



# *Cinderella*

## **Study Guide**

**November 15, 18, 21, 23, 2008**

**Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre – Atlanta, GA**

Music by Gioacchino Rossini • Libretto by Jacopo Ferretti • Sung in Italian with English supertitles  
Directed by David Gately • Conducted by Gregory Vajda



THE ATLANTA OPERA

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## WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE OPERA

Are you unsure about how to act, what to wear or what you are going to see at the Opera? You are not the only one! Many others, students and adults, are nervous about their first trip to the opera. Read the truth behind some of the most popular opera myths and see if they answer some of your questions about the opera as well!

### **MYTH #1 OPERA IS BORING AND STUFFY.**

Not true! Operas tell some of the most interesting, scandalous, and beautiful stories of all time. It is not unusual to find love triangles, murders, fatal illnesses, and messages from beyond the grave. It's like *Days of Our Lives* set to music!

### **MYTH #2 OPERA IS SUNG IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE SO I WON'T UNDERSTAND THE STORY.**

We can help! It is true that many operas, like *Cinderella*, are sung in languages other than English. Since most people in our audience do not speak Italian, we project English translations, called *supertitles*, of the opera on screens above the stage. This way, you can follow along even if you do not understand the language. You also can read the synopsis of the opera before you arrive. Knowing the story will also help you follow along.

### **MYTH #3 I NEED TO WEAR A TUXEDO OR A BALL GOWN TO THE OPERA.**

While many people like to dress up when they go to the opera, it is definitely not required. Wear something that makes you feel comfortable, but remember that it is a special event and you may want to wear something a little nicer than ripped jeans and a sweatshirt!

### **MYTH #4 IF I'M A FEW MINUTES LATE, NO ONE WILL CARE. AFTER ALL THE OPERA IS SO LONG, IT DOESN'T MATTER IF I MISS THE FIRST FEW MINUTES.**

You don't want to miss the beginning! At most opera houses, the ushers will not seat you if you arrive after the opera has begun, as it is disturbing to the rest of the audience and the performers. If you arrive late, you may need to wait until after the first act before you can enter the hall. And a lot happens in the first act!

HERE ARE A FEW MORE TIPS TO MAKE YOUR TRIP TO THE OPERA MORE COMFORTABLE.

1. Remember: the opera is a live performance. You can hear the performers on stage and that means they can hear you too! Please refrain from talking or whispering during the opera. It is distracting to others around you as well as to the singers. Please do not leave your seat during the performance. This performance of *Cinderella* will be one hour with no intermission.
2. If you have them, please turn off all cell phones, pagers, beeping watches and anything else that may go "beep" in the night!
3. Please do not take photographs or video or audio recordings of the performance.
4. After the orchestra has tuned, the auditorium will become quiet. The conductor, or maestro, will then enter the pit. It is acceptable (and appreciated) to applaud the maestro's entrance. After all, he/she worked very hard to bring this performance to life!
5. If you like what you have seen and heard, let the performers know! It is okay to applaud at the end of songs, called arias, and at the end of a scene. If you *really* liked what you heard, call out "bravo" (to the men on stage), "brava" (to the women) and "bravi" (for all on stage). And of course, a standing ovation is always welcome!

## ***Cinderella***

### **SYNOPSIS**

The story takes place in an imaginary kingdom at no specific time in history.

#### **Act I**

##### *The home of Don Magnifico*

The scene opens in the house of the Baron of Mountflagon, Don Magnifico, Cenerentola's stepfather. Cenerentola (Cinderella), is sitting by the fire making coffee for her step-sisters Clorinda and Tisbe, as they primp and admire themselves in the mirror. While Cenerentola goes about her work, she sings a pathetic little song about a King who sets forth to choose a wife. A knock is heard at the door, and Cenerentola goes to answer. It is Alidoro, a philosopher and a friend of the Prince. He is disguised as a beggar. The two sisters are disgusted, and they curtly dismiss him. Cenerentola takes pity on him and offers him a cup of coffee and a piece of bread, annoying her step-sisters greatly. The quarrel is interrupted by the entrance of the Prince's courtiers. They announce that the Prince, Don Ramiro, is coming to escort them to the ball where he will select the most beautiful and charming woman to be his bride. Both Clorinda and Tisbe are convinced that their charms will make the Prince fall in love with them easily. They fight with each other over which one of them will tell their father, Don Magnifico, the good news. Their noise awakens Don Magnifico who scolds his daughters and makes them listen to him recount the lengthy dream that they interrupted. They listen reluctantly, and then they go to prepare for the Prince's visit and the upcoming ball.

When the Prince arrives, he is disguised as his valet, Dandini. He maintains this disguise because he is in search of a bride who will love him for himself and not for his wealth and position. Upon seeing Cenerentola, he is taken by her charm and beauty. Cenerentola and the Prince fall in love at first sight and express their feelings in a beautiful love duet. The romantic mood is broken when the lazy sisters, who are preparing for the ball in an upstairs room, order Cenerentola to come upstairs to help them. Cenerentola dutifully goes to her sisters' aid, leaving the Prince alone and bewildered about his feelings for this woman who has captured his heart. His musings are interrupted by the arrival of the real Dandini who is masquerading as the Prince.

The voice of Cenerentola is heard begging Don Magnifico to allow her to go to the ball. Neither Don Magnifico nor her step-sisters will listen to her. They tell the Prince that the third daughter, listed in the Prince's record book, is dead, and Cenerentola is only a servant. Satisfied, the Prince and Dandini leave, but Alidoro stays behind and promises to help Cenerentola get to the ball.

The next scene takes place in the Prince's palace. Don Magnifico has been promised the appointment of chief butler to the Prince and is busy tasting the royal wines. Prince Ramiro, still disguised as the Prince's valet, has seen enough of Clorinda and Tisbe by this time to know the neither of them could make him happy. The girls are determined to capture Dandini, who is still disguised as the Prince. When Dandini tells the sisters that he can only marry one of them, he suggests that the other marry his valet (who is really the Prince in disguise). The sisters are thoroughly disgusted, and they answer no. The arrival of an elegant, veiled lady is announced and Clorinda and Tisbe become extremely jealous. When the unknown lady removes her veil, they are all surprised by

how much she looks like Cenerentola. Clorinda, Tisbe, and Don Magnifico decide that it couldn't possibly be their Cenerentola; therefore, there is no cause for alarm.

## **Act II**

In a small room of the palace, Clorinda, Tisbe, and Don Magnifico continue to discuss the uncanny resemblance of Cenerentola to the unknown lady. Both sisters believe that they have made a conquest of the Prince, and they are no longer on friendly terms. By this time, Dandini, who is still disguised as the Prince, has fallen in love with Cenerentola and asks her to marry him. Cenerentola refuses and confesses her love for his "valet". The Prince overhears her, comes forward, and proposes to her. Cenerentola admits that she loves him, but before consenting to be his bride, the Prince must first find out who she really is. She gives him a bracelet which matches another she is wearing and swiftly departs as the clock strikes twelve.

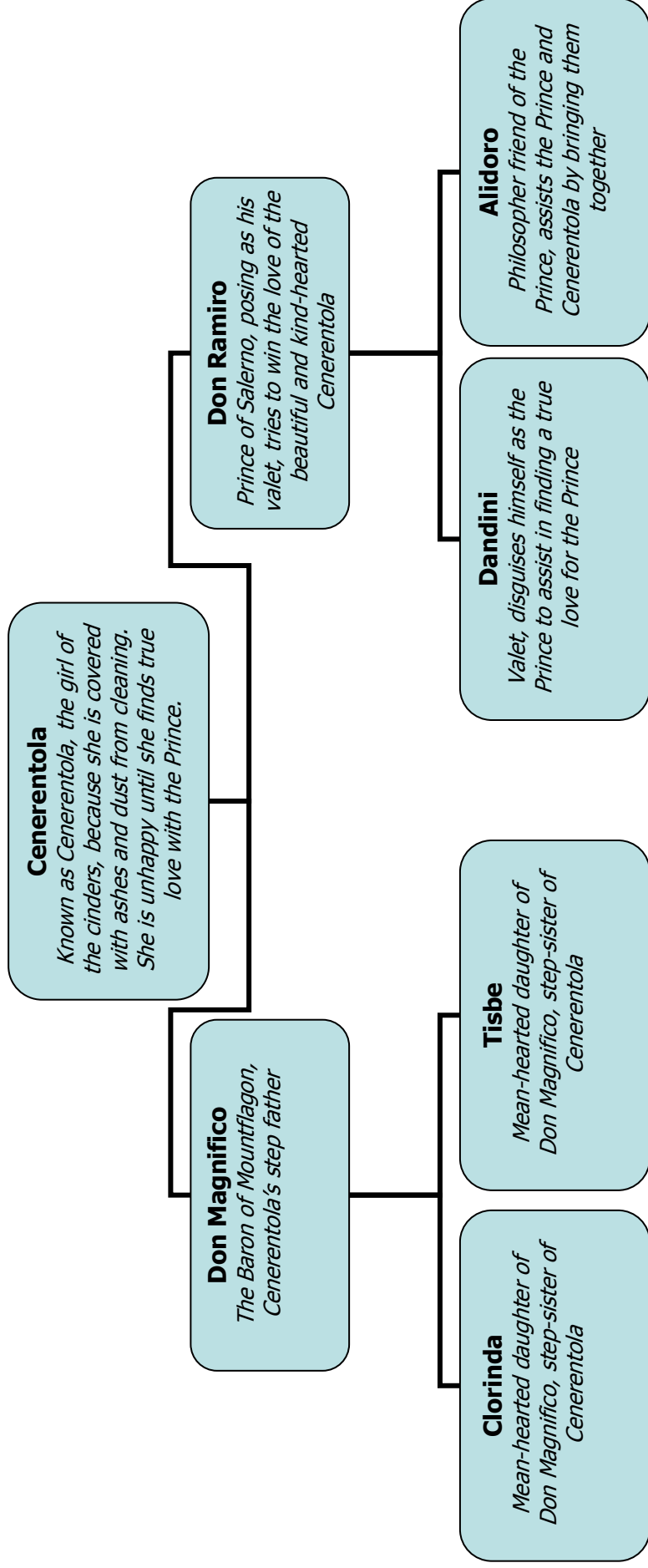
Don Magnifico enters and asks Dandini whether it would be possible to speed up the wedding. Dandini has a secret; but first he asks, if he were to marry one of Don Magnifico's daughters, how should she be treated? Don Magnifico tells him she should have thirty servants always at hand, sixteen horses, a dozen dukes, a coach with six footmen and fancy dinners always ready. Upon hearing this, Dandini decides to confess that he is only a valet and marriage with a daughter of Don Magnifico, a Baron, is unthinkable. Don Magnifico is beside himself with anger. He demands an explanation and leaves in a huff.

The next scene takes place in Don Magnifico's house. Cenerentola is sitting in front of the fire in her old tattered clothes. Clorinda and Tisbe scowl at Cenerentola, who resembles their rival, the unknown lady at the ball. They comment on the fact that she is still there, and therefore, couldn't possibly have been at the ball. A storm rages outside – brought about by a magic spell of the philosopher, Alidoro. The Prince and Dandini seek shelter from the storm in Don Magnifico's house while they wait for another coach to be prepared. Don Magnifico orders Cenerentola to bring their best chair for the Prince, who notices that the bracelet she wears is the companion of the one he holds. Don Magnifico, Clorinda, and Tisbe, unable to understand, rudely order Cenerentola away. The Prince grows angry and threatens them with his displeasure. Cenerentola, on behalf of Don Magnifico and her step-sisters, begs for the Prince's forgiveness. She also tells her step-sisters that she forgives them. She says she would like to be their sister as well as their friend.

