



Summer Institute for Educators 2021

Shoulder to Shoulder into the Fray: The Resilient Women of Opera

ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

- The arts can express and mirror a full range of human experience through the use of expressive language, music, drama, and visual symbolism.
- The arts can teach us to remain courageous and resilient in the face of adversity.
- The arts can both reflect and challenge important issues about the role of gender in society.
- The arts and humanities are deeply interdisciplinary and can provide teachers with numerous access points to their subject matter.
- Studying arts and humanities can help students to understand the culture and time period in which one or more works were created and our culture today.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Why opera? Why now?
- How can opera provide a model for self-empowerment, collaboration and self-expression for our students?
- What does opera reveal about the culture and time period in which it was created? What does opera reveal about our culture today?
- How does opera teach us to remain courageous and resilient in the face of adversity?
- In what ways does opera reflect and challenge important issues about the role of women in society?
- How does opera's heightened emotional language mirror our internal emotional landscapes?



SUMMER INSTITUTE 2021

DAILY AGENDA

DAY I

Overarching Daily Goals:

- Participants understand what makes opera operatic: themes, structure, music, characters and tone.
- Participants will explore tableaux, pantomime, text and subtext as the building blocks for opera creation.

Schedule

10:00-10:15 (15 min.)

Conference Welcome: Setting the Stage

Muse Machine Executive Director Mary Campbell Zopf introduces our conference's players and shines a focus on the foundational aims of our time together.

10:15-10:45 (30 min.)

Opening Circle

In this high-spirited warmup, Bishop Chantel Wright will help us use our voices as well as movement in our journey towards embodying theatrical characters. Come ready to re-discover the thrill and vulnerability of performing as we learn the anthems of our conference. No previous vocal experience required.

10:45-11:40 (55 min.)

"Who Can Tell What the Hell [Operas] Are?"

The scene: *A group of teachers meets over the summer, exhausted by the past school year and skeptical of opera as an educational tool. Can they be convinced that opera has something to say to them and their students?* Angela Marroy Boerger leads this introductory session which will disrupt your preconceived notions of opera and introduce the resilient women of opera whose voices ring out even today in timeless messages of strength.

11:40-12:40 (60 min.)

Tableaux, Pantomime / Text, Subtext

How can we use our bodies to communicate emotion? What does it mean to represent a story physically? Presenter Givonna Joseph will lead an exploration of the theatrical techniques of tableau and pantomime as we begin the imaginative work of physicalizing the texts and subtexts of operatic and historic characters.

12:40-12:50 (10 min.)

Rest Break

12:50-1:00 (15 min.)

Guided Reflection: Lesson Planning

1:00-1:30 (30 min.)

Lunch

1:30-2:25 (55 min.)

Opera Creation Breakouts

In our breakout sessions for Day 1, groups will begin to develop an original operatic moment, inspired by a historic photo and research prompt. Through group discussion and improvised tableaux, groups will work towards developing the emotional world and physical representation of an imagined character.

2:25-2:50 (25 min.)

Closing Circle

Brandon leads the group in a reflective and expressive exercise using our new expertise in tableaux. We will round out our circle time with a refrain of our conference anthem.

2:50-3:00 (10 min.)

Housekeeping

Reviews and reminders before we adjourn for the day.

Notes:

DAY 2

Overarching Daily Goals:

- Participants can explain connections between opera and societal issues, such as in *The Merry Widow* the representation of women's experience of marriage and marriage laws and customs.
- Participants will gain the skills to identify opera moments and create an original libretto for an aria.

Schedule

10:00-10:15 (15 min.)

Musical Welcome

Welcome to Day 2! We'll begin the day with a brief exercise in musico-visual improvisation.

10:15-10:45 (30 min.)

Opening Circle

Bishop Wright will spark our creative energy in today's Opening Circle, which will focus on using articulation and breath to clarify a text.

10:45-11:40 (55 min.)

The Libretto Writing Toolbox

Stuart Holt will introduce five literary tools that support the creation of an operatic text, or "libretto." Then, following a brief study of "The Ladies' Choice" from *The Merry Widow*, we will imagine Hannah's expressive response. The activity will culminate in the group creation of a response aria in the voice of Hannah, using the techniques of the Libretto Writing Toolbox.

11:40-11:50 (10 min.)

Rest Break

11:50-12:10 (20 min.)

Creative Reflection: Alternative Representations of Learning

12:10-1:00 (50 min.)

Dear Hannah: A Letter Writing Activity

Brandon Anderson will lead the group in a study of two 20th-century women leaders from Dayton and their differing views on women's suffrage. Inspired by these primary source documents, we will then break out into groups and compose a letter in the voice of one of these historical figures, advising Hannah on whether she should consider remarrying.

