The Little Prince
Music by Rachel Portman and Libretto by Nicholas Wright
Welcome to Houston Grand Opera’s 2015 Student Matinee performance of *The Little Prince* by Rachel Portman and Nicholas Wright.

This adaptation of the much-beloved book by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry examines the world through the eyes of a child Prince. Brought to life by a cast that prominently features Houston-area children performing alongside HGO Studio artists, the opera will captivate young imaginations and provide a wealth of food for thought and further discussion. Student Matinee performances are scheduled on December 8, 9, and 15 at 10 a.m.

We believe that the performing arts play an essential role in the education process. HGOco is Houston Grand Opera’s unique initiative designed to connect the company to our community; through this series of programming, HGO partners with schools, educators, and parents to provide opportunities for students to experience the thrill of the performing arts in Houston.

HGOco offers the following tools to enhance the opera-going experience:

**The Little Prince Study Guide:** This guide provides a more in-depth look at *The Little Prince*, and is intended to help prepare students and teachers for the performance they will be attending.

**The Little Prince Docent Program:** HGOco offers in-school presentations for your students, designed to introduce them to the exciting art of opera and give an overview of the performance they will see on their visit to the Wortham Center. These multi-media presentations are hosted by HGO Guild members, whose enthusiasm and love for opera will excite your students about their upcoming visit to HGO. (For more information or to request a docent presentation, please email us at HGOco@hgo.org.)

**Professional Development Workshop—The Little Prince:** Wednesday, December 2, 5:30 p.m. HGOco’s Professional Development Workshops are designed to help educators and their students connect with opera in exciting ways. Join us for dinner, an in-depth opera preview, and discussion. Together we will brainstorm ways to incorporate themes and ideas into your curriculum before you attend a Houston Grand Opera dress rehearsal. Participants may be eligible for TEA continuing education credit. (For more information or to book a ticket for this event, please visit [www.houstongrandopera.org/communityprograms/hgoco-event/professional-development-workshops-the-little-prince](http://www.houstongrandopera.org/communityprograms/hgoco-event/professional-development-workshops-the-little-prince)).

**Opera brings together the many forms of artistic expression:** instrumental music, drama, dance, visual arts, and of course the human voice. We hope your experience with Houston Grand Opera will be greatly rewarding and will provide the catalyst for a lifelong appreciation of the art form we celebrate.

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Attending the Opera

Welcome to the Cullen Theater at the Wortham Theater Center.

We hope to make your experience at Houston Grand Opera one you will remember for years to come. Here are some tips for attending a Student Matinee.

A common question is “What should I wear?” While you may imagine opera audiences decked out in ball gowns and tuxes, you will find that people wear all sorts of things to the opera—jeans, dress pants, cocktail dresses, suits. The important thing is to be comfortable and to wear something that makes you feel good. You may want to bring a sweater from home because it can be quite chilly inside the theater.

The performance starts promptly at 10 a.m., and there is no late seating. Please be sure to allow plenty of time for students to get off the bus and into their seats. If you and your students would like to take photos, please do so in the lobby or before the lights go down in the house. Photography and other recording devices are not allowed during the performance. Don’t forget to turn off your cell phones! The sound and light coming from a cell phone can be very distracting to performers and fellow audience members.

Sometimes, it’s a little difficult to understand words when they are sung—even when they are in English, as with The Little Prince. Not to worry, because there is a horizontal screen above the stage where supertitles are projected, so you’ll know what’s being sung. HGO was among the first opera companies to adopt this practice, which has revolutionized opera stages around the world and made opera more readily accessible.

You can show your appreciation for a performer by applauding after a well-sung aria. If you’re wondering when to applaud, there is no easy answer. The etiquette depends on the type of music being performed. When in doubt, just applaud when everyone else does. There are certain set arias or songs within almost every piece that audiences recognize, but often, since the music is continuous, there is no real spot for applause. You may even hear fellow audience members shouting “bravo!” for a man, “brava!” for a woman, or “bravi!” for a group of performers after a truly spectacular aria. Feel free to join in!

Opera 101

The word “opera” is an Italian form of the word for “work”—not work as in labor, but work as in a work of art. Today we accept the word “opera” as a reference to a theatrically based musical art form in which the drama is propelled by sung text accompanied by instrumental music.

