

TOLEDO OPERA

OPERA ON WHEELS



Who's
Afraid
of the
Big
Bad
Wolf?

Teachers'
Guide

Music by
Wolfgang
Amadeus
Mozart

Directed by
James M. Norman

Created by
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Overview

Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf? is an engaging, 40-minute adaptation of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* that reinvents the Don himself as the infamous Big Bad Wolf. Little Red Riding Hood and The Three Little Pigs must work together to show the Wolf the error of his ways. Using the music and themes from one of Mozart's greatest operas, young audiences learn the dangers of bullying, the power of friendship, and the ability of music to bring people together.

What is Opera?

Before the performance, ask your students for their ideas about what an opera is. Write **WHAT IS AN OPERA** on the board and list the students' answers. After your students see the performance, ask the same question to see if their answers change.

The word **opera** is the plural form of the Latin word **opus** (which translates quite literally as **work**). Today we use the word **opera** to refer to a theatrically based musical art form in which the drama is sung (without microphones!), rather than spoken, and is accompanied by a full symphony orchestra.

Opera was born out of the belief that drama can be better expressed by music and text than by text alone. One of the unique things about opera is how it combines so many different art forms (music, drama, and visual arts) to create an artistic spectacle. Of course, the use of many art forms means that there are many people involved in the creation and production of an opera. These may include:

Composer: Writes the music

Librettist: Chooses a story, writes or adapts the words

Conductor: Leads the musicians and singers

Director: Blocks or stages the entire production

Principal Singers: Have the leading and supporting roles

Chorus: Sings as a group

Supernumeraries: Act but do not sing

Repetiteur: Accompanies singers during rehearsal, plays the whole orchestral score on piano

Costume Designer: Designs the costumes for each character

Wardrobe/Costume Staff: Fit, clean and repair costumes; help singers put costumes on

Wig Staff: Make and fit wigs to the principal singers, chorus, and supernumeraries

Make-up Staff: Apply make-up for principal singers, assist chorus with make-up

Set Designer: Designs the scenery for each scene

Lighting Designer: Designs lighting effects

Prop Builders: Build/buy all the set pieces that are not structural

Stage Manager: "Calls the show" -- cues scenery changes, lighting, and singers so that everything happens at the right time.

Stagehands: Move scenery; run lighting & sound cues

Front of House Staff: Work in the performance venue: seating patrons, operating coat check

Artistic Director: Chooses which shows to produce and which artists to hire

Administrative Staff: Find funding (!); sell tickets; hire artists; take care of the business side of opera.

Audience: Enjoys and appreciates opera from a seat in the hall!

Critic: Writes a critique of performance for newspaper, radio, or TV

Characters and Synopsis

Characters

Big Bad Wolf, baritone

Little Red Riding Hood, soprano

3rd Little Pig, mezzo-soprano

Synopsis

SETTING: A DARK FOREST

TIME: THE FAIRYTALE PRESENT

Once upon a time—not so far from our own—there was a Big Bad Wolf. Every day, the Wolf would wander the forest looking for creatures to taunt, hassle, and bully. He loved feeling superior to his victims, he loved seeing them cower in fear, and he rejoiced when they ran away from his great, loud howl. The Wolf loved the chase!

However, on this day, two of the Wolf's latest victims run into each other, deep in the woods. Little Red Riding Hood and the 3rd Pig each are looking for their families. They are separated from them while running away from the Wolf.

Little Red Riding Hood first tells the story of how she became lost in the woods. While bringing cookies to her Grandma, the Wolf convinces her to stray from the path to pick a bouquet of flowers. While Little Red Riding Hood is delayed in the woods, the Wolf goes to Grandma's house first. But before he can eat her, Little Red Riding Hood appears. The Wolf quickly hides Grandma, and dons her bonnet and frills. Slowly, Little Red Riding Hood realizes that it is the Wolf—and not her Granny—under the covers, and the real Grandma jumps out of hiding, distracting the Wolf! They set a rendezvous deep in the woods, and Little Red Riding Hood narrowly escapes the Wolf and runs into the forest.