1:00-1:30 (30 min.)

Lunch

1:30-2:25 (55 min.)

Opera Creation Breakouts

In our work group breakout sessions for Day 2, groups will create a 4- or 8-line “libretto” using their chosen primary source image and original character development, using lessons learned from the Libretto Writer’s Toolbox.

2:25-2:40 (15 min.)

Lesson Plan Deep Dive: Partner Breakouts

In these partner-based small breakouts, participants will reflect on ways that you can mine your curriculum for ways to express learning through opera.

2:40-2:50 (10 min.)

Closing Circle

Time for sharing, breathing, and singing.

2:50-3:00 (10 min.)

Housekeeping/Announcements

Reviews and reminders

Notes:

DAY 3

Overarching Daily Goals:

- Participants understand how music is used to define a character by examining the music in *Carmen*.
- Participants see how opera can illuminate societal issues that characterize *Carmen*'s life and status.
- Participants understand how outsider status can be examined through opera and popular music from both a historic and a contemporary perspective.
- Participants will gain insight into the world of props, sets and visual design for the stage.

Schedule

10:00-10:15 (15 min.)

Musical Welcome

Day 3 will begin with a new exercise in emotive and musical improvisation.

10:15-10:45 (30 min.)

Opening Circle

Bishop Wright will bring in examples from today's music to wake us up and help us get ready and excited to sing.

10:45-11:35 (50 min.)

The Musical Character of Freedom

We will examine the musical language that demonstrates *Carmen*'s determination to be free despite attempts to keep her on the margins of society. Within that context, we will consider operatic interpretations of the struggle for freedom and self-determination.

11:35-11:45 (10 min.)

Rest Break

11:45-12:35 (50 min.)

Composition LIVE

Joel Esher will introduce participants to easy tools that every teacher can use to compose original music. Using accessible resources such as Zoom Whiteboard and BandLab, as well as non-standard notation, Joel will break down composition into a series of approachable elements (Rhythm, Pitch, Dynamics, Articulation, Emotive word-sounds, and/or repetition) to capture expressive moments in song.

12:35-1:10 (35 min.)

Conversation with Buist Bickley

Angela Marroy Boerger interviews Broadway props supervisor Buist Bickley, about his design work and how he uses visual storytelling to amplify theatrical narratives. One of Broadway's most in-demand props supervisors, Buist brings a wealth of experience on shows ranging from *Dear Evan Hansen* to *SpongeBob SquarePants*.

1:10-1:40 (30 min.)

Lunch

1:40-2:35 (55 min.)

Opera Creation Breakouts

In our group sessions for Day 3, groups will apply Joel's composition toolbox to add musical flavor to their libretto-in-development. Participants will continue to refine their choices of characterization through tableaux, visual elements, and possible musical accompaniment.

2:35-2:50 (15 min.)

Creative Reflection: Alternative Representations of Learning

This fast-paced creative response begins with a household scavenger hunt and culminates in the design of a "touch box" inspired by participants' understanding of the character of Carmen.

2:50-3:00 (10 min.)

Closing Circle

Notes:

DAY 4

Overarching Daily Goals:

- Participants are prepared to draft a lesson and bring it to life in their classrooms with their students.
- Participants understand how there are diverse contributors to opera in America.
- Participants understand the contemporary forces that shape opera today.

Schedule

10:00-10:15 (15 min.)

Musical Welcome

10:15-10:45 (30 min.)

Opening Circle

10:45-11:30 (45 min.)

The Work of OperaCréole with Givonna Joseph

Opera and classical music in New Orleans and around the world have always included the contributions of persons of color. Since the 19th century, Creoles of New Orleans have made contributions to the music and culture of New Orleans. It is their participation in opera, as well as the music of Africa, Spain, and Haiti that contributed to the birth of jazz.

The non-profit, award winning company OperaCréole, founded in 2011 by the mother and daughter team of Givonna Joseph and Aria Mason, is dedicated to researching and performing lost or rarely performed works by composers of African descent. The company focuses in particular on works by 19th-century New Orleans free composers of color, and toward preserving and promoting Creole language and culture.

11:45-1:00 (1 hr. 15 min.)

Opera Creation Group Rehearsal

1:00-1:30 (30 min.)

Lunch

1:30-2:15 (45 min.)

Group Shares

2:15-3:00 (45 min.)

Closing Circle

3:00-4:00 (60 min.)

Optional time to share camaraderie and final thoughts.

8:30-10:00 (90 min.)

Road trip to Cincinnati Opera's CARMEN

Performance tickets are available on a limited first-come, first-serve basis to summer institute participants. This performance features an all-star cast including J'Nai Brugger, Janai Bridges, Stephen Costello and Christian Pursell.

Notes: