



THE ATLANTA OPERA'S

# DON PASQUALE



FIELD TRIP EDUCATOR GUIDE

# Dear Educators,

Welcome to ArtsBridge's 2016-17 Field Trip Season! We are thrilled to present The Atlanta Opera's production of *Don Pasquale*.

The Atlanta Opera Student Short is a fully-staged, abbreviated version of our mainstage production and will feature mainstage artists and the full Atlanta Opera orchestra and chorus. Highlights from the three-act opera have been carefully selected and threaded together to create this special performance, providing students with a thorough narrative of the opera.

This will be the first opera experience for many of your students and will be most fully enjoyed with a bit of preparation before they arrive at the theater. This guide has been developed to acquaint both you and your students with the opera *Don Pasquale*, as well as to familiarize students with the world of opera (vocabulary, history, etc.) Our goal is to provide you with an innovative, multidisciplinary approach to teaching required skills and curriculum, including Georgia Performance standards and national arts standards. Where applicable, you will find the corresponding standard(s) at the end of each activity or lesson.

Thank you again for sharing this experience with your students. We value your feedback and we use it when planning future community engagement programs. We welcome comments from you, your students, and/or administration following the performance. It is our sincere hope that you enjoy the performance, and look forward to seeing you and your students at the opera!

We look forward to inspiring and educating your students through the arts on March 30th at the world-class Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre!

**See you at the theatre,**

**The Atlanta Opera and The ArtsBridge Team**

*This study guide was written by Natalie Barrow, Cara Myler, Wade Thomas and designed by Gibbs Creative.*

## GUIDE CONTENTS

About The Cobb Energy  
Performing Arts Centre. . . . . 3

Field Trip Guidelines. . . . . 4

Transportation Information . . . 5-6

Theater Etiquette. . . . . 7

Pre-Show Activities . . . . . 8

What to Expect at the Opera . . . 9

Theatrical Vocabulary . . . . . 10

About the Performance . . . . . 11

About the Composer. . . . . 12

Bel Canto Singing . . . . . 13

Black & White vs. Color . . . . . 14

Opera History. . . . . 15-16

Commedia Dell'Arte . . . . . 17

Voice Breakdown . . . . . 18- 20

Performance Standards. . . . . 21

Post Show Activities . . . . . 22-23

Resources and Sources . . . . . 24

# ABOUT COBB ENERGY PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE



The landmark Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre is a cultural, entertainment and special events venue of a national significance. Atlanta's first major performing arts facility in four decades, Cobb Energy Centre boasts state-of-the-art systems, amenities and design features that allow the expression of any artistic idea and captivate performers, patrons and event planners. The Centre's strong suit is versatility. It can accommodate events as diverse as Broadway, concerts, corporate functions, private parties and family entertainment.

The Centre's distinctive façade and three-story lobby – highlighted by a 65-foot, floor-to-ceiling glass curtain wall – offer visitors a grand welcome and stunning introduction to a venue of great warmth, elegance and possibilities. Nothing speaks "special occasion" like the majestic lobby – a gathering space and promenade with two grand staircases, specially designed, colored-glass chandeliers and walls of Venetian plaster.

The Centre's 2,750-seat John A. Williams Theatre captures the richness and intimacy of vintage theatres. Yet it incorporates modern touches and technology – including advanced sound, lighting and acoustical elements – that allow fine-tuning for each performance. With equal poise, the Theatre can host concerts, opera, drama, comedy, lectures, dance and spoken word.

For special occasions and events – from wedding receptions and themed parties to corporate banquets and black-tie galas- the Centre's flexible spaces include a 9,500- square foot Courtyard, 3,100-square-foot Terrace and 10,000-square-foot Ballroom – divisible into three independent spaces, each with autonomous sound and lighting controls. The Ballroom's pre-function area is ideally suited for pre-and post-event gatherings.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- More than 250,000 patrons visit the Cobb Energy Centre each year.
- The Cobb Energy Centre opened in 2007.
- The Cobb Energy Centre has two main spaces:
  - John A. Williams Theatre, 2,750 seats
  - Kessel D. Stelling Ballroom, 10,000 square feet
- No seat is more than 160 feet from center stage in the John A. Williams Theatre.
- There are 1,000 parking spaces on site.
- The Centre is located one mile from the new Braves stadium and only 15 minutes from downtown Atlanta.
- ArtsBridge programs began in 2007 and reach 30,000 – 40,000 to 50,000 students each year.



# FIELD TRIP GUIDELINES

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*Below are simple guidelines for ArtsBridge Field Trips to Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre. Please read carefully and contact us at (770) 916-2805 if you have questions.*

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**Reservations:** All field trip admissions are to be made in advance. Please do not bring more than the number of seats reserved. Performances are expected to sell out and we will not be able to accommodate an increase in numbers at the last minute. All patrons, including teachers and chaperones, must have a reservation in order to attend these performances. Children under the age of three are not permitted to attend.

**Payment:** Payments must be made in full, 3 weeks prior to the day of show or we will not be able to accommodate your reservation. An invoice will be given to you at the time your reservation is made. Once you have paid in full, we will send a confirmation, which will serve as your school's ticket into the performance. ArtsBridge reserves the right to cancel unpaid reservations after the payment due date.

**Transportation:** The Centre can accommodate school buses, vans and cars. Please be aware that vans and cars will incur a \$6 per vehicle parking fee. A third party contractor runs the Centre's garage and charges this fee. There is no charge for parking school buses. All buses, vans and cars must comply with directions provided by on-site staff.

**Arrival:** All vehicles should approach the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre from AKERS MILL ROAD (map enclosed). Upon entering the driveway, buses will be directed to the circular drive where they will temporarily pull up to the curb for unloading. A Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre representative will board the bus and check-in your school. Students will be immediately unloaded and buses will be directed to their designated parking areas.

**Seating:** Students are seated as they arrive, starting with the floor level, first row. The exception to this is for programs with older and younger students in attendance at the same time. In this case, students in kindergarten and first-grade will be seated in the first few rows of the theatre. There are three levels of seating, with the back row of the top level no more than 160 feet from the stage.

**Restrooms:** Please seat your entire group, before taking restroom breaks so that you can be easily found. Students MUST be accompanied by adult chaperones when going to the restroom. We encourage that you take groups so there are fewer trips.

**Chaperones:** Chaperones have a job to perform while at the Centre. Please make sure that your chaperones are interspersed among students, and that they are prepared for the day's responsibilities. Please discuss restroom visits, emergencies, behavior, etc. with your chaperones prior to arrival.

**Behavior:** Students and teachers are encouraged to enjoy performances, applaud and express enthusiasm in a manner that is appropriate for the performance, yet not disruptive for others. We request that all phones, tablets and any other electronic devices be completely turned off or on silent mode during the performance. We ask that chaperones on upper levels watch for students tossing or throwing items to lower levels and prevent students from climbing or leaning on railings. No student can leave the audience chamber without an accompanying chaperone. Students/classes that are disruptive may be asked to leave the performance with no refund. (See *Theatre Etiquette* on Page 7)

**Departure:** Performances last approximately one hour. Upon conclusion of the performance, classes will be dismissed to the designated parking area to board their buses and return to school.

**Lunch:** There is no facility for students to eat lunch in the Cobb Energy Centre. We recommend students eat lunch at the Galleria Specialty Mall, Cumberland Mall, at a park on the route to/from the venue or on their bus.



# TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION

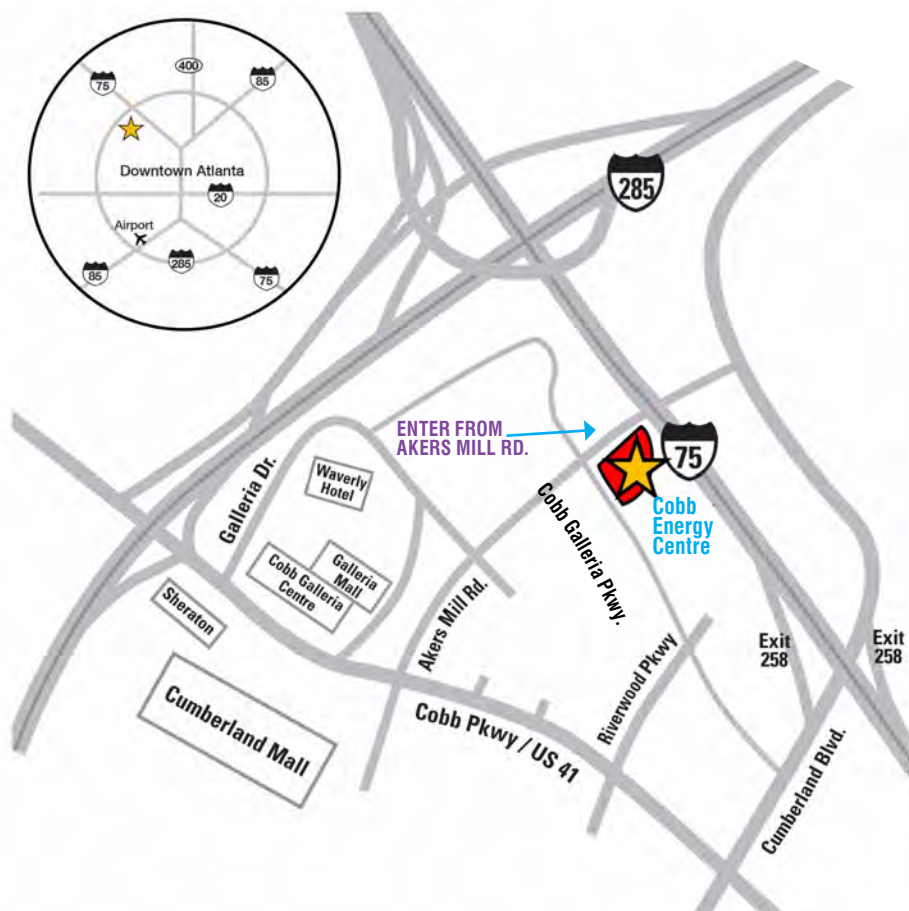
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**Buses:** All school buses must approach the building from AKERS MILL ROAD on the North side of the building. This will be crucial in assuring a fairly smooth flow of traffic. There will be Centre representatives guiding you. Buses will pull onto the site from behind the building and then drive to the front. PLEASE MAKE SURE YOUR DRIVERS USE THE MAP BELOW. There is no charge to park school buses on-site.

**Checking In:** When you arrive at the front of the building, a representative from the Centre will board your bus to check-in your school. You and your bus driver will be given a large number that will be taped to the bus windows. Please remember your number, as it will help you find your bus after the performance.

**After the Show:** After the performance, buses will be parked in the Centre's surface lot in numerical order and representatives will assist you in locating your bus(es). We encourage everyone to board their buses as quickly and safely as possible. For safety reasons, we hold all buses until everyone has boarded, so please make your way directly to the surface parking lot following the performance (see map below).

**Cars/Vans/SUVs:** You will approach the building in the same manner, but will park in our parking deck. Please note there is a \$6 per vehicle parking fee for cars/vans/SUVs. After you have parked, make your way to level 2 of the deck and to the west side (theatre side) of the building. When you emerge from the parking deck, there will be a Centre representative to check you in and direct you to your seats.



# ADDITIONAL MAP FOR ALL VEHICLES ATTENDING



2800 Cobb Galleria Pkwy, Atlanta, GA 30339

# THEATRE ETIQUETTE

*A live performance is a unique experience shared between performers and audience members. Unlike television or movies, audience distractions can disrupt the performers, production and audience. Before you arrive at the Cobb Energy Centre, please review the following information with your students and chaperones, and help ArtsBridge create a meaningful experience for all.*

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- Arrive early. Groups are seated on a first come, first served basis. Seats are not assigned for ArtsBridge events.
- Food, drink, candy, gum, etc. is not permitted in the theatre.
- Silence or turn off all electronic devices. We encourage you to share your ArtsBridge experience at the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre via social media, but please refrain from doing so or texting during performances; the glow from your device is distracting.
- Photography and video/audio recording of any kind is not allowed in the theatre during the performance.
- Respect the theatre. Remember to keep your feet off of the seats and avoid bouncing up and down.
- When the house lights dim, the performance is about to begin. Please stop talking at this time.
- Talk before and after the performance only. Remember, the theatre is designed to amplify sound, so the other audience members and the performers on stage can hear your voice!
- Use the restroom before the performance or wait until the end.
- Appropriate responses such as laughing and applauding are appreciated. Pay attention to the artists on stage – they will let you know what is appropriate.
- If you need assistance during the show, please find your nearest volunteer usher.
- As you enter and exit the theatre, remember to walk and stay with your group.
- Open your eyes, ears, mind and heart to the entire experience. Enjoy yourself!





# PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

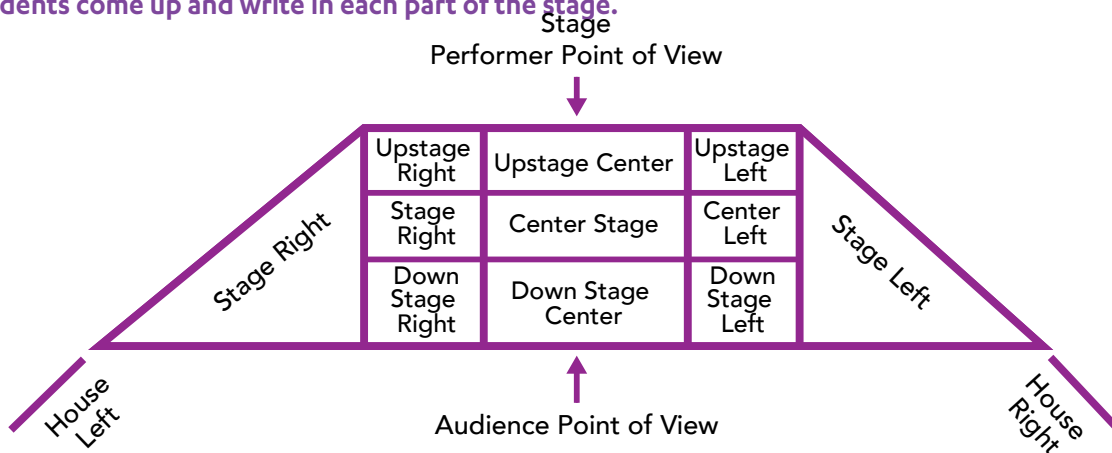
Before attending an ArtsBridge Field Trip, review the following questions and vocabulary with your students:

1. How many of you have experienced a live theatre performance? What did you see?
2. What are some of the differences between going to the theatre and watching television or going to a movie?
3. The BAD Audience Member! A fun way to review theatre etiquette with your students is to have them point out bad audience behavior during a show. Here's one way to illustrate this concept:



- a. Have students present something to the class. The key is they are “actors” and the class is the audience.
- b. Once they are into the activity, you (the teacher) leave the room and then re-enter. Enter loudly, chew gum, step on people’s feet, talk to them, etc. Be the worst audience member. Find a seat and continue to talk to others, ask what’s going on in the performance, take pictures, talk on your cell phone etc.
- c. Ask the class to list all the bad behavior. Write these on the board.
- d. Ask the audience members how they felt when the bad audience member came into the theatre. Could they hear the actors? Were they distracted?
- e. Ask the actors how they felt. Could they concentrate on their performance?

4. Review the stage diagram below with the students. Draw the diagram on the whiteboard and have students come up and write in each part of the stage.





# WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE OPERA

Many people have preconceived ideas about 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's not unusual to find love triangles, murders, fatal illnesses, and messages from beyond the grave.

## 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 *Don Pasquale*, are sung in languages other than English. This Atlanta Opera production will be sung in Italian. Since most people in our audience do not speak Italian, we project English translations called "supertitles" on the screen 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.



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!

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

Some people like to dress up when they go to an opera performance, but there is no dress code to attend an opera. You will see people wearing everything from jeans to ball gowns. Dressing up can be a part of the fun of attending an opera performance but you should wear whatever makes you comfortable. The opera is a place for everybody.



## MYTH #4: OPERA SINGERS JUST SCREECH AND HIT HIGH NOTES ALL THE TIME

Most of the music we listen to today is electronically reproduced and amplified by speakers. Opera is one of the only places you'll hear singers perform without a microphone. All the sounds you will hear at the opera are natural and coming straight from the singer's throats and the orchestra's instruments to your ears. Opera singers have trained for years to project their sound and make it larger than life. While you may not be accustomed to live, unamplified singing, it can be a wonderful experience if you think about how much skill is required.