The 3rd Pig has a similar story. To be independent, the Pigs' mother kicked them out of the family home. As they debate how to build houses of their own, each becomes more insistent that her way is right. One wants to make a house from straw, one from sticks, and the third from bricks. However, as their houses are constructed, the Wolf appears and blows down the first two houses. The 3rd Pig safely watches from her brick abode as her brothers scatter into the forest, with the Wolf trailing behind. The 3rd Pig sets out to find her brothers and teach this Wolf a lesson.

Little Red and the 3rd Pig resolve that if they don't work together to teach the Wolf a lesson, who would? At this moment, Little Red's Granny and the other Pigs appear in the clearing, and everyone rejoices that they are together once more. They devise a plan, and set it into action:

They know that the Wolf loves sweet foods, so Little Red bakes cookies, Granny knits a net, and they set a trap, luring the Wolf to the 3rd Pig's brick house. From the roof, they ensnare the Wolf with the smell of chocolate chip cookies and capture him in their net. Only then, is the Wolf forced to confront his victims and learn that there are consequences for his actions...



Resident Artists 2017-2018

Michael Colman (Big Bad Wolf) , bass baritone



Bass-baritone Michael Colman has performed all over the country in roles ranging from the comedy of Mozart's Figaro and Leporello to the drama of the Sorceress in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and Collatinus in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*. Michael made his professional debut as an Apprentice Artist with the Lyric Opera of Kansas City, and he earned degrees from Baylor University and the University of Kansas. Awards include the Grand Prize at the Kristin Lewis Foundation Competition, First Prize at the Kansas City Music Clubs Competition, the Patroness Award at the SAI Regional Music Competition, Finalist at the Harold Haugh Light Opera Competition, and multiple First Place awards in the Texoma NATS Regional Competition.

Carolyn Aguirre (3rd Pig), mezzo-soprano



Mezzo-soprano Carolyn Aguirre recently completed her graduate studies at Mannes College of Music where she performed the role of the Baroness (*Vanessa*) with Mannes Opera. During her time in New York, Carolyn also worked with Light Opera of New Jersey as Miss Todd (*The Old Maid and the Thief*), participated in Mannes Opera's Scenes programs as Leonor (*La Favorite*), Maddalena (*Rigoletto*), Augusta Tabor (*The Ballad of Baby Doe*) and Baba the Turk (*The Rake's Progress*) and performed the role of the Sorceress/Spirit (*Dido & Aeneas*). Prior to her studies at Mannes, she received her Bachelor of Music from Boston University.

Janani Sridhar (Little Red Riding Hood), soprano



Soprano Janani Sridhar is a seasoned performer of both operatic and concert repertoire. Previous roles include Nella (*Gianni Schicchi*), Lucia (*The Rape of Lucretia*), Adina (*L'Elisir d'Amore*), Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*), Violetta (*La Traviata*), Kate Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*), Dido (*Dido and Aeneas*), Antonia (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), Colrinda (*Cendrillon*), and Musetta (*La Bohème*). Ms. Sridhar has competed in many vocal competitions across the U.S. and scored 1st place in University of Connecticut's Concerto Competition, the Amy Jane Cohen Encouragement Award-Connecticut Concert Opera, and many others. Janani is an alumna of the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and Manhattan School of Music and is a doctoral candidate at Stony Brook University.