*Used by permission of the Washington Opera.*

# La Cenerentola

## Character Map



## MEET THE COMPOSER...

### Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868)

Gioacchino Rossini was born on February 29, 1792, in Pesaro, Italy. His father, Giuseppe, was the town trumpeter as well as a horn player in the local brass band. His mother, Anna, was a baker's daughter. They were both members of a traveling theatrical company, Giuseppe playing in the orchestra and Anna singing on stage. As a child, little Gioacchino studied singing and horn playing at home. At the age of twelve, the family settled in Bologna, Italy where he could pursue his musical studies to the fullest. He soon began to earn money as a chorus master, an accompanist and a singer, particularly in churches. His work in music was so impressive that at the age of fourteen he was awarded a great honor – he was elected a Fellow of the *Accademia Filarmonica*. At age fifteen, he entered the conservatory where he pursued studies in composition, counterpoint, cello and piano. He was particularly interested in studying the music of Haydn and Mozart, and he imitated their orchestration and fluency. During his lifetime, Rossini was described as the "Italian Mozart", a compliment he must have thoroughly enjoyed because he considered Mozart his idol. Like Mozart's, Rossini's music has laughter, and he understood the human voice and its possibilities.

Rossini wrote his first opera in 1810, *La Cambiale di Matrimonio (The Marriage Contract)*, at the age of eighteen. By his twenty-second birthday, he had several successes to his credit. By 1829, he produced thirty-six operas. From then until his death on November 13, 1868, he composed only non-operatic music at sporadic intervals.

*La Cenerentola (Cinderella)*, Rossini's nineteenth opera, was composed in a remarkable twenty-four days before premiering in Rome on January 25, 1817. The original story of "Cinderella" had been written by Charles Perrault, a Frenchman who lived in the seventeenth century. Before Rossini set this well-known fairy tale, the story had attracted at least three other composers. Rossini and his librettist, Jacopo Ferretti, made some surprising changes in Perrault's story. They decided to base their libretto on Charles-Guillaume Etienne's libretto for the opera *Cendrillon (Cinderella)* by Nicolas Isouard. This opera based on the Cinderella story was first performed in Paris in 1810. Being a very practical man and unattracted to the supernatural, Rossini decided to remove all magic from the tale. He concentrated instead on the opposing qualities and characters of the leading figures in the story. Thus, there is no fairy godmother, no pumpkin coach, no horses and footmen made of mice, no midnight chiming bell, and above all, no glass slipper. Instead, it is the Prince's friend and tutor, Alidoro, who manipulates the plot so that Cinderella wins the Prince, and the glass slipper becomes a down to earth bracelet (one of a pair). Rossini retains the two ugly and self-centered step-sisters, but the wicked step-mother becomes a step-father, whose character is more sympathetic but also somewhat bumbling.

Originally, Rossini planned to call his opera by the original name given to its heroine, "Angelina", with the subtitle "The Triumph of Goodness", as if to emphasize the human rather than the magical quality of the work. While he decided to call the opera *La Cenerentola*, goodness still triumphed. The work ends with one of the most beautiful and difficult arias ever written, in which Cinderella forgives her sisters for past wrongs, telling them she will not only be a sister to them but a friend to them as well.

There are wonderful human insights in Rossini's operas. His ability to transform characters into people with whom the audience can relate is what he did quite well through his music. That is why the composer and his music, particularly his operas, are still celebrated today, more than two hundred years after his birth.

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## The Age of Romanticism

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Europe fell under the spell of a new tendency that sought to liberate and express a more overt emotionalism. Romanticism is a complex artistic, literary and intellectual movement that was partly a revolt against aristocratic social and political norms of the Age of Enlightenment and also a reaction against the scientific rationalization of nature. Romanticism was embodied most strongly in the visual arts, music, and literature.

**In literature:** In France, Romanticism was launched through the works of its poets such as Alfred de Lamartine, Alfred de Vigny, Alfred de Musset, and Victor Hugo as well as the authors Chateaubriand and George Sand. In Great Britain such legendary figures as Lord Byron, P.B. Shelley and Walter Scott were at the head of the Romantic Movement.

**In painting:** The French Romantic school was associated with such names as Gericault, Gros, and Delacroix.

**In music:** Musical romanticism emerged out of literary Romanticism. Chopin, Berlioz, Liszt, Wagner, Bellini, Donizetti and Verdi were to become the innovators and figure-heads of this movement.

If Romanticism was primarily literary and pictorial in France, it was strongly musical in Germany with such musicians as Schubert, Weber, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Liszt and Wagner.

**And Rossini in all this?** At this time, Italian opera was triumphant in Europe through its virtuosity and melodic beauty. Composers could delve into a rich tradition for their needs; dramatic emphasis, a somewhat reduced by infinitely varied orchestration. The Rossini style of singing requires a virtuosity, interior impulse and a continual variety and energy as well as an ability to sing long legato lines. There are three major factors in singing Rossini's music: intensity, range of color and rhythmical sense.

**Rossini's contemporaries:** There was above all Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848) who wrote 71 operas including *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Don Pasquale*, and *L'Élixir d'Amore*. He also composed cantatas, symphonies and piano pieces. Vincenzo Bellini (1801-1835) composed *Il Pirata*, *I Puritani*, *La Sonnambula*, and *Norma*. Renowned for an almost aristocratic reserve, he was a melodic genius, excelling in a tender and melancholy style.

**The fashion in France:** During the reign of Napoleon the differences between bourgeois fashion and the ornate and traditional court costumes became more striking according to the wishes of the Emperor. The Napoleonic wars made the economic situation of almost all European nations precarious. Their populations,

for purely economic reasons, could not hope to aspire to the luxurious garments worn at court of France. For many European courts, the Versailles fashions were the trend setters.