# THEATRICAL VOCABULARY

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*Review the following theatrical terms with your students before attending the performance! This will help them better understand all of the elements of a production.*

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**Author** – the writer of a script; also called the book

**Audition** – to perform to get a role for the production; usually includes singing, dancing and reading scenes from the show; usually takes place in front of the Director & Creative Team

**Ballad** – a slow song for actors to showcase vocal clarity

**Blocking** – the specific movement of actors on stage; usually given by the Director

**Box Office** – a booth inside the theatre where tickets are sold

**“Calling the Show”** – the process of calling out the lighting, sound and scene-change cues during a performance; usually done by the stage manager

**CASTING** – the process through which actors are chosen for roles in the production

**Casting Agent** – one who chooses actors for roles in the production

**Choreographer** – one who designs dance sequences and teaches them to the cast of the production

**Composer** – one who writes the music

**Conductor** – one who directs the orchestra

**Costumes** – a set of clothes in a style typically of a particular country or historical period

**Curtain Call** – the appearance of one or more performers on stage after a performance to acknowledge the audience’s applause

**Director** – one who supervises the creative aspects and guides the artistic vision of the production

**Dress Rehearsal** – rehearsal in which performers practice with costumes, props, lights and microphones

**Dresser** – one who assists performers with their costumes during dress rehearsals and shows

**Electrician** – one who works with the lighting designer to adjust and operate lighting instruments

**Ensemble / Chorus** – typically singers, dancers or actors who perform in group numbers

**Head Carpenter** – one who builds the sets for the production

**House Left** – the left side of the theatre, when facing the stage (audience’s point of view)

**House Manager** – one who oversees all aspects of the audiences; responsible for ushers and audience safety

**House Right** – the right side of the theatre, when facing the stage (audiences point of view)

**Lighting Designer** – one who decides where the lighting instruments should go, how they should be colored and which ones should be on at any particular time to affect mood, visibility and to showcase costumes and sets

**Lyricist** – one who writes the words to a song

**Makeup Artist** – one who applies cosmetics to a performer’s face and body

**Music Director** – one who teaches and rehearses the music with the orchestra

**Orchestra Pit** – the lowered area in front of a stage where the orchestra (musicians) sit and play during the performance

**Overture** – an orchestral piece at the beginning of an opera, suite, play, oratorio, or other extended composition

**Producer** – a person responsible for the financial and managerial aspects of staging a play, opera, musical, ballet, etc.

**Program** – a listing of the order of events, names of the cast and crew and other relevant information for the production

**Property (Props) Manager** – one who manages all items used on stage that cannot be classified as scenery, electrics or wardrobe

**Proscenium arch** – the arch opening between the stage and auditorium; the frame of the stage

**Read-through** – the cast reads through the script without movement or music; typically done at the first rehearsal

**Set Designer** – one who designs the scenery for the stage

**Sitzprobe** – the first rehearsal with both the performers and the orchestra, with no staging or dancing

**Sound Designer** – one who plans and executes the layout of all sound playbook and equipment for the show

**Sound Operator** – one who handles the sound playbook and mixing equipment for the show; works with Sound Designer

**Sound Board** – a desk comprising a number of input channels where each sound source is provided with its own control channel through which sound signals are routed into two or more outputs; controls all microphones and music

**Spotlights** – a lamp projecting a narrow, intense beam of light directly onto a place or person, especially a performer on stage

**Standby / Understudy** – one who studies a role and is prepared to substitute a performer when needed

**Stage Left** – the left side of the stage, when facing the audience (performer’s point of view)

**Stage Manager** – one who is responsible for the quality of the show’s production, assists the director and oversees the show at each performance

**Stage Right** – the right side of the stage, when facing the audiences (performer’s point of view)

**Technical Rehearsal** – rehearsal incorporating the technical elements of a show such as the scene and property shifts, lighting, sound and special effects

**Uptempo Song** – a fast, upbeat song for actors to showcase dancing and acting ability

**Usher** – one who guides audience members to their seats

**Wig Master / Mistress** – one who obtains and customizes wigs for performers to wear

# ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

# DON PASQUALE

## ACT I

Don Pasquale is an old film star from the silent movie era as famous as the great Norma Desmond. He lives in an old mansion on Sunset Boulevard that is as devoid of color as his old black-and-white films. His ward and nephew, Ernesto, has refused an arranged marriage, proclaiming his love for Norina, a popular Hollywood starlet. Don Pasquale, outraged, decides to disinherit the boy and beget his own heirs. To do this he needs a wife, and he has called on a family friend, Dr. Malatesta, to help him find one. Malatesta, siding with Ernesto and Norina, makes a plan to teach the headstrong Pasquale a lesson. Malatesta glowingly describes to him his beautiful and completely imaginary sister and tells him that the girl is in love with him. Before long, the old bachelor is convinced he loves the girl and expresses his desire to marry her with Technicolor enthusiasm. Furthermore, he is prepared to cut Ernesto out of his will. Unaware that Dr. Malatesta has a plot afoot, Ernesto grows bitter at this apparent betrayal by his good friend.