Opera began in Florence, Italy, in the late 16th century as a way to recreate ancient Greek drama. The first opera, Dafne, was composed by Jacopo Peri in 1597 and like many of the early operas, Dafne retold a classic Greek tragedy. Opera continued to evolve, reflecting the cultural shifts of society. At first, opera was only for the nobility, commissioned and performed for the special events of royal families. It wasn’t long, however, before theater owners in Venice realized that a great deal of money could be earned through this new form of entertainment. Public opera houses soon were built for the growing merchant class to attend. This change in the makeup of the audience brought about changes to the kinds of operas produced. In the 18th century, the most popular and prestigious form of opera was opera seria (serious opera). But soon, opera buffa (lighthearted and comedic opera) grew in popularity. Since then, operas have been written on a wide range of topics: cultural clashes (Madame Butterfly), young love (The Barber of Seville), politics (Nixon in China), and children’s stories (The Little Prince), just to name a few.
How to Create an Opera

**THE STORY:** Someone finds a story they find exciting that they believe will make a good opera.

**THE MUSIC:** Often, the librettist then sends a completed libretto to a COMPOSER who writes music that will enhance the story. The final combination of words and music is called a **SCORE**.

**THE WORDS:** A LIBRETTIST takes the basic story and begins writing characters, scenes, settings, and drama to create a **LIBRETTO**, like a play.

**THE DESIGN:** The score is read by a STAGE DIRECTOR, SCENIC DESIGNER, COSTUME DESIGNER, and LIGHTING DESIGNER who create a unified look for the production. These designs are submitted to supervisors who will oversee the work of building costumes and sets and setting the lights to create the visual world of the opera.

**THE PERFORMANCE:** Words, music, sets, costumes, lights, cast, and orchestra come together to perform for you, our audience.

**THE REHEARSALS:** A CONDUCTOR (or MUSIC DIRECTOR) teaches the CAST of singers how to sing the music. The STAGE DIRECTOR helps the CAST discover where to go onstage and how to best act out the roles of the opera.

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**Who’s Who**

**The Author**

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry was born on June 29, 1900, to an aristocratic family in Lyon, France. His father died just after his fourth birthday, leaving his family impoverished and Saint-Exupéry as man of the house. After failing his final exams at the preparatory Naval Academy, Saint-Exupéry enrolled in the École des Beaux-Arts to study architecture. But it wasn’t long before he dropped out and began accepting odd jobs. In 1921, Saint-Exupéry began service in the military, first as a private soldier and then as a pilot in the French Air Force. He took a brief hiatus from flying but began again in 1926, becoming one of the pioneers of international postal flight. During his years as a pilot, Saint-Exupéry began writing. He was established as a rising star in the literary world with the publication of his 1931 novel *Vol de nuit* (Night Flight) about his experiences as a mail pilot.

In 1935, Saint-Exupéry and his co-pilot crashed their plane in the Sahara while flying from Paris to Saigon. Both men survived the crash but experienced intense dehydration and hallucinations. After four days in intense desert heat they were discovered and saved using a native rehydration treatment. This experience was prominently featured in Saint-Exupéry’s memoir *Wind, Sand, and Stars* and proved a crucial inspiration for a scene in *The Little Prince*.

After France fell to the Germans in 1940, Saint-Exupéry and his wife, Consuelo, fled to New York. It was in New York that he was encouraged to write a children’s book based on the “little fellow” he frequently doodled on napkins and tablecloths. *The Little Prince* was published in 1943 and has become Saint-Exupéry’s best-known work.

Later, Saint-Exupéry returned to France to fight and fly with the Free French Air Force. In 1944, while flying a reconnaissance mission over France, Saint-Exupéry’s aircraft disappeared, presumably shot down by German forces. The wreckage was finally found in 2004, in the Mediterranean Sea near Marseilles.

**Art Imitating Life**

In an article for the *New York Times*, reviewer Barry James called *The Little Prince* “an allegory for Saint-Exupéry’s own life—his search for childhood certainties and interior peace, his mysticism, his belief in human courage and brotherhood, and his deep love for his wife Consuelo but also an allusion to the tortured nature of their relationship.”

Saint-Exupéry’s life experiences and beliefs are reflected throughout *The Little Prince*. For instance, the baobab trees that threaten the Prince’s planet as they grow are thought to represent the Nazi attempt to gain control during World War II.

Many biographers believe that Saint-Exupéry’s wife inspired the Prince’s beloved Rose. It was a complicated and tumultuous love, thus Saint-Exupéry portrays the Rose as petulant, vain, flighty, and imperious. At first, the Prince tenderly protects his Rose from harsh winds but he soon grows tired of her demands and leaves her. He
later realizes, “I should have judged her according to her actions, not her words. She perfumed my planet and lit up my life. I should never have run away!” Saint-Exupéry was unhappily married, which is portrayed in the story through the Prince’s abandonment and regret.

Elements of Saint-Exupéry himself are thought to be found in both the characters of the Pilot and the Little Prince. The story begins with the Pilot telling the reader of his crash landing in the Sahara six years earlier. This is clearly drawn from Saint-Exupéry’s own experience with a plane crash in the Sahara. Yet the Prince embodies Saint-Exupéry’s philosophies, dreams, and love of travel. Additionally, the Prince’s appearance may have been inspired by Saint-Exupéry as a young boy with golden curly hair.

In his biography, titled Antoine de Saint-Exupéry: His Life and Times, Curtis Cate discusses the parallels between the novella and Saint-Exupéry’s life and beliefs. The Little Prince, of course, is Saint-Ex as a child. The Rose it is his duty to tend is a more complex creation. She is very feminine and flighty, like Consuelo—that “poppy” who, he said once, would end up shorn of her petals if she went on so giddily spinning. The Little Prince’s three volcanoes, which he regularly sweeps like a chimney, were similarly inspired by dead craters Saint-Ex had seen in southern Patagonia. Like all great fables, this one is as full of enchantment for a child as it is rich in nourishment for adults. It echoes many of the themes its author had most to heart: the fragility of joy and the primordial importance of love, without which one is blind—expressed in the Fox’s secret: “One sees only with the heart. The essential is invisible to the eye.” The importance of a mission, a duty, an obligation in life is exemplified by the Lamplighter who lights and extinguishes his lamp because that is the way things are. The pleasure which comes not because it is given or received but because it has been earned, like the sweet water of the well. And not least, [Saint-Exupéry’s] feeling that his broken-jointed carcass was done for, “I can’t carry off this body. It’s too heavy,” says the Little Prince as he prepared to return to his tiny star. “But it will be like an old discarded rind.” Saint-Ex could feel [his body] creaking with every step he took—a mortal coil he could not reel off and which his soaring spirit would have to drag around, like a prisoner’s ball and chain, to the very end of his days.

(Rachel Portman
Composer
Rachel Portman’s The Little Prince has been seen at HGO twice previously: it received its world premiere in 2005 and was staged again in 2004. Born in West Sussex, England, Rachel Portman began composing at age 14 and studied music at Oxford University. She gained experience writing music for drama in BBC and Channel 4 films including Mike Leigh’s Four Days in July and Jim Henson’s Storyteller series. Her extensive film work includes scores for Never Let Me Go, The Joy Luck Club, Benny and June, and The Manchurian Candidate. She won an Academy Award for her score for Emma and Academy Award nominations for Chocolat and The Cider House Rules. She has also written a musical of Little House on the Prairie and a dramatic choral symphony commissioned for the BBC Proms concerts titled The Water Diviner. She was appointed an officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the 2010 New Year Honors.

Nicholas Wright
Librettist
The Little Prince, which received its world premiere at HGO in 2003, represents playwright Nicholas Wright’s first work in opera: he later wrote the libretto for the opera Man on the Moon for British television. His plays include Treetops and One Fine Day (Riverside Studios); The Gorky Brigade (Royal Court); The Crimes of Vautrin (Joint Stock); The Custom of the Country and The Desert Air (Royal Shakespeare Company); Cressida (Almeida Theatre at the Albery); Rattigan’s Nijinsky (Chichester); The Last of the Duchess (Hampstead); and Travelling Light, Mrs. Klein, Vincent in Brixton, and The Reporter (National Theatre). He also adapted His Dark Materials for the stage and wrote versions of Naked, Lulu, John Gabriel Borkman, Three Sisters, and Thérèse Raquin. His adaptation of Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela’s A Human Being Died That Night was produced at Hampstead Theatre in 2015 and 2014 and at Brooklyn Academy of Music in 2015, and his adaptation of Pat Barker’s Regeneration was produced in Northampton and on tour in 2014.

(Costume sketch for The Little Prince by designer Maria Bjørnson)
The performance will last 2 hours with one intermission. Stay in your seats during intermission for interviews with the cast!
Student Matinee Cast and Creative Team

**Cast**
The Little Prince: Andy Jones (Dec. 9) / Cohle H. Smith (Dec. 8, 15)
The Pilot: Ben Edquist
The Snake / The Vain Main: John Kapusta
The Fox: Sofia Selowsky
The Businessman: Samuel Schultz
The Rose: Pureum Jo
The King: Federico De Michelis
The Drunkard / The Lamplighter: Chris Bozeka
The Water: D’Ana Lombard

**Creative Team**
Conductor: Bradley Moore
Production: Francesca Zambello
Director: Ellen Douglas Schlaefer
Set and Costume Designer: Maria Bjørnson
Original Lighting Designer: Rick Fisher
Lighting Realizer: Michael James Clark
Children’s Chorus Director: Karen Reeves

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Children’s Chorus

What to Look For

**The Children’s Chorus**
If you’ve read Saint-Exupéry’s cherished novella you’ll notice something onstage in the opera that was not included in his original story: a chorus of children. It was important to the creative team for children to have a strong presence in the opera so that young audience members could see themselves onstage. The idea of the children’s chorus then quickly blossomed and became essential to the telling of the story. You’ll see the chorus play different characters throughout the piece—the stars, the sandstorm, the cranes. They lead the audience on this journey while also highlighting major themes of innocence and exploration.

**Design**
Creating an opera requires collaboration among artists as they discover the best way to tell the story dramatically, musically, and visually. As much as the creative team focused on words and music to capture the spirit of Saint-Exupéry’s *The Little Prince* they also relied on design to enhance their vision. Saint-Exupéry illustrated *The Little Prince* himself, so set and costume designer Maria Bjørnson wanted to capture the essence of his original artwork in her designs. The costumes are playful while still exhibiting Saint-Exupéry’s simple style. Here you can see Bjørnson’s design and the final costume for the Rose.

The set frames the onstage action with a circular portal. This is reminiscent of the book’s illustrations, mimicking the circular shape of the various planets visited by the Prince. Here is a model of the set by designer Maria Bjørnson showing the opening scene of the opera.
A Character Tour
with HGO Dramaturg Paul Hopper

The Little Prince (boy treble, or high young male voice)

This is no ordinary prince. The Little Prince comes from Asteroid B-612, a tiny planet no larger than a house. He keeps busy by cleaning his three small volcanoes and keeping the Baobab trees away until one day—he sees a Rose. He loves the Rose deeply, but she is vain and demanding, so he sets off to explore the universe! On his travels, he meets a number of colorful and often puzzling characters. He realizes that all he wants in life is to love his precious Rose, and that the search for answers can be more important than the answers themselves.

“I have not much time. I have friends to discover, and a great many things to understand.”

The Pilot (baritone, the middle of the male voices)

Our narrator throughout The Little Prince is the Pilot, who is looking back on his chance encounter with the Prince six years earlier. The two meet after the Pilot’s plane crash lands in the Sahara. Even though he is an adult and the Little Prince is a child, the Pilot realizes they share the same outlook on life. The character of the Pilot is based on Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, the author of the original The Little Prince. He was a pilot, too, and doodled pictures of his imaginary prince for years before he finally wrote the book—his doodles ended up becoming the illustrations!

“Grownups never understand anything by themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them.”

Baobab Trees (tenors and basses, the highest and lowest of the male voices)

The towering baobab trees are pesky weeds that can easily take over an entire planet if they’re not spotted early. The prince diligently watches for the first sign of them on his planet and yanks them out to protect his home. The baobab trees remind us that while some daily tasks may seem insignificant now, they cannot be ignored.

“Sometimes there is no harm in putting off a piece of work until another day. But when it is a matter of baobabs, that always means a catastrophe.”

The Rose (soprano, highest female voice)

On Asteroid B-612 there grows a Rose of exquisite beauty. When she emerges from her bud the first time the Prince falls in love with her. Unfortunately, she is as moody as she is beautiful, and the Prince abandons her to begin his voyage. As the Prince grows in wisdom, he learns to love the Rose simply for her essence. Many believe the character of the Rose is based on Saint-Exupéry’s wife, Consuelo.

“I ought to have judged her on acts and not on words... but I was too young to know how to love.”

The King (bass)

The first person the Prince meets when he takes off on his interplanetary tour is the King. The King thinks that all men are his subjects—even though he is the only one on his planet, with no one to rule. Sometimes politicians, monarchs, and CEOs who make the biggest deal about their power end up being the lousiest leaders.

“Ah! Here is a subject,” exclaimed the King, when he saw the Little Prince coming.

The Vain (Conceited) Man (tenor)

Next the Prince meets the Vain Man, who thrives on being admired by others. He lives for the sound of applause, and it doesn’t matter to him whether he did anything to deserve praise. After meeting this man, the Prince can’t help but say, “Grown-ups are certainly very strange.”