During the Romantic era (1820-1840), the predominance of black garments became a fashion statement. Around 1820, the cut of the clothes returned the waist to its normal place. But decidedly females wanted to have sculptured waists and so corsets became popular. Elegant ladies wore cashmere shawls or popular long waistcoats. Women's shoes had low heels and the supple bonnets were replaced by a more rigid and larger hat. Almost everyone wore a hairpiece attached to the head, often by a horned comb.

In the second half of the century, the Parisian court launched a fashion renowned for its splendor which resembled, vaguely, the Rococo. Crinoline, which requires a great deal of cloth, became popular. During the reign of Napoleon III, expensive cloths became quite fashionable. Silks, satins and fine woolens were worn throughout the day.

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## MEET THE CONDUCTOR...

### **Gregory Vajda**

Atlanta Opera Debut: *Roméo et Juliette*, 2006-2007

Gregory Vajda has fast become one of the most sought-after conductors on the international scene. After completing his tenure as assistant conductor of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra in 2005, Mr. Vajda took over as resident conductor of the Oregon Symphony Orchestra at the start of the 2005-06 season. He earlier served as founder and artistic advisor of the Valley of the Arts Summer Festival in Hungary, permanent guest conductor of the Hungarian State Opera (1998-2003), and principal conductor of the Ernő Dohnányi Symphony Orchestra in Budapest. This past summer he made his Salzburg Festival debut conducting the Vienna Philharmonic in Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle*.

In past seasons, Mr. Vajda appeared with St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Milwaukee Chamber Orchestra, the Calgary Philharmonic, the National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Montreal Symphony, and Ensemble... He has also led the Klangforum Vienna in performances of Péter Eötvös' *As I Crossed a Bridge of Dreams* and *Three Sisters* (as part of the Vienna Festwochen), given the premiere of his chamber opera *The Giantbaby* at the New Theatre in Budapest, and the premiere of Hungarian composer György Ránki's opera *King Pomade's New Clothes* at the Hungarian State Opera. He has also conducted at the festivals of Avignon and Strasbourg, and at the Mostly Mozart Festival in Lincoln Center. Recently, Mr. Vajda conducted his own composition for the silent film *The Crowd* at the Auditorium of the Louvre. He has also recorded his own orchestral piece entitled *Duevoe* with the Hungarian Radio Symphony Orchestra. Born in 1973 in Budapest, Hungary, the son of renowned soprano Veronika Kincses, Gregory Vajda studied clarinet and composition at the Béla Bartók secondary school. He then studied conducting at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music under Professor Ervin Lukács. He was also a conducting pupil of the well-known twentieth-century composer and conductor, Péter Eötvös.

## MEET THE DIRECTOR...

### David Gately

#### *Atlanta Opera Debut*

David Gately is known for telling a story with his opera direction, and has had quite an extensive directing career throughout North America. Recently he has directed productions of *l'Elisir d'amore* with The Dallas Opera, *Madama Butterfly* with Seattle Opera, *La Boheme* with Florida Grand Opera, *Carmen* in New Orleans, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* in Edmonton, *Die Zauberflöte* with the Cincinnati and Vancouver Operas, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Florentine Opera and Glimmerglass Opera, *Falstaff* with Opera Omaha and *Rigoletto* with Utah Opera.

Mr. Gately's hugely successful "wild west" production of *Don Pasquale* has been mounted by San Diego Opera, Kentucky Opera, Calgary Opera, Chautauqua Opera, Virginia Opera, Dayton Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Opera Omaha, Edmonton Opera and with Fort Worth Opera. Gately's productions of *The Mikado* and *The Pirates of Penzance* as well as his *Barbieri* and *l'Italiana* have appeared throughout the US and Canada. Mr. Gately has extensive experience directing operas of many different composers, in widely varying styles, and from many different eras.

In the 2006-2007 season Mr. Gately had a very busy season directing a new production of *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Vancouver Opera and Utah Opera, the opening Gala at Florida Grand Opera's new opera house, *Madama Butterfly* with Austin Lyric Opera, *Tosca* with Opera Omaha, *Carmen* with Calgary Opera, *Falstaff* with Ft. Worth Opera and *Il Barbieri di Siviglia* for Opera Lyra in Ottawa. Other recent productions include *Don Pasquale* for Opera Colorado, *Angels in America* and *Lucia di Lammermoor* for Ft. Worth Opera, *Così fan tutte* with Florida Grand Opera, *Carmen* with Austin Lyric Opera and *La Cenerentola* for Connecticut Opera. He will also direct Mark Adamos' *Lysistrata* for the Seagle Music Colony.

In the 2005-2006 season Mr. Gately directed *Carmen* with Florida Grand Opera, *La Traviata* and *La Boheme* with Ft. Worth Opera, *Das Rheingold* with the Academy of Vocal Arts, *Little Women* with Kentucky Opera, *Sweeney Todd* and *Rigoletto* at the Brevard Festival, and *The Tsar Has His Photograph Taken* at the Fringe Festival in Boston.

Mr. Gately's previous directing credits include *Hansel und Gretel* with Utah Opera, *Don Pasquale* with L'Opera de Montreal and Arizona Opera, *I'Italiana in Algeri*, *Little Women* and *Salome* with Fort Worth Opera, *Les Contes d'Hoffman* with Tulsa Opera, *Cosi fan Tutte* with Kentucky Opera, *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Orpheus in the Underworld* at the Brevard Music Colony, *Der Rosenkavalier* with Vancouver Opera, *The Turn of the Screw* with the New England Conservatory. He has also directed *La Boheme* with Florida Grand Opera, *The Mikado* with Edmonton Opera, *Don Pasquale* with Fort Worth Opera, *La Boheme* with Vancouver Opera, *I'Italiana in Algeri* with Central City Opera, *Kiss Me Kate*, and *Madama Butterfly* with the Brevard Music Festival, *Le Nozze di Figaro* with the Academy of Vocal Arts and *The Seven Deadly Sins* with Boston University.

