



Attend the Tale: Operatic Ghost Stories

Performance Guide

With extreme drama, thrills and emotion, let opera transport you to a world that lies in your imagination and beyond. From Mozart to Andrew Lloyd Webber, operatic and musical theatre is filled with narratives based on myth, mystery and phantoms. Students will join in the storytelling as the Dayton Opera Artists in Residence go on a spooky voyage to explore the elements of drama and how the human voice can inspire awe and shivers.

This performance guide includes:

- Artist bios
- A warmup activity and discussion prompt
- Background information
- Key vocabulary
- Suggested Q & A questions
- Post-show discussion questions
- An opera extension activity on EdPuzzle
- Related Ohio Learning Standards

BEFORE THE SHOW

Meet the Artists

Dayton Opera was founded in 1962 to enrich the cultural life of the Miami Valley. In 2003, Dayton Opera moved from its long-time home of Memorial Hall to its current home at the Benjamin and Marian Schuster Performing Arts Center. Many accomplished and well-known singers have been heard in Dayton Opera productions throughout the years. They include Martina Arroyo, Placido Domingo, Robert Merrill, Roberta Peters, Jerome Hines, Erie Mills, Samuel Ramey, James Morris and Mary Jane Johnson.

The Dayton Opera Artists-in-Residence Program was established in 1987 to serve as a professional training program for young singers as a bridge to move from the university/conservatory education experience into the arena of a professional opera company.

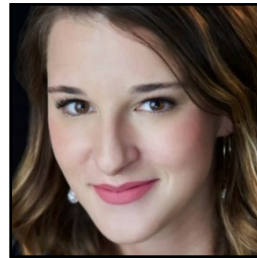
Read more about our Artists in Residence here! <https://daytonperformingarts.org/opera/artists-in-residence-program/>.



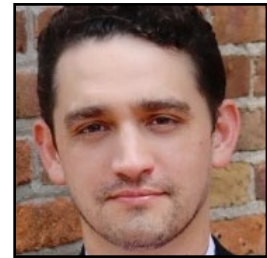
Allison Deady
Mezzo-soprano



Artega Wright
Baritone



Gabrielle Flannery
Soprano



Carl Rosenthal
Tenor

Find **@daytonopera** on Twitter and Facebook and **@daytonoperaofficial** on Instagram.

Classroom Warmup

In a story that is more silly than scary, the Artists in Residence (with the help of the audience) will try to solve the mystery of how Old Abram Brown died.

Watch this video to introduce the English folk song “Old Abram Brown,” arr. Benjamin Britten. Performed by Vermont ACDA Children’s and Middle School Honor Choir. Chris Clark conducting.

<https://youtu.be/qQ9wlfqZ5Nw?si=Bf09G9nE7xHIA6GL>

Discuss: What makes this song sound spooky? Can you use music terminology to describe what is going on musically?

The Opera Connection

The original folk song is only four lines long, so our mystery is revealed in new songs written by Artist in Residence Allison Deady and set to the music of famous arias.

- Gounod's *Romeo et Juliette*: "Mab, la reine des mensonges"
<https://youtu.be/BgRSUJPlqQ?si=IhJ3UXNUAkp9vSbd>
- Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*: "Regnavo nel silenzio"
<https://youtu.be/dYbCXyQH6oY?si=ujSzYia0cKS6e5Aj>
- Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*: "Miles!"
<https://youtu.be/N8BMF0mcaQA?si=lrRiNCEswm7vfcgs>
- Gilbert and Sullivan's *Ruddigore*: "Cheerly carols the lark"
<https://youtu.be/2p46wwonJM8?si=M3oMCSQjTRInCc2z>
- And one special tune from a show that many people consider operatic... can you guess it? Here's a clue: Josh Groban sings the title role on Broadway.

About "Old Abram Brown"

The image shows a musical score for the song "Old Abram Brown". The title is written in a stylized font at the top. Below it, the text "English folk song" is written. The score is in 2/4 time and consists of two staves. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is written on a single line. The lyrics are: "Old Abram Brown is dead and gone; you'll nev - er see him more! He used to wear an old gray coat all but - toned down be - fore." There are two square boxes with numbers 1 and 2 above the first and last notes of the first staff, respectively. The copyright notice "© bethsnotes.com" is at the bottom right of the score.