Shooting a scene from her next movie on a Hollywood soundstage, Norina's screen persona boasts about knowing all the tricks to win a man's love. Malatesta arrives and reveals to Norina his plans for fooling Don Pasquale: Norina is to enact the role of Malatesta's sister, wed the old bachelor in a fake ceremony, and then drive him so crazy with her whims and demands that he will be eager to find a way out of the unpleasant staged marriage. Malatesta hires local stage hands to help out, but there is no time to tell Ernesto.

## ACT II

Realizing that he will never be able to marry Norina without his inheritance, Ernesto laments his situation as passionately as any of his uncle's silent films. When he leaves, Malatesta arrives with Don Pasquale's "bride" and introduces her to Pasquale, who is outlandishly dressed in an old costume worthy of Rudolph Valentino. Without further delay, a ceremony takes place, during which Ernesto returns and is forced to witness the contract, and he is finally told what is afoot. As soon as the mock ceremony ends, Norina turns into a fiery shrew who torments Don Pasquale with her nasty short temper and extravagant ways.

## ACT III

Having turned Don Pasquale's mansion into a kind of Hearst Castle, Norina invites the elite of the Hollywood film world to cavort at Don Pasquale's expense. Exquisitely gowned, Norina brazenly leaves the house to attend a late-night concert, and as part of the plan, she drops a letter where Don Pasquale will find it. It is a love letter from Ernesto, inviting her to a rendezvous in the garden of the Hollywood Bowl. Don Pasquale realizes that he cannot endure the situation any longer. Furious, he calls Malatesta, who promises to fix everything.

In the garden of the Hollywood Bowl, Ernesto is disguised as a Hollywood crooner and sings a love song to Norina, who responds fervently for Don Pasquale's eavesdropping ears. Don Pasquale springs upon the conspirators, who then happily reveal their plot. Immensely relieved to discover that his marriage has been like scenes from a popular Hollywood comedy, Don Pasquale forgives everyone involved and happily gives Norina to Ernesto.

## THE CAST OF CHARACTERS

**DON PASQUALE**  
bass - an elderly bachelor

**DR. MALATESTA**  
baritone - Pasquale's physician and advisor

**ERNESTO**  
tenor - Pasquale's nephew

**NORINA**  
soprano - a young widow in love with Ernesto

**CARLINO**  
bass - Malatesta's cousin, a notary



Photo by  
Philip Groshong/  
Cincinnati Opera 2017

Synopsis by Chuck Hudson, *Don Pasquale* Production Director

# ABOUT THE COMPOSER

# GAETANO DONIZETTI

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**Gaetano Donizetti was born on November 29, 1797 in Bergamo, Italy, a medium-sized city not too far from Milan. Donizetti's family was not affluent, his father was a janitor in a pawnshop and his oldest brother was a military bandmaster.**

Donizetti began studying music in Bergamo at the age of nine under the tutelage of Johann Simon Mayr. He was one of the first students enrolled at the Lezioni Caritatevoli school (founded by Mayr) under scholarship. His teachers at the school observed that he had a poor voice, "defective and throaty," for which they tried to expel him. Fortunately, one of his professors recognized his talent and contrived to keep him on studying keyboard and composition.



When he was 17, Donizetti went to the university town of Bologna for further study. It was there where he wrote his first opera, *Il Pigmaliione*. He spent two weeks on it, pulling an all-nighter to get it finished, although it wasn't premiered until 1960, more than a century after his death. The first performance of one of his operas, *Enrico di Borgogna*, took place in Venice in 1818, just before his 21st birthday.