## **A HISTORY OF OPERA IN ATLANTA**

Opera has been beloved in Atlanta since 1866! Though there hasn't always been a local opera company, audience members throughout Atlanta have been enjoying opera for over 137 years.

It began when the Ghioni and Sussini Grand Italian Opera Company presented three operas in Atlanta in October 1866. They were well received and soon after, small touring companies began to bring full-length operas to Atlanta. When there wasn't a touring opera company in town, people would throw parties where they could entertain, often with musical presentations. Even without the presence of an opera in town, audience appreciation for opera was growing!

In 1910, New York's Metropolitan Opera first brought its opera tour to Atlanta. By this time, Atlantans were in love with opera. Once a year, for a full week during spring, people flocked to the city to see the Metropolitan Opera's wonderful performances and enjoy the many parties that were hosted throughout the city in celebration of the operas' arrival. It was a magnificent time! The opera was *the* place to see and to be seen, with people crowding the lobbies and balconies. This continued for nearly seven decades, with the exception of 1931-1939, when the Metropolitan was unable to tour due to the Depression.

Soon, citizens of Atlanta began to yearn for their own opera company, to represent and support local talent, as well as to provide performances throughout the year, instead of only once in the spring. Several smaller, local opera companies began to crop up. With the arrival of local opera companies, and with troubles of its own, the Metropolitan Opera discontinued its nationwide tour, giving its last Atlanta performance in 1986.

In 1980, The Atlanta Civic Opera was born as a result of two smaller companies merging together, the Atlanta Lyric Opera and the Georgia Opera. Since then, the company has changed and grown tremendously!

The Atlanta Opera was the first resident company in the new Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre upon completion of the facility in fall 2007. Patrons and performers alike are extremely happy with the new theater, acoustically designed for opera.

Besides our mainstage performances, The Atlanta Opera has many services to offer. There are balls and galas to attend, dinners, concerts, opera classes and talks. The Atlanta Opera Studio, founded in 1980, brings children's opera (complete with sets and costumes) opera workshops and master classes to schools throughout the state in an effort to teach students about opera.

The Atlanta Opera strives to present quality opera productions, while educating and fostering a sense of appreciation for the opera within the community. So long as there are those in Atlanta who love music and the art of opera, we can continue to perform and to grow!

## SPECIAL THANKS

The Atlanta Opera would like to thank the following for their generous support of our education and outreach programs.

Wachovia Foundation  
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The Sara Giles Moore Foundation  
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Zeist Foundation  
The Atlanta Foundation  
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The Shirley Family Foundation  
Camp-Younts Foundation  
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Frances Wood Wilson Foundation  
Bright Wings Foundation  
WGBH Educational Foundation



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### **Contributors**

Portions of this education guide have been contributed by the following opera companies:

Montréal Opera Guild  
Washington Opera  
Opera Columbus

The following Georgia Performance Standards may be aligned with The Atlanta Opera's *Cinderella* Student Shorts and accompanying educational materials.

### **Georgia Performance Standards: Grades 4-8**

#### *English and Language Arts*

##### ELA R1

The student demonstrates comprehension and shows evidence of a warranted and responsible explanation of a variety of literary and informational texts.

ELA R3 The student understands and acquires new vocabulary and uses it correctly in reading and writing.

ELA W1 The student produces writing that establishes an appropriate organizational structure, sets a context and engages the reader, maintains a coherent focus throughout, and signals a satisfying closure.

ELA W2 The student demonstrates competence in a variety of genres.

ELA C1 The student demonstrates understanding and control of the rules of the English language, realizing that usage involves the appropriate application of conventions and grammar in both written and spoken formats.

ELA LSV1 The student participates in student-to-teacher, student-to-student, and group verbal interactions.

ELA RC2 The student participates in discussions related to curricular learning in all subject areas.

ELA RC3 The student acquires new vocabulary in each content area and uses it correctly.

### **Georgia Performance Standards: Grades 9-12**

#### *English and Language Arts*

##### ELA RL1

The student demonstrates comprehension by identifying evidence (i.e., examples of diction, imagery, point of view, figurative language, symbolism, plot events and main ideas) in a variety of texts representative of different genres (i.e., poetry, prose [short story, novel, essay, editorial, biography], and drama) and using this evidence as the basis for interpretation.

ELARL2

The student identifies, analyzes, and applies knowledge of theme in literary works and provides evidence from the works to support understanding.

ELA RL3

The student deepens understanding of literary works by relating them to contemporary context or historical background, as well as to works from other time periods.

ELA RL4

The student employs a variety of writing genres to demonstrate a comprehensive grasp of significant ideas in selected literary works. The student composes essays, narratives, poems, or technical documents.

ELA W1

The student produces writing that establishes an appropriate organizational structure, sets a context and engages the reader, maintains a coherent focus throughout, and signals closure.

ELA W2

The student demonstrates competence in a variety of genres.

ELA LSV1

The student participates in student-to-teacher, student-to-student, and group verbal interactions.

*World Geography*

SSWG2

The student will explain the cultural aspects of geography.

# OPERA: THEN AND NOW

## INTRODUCTION

Opera combines all of the fine arts: music, drama, visual art, and dance. The performance of an opera includes many craftspeople: costume designers, seamstresses, stagehands, makeup artists and wigmakers; the musicians in the orchestra, the singers in the chorus, and the dancers on stage; the artistic director, stage director and choreographer; the engineers running the computers and lighting. How have major inventions over the centuries affected the opera performances we see? Let's find out!

## FOREIGN LANGUAGES

If so many operas are in **foreign languages** how can we understand the story, the humor, or the dramatic situations in which the characters find themselves? Throughout history, on-stage conventions have helped audiences understand the stories of their favorite operas. Period **costumes**, magnificent **stage sets** and elaborate **dances** describe the time and place in which the opera is set. The **stage direction** and **choreography** communicate elements of the story. The **music** conveys emotions and the subtexts of the story. Many opera companies, however, offer their audiences a little more help, with the aid of modern technology. Using large screens above or beside the stage, English translations are projected. These **Supertitles** do not include every word that is sung, but enough to understand the story. As the technology advances, opera companies have begun to move from using slide projectors to computers to project the Supertitles onto the screens.

## THE SINGERS

Over the years, the **singers** have changed, too! In early Italian operas, singers did very little acting on stage, focusing on showcasing their voices. Operas often resembled concerts, more than plays. By Mozart's time in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, however, singers were encouraged to play out the action in the story, adding the dramatic element that we see on stage today. At that time, the singers sometimes did not always "look the part" they were singing. The singers sometimes did not look like princesses or lovely young maidens, and the prince may not have looked young and handsome. The **bel canto** style of singing, which literally means "beautiful singing," was favored in Italian opera, especially in the operas of Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti. This style focuses on the voice as the most important expressive element in the opera. It is more important than the words and even the orchestra. In later operas by Wagner and Berlioz, the orchestra became a partner with the singers, rather than an accompanist. This meant that the singers had to produce even more power to be heard over a large, rich symphonic orchestra.

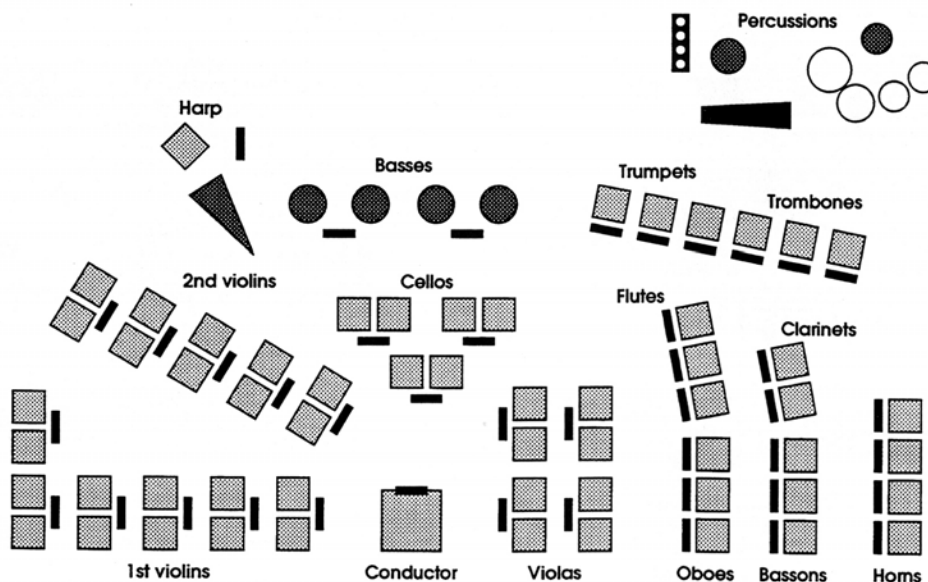
## THE ORCHESTRA

And what about the **orchestra** in the pit? The orchestra provides a framework for the opera by playing recurring themes and providing dramatic clues to the drama while accompanying the singing. But the orchestra wasn't always as we see it today. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, some operas were intended for entertainment at private parties, primarily at weddings (Monteverdi's *Orfeo* begins with a wedding scene). The principal accompanying instruments were a **continuo** (a small organ) or **harpsichord** and a few **viols** (stringed instruments). In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Mozart began to write his operas for an orchestra of 20 musicians and harpsichord and he was

the first composer to add clarinet to his opera orchestra. The small-scale accompaniment, however, was still often used during a **recitative**, a musical selection in which the singing imitates the sound of spoken words and helps to move along the story line. (**Arias**, on the other hand, are more melodic and are often written to express strong emotion, rather than to tell parts of the story.) By Wagner's 19<sup>th</sup> century, the opera orchestra had increased in size, mostly due to large symphonies composed by Beethoven (b. 1827). Wagner referred to opera as "**music drama**" and is one of the few composers who wrote the **libretto** (the book or story of the opera) as well as all the stage directions and music! Many composers work with colleagues to complete one or more of these elements. [FYI: Beethoven only wrote one opera, *Fidelio*. Just as he persistently made changes and corrections in his other works, Beethoven composed four different overtures for this one opera.]

The orchestras that you see at opera houses today consist of between 45 and 120 musicians, depending on the requirements of the composer. It is made up of several sections: strings, woodwinds, brass and percussion. It is situated in the orchestra pit, the area which is in front of the stage. The orchestra is seated lower than the stage so that the sound of the singers' voice may travel over it. The orchestra pit in the John A. Williams Theatre at the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre has a retractable cover. The cover is removed for Atlanta Opera productions to accommodate the orchestra. For some other performances at the theatre, the pit may be closed to allow for extra seating in the theatre.

## The orchestra



*Diagram used by permission of the Montréal Opera Guild*

### THE STAGE

**Power** to the stage! Even before electricity was available, Monteverdi used torches to light his early opera, *Orfeo*, in 1607 and all of Mozart's operas (1769 – 1791) were staged with candle-powered and reflected oil lamps around the front of the stage. While Wagner's Festival Theatre at Bayreuth (1870's) had one of the first electric generators in all of Europe, **electricity**

continues to enhance fantastic opera performances in many ways in opera houses around the world. At the Metropolitan Opera at Lincoln Center in New York, for example, four stages move **hydraulically**: one stage lifts and moves to the side as another replaces it with the scenery for the next act. This changes work the stage crews need to do and allows for more elaborate and grandiose sets and smoother scene changes. Engines controlled by computers make this possible as well as controlling lighting and special effects on stage.

## THE OPERAS

Where do the stories for operas come from? Are all operas based on fairytales and myths? Are they all love stories like *Madama Butterfly*? Throughout the history of opera, their stories have come from many sources, including myths and history, are funny and tragic, take place hundreds of years ago or in modern times, and address topics including love, death, and fantasy.