“But the conceited man did not hear him. Conceited people never hear anything but praise.”

Quotations are from the novella The Little Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Costume sketches for The Little Prince by designer Maria Bjørnson
The Drunkard (tenor)

The third planet is inhabited by a man caught in a vicious cycle. When the Little Prince meets him, he is surrounded by empty bottles. When the Little Prince questions him, the Drunkard says he is drinking to forget that he is ashamed of drinking. The Drunkard illustrates the twisted logic that people use to justify their actions.

"Why are you drinking?" demanded the Little Prince.
"So that I may forget."

The Little Prince Study Guide

The Businessman (baritone)

Arriving on the fourth planet, the Little Prince meets the Businessman, who spends all his time counting his riches. He even believes he owns the stars, just because he has written down their numbers. Like the Drunkard, the Businessman's thinking is twisted: he explains to the Prince that the purpose of owning lots of stars is so he can buy more of them. The Prince realizes his few possessions are worth more than any amount of money.

"As for me, I am concerned with matters of consequence. There is no time for idle dreaming in my life."

The Lamplighter (tenor)

The Lamplighter lights a street lamp every night and puts it out in the morning, but because his planet is spinning faster every year, he is always busy. The Little Prince respects this man, who would seem ridiculous to the King or the Businessman, because he is concerned with something other than himself.

"That is a beautiful occupation. And since it is beautiful, it is truly useful."

The Snake (tenor)

Even though the Snake speaks in riddles, he is the easiest to understand of all the creatures in the story. When the Snake offers the Little Prince a trip home whenever he needs it, the Prince refuses because he knows the Snake is speaking about death. The Prince later realizes that his body is not his true self, turns himself over to the Snake, and is never seen again. What is clear is that his life goes on because he is loved.

"Whomever I touch, I send back to the earth from whence he came."

The Fox (mezzo-soprano, middle female voice)

The Little Prince encounters the Fox at a time of sadness; he misses his home and his Rose. The Fox says that the Prince must tame him in order to become his friend—by taming, he means to slowly establish a relationship by learning from each other. When it's done right, having a true companionship with another living being is the true reward.

"It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."
Celebrated for her film scores and the first woman ever to win an Oscar in that category (Emma, 1997), Rachel Portman had long wanted to compose a family-friendly opera. It was Jim Keller, an associate of composer Philip Glass, who suggested an opera based on Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s beloved classic, The Little Prince.

“At first I thought it was too episodic,” said Ms. Portman. And, she added, The Little Prince is not the kind of action-packed “thriller” that many people suppose is necessary to attract audiences these days. But the more she thought about it, the better she liked the idea. The Little Prince, widely read and loved by both children and adults, appealed to her for its ability to touch audiences of all ages and for its mixture of humor and pathos. Glass himself, who “has been incredibly supportive” and has advised Portman throughout the project, suggested Francesca Zambello as a director, and one thing led to the next. Ms. Zambello got English National Opera (ENO) involved and the world premiere was to be staged there, with Houston Grand Opera to mount the production later. ENO was unable to obtain the rights, however, and the production fell through. Zambello didn’t let it go.

“I believe passionately in the story, in the music, and in shows for young audiences,” Ms. Zambello explained, so she continued to pursue the project through Houston Grand Opera. The upshot was that HGO succeeded in working out an agreement with the publisher and the Saint-Exupéry heirs.

British playwright Nicholas Wright, who had developed a rapport with Ms. Zambello when he worked as dramaturg with her on a project for the National Theatre, was asked to be the librettist. He knew and admired Ms. Portman’s work, but he was initially reluctant to undertake the project. An Olivier Award recipient for Best Play (Vincent in Brixton, which opened on Broadway March 6, 2003), Mr. Wright has adapted a number of classic novels to the stage but had never written a libretto or lyrics of any kind. He wasn’t sure whether he could comply when Ms. Portman told him the music she envisioned for this project required a libretto with meter and rhyme, but he finally decided to undertake the project because of his love for music, fostered early on by his musical family.

The interests of the Saint-Exupéry family were represented throughout the process by historian and author Frédéric d’Agay, grandson of Saint-Exupéry’s sister Gabrielle d’Agay. His role has been to protect Saint-Exupéry’s legacy—a purpose with which the other members of the team were in accord, and they welcomed his active participation. After all, says Mr. Wright, “The book is very purely the expression of a single mind. The complexities of the book come from the fact that a sensitive, brilliant brain is expressing itself without mediation from anyone else, and this is what gives it its odd, individual feel. But the writing of an opera libretto is collaborative. For me, the question was: how to keep the strangeness and individuality of the original, while at the same time giving the other partners what they need and indeed must have to be able to do their best work.”

