *The Adventures of Robin Hood* save Korngold from Nazi oppression, it garnered him an Academy Award for Best Original Score. As Korngold composed more and more cinematic scores, he received further nominations still for *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* (1939) and *The Sea Hawk*

(1940). Korngold is now recognized as the father of modern cinematic music, and much of what you hear in modern cinematic music is due to the work of this innovative, ground-breaking composer.

Despite Korngold's staggering contributions to both classical and cinematic music in the last century, he remains largely unrecognized in North America, with his works only now experiencing revival in the United States. Korngold's memory lives in through his lush, complex and emotional scores, and his body is buried in the Hollywood Forever cemetery.

## Part 3: Characters, Synopsis & Cast

### Characters

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Voice type</b>
Lyne Fortin	Marie/Marietta	Soprano
David Pomeroy	Paul	Tenor
Brett Polegato	Fritz/Frank	Baritone
Emilia Boteva	Brigitta	Mezzo-Soprano

# Synopsis – Die Tote Stadt

## Act I

Paul is in the home he shared with his late wife, Marie, mourning her loss. The decaying city around him serves as a constant reminder of the past. Paul has transformed one of his rooms into a “temple of memories” in which he has enshrined relics and reminders of his life with Marie, including a treasured braid of her hair. He is in an excitable state when his friend, Frank, comes to visit and Paul tells him of a young woman he just met. Marietta, a dancer, bears an uncanny resemblance to Marie and he has invited her to his home in an effort to bring new life into this place of grief and death. When the girl arrives, Paul is so overwhelmed that he attempts to embrace her on the spot. Marietta pulls away, and in the ensuing “play,” she accidentally reveals a portrait of his late wife. Hearing friends singing in the street on their way to rehearsal, she departs, while Paul agonizes over his conflicting emotions: loyalty to his dead spouse and desire for her living double. An apparition of Marie steps from her portrait, counselling Paul to choose the living as she morphs into an image of the dancer.

## Act II

Weeks later, Paul continues to struggle with the boundary between fantasy and reality. He tells his friend Frank about his agony, tormented by guilt. He sees his housekeeper, Brigitta, who left his service due to his perceived “infidelity” to the dead Marie. Frank, for all his well-intentioned efforts to help, is no longer perceived as a friend, but rather a contender for Marietta’s charms. Marietta and her friends approach as Paul steps into the shadows to secretly observe her. She begins to rehearse a scene she is performing in the ballet *Robert le diable*, in which her character rises from the tomb. Paul confronts her, outraged at this mock resurrection and she sends her friends away. Paul angrily denounces Marietta and claims her only attraction is her resemblance to his dead wife. Marietta refuses to believe this and seduces Paul, suggesting they spend the night at his home in order to banish the ghost of Marie, once and for all.

### **Act III**

The following morning, Marietta stands gazing at Marie's portrait, triumphant. A religious procession passes by and the couple watch from the window until Paul, seeing the bishop, falls to his knees. Marietta is put off by Paul's piety and she attempts to distract him. They begin to quarrel, with Paul trying to defend himself while Marietta denounces him as a hypocrite and weakling. She begins to dance erotically, taunting him, and drapes Marie's braid around her neck. Seized with rage, Paul strangles Marietta and is horrified as he watches her turn into Marie in death. After a restless and exhausted sleep, Paul suddenly wakes and realizes that none of this actually occurred: the braid is in its usual place. The housekeeper announces Marietta's return for her umbrella and the roses she left behind when she hastily departed. The young woman suggests to Paul that perhaps she should stay with him; however, Paul appears noncommittal. After Marietta leaves, Frank tries to convince him to abandon Bruges—this city of death—forever. The past is gone and, with it, the love of his life.

*By Suzanne Calvin, Director of Media and Public Relations, The Dallas Opera*

## ***Cast and Company Biographies***



### **BRAMWELL TOVEY - Conductor**

Conductor GRAMMY and Juno award-winning conductor/composer Bramwell Tovey was appointed Music Director of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra in 2000. Under his leadership the VSO has toured to China, Korea, across Canada and the United States. Mr. Tovey's guest appearances in the 15-16 season include the symphonies of Montreal, Melbourne, New Zealand, and Pacific Symphony, and the Philadelphia Orchestra and New York Philharmonic, reprising his programs with both at Bravo! Vail in summer 2016.

The summer also includes returns to the Blossom Music Center, Ravinia Festival, and Hollywood Bowl. A talented pianist, he has appeared as soloist with many major orchestras including the New York, Sydney, Melbourne, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, St Louis, Toronto, and Royal Scottish orchestras.

### **KELLY ROBINSON- Director**

Kelly Robinson is a director and choreographer whose career spans opera, theatre, film and television. He has directed critically acclaimed productions of standard operas and new productions of such works as *Les Pecheurs de Perles* and Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*.

Mr. Robinson's work has been seen at the National Arts Centre, The Stratford, and Shaw Festivals, Vineyard Theater (New York) and London's West End. World premieres include the operas *Filumena* and *Lillian Alling* by Estacio and Murrell and *The Inventor* by Bramwell Tovey and Murrell. Recent projects include *The Merry Widow* for Michigan Opera Theater, *Don Giovanni* for Opera Santa Barbara, and his last production for Calgary Opera was *The Flying Dutchman*.



## **LYNE FORTIN - Soprano**



Lyne Fortin is one of Canada's leading sopranos, with appearances with L'Opera de Montreal, Canadian Opera Company, Vancouver Opera, Opera Saskatchewan, Calgary Opera, Edmonton Opera, Opera de Quebec and Opera Hamilton. In the United States, she has appeared with the Baltimore Opera, Seattle Opera, Connecticut Opera, Kentucky Opera, Opera Pacific, Arizona Opera, Michigan Opera Theater, Akron Symphony, the New Jersey State Opera and Portland Opera. She has also sung at the Vlaamse Opera in Belgium and Scottish Opera. Recent engagements include Alice Ford in Falstaff for the Canadian Opera Company and Opera de Quebec and Lady Macbeth in Verdi's Macbeth for Pacific Opera Victoria and Kentucky Opera. Fortin will also play Marietta in Die tote Stadt for the National Reisopera in

the Netherlands.

## **DAVID POMEROY – Tenor**

Canadian tenor David Pomeroy is enjoying a career that is placing him in the spotlight on some of the world's most important stages. The Newfoundland native made his Metropolitan Opera debut, portraying the title role of Hoffmann in Les Contes d'Hoffmann opposite soprano Anna Netrebko under the baton of Maestro James Levine.

Previously, Mr. Pomeroy had sung the title role of Faust with bass James Morris in the annual "Met in the Parks" concert series. In the current season he made his debut as Paul in Die tote Stat in both Frankfurt and Calgary, and he will sing Don Jose in Carmen with Canadian Opera Company.



## **BRETT POLEGATO - Baritone**

One of today's most sought-after lyric baritones on the international stage, Brett Polegato's artistic sensibility has earned him the highest praise from audiences and critics: "his is a serious and seductive voice" says the Globe and Mail, while the New York Times has praised him for his "burnished, well-focused voice," which he uses with "considerable intelligence and nuance."

Since finishing first among the men at the 1995 Cardiff Singer of the World competition, his career has encompassed over fifty operatic roles at the world's most prestigious venues including La Scala, l'Opéra National de Paris, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, the Teatro Real, the Concertgebouw Amsterdam and the Carnegie Hall. He has made a name for himself in a number of dramatic roles, most notably the title roles of Eugene Onegin and Don Giovanni, Il Conte Almaviva Le nozze di Figaro and Pelléas Pelléas et Mélisande.



## **EMILIA BOTEVA Mezzo-Soprano**

Boteva made her professional debut at the State Opera House in Sofia and has appeared there in such roles as Ulrica, Azucena, Maddalena, Fenena, Eboli and Amneris. Last April, Ms. Boteva was in Mexico City for performances of Mahler's Symphony No. 3 with Orchestra sinfonica national de Mexico and was previously heard there in Verdi's Requiem.

She was well-received in Chicago at the Grant Park Festival for Alexander Nevsky and also recently appeared for Edmonton Opera as Filipyevna in Eugene Onegin, for Opera Tampa as Ulrica in Ballo In Maschera and for Opéra de Montréal as Mary in Der Fliegende Holländer.

# Part 4: The Language and History of Opera

## *The History of Opera*

Theatrical performances that use music, song and dance to tell a story can be found in many cultures. Opera is just one example of music drama.

Have you ever wondered where opera got its start? Back in the late 1500s during the height of the Renaissance, a group of men called the Florentine Camerata got together to create a new and moving theatrical experience. They wanted to recreate what the ancient Greeks did during their legendary dramas. The result was something entirely new – opera!

Most of the early operas were based on Greek myths. The first opera that we know of was called *Dafne* by Jacopo Peri in 1598, but the most famous opera of this early period that is still performed today is Claudio Monteverdi's *Orfeo* (1607). Certain basic ingredients were included in opera: songs, instrumental accompaniments, costumes, dance, and scenery. We still use all of these ingredients today! The early operas were first performed in the grand courts of Italian nobility, but soon opera became popular with the public, too. As it became all the rage, productions became more lavish.

Soon, theatres began to be built just to mount operas. These theatres had elaborate stage machinery to create special effects like flying actors or crumbling buildings. Not everyone embraced the new form of theatre. Some critics thought that all of the stage antics in opera detracted from the music and drama. Some people even believed that seeing too much comedy in opera could make you immoral.



Léo Frederic Handel (1685-1759)

During the Baroque period (about 1600 to 1750), Italian opera spread all over Europe. The Italian style of opera was so popular that even non-Italians wrote in this style. For example Léo Frederic Handel (1685–1759) was a German-born composer who lived and worked in England. His operas, like *Julius Caesar* (1724), were written in the Italian language and used an Italian style of music. The only nation to create its own national operatic style was France. Ballet played a large role in the French culture, and operas often included ballets in the middle of the opera. The most famous French Baroque opera composers were Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687) and Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764).

The 18th century was full of change for both Europe and opera. This time period was known as the Age of Enlightenment. People were starting to talk about new forms of government and organization in



society, especially the ever-growing middle class. Music displayed this new thinking as composers dropped the Baroque era's complicated musical style for simpler, more emotional music. In less-flashy music, characters could express their thoughts and feelings more believably. One of the first operas to use this new style was Christoph Willibald Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* (1762).

In 1789 the French Revolution changed the world. The first modern democracies were born, and to match the times in which they were created, audiences wanted to see characters like themselves on stage, not gods and goddesses. They also wanted to see issues that were important to them. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* (1786) featured a timely story of aristocratic class struggles that had both servants and nobility in lead roles. The ideals of the Enlightenment also came to the stage in Ludwig van Beethoven's only opera, *Fidelio*, a story about equality and freedom.

In the 1800s opera continued to grow. The Italian tradition continued in the bel canto movement, which literally translates to "beautiful singing." These operas asked performers to sing complicated groups of fast notes in the melodies. The most famous bel canto composers were Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868), Gaetano Donizetti (1797–1848), and Vincenzo Bellini (1801–1835). Their operas, like Rossini's popular comedies *The Barber of Seville* (1816) and *Cinderella* (1817), are still some of the most popular operas performed today. By the middle of the century, the Romantic Movement led many composers to champion their own national identities. As a result, operas in languages other than Italian became more common; new works often reflected pride in a country's people, history, and folklore. German operas like Carl Maria von Weber's *Der Freischütz* (1821), Russian operas like Mikhail Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar* (1836) and French operas like Léo Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* (1836) started to be performed across Europe. By using nationalism in his operas like *Nabucco* (1842), Italian Giuseppe Verdi became a national hero.



Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

In Germany Richard Wagner took Romanticism to the extreme in a four-part operatic miniseries based on Norse mythology, *The Ring of the Nibelung* (1876), which takes over 15 hours to perform! The operatic stereotype of the singer in the Viking helmet comes from these operas.



Johanna Heinze, Mezzo-Soprano, 1907

Opera in 20<sup>th</sup> century became even more experimental. Composers like Léo Delibes (*La Bohème*, 1896), Claude Debussy (*Pelléas et Mélisande*, 1902), Richard Strauss (*Salome*, 1905), and Benjamin Britten (*Peter Grimes*, 1945) evolved their national styles. Others, horrified by the

destruction of World War I (1914-1919) and other aspects of modern life, created music that was new and drastically dissonant. These operas often explored either dark psychological topics (*Wozzeck* by Alban Berg, 1925), or simple and absurd (*The Rake's Progress* by Igor Stravinsky, 1951). American opera

had a huge hit with Léo and Ira Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* (1935) which included jazz and blues musical styles. Not only did American composers embrace popular music in opera but also a repetitive, hypnotic style called minimalism. American composer Philip Glass's *Einstein on the Beach* (1976) is the popular example of minimalism in opera.

## ***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 labour intensive to create.

Opera came to Canada with the first French settlements. Samuel de 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 Canadian opera flourished. Government money through the Canada Council was made available for new commissions and there was an explosion of new 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 Magician*, 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 Léo Elliot Clarke.