When Donizetti was 23, he was drafted, but before he had to serve in the army a local patroness of the arts bought him out of his commission. Following that, the composer succeeded both by commissions and by currying favor with local and regional nobility. The total number of his operas has been estimated to be as high as 70, and it is said that Donizetti habitually overworked himself in an attempt to keep pace with the demands from various opera houses. Much of his work was written under less than favorable conditions, although the 21st century listener would not perceive that from the melodic and lyrical bel canto compositions. While he is most well-known for his operatic works, Donizetti also composed music in a number of other forms including church music, string quartets, and some orchestral works.

Perhaps Donizetti's most well-known opera is the tragedy, *Lucia di Lammermoor*. He is also well-known for the comedies *Don Pasquale* and *The Daughter of the Regiment*, which came after *L'Elisir d'Amore*, and his three operas on Tudor Queens: *Anna Bolena*, *Maria Stuarda*, and *Roberto Devereux*.

In 1842, Donizetti became Hofkapellmeister, or Court Music Director, to the Habsburgs in Vienna. This would have set him up very nicely and been a very lucrative culmination to his career. However, shortly thereafter on a trip to Paris he contracted syphilis, which was fairly common at that time. Its effects were not immediately apparent, and he was able to continue composing for a while. By the end of 1843, however, he was no longer capable of concentrating well enough to compose. After a little more than two years of steady deterioration into madness, he was institutionalized against his will in February 1846. A year and a half later his family succeeded in bringing him back to Bergamo. There he was alive but completely unresponsive, not recognizing family, friends, or any music. Donizetti died at the age of 51 on April 8, 1848.



# BEL CANTO

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**Bel Canto (Italian for “beautiful singing”) is the term to describe the elegant Italian vocal style of opera that originated in the mid-1700s and flourished through the first decades of the 19th century. The bel canto style was a distinctive artistic movement – a way of emphasizing the voice as the most important expressive element in opera.**

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Donizetti was one of the three leading bel canto composers. He wrote *Don Pasquale* in 1842, at the end of what was known as the bel canto era (approximately 1805-1840).

Donizetti’s operas are all about the singing, although he did have a sharp ear for orchestration and for the dramatic shaping of concerted pieces along symphonic lines. Unlike his fellow bel canto composers, Gioachino Rossini and Vincenzo Bellini, Donizetti wrote more simply for the male voices and began the development of the baritone voice that led to its prominence in Verdi’s operas.



Photo by  
Philip Groshong/  
Cincinnati Opera 2017

## Characteristics of Bel Canto Singing

A smooth style of singing, or legato, across the entire range

Agility and flexibility that enables the singer to manage vocal embellishments with ease

Lack of noticeable breath sounds and excessive vibrato

Clear attack and diction

Full, even tones

A well-focused timbre

Refined breath control that governs graceful phrasing

## ACTIVITY

Have students brainstorm modern vocalists whose singing has Bel Canto characteristics.

- 1 In what musical genre does the artist fall?
- 2 How is the genre both similar and different from opera?
- 3 What character might the artist play in *Don Pasquale*? Why?

# BLACK AND WHITE VS COLOR

In this production of *Don Pasquale*, the contrast and shifting of black and white into color is thrust to the forefront. Black and white is the color of glamour cinematography. The most glamorous icons of the screen, those actors who only require last names – Garbo, Bogart, Bacall, Gable, Dietrich – are most famously photographed in black and white.

Directors still sometimes opt for black and white to make a political and/or aesthetic point. *Street Scene* (1989)—a film by an African American director—restages Charlie Chaplin's *The Kid* (1921) in the contemporary inner city, suggesting both that inner-city denizens have at least the humanity we grant to the little tramp, and that nostalgizing poverty is cruelly absurd.

Some films are shot in black and white as a kind of homage to earlier cinema genres. Steve Martin's *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid* (1982) pays tribute to film noir, while *Movie Movie* (1978) and *Young Frankenstein* (1974) fondly recall the 1930s backstage musical and the 1940s horror film.

Especially for the Technicolor technicians, the principal job was to figure out how to make color film acceptable to an audience and an industry that was at first hesitant about the technology. Some actors, for example, did not think they photographed as glamorously in Technicolor as in black and white. Still, after the box office successes of films like 1939's *Gone With the Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz*, studio execs came to realize that adding color to a film would measurably increase its box office appeal. This expensive technology was used for high-profile prestige pictures, like the Errol Flynn vehicle, *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938), which cost \$2 million, an amazing price tag for the Great Depression years.