From the earliest discussions, said Mr. Wright, the team was concerned with “keeping the book’s simplicity intact—how to make sure that something so delicate, naïve and unforced would survive the transition into a different and perhaps more artificial medium. Every discussion we had led us back to the spirit of the book.” With this in mind, they began writing.

Often in opera, the libretto is written first and is then set by the composer. This time it varied: sometimes the words came first, sometimes the music. The collaboration with Wright worked well, said Ms. Portman: “I found his arias very settable—I was very inspired by them.” Whenever she got stuck, she went back to the original text; she said, explaining, “The closer I stayed to the book, the better it was.” For example? “The Snake is a thinly drawn character in the book. I wrote a set piece [an aria] for the Snake, thinking that it would be fun, but I wasn’t happy with it. It took away the sinister quality and the mysteriousness that the Snake has in the book. Now the character is much more serious,” she said—and she is much happier with the result.

Staying close to the spirit of the book applied to the designs as well. Saint-Exupéry illustrated The Little Prince himself, so the set and costume designer, Maria Bjørnson, had the advantage of knowing exactly what the author envisioned. Her costume designs capture the flavor and style of Saint-Exupéry’s illustrations. The most important feature of the set is a portal through which we see the various worlds visited by the Little Prince, which is reminiscent of many of the book’s illustrations of various planets. The internationally recognized Ms. Bjørnson, who won a Tony award for designing Phantom of the Opera, passed away unexpectedly [in December 2002]. She had completed the designs for The Little Prince, but nevertheless, her passing left a great emptiness that continues to be felt by the rest of the team, said Ms. Portman.

As closely as the team adhered to the spirit of the book, points of departure were inevitable. Decisions about what to cut were guided by the choice to focus on the relationship between the Little Prince and the Pilot. Also, for the sake of drama, some points needed to be clarified, explained Ms. Portman. In the book, it is not clear why the Little Prince leaves his planet to explore other worlds. In the opera, he leaves because his beloved Rose tells him to seek wisdom in the worlds around him. Another challenge was to keep the Pilot’s role active, which was achieved by bringing his thread of the story back to the audience’s attention and pointing out the danger the Pilot is in—i.e., that he’s had a plane crash in the Sahara, he cannot fix his plane, and he is running out of water.

The hardest quality of the book to preserve, said Mr. Wright, was Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s sense of humor, which is “subtle, delicate, gently ironic. I hope I’ve been able to catch at least some of it, but I’ll know more when I have seen the show.”

Perhaps adapting a literary work for the stage is akin to the challenge of translating a passage of poetry from one language to another: balancing the need to preserve the emotional meaning along with the literal meaning, and knowing when one must be sacrificed—at least a little bit—for the other. But there the similarity ends. An opera is not simply a translation, after all, but a brand new work of art, one that will have its own place in the creators’ legacies.

[This article was written by Laura Chandler for Opera Cues in spring of 2003 and has been published here with permission from the author.]
Glossary of Terms

A CAPPELLA—Vocal music without instrumental accompaniment
ACCOMPANIMENT—The musical background provided for a principal part
ARIA—A musical piece for solo voice focusing on emotional expression
BARITONE—The middle-range male voice
BASS—The lowest male voice
CHORUS—A group of singers who sing and act in a group, never as soloists
COLORATURA—Ornamental vocal music where several notes are sung for each syllable of the text
COMPOSER—The person who wrote the music
CONDUCTOR—The person who leads the orchestra
CRESCENDO—Music that gradually gets louder
DECRESCEndo—Music that gradually gets softer
DUET—A musical piece for two performers
FINALE—The last musical number of an act or show, it usually involves most of the cast and often repeats musical themes from the show
FORTE—Musical notation meaning the notes should be played or sung loudly
LEGATO—Smooth, connected playing or singing.
LIBRETTIST—The person who wrote the words for an opera
LIBRETTO—Literally ‘little book’ of the text or words of an opera
MEZZO-SOPRANO—The middle female voice, usually darker and fuller than a soprano’s
NOTE—A musical sound with its own pitch
OVERTURE—Introductory orchestral music used to set the theme or mood for the story. Historically, the overture was simply used to quiet the audience.
PIANISSIMO—Musical notation meaning the notes should be played or sung very softly
PITCH—The highness or lowness of sound
PROPS—Objects placed on the stage and used by the actors, an abbreviation of the word ‘properties’
QUARTET—A piece written for four performers, or a name for the performers themselves
SCALE—A series of 8 notes that can be played in ascending and descending pattern.
SCORE—The printed page upon which all the vocal and instrumental music of an opera is written
SET—The scenery used on the stage to show location
SOPRANO—The highest female voice
STAGE DIRECTOR—The person who decides how the singers will move on stage and how they will act while they are singing their parts
TEMPO—The speed at which the music moves
TENOR—The highest male voice
TRIO—A name for a group of three performers or a piece written for three instruments