**Myths** have been the inspiration to many composers for highly imaginative operas. Monteverdi's *Orfeo* was based on the Greek myth that was a familiar story during the Renaissance. Ideas of the ancient world, primarily from the Greeks, were popular themes in architecture, painting and drama at that time. Even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Wagner was fascinated with many of the same tales, though they had since evolved into Nordic folktales. "The Lord of the Rings" stories are very much like many of Wagner's "music dramas," including greedy dwarves and the precious golden ring that makes one invincible.

**Traditional stories** of medieval kings and queens, magicians, and great knights are favorite topics for opera. Classic **literature** has also provided the basis for many operas. Popular themes from literature include various Shakespeare plays and the adventures of Don Quixote. Some operas, especially in more recent times, have been inspired by **actual events**. *Andrea Chenier* (1896) by Umberto Giordano was based on the life of the poet Andrea Chenier, a supporter and then victim of the French Revolution and *Nixon in China* by John Adams reflected actual events in the 1970's. There is even an opera written in the 1960's based on the life of Lizzie Borden!

**Grand opera** is a term that is often heard in opera circles. Grand opera means grand everything: big stage sets, big voices, big orchestra! Grand opera was popular in Europe in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Grand operas include huge crowd scenes and feature a wide range of emotions and events, including heroic feats, great passion and intense suffering within a religious or romantic story. One of the best-known grand operas is Verdi's *Aida*.

Composers from different countries and periods of history use different **styles** of writing. In his writing, Puccini matches specific instruments and combinations of instruments to dramatic moments, allowing the orchestra to create the atmosphere for the scene. Music scholars agree that Puccini's style of writing emphasizes melody, and he uses **leitmotif** to connect characters (or combinations of characters). A leitmotif is a recurring musical theme, associated with a particular person, place, or idea. Wagner also used this tool in his operatic works. Another distinctive quality in Puccini's works is the use of the voice in the style of speech: characters sing short phrases one after another as if they were talking to each other.

\*\* Next, you will find a worksheet entitled "What Have You Learned?" for your students to complete. You may want to assist them by listing the bold words from this lesson on the board.

**WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?**

Name the four fine arts.

\_\_\_\_\_

In what language is *Cinderella* written and performed? \_\_\_\_\_

What do the singers do that helps the audience understand what is happening in the opera?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What are Supertitles? \_\_\_\_\_

Name two ways in which stages were lit in the early days of opera. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What is a recitative? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What is bel canto? When was it popular? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What is leitmotif? \_\_\_\_\_

What are two themes/story ideas that are often seen in opera? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you think that *Cinderella* is an example of grand opera? Why or why not?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# CINDERELLA AROUND THE WORLD

Subject: Language Arts; Social Studies

Grade Level: 4-8, with optional theater component for grades 7-12

Utilizing different versions of the Cinderella tale, students will examine different literary components and cultural characteristics based on reading and discussion.

## **Resources:**

Jacobs, Joseph, ed., *Tattercoats*, 1989

Steel, Flora Annie, *Tattercoats*, an old English Tale, 1976

William-Ellis, Amabel. *Tales from the Enchanted World*. Illustrated by Moira Kemp. 1986. (page 8-16)

*Cinderella (The Oryx Multicultural Folktales Series)*, by Judy Sierra. Oryx Press, 1992. (24 Cinderella stories from a wide range of cultures)

*Cinderella: Three Hundred and Forty-Five Variants of Cinderella, Catskin, and Cap o'Rushes*, by Marian Roalfe Cox, with an introduction by Andrew Lang (1893). Kraus Reprint, 1967

*Eight Cinderellas*, by Nancy Polette (Book Lures)

*The Multicultural Cinderella*, by J.D. Rusting. Rusting Educational Services (4523 Elinora Ave., Oakland, CA, 94619), 1994 with updates.

**Focus and Review:** Review the familiar story of Cinderella (Charles Perrault) with the students.

**Statement of Objectives:** Explain to the students that there are many variations of the classic Cinderella story from all over the world told over hundreds of years. The stories vary based on cultural differences, yet there are themes that remain the same throughout.

-Students will compare and contrast different versions of the Cinderella story using a story chart.

-Students will present their findings using the Cinderella Worksheet.

**Teacher Input (present tasks, information, and guidance):** Introduce the Cinderella Story Chart to the class and define each component on the chart. Divide the students into small groups, providing each group with a different version of Cinderella to study. Explain to the students that each group will be responsible for identifying the Story Chart components for their version.

**Guided Practice (assessment and feedback):** As a class, enter information on the Cinderella Story Chart (column 1) based on the review of the classic Perrault version. Assess the student's understanding of each chart component, comprehension of the story, and ability to transfer information.

**Independent Practice (retain and transfer):** Have the students read their Cinderella stories as a group and complete the Story Chart exercise. Once completed, have each group report to their findings to the rest of the class.

**Closure:** As a class, discuss the differences seen between stories. Discuss the commonalities. Ask the students to identify other stories that may have similar themes or characteristics.

### **Optional Theater Component for Grades 7-12**

- Students will use the Plot Pyramid to create and develop a scene.
- Students will create a script based on a Cinderella tale that includes characters, actions and setting.
- Students will present their scripted scenes employing the basics of acting (posture, voice, movement and language).

Have each group complete a Plot Pyramid for their version of Cinderella. Have each group choose one scene, based on their completed Plot Pyramid, and write a 3-5 minute script (one page equals about one minute). Have the groups present their scenes to the class. Each group should assign a recorder who charts the similarities and differences using the Cinderella Story Chart.