Benjamin Britten

In 1934, English composer Benjamin Britten wrote a series of twelve songs for the school in Wales where his brother was a teacher. These songs, collectively called Friday Afternoons (that was when pupils had their singing practice), started a long process of writing music for schools and Britten's lifelong interest in music for young people. Britten set to music text by many different poets and authors. The music always beautifully illustrates the mood of the text. All the songs are accompanied by the piano.

"Old Abram Brown" is one of the Friday Afternoons songs. The text is by an unknown writer and was taken from an anthology called *Tom Tiddler's Ground*, edited by Walter de la Mare. In the 1920s and early 30s, children sang mostly nursery rhymes and playground chants, and folk songs with simple accompaniments. When Britten composed these songs, they would have felt very contemporary, just as it does when we sing the latest pop songs at school today.

Vocabulary

The following concepts and terms will be introduced in Dayton Opera's performance.

- *Minor/Major*: The words derive from Latin words meaning "large" and "small," the difference between major and minor chords and scales boils down to a difference of one essential note – the third. The third gives major-sounding scales and chords their brighter, cheerier sound, and gives minor scales and chords their darker, sadder sound.
- *Musical Accent*: In music, an accent is an emphasis, stress, or stronger attack placed on a particular note or set of notes.
- *Dissonance*: Dissonance in music describes notes that “disagree” with one another to create a harsh, abrupt, or even jarring sound.
- *Chromaticism*: The chromatic scale consists of all twelve pitches within an octave, making it much more elaborate than the conventional diatonic scale. Incorporating these additional pitches into a piece can create a sense of tension, harmony, or depth.
- *Mood*: The feeling a song or piece causes you to feel.

The Q & A

Artists love to answer thoughtful questions! If you are having trouble thinking of a question, here are some that are sure to be well-received.

- What drew you to this art form?
- Who are you inspired by?
- What's your favorite opera role to play?
- What kind of training/education did you complete?
- What's your favorite (or least favorite) part about your work? Why?
- Have you ever dealt with stage fright?
- What advice would you have for someone wanting to follow in your footsteps?

Compose Your Question

AFTER THE SHOW

Post-Show Discussion

Teachers can facilitate a conversation or have students write their responses.

Follow-up Questions

- What did you like or dislike about the performance? Why?
- What did you appreciate about the performances by the singers?
- What surprised you?
- Did the story go the way you expected?
- Now that you've heard some real opera singers, would you be interested in seeing an opera?

EdPuzzle: Opera Extension

In this short video, you will see Nadine Sierra sing an excerpt from the title character's Act I aria (song) in the final dress rehearsal for the 2021-2022 production of *Lucia di Lammermoor* at the Metropolitan Opera. (This is one of the songs adapted for today's performance!)

Watch the video and see if you can answer three questions that test your musical knowledge.

1. What is the mood?
2. The clip ends with a musical accent. Why?
3. Is the aria in the major or minor?

Student Link (no account or name required):

<https://edpuzzle.com/open/rudecse>

Using this link means student answers are submitted anonymously to Muse Machine.

Teacher Preview Link:

<https://edpuzzle.com/media/65046b40564a8b3fdfa96da0>

Teachers can copy the EdPuzzle into their own account and edit the questions to suit their class's learning objectives. Student answers are submitted to the teacher, not to Muse.

FOR TEACHERS

Related Ohio Learning Standards

The following standards are linked to the artist’s performance and/or the activities in the performance guide. Teachers may be able to make additional connections.

Music

<i>Enduring Understandings: Critical and Creative Thinking, Literacy</i>	
Perceiving/Knowing/Creating	
6.5CE	Distinguish between and among the use of dynamics, meter, tempo and tonality in various pieces through active listening.
7.6CE	Identify various careers for musicians (e.g., in education, entertainment and technical support).
HS I.3CE	Recognize and describe the elements of music.
HS II.4CE	Describe the elements of music and their functions.
Producing/Performing	
6.6PR	Attend live performances and demonstrate appropriate audience etiquette.
Responding/Reflecting	
6.2RE	Reflect on a variety of live or recorded music performances.
7.4RE	Explain how and why people use and respond to music.
8.4RE	Express how music performance and settings affect audience response.
HS I.2RE	Respond to aesthetic qualities of a performance using music terminology.
HS II.2RE	Describe how the use of elements of music affects the aesthetic impact of a music selection.
HS III.3RE	Assess how elements of music are used in a work to create images or evoke emotions.

Writing

CCR Anchor Standard 4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
CCR Anchor Standard 10	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Speaking and Listening

CCR Anchor Standard 1	Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
CCR Anchor Standard 2	Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.