Classroom Activity

Pre-Performance Activity

Introduction to Opera

Explore opera with your students by defining the art form, comparing it to other art forms, and listening to music from well-known operas.

1. Discuss as a class what you think an opera is or have your students write down three words that they associate with opera.

2. Define opera: Opera is a form of theater that uses words, music, and design to tell a story. Then ask your students if this is close to what you all came up with.

3. Have your students identify differences between opera and theater, or opera and ballet. What is a major element of opera that the other two art forms don’t have?

4. Lead the class in singing a familiar tune (ex: “Happy Birthday” or “Row, Row, Row Your Boat”). Then, sing it again with different emotions (ex: happy, sad, angry). When you sang it with different emotions did it change the volume or tempi (speed) of the song? What did happy sound like? What about sad or angry?

5. Play your students an excerpt from each of the following arias. Play each excerpt twice through and then have your students write down or discuss the volume, tempo, and emotion of the piece. How does it make you feel? Can you guess what is going on in the story based on the music of this one piece?

   - “Der Hölle Rache” from Mozart’s The Magic Flute [CLICK HERE]
   - “O soave fanciulla” from Puccini’s La bohème [CLICK HERE]
   - “Votre toast” or the Toreador Song from Bizet’s Carmen [CLICK HERE]
Classroom Activity

Pre-Performance Activity

What would your opera sound like?

You and your class will explore how music can enhance a story.

1. Included below is the text from Chapter 10 of The Little Prince. In this chapter, the Prince begins his journey through the cosmos and meets a delusional King who rules over no subjects. Please read the following chapter to your class (or have them read it at home). If you’d prefer to read the whole book, that’s great, too!

2. Discuss with the class the most important aspects of this chapter. How would you convey its importance using music? Would you repeat the same line over and over again? What about volume and tempo? What does the King’s planet sound like? How would it sound different from Earth?

3. What instruments would you use to accompany the King? The Prince? If your class hasn’t learned about specific instruments yet, have them identify the different sounds. Does it sound like any animals or inanimate objects (like a bird or a creaky floor)?

4. You can also use this chapter to discuss themes of childhood vs. adulthood, truth, perception, and narrow-mindedness, which are common themes throughout the book and opera.

Chapter 10

[The Little Prince] found himself in the vicinity of asteroids 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, and 330. So he began by visiting them, to keep himself busy and to learn something.

The first one was inhabited by a king. Wearing purple and ermine, he was sitting on a simple yet majestic throne.

“Ah! Here is a subject!” the king exclaimed when he caught sight of the little prince. And the little prince wondered, How could he recognize me when he had never seen me before? He didn’t realize that for kings, the world is extremely simplified: All men are subjects.

“Approach the throne so I can see you a little better,” he commanded. The monarch had no need to be tactful. He was used to being listened to. So he sputtered a little, and seemed annoyance.

“May I sit down?” came now a timid inquiry from the little prince.

“I order you to do so,” the king answered him, and majestically gathered in a fold of his ermine mantle.

“Ah, then,” the king said. “I order you to yawn. It is years since I have seen anyone yawning. Yawns, to me, are objects of curiosity. Come, now! Yawn again! It is an order.”

“That frightens me . . . I cannot, any more . . .” murmured the little prince, now completely abashed.

“Well! Well!” replied the king. “Then I—I order you sometimes to yawn and sometimes to—”

He sputtered a little, and seemed annoyed.

“For what the king fundamentally insisted upon was that his authority should be respected. He tolerated no disobedience. He was an absolute monarch. But, because he was a very good man, he made his orders reasonable.

“If I ordered a general:” he would say, by way of example. “If I ordered a general to change himself into a sea bird, and if the general did not obey me, that would not be the fault of the general. It would be my fault.”

“May I sit down?” came now a timid inquiry from the little prince.

“I order you to do so,” the king answered him, and majestically gathered in a fold of his ermine mantle.

But the little prince was wondering . . . The planet was tiny. Over what could this king really rule?