Josh Wang, pianist



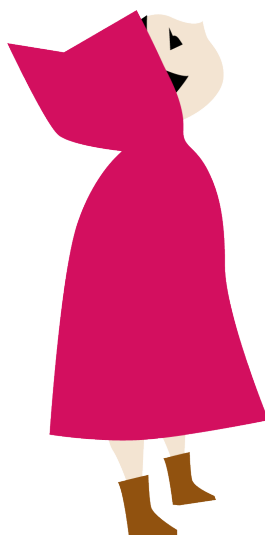
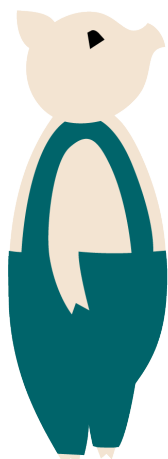
Originally from southeast Wisconsin, Josh Wang recently completed a Master's Degree in Piano Performance at Bowling Green State University, where he was a graduate instructor of group piano. He holds a bachelor's degree in the same field from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, where, in 2011, he was a concerto soloist with the University's symphony orchestra. Currently, Josh balances his time between private teaching, collaborating, and serving as director of music at First Presbyterian Church of Bowling Green, OH where he directs the choirs and handbell ensemble. Josh also serves as the rehearsal accompanist for the Toledo Choral Society.

About the Composer

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) is arguably the greatest composer the Western World has ever seen. Although he lived to be only 35 years old, Mozart defined and forever changed the world of music. Mozart's many operas, symphonies, masses, concertos, sonatas, etc. have never left the musical canon.

Mozart was a child prodigy and throughout most of his childhood, his father, Leopold Mozart, took Mozart around the world to perform for all the great courts of Europe. During this time, it was his keyboard skills that brought the young Mozart acclaim. However, at this young age he was already experimenting with composition. After all, Mozart started composing pieces like *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* at the age of 4 and he wrote his first opera at 9 years old. As Mozart grew up, he became fiercely independent and became infamous for doing what he wanted to do and defying his family and patrons.

After leaving his hometown of Salzburg where he was under the patronage of the Cardinal, Mozart settled down in Vienna where he became one of the first freelance composers. At this time, most composers required a court position in order to make ends meet. Mozart, however, defied convention and through his subscription concerts, commissions, teaching jobs, etc. Mozart made a modest living as a musician. Quite the feat. But, life was not easy for the adult Mozart. He was often plagued with debts and was always struggling to achieve the success he wanted, and even though he was independent, he was still subject—like everyone in Austria at this time—to the whims and tastes of Emperor Joseph II. Mozart died in 1791 and was buried in an unmarked grave, which was customary during this period of the Enlightenment. Mozart's best known operas include *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Così fan tutte*, *The Magic Flute*, and *Don Giovanni*—which is the music you will be hearing today!



About Enlightenment

Mozart lived during a period called The Enlightenment, a period of European history from about 1650-1790. This was a time when reason began to govern philosophy, society, culture, art, behavior, and governments. This was a time when restraint and Humanism took precedence over the frivolity and absolute rule of the monarch that was found in the Baroque and Renaissance. This time period forever changed Western civilization. Due to rational, enlightened thought, many accepted societal norms were challenged and led to the American and French Revolutions—each bringing about very different results. You can hear the Enlightenment in Mozart's music. Notice how each musical phrase is perfectly balanced and the emotion in the music is tempered and subtle (especially compared to the Romantic Era which appeared in music and art around the year 1800). There is incredible clarity in the score. While the music is often complex, it is always understandable and accessible to any listener.

DIVE DEEPER! Learn more about Mozart, The Enlightenment, and Mozart's other great opera, *The Magic Flute* by watching this TED ED video, written by Arizona Opera Director of Education, Joshua Borths.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8iKd-P4Bcac>

Adapting Giovanni into the Big Bad Wolf

Who's *Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?* is based entirely on Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni*. All the music and all the themes you will experience today can be found in this original opera. *Don Giovanni* (based on the famous legends of Don Juan) is about an aristocratic bully who had had his way for far too long. Throughout the course of the opera, Don Giovanni's past catches up to him as each of the men and women he bullies work for him to get his comeuppance. The opera famously ends with the ghost of a man Don Giovanni killed, the Commendatore, dragging Don Giovanni down to hell. This original opera is over three hours long and is one of the most interesting operas ever written. It combines comedy and tragedy together in interesting ways, culminating in this famous final scene described above.

When creating *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?*, we took the three-hour opera, and shortened it to the approx. 35 min production you are seeing today! We also took the characters of Don Giovanni and transformed them into familiar fairytale characters living in a fairytale forest, instead of the Seville, Spain of the original opera.

This process of taking one work of art and transforming it into another is called "Adaptation." This is the process of taking an original work and turning it into a different kind of work, while maintaining the spirit of the original. Adaptations are important to recognize and understand as you look at different works throughout your life. Some adaptations are more faithful than others. For example, the Harry Potter movies were very faithful to the world of the books when transferred into the world of cinema. However, some adaptations are less literal, like *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?*

Adaptation Activity

As a class, talk about adaptations that you've experienced.

See if you can brainstorm on the board different kinds of adaptations. Examples include books to movies, movies to TV shows, TV shows into toys, etc.

Now, dig a little deeper. Can you think of any stories that were adaptations that are less literal? Examples include historical stories adapted in different ways (like *Hamilton*), other fairytales (like *Shrek*), etc.

Finally, in all the above brainstormed activities, the original story had to change based on the medium of the adaptation (for example, the *Harry Potter* movies can't be as long as the books). Individually, have your students write down their favorite story. How has that story been adapted? Are there any mediums that haven't received an adaptation (for example, there hasn't been a *Harry Potter* TV show)?

If you were to adapt this story to a different medium, how would you do it? Would you have to change the original? Would you have to change the focus of the story? Does this exercise make you think about art in a different way?

Remember, every work of art we see was intentionally put there by someone. Don't take anything for granted, and always ask why. Why did they do it that way? Did a specific choice solve a problem? What problem was it trying to solve?

The Overture Helps Predict

The traditional way to teach opera in the classroom is to talk through the synopsis, watch/listen to parts of the opera, and introduce the composer's biography. However, the goal of this activity is for students to figure out the opera for themselves by themselves before this information is relayed.

Overture Activity

- 1) Play the overture (or a part of the overture) to *Don Giovanni* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jyjVCbTo5FO>) and have students raise their hands every time there is a musical change (or a new section... this does not need to follow any formal music theory. Anyone can do this!).
- 2) Listen to the music again and have students decide what the emotion or attitude of each section is (for example: "This music is playful," "This music is serious," "This section is more energetic").
- 3) Have them listen to it a third time and come up with reasons why the music made them feel a certain way (for example: "This section was serious because it is slow" "This section is exciting because it's loud").
- 4) Based on this simple analysis, ask students what they expect to experience or see in *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf*?

DIVE DEEPER!!!!!!

Now, give students the synopsis of the opera. Ask them if the overture prepared them for the themes and emotions that would play out in the opera.

What to Listen for . . .

There are many things to listen for in *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf*, and you should encourage your students to actively engage in the music. Try not to let them be passive listeners. To help you with this task, here are two things for them to listen for while watching the performance:

- 1) **Different Voices in Opera:** You will be introduced to three main voice types in order of pitch level from highest to lowest – soprano (Little Red), mezzo-soprano (Pig), and baritone (Big Bad Wolf). Often, the sounds of their voices portray the personality and emotion of the character.
- 2) **The Power of Musical Suggestion:** Like the human voice, the music played underneath the singers often sets the mood for the scene to come. Can you predict the mood of the scene based on the music you hear before the performers sing? Does the music make you feel happy, excited, anxious, sad, etc.? Even when there isn't singing, pay attention to what the piano is telling you about the story!

After the performance: Ask your students if the show they saw met their expectations, based on their preparation. If there were differences, why did they think that was? See how your students answer the following questions: 1) Was opera different than they originally brainstormed? 2) What were the voice types they heard and did they match the characters portrayed? 3) Name a specific instance when the piano gave you a clue about what was going to happen.