*Used by permission of Opera Columbus*

**CINDERELLA STORY CHART**

<b>STORY</b>					
<b>COUNTRY</b>					
<b>SETTING</b>					
<b>CHARACTERS</b>					
<b>MAGICAL ELEMENTS</b>					

# PLOT PYRAMID

**CLIMAX-**

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**RISING ACTION**

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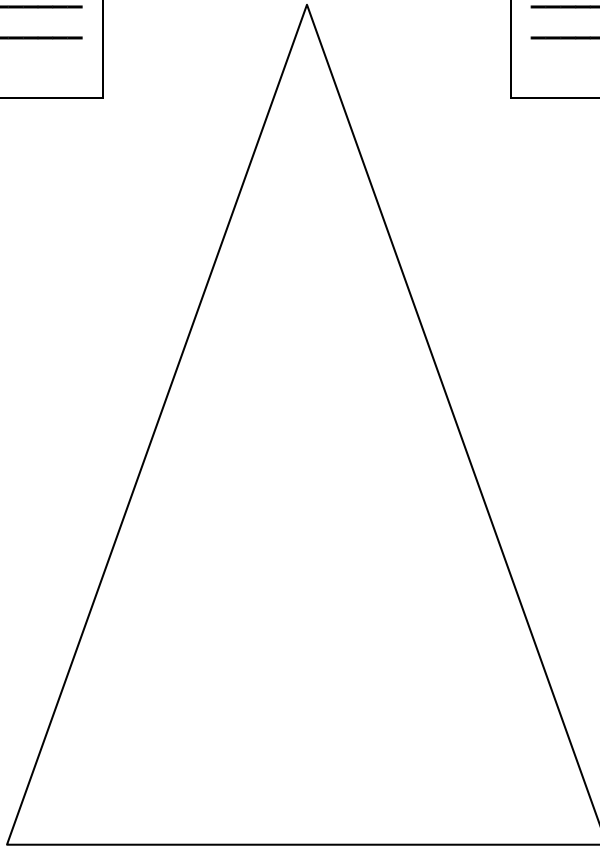
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**FALLING ACTION**

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**EXPOSITION**

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**DENOUEMENT/CONCLUSION**

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# CHARACTER ANALYSIS

## IT'S ALL IN HOW YOU SAY IT!

Objective: Students will learn about different characteristics through experimenting with vocal interpretations. Students will then analyze character traits of Cenerentola, Don Magnifico, Alidoro, and the Step-Sisters from the opera *Cinderella*.

Materials: List of Characteristics, *Cinderella* Student Short synopsis.

### I. CHARACTERIZING THROUGH VOCALIZATION

When trying to characterize people in books or plays, we not only look at what they say, but we listen to how they say it. Sometimes, the inflection in the voice can change the meaning of a simple sentence. In opera or musical theater, the inflection can be dictated through the musical line: for example, an "ah" sung in a very high register and very loud could be an exclamation of fear or surprise, while the same "ah" sung in a low register and quietly could be a sigh or contentment or sadness.

- A. Have your students take a simple phrase like "Well, that's the way it is" or "I don't know about that" or a sentence of your choosing, and say it with different inflections to change the meaning. Students may refer to the character list to give them ideas about how to deliver the line. Remember that more than one characteristic can fit an inflection. Go around the room and have each student deliver a line choosing a characteristic and then discuss the different ways to say it.
- B. Write a brief, 4-8 line dialogue between two characters. (Use simple, emotion-neutral statements such as "Hello. How are you? Some weather we're having.") Have pairs of students interpret and deliver this same dialogue. Discuss how each group interpreted and delivered the scene differently. What did the different interpretations tell us about the relationship between the characters, their moods, their characters, etc.
- C. On the blackboard, list the different emotions the students demonstrated and discuss how these emotions could help them make judgments about different individual's character.

### II. CHARACTER ANALYSIS

When going to see an opera that is in another language, it is important for the students to know the story before they get to the theater so they can understand what's going on onstage. Knowing the characters and how they react to one another is an important aspect of understanding a story.

- A. Have students read the synopsis of *Cinderella*. Discuss the students' impressions of the characters and storyline. Ask the students to predict how Rossini may portray the character traits and storyline through music. What character traits might he accentuate? How might those traits be illustrated by the performers?

- B. Divide the students in to four groups and assign each group the following questions to discuss.
- a. Why is Cenerentola unhappy? How do we know she is unhappy?
  - b. How do you think Don Magnifico feels towards Cenerentola? Clorinda? Tisbe?
  - c. How do you think Clorinda and Tisbe feel when they realize that Cenerentola was the unknown lady at the ball?
  - d. What do you like about Alidoro's character? What do you dislike? What about Don Ramiro's character do you like and dislike?
- C. Follow Up: After attending the opera, have the students revisit their character analyses. Did The Atlanta Opera portray the characters as they had expected? Did the Opera's production shed new or different light on the individuals?

## A List of Character Traits

absent-minded  
adventurous  
ambitious  
awkward  
boastful  
bold  
bossy  
bright  
brave  
calm  
careless  
care-free  
cautious  
changeable  
charming  
clever  
conceited  
confused  
contented  
cooperative  
courageous  
cowardly  
coy  
cruel  
hard-working  
curious  
dainty  
daring  
dark  
demanding  
dependable  
determined  
dreamy  
dull  
expert  
fat  
fearful  
fierce  
follower  
forgetful  
forgiving  
friendly  
funny  
fussy  
generous

gentle  
gloomy  
greedy  
helpful  
honest  
humble  
humorous  
intelligent  
jolly  
keen  
kind  
lazy  
leader  
light-hearted  
loud  
loyal  
mischievous  
nagging  
neat  
obedient  
organized  
outspoken  
patient  
playful  
pleasant  
polite  
poor  
quarrelsome  
quick-tempered  
quiet  
reasonable  
reckless  
relaxed  
respectful  
restless  
rich  
rude  
sad  
self-centered  
selfish  
sensitive  
sentimental  
serious

sharp-witted  
shiftless  
short  
shrewd  
shy  
sneaky  
soft-hearted  
spunky  
stern  
stingy  
stubborn  
superstitious  
suspicious  
talkative  
tall  
thin  
thoughtful  
timid  
tough  
trusting  
understanding  
unfriendly  
unkind  
wise  
withdrawn  
witty  
zany