“Sire,” he said to him, “I beg that you will excuse my asking you a question—”

“I order you to ask me a question,” the king hastened to assure him.

“Sire—over what do you rule?”

“Over everything,” said the king, with magnificent simplicity.

“Over everything?”

The king made a gesture, which took in his planet, the other planets, and all the stars.

“Over all that?” asked the little prince.

“Over all that,” the king answered.

For his rule was not only absolute: it was also universal.

“And the stars obey you?”

“Certainly they do,” the king said. “They obey instantaneously. I do not permit insubordination.”

Such power was a thing for the little prince to marvel at. If he had been master of such complete authority, he would have been able to watch the sunset, not forty-four times in one day, but seventy-two, or even a hundred, or even two hundred times, without ever having to move his chair. And because he felt a bit sad as he remembered his little planet which he had forsaken, he plucked up his courage to ask the king a favor: “I should like to see a sunset . . . Do me that kindness . . . Order the sun to set . . .”

But the little prince was wondering . . . The planet was tiny. Over what could this king really rule?

“Order the sun to set.”

“If I ordered a general to change himself into a sea bird, and if the general did not carry out the order he had received, which one of us would be in the wrong?” the king demanded. “The general, or myself?”

“You,” said the little prince firmly.

“Exactly. One must require from each one the duty which each one can perform;” the king went on. “Accepted authority rests first of all on reason. If you ordered your people to go and throw themselves into the sea, they would rise up in revolution. I have the right to require obedience because my orders are reasonable.”

“Then my sunset?” the little prince reminded him: for he never forgot a question once he had asked it.
"You shall have your sunset. I shall command it. But, according to my science of government, I shall wait until conditions are favorable."

"When will that be?" inquired the little prince.

"Well! Well!" replied the king, and before saying anything else he consulted a bulky almanac. "Well! Well! That will be about—about—that will be this evening about twenty minutes to eight. And you will see how well I am obeyed!"

The little prince yawned. He was regretting his lost sunset. And then, too, he was already beginning to be a little bored.

"I have nothing more to do here," he said to the king. "So I shall set out on my way again."

"Do not go," said the king, who was very proud of having a subject. "Do not go. I will make you a Minister!"

"Minister of what?"

"Minister of—of Justice!"

"But there is nobody here to judge!"

"We do not know that," the king said to him. "I have not yet made a complete tour of my kingdom. I am very old. There is no room here for a carriage. And it tires me to walk."

"Oh, but I have looked already!" said the little prince, turning around to give one more glance to the other side of the planet. On that side, as on this, there was nobody at all . . .

"Then you shall judge yourself," the king answered. "That is the most difficult thing of all. It is much more difficult to judge oneself than to judge others. If you succeed in judging yourself rightly, then you are indeed a man of true wisdom."

"Yes," said the little prince, "but I can judge myself anywhere. I do not need to live on this planet."

"Well! Well!" said the king. "I have good reason to believe that somewhere on my planet there is an old rat. I hear him at night. You can judge this old rat. From time to time you will condemn him to death. Thus his life will depend on your justice. But you will pardon him on each occasion, for he must be treated thriftily. He is the only one we have."

"I," replied the little prince, "do not like to condemn anyone to death. And now I think I will go on my way."

"No," said the king.

But the little prince, having now completed his preparations for departure, had no wish to grieve the old monarch.

"If Your Majesty wishes to be promptly obeyed," he said, "he should be able to give me a reasonable order. He should be able, for example, to order me to be gone by the end of one minute. It seems to me that conditions are favorable. . . .As the king made no answer, the little prince hesitated a moment. Then, with a sigh, he took his leave.

"I make you my Ambassador," the king called out, hastily. He had a magnificent air of authority.

"The grown-ups are very strange," the little prince said to himself, as he continued on his journey.

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**Classroom Activity**

**Post-Performance Activity**

**Student Review**

Ask your students to write a review of the production. Have them incorporate appropriate musical and operatic terms that can be found in the glossary. This activity can be done in groups or individually.

1. Briefly discuss different types of print media and look at a few examples of professional reviews. This can be a review of a restaurant, a book, a movie etc. How does the reviewer use evidence to support his or her opinions?

2. Then, assign students to write a review of the production focusing on acting, singing, and design. As with many professional reviews, the reader may not have seen the production, so writers should include a brief synopsis of the story in their own words.

3. After reviews are handed in, offer students a chance to discuss their opinions and compare and contrast their ideas. Was there a variety of experiences?
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