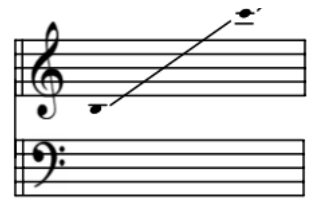
The Operatic Voice

Being an opera singer is hard work! Singers need to be physically strong and have superb technique in order to sustain long phrases (musical thoughts): this means they have excellent control of both the inhalation and exhalation of their breath. Likewise, their voices must maintain a resonance (using the cavities in the face to increase the audibility of the voice, even when singing quietly) in both the head (mouth, sinuses) and chest cavities. All this resonance is necessary to achieve the volume required to be heard above the orchestra that accompanies the singers. Opera singers do not usually use microphones, so they must project their voices throughout a whole theatre using only their muscles and technique! All voices are defined by both the actual voice “type” and the selection of repertoire for which the voice is ideally suited. The range, pitch, and tone of a singer’s voice will determine what kind of role they will play in the opera. Below are a list of the voice types (and ranges) commonly found in operas:

Female Voice Types

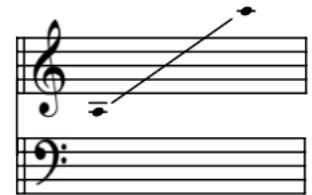
• Soprano (“sopra” = “over”)

The highest pitched female voice. Soprano voices vary by sound type: there are coloratura sopranos, who can sing very high notes and rapid passages with ease, dramatic sopranos, whose voices have great power, and lyric sopranos, whose voices have exceptional beauty and can sustain long passages. Composers often (but not always) write the female lead role in an opera for a soprano.



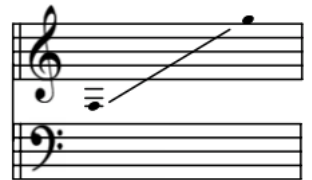
• Mezzo-Soprano (“mezzo” = “medium”)

Lower than the soprano and higher than contralto. Usually plays either the character of a young boy (this is called a trouser role) or a complex character with energy and awareness of life, or an evil character. Bizet’s *Carmen* is one of the most famous mezzo roles in opera, and is a rare lead role for a mezzo.



• Contralto (“contra” = “against” & “alto” = “high”)

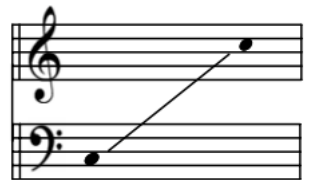
The lowest pitched female voice, these singers have a deep, well rounded sound. Contraltos more rare than sopranos or mezzos, and they are usually given the role of a maid, mother, or grandmother. Olga in Tchaikovsky’s *Eugene Onegin* is one such role.



Male Voice Types

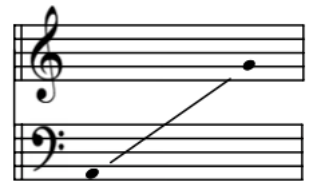
• Tenor (“tenere”= “to hold” - central notes of harmony)

The highest sounding male voice: often the leading role. Tenors, like sopranos, can have lyric or dramatic sound quality. Luciano Pavarotti was one of the world’s most famous lyric tenors. Tenors typically play characters that fall in love with Sopranos, such as Alfredo in Verdi’s *La Traviata*.



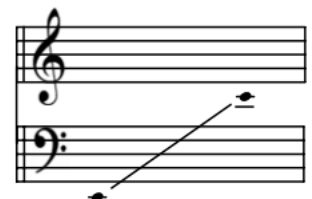
• Baritone (from the Greek term for “deep sounding”)

These voices are more mellow-sounding and slightly lower than tenors. The roles sung by bartones are usually father figures or counts and other nobles, and these are often important roles in the story (like Rigoletto in Verdi’s *Rigoletto*).



• Bass (“low”)

Basses are the lowest sounding human voices, and they often play roles of wise and older characters in opera, like kings, emperors, or gods. They can also play profoundly evil characters, like Satan in *Mephistopheles* or *Faust*. The basso profundo is the lowest voice in singing, and is commonly heard in Russian opera. One of the most recognizable bass roles in opera is Leporello in W.A. Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*.



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