In 2003, Calgary Opera embarked on our first full-length new work, a co-commission with The Banff Centre, *Filumena*. The opera told the true story of Filumena, a young immigrant woman hanged for the death of an RCMP officer. It was presented to standing ovations and rave reviews, so in 2007 Calgary Opera and The Banff Centre reunited the creative team - John Estacio, John Murrell, Kelly Robinson, Harry

Frehner, Sue LePage - to create *Frobisher*. *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. In 2008 *Hannaraptor*, by Allan Gilliland and Val Brandt, was created. Taking place in the rugged landscape of the Drumheller area, *Hannaraptor* followed the emotional story of a young girl who discovers a fossil of a yet undiscovered dinosaur. The production struck a chord with young people as it toured to communities and schools throughout southern Alberta. *Hannaraptor* was remounted in Calgary Opera's 2012-13 season and toured to communities in and around Calgary as well as towns as far reaching as Lac la Biche and Bonnyville in northern Alberta.

Dean Burry's *The Hobbit* and *The Brothers Grimm* have been produced across Canada. *The Brothers Grimm* toured with our own Emerging Artists in March 2007 and again in March 2011. By 2012 it had been performed over 500 times, making it the most performed new Canadian work of all time. 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*. In 2009 Calgary Opera performed Vancouver Opera's production of *The Barber of Seville*, a Canadian adaptation of *The Barber of Seville*.

Reuniting Calgary Opera's creative team of John Murrell and John Estacio, Vancouver Opera recently entered onto the new work front with *Lillian Alling*, the story of an intrepid yet mysterious woman searching for a man she scarcely knew, wherever it might take her. In 2011, Calgary Opera presented the world premiere of Bramwell Tovey and John Murrell's *The Inventor*, the story of the black sheep nephew of the famous Keith brewing family.

Most recently, Calgary Opera has embarked on a new venture with, *What Brought Us Here - A New Community Opera*, by Arthur Bachmann and Clem Martini, created from the collected stories of new immigrants to Canada. This new opera premiered in September 2012 at the Arrata Opera Centre with a hugely positive response.

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

# The Language of Opera

Act - Main sections of a play or opera.

Aria - A solo song sung in an opera.

Audience - People who watch a performance and sit in the "house" or auditorium.

Ballet - Dance set to music within an opera.

Blocking - Action on stage.

Character - Person who is part of the opera's story.

Chorus - Music composed for a group of singers or the name of a group of singers in an opera.

Conductor - Person who rehearses and leads the orchestra.

Duet - A song performed by two singers.

Libretto - the words of the opera.

Opera - a musical work in one or more acts, made for singers and instrumentalists.

Opera Buffa - Funny, light opera.

Opera Seria - Serious, dramatic opera.

Orchestra - A group of musicians who play together on various musical instruments.

Overture - A piece of instrumental music played at the beginning of an opera.

Program - Booklet that contains information about the opera, composer, performers, and the opera company.

Recitative - Words that are sung in the rhythm of natural speech.

Rehearsal - Time when singers/actors practice with or without the orchestra; time when musicians practice together with the conductor.

Scene - Segments of action within the acts of an opera.

## Types of Singers

Soprano - Highest pitched female voice.

Mezzo-Soprano - Female voice between soprano and contralto.

Contralto – Lowest pitched female voice

Tenor - Highest pitched male voice.

Baritone - Male voice between tenor and bass.

Bass - Lowest pitched male voice.

# Activity Sheet: The Language of Opera

## *Connect the terms*

1. Opera Seria
  2. Baritone
  3. Opera
  4. Ballet
  5. Orchestra
  6. Libretto
  7. Duet
  8. Aria
  9. Soprano
  10. Chorus
  11. Act
  12. Contralto
  13. Tenor
  14. Opera Buffa
  15. Recitative
  16. Bass
  17. Overture
- A. Dance spectacle set to music.
  - B. Highest pitched woman's voice.
  - C. Dramatic text adapted for opera.
  - D. Low female voice.
  - E. Comic opera.
  - F. A dramatic or comedic musical work in which singing is the essential factor; very little is spoken.
  - G. Opera with dramatic and intense plots.
  - H. Music composed for a singing group.
  - I. A song written for two performers to sing together.
  - J. A group of musicians who play together on various musical instruments.
  - K. Highest pitched man's voice.
  - L. A musical style in which the words are spoken in the rhythm of natural speech.
  - M. Male voice between bass and tenor.
  - N. A piece of music originally designed to be played before an opera or musical play.
  - O. Deepest male voice.
  - P. Elaborate solo in an opera or oratorio.
  - Q. Main division of a play or opera.