Photo by  
Philip Groshong/  
Cincinnati Opera 2017

- 1 How do you think color helps tell a narrative story?
- 2 Imagine you're directing a production of *Don Pasquale*. In what era would you set the story? What colors would you choose to establish characters and set the scene?

ACTIVITY

Some directors have been thinking outside the Crayola box, mixing panchromatic and color stock in the same film. Early on the decision was in part economic: Technicolor was incredibly expensive. But even early on the decision to mix it up could be motivated by plot and theme as much as by economics. The most famous example is of course *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). Monotonous Kansas is monochromatic, but after a tornado, Dorothy opens the front door and finds herself in a Technicolor Oz. The 1939 audience shared her sense of wonder at their introduction to a prismatically colorful new world.

# OPERA HISTORY

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**Opera is a dramatic story told through song.** Considered by many to be the most complete art form, it combines all of the elements of art, words, music, drama and dance. The earliest Italian operas were called by several names, such as “favola in musica” (fable in music) and “drama per musica” (drama by means of music). This last title is very close to the dictionary definition, and is the correct basis for any discussion about opera. The unique thing about opera is the use of music to convey an entire story/plot. This is based on the feeling that music can communicate people’s reactions and emotions better than words (read or spoken) or pictures. Opera takes any type of dramatic story and makes it more exciting and more believable with the help of music. Many famous stories have been made into operas, including *Cinderella*, *Hansel and Gretel*, and *Romeo and Juliet*.



## A BRIEF HISTORY

The concept of opera was developing many years before the first opera was written. Its beginning can be traced to the ancient Greeks. They fused poetry and music, creating plays that incorporate song, spoken language and dance, accompanied by string or wind instruments. In the 1100s the early Christian church set religious stories to music, a style known as liturgical drama. The first true opera, *Daphne* (1597), was composed by Jacopo Peri. It told the story of a Greek myth. The first great composer of opera was Claudio Monteverdi. Some of his operas are still performed today. German composer Christoph Gluck’s most famous opera, *Orfeo ed Euridice* (1762), marked a shift in importance from the performers to the drama. It also reduced the amount of recitative and laid the foundations for the progression of the art form. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was another prolific composer during this time and many of his operas like *Le Nozze di Figaro* (The Marriage of Figaro - 1786) and *Die Zauberflöte* (The Magic Flute - 1791) are still frequently performed around the world.



# OPERA HISTORY



## OPERA AROUND THE WORLD

Italy was the first country where opera became popular. It was the homeland of Jacopo Peri and Claudio Monteverdi. In time this exciting form of entertainment spread to the rest of Europe. France and Germany joined Italy as the principal opera producers. Eventually opera came to reflect the stories and musical styles of each of these countries. The Italians have always been famous for their love of singing, and so in Italian opera there has always been great emphasis placed on the singer and the beautiful sounds of the human voice. It wasn't until the late 19th century and early 20th century with the later works of Verdi and the operas of Puccini that a balance was achieved between the role of the orchestra and that of the singer. These two forces were combined to give a more effective presentation of the story. The French have favored the pictorial side of drama, and this has led to a continuing emphasis on the visual spectacle, especially with dancing. For example, the Paris opera audience in the 19th century would not accept a work for performance if it did not contain a major ballet. Verdi, an Italian composer, had to add ballets to all of his works to get them performed in Paris. The Germans have always sought to extract from both the Italian and French traditions, and go beyond both in an attempt to present more than just a story. In fact, one of the greatest German opera composers, Richard Wagner, chose legends or myths for most of his opera plots so that he could communicate ideas as well as just a story.

## DIFFERENT OPERA STYLES

**Opera Seria** – serious opera. These stories are often tragic, and typically involve heroes and kings or ancient myths and gods. *Julius Caesar* (1724) by George Frederic Handel is a classic example of opera seria.

**Opera Buffa** – comic opera, always sung in Italian. The jokesters in these operas are always the working class, such as maids, peasants, or servants, who keep busy getting the best of their employers. *The Italian Girl in Algiers* (1813) by Rossini is an amusing example of opera buffa.

**Singspiel, or “sing Play,”** evolved in German speaking countries out of the comic opera tradition. It includes elements of comic opera, spoken dialogue interjected among the sung phrases, and often, an exotic or fanciful theme. Mozart's *The Magic Flute* (1791) is an example of this style.

**Bel Canto** – This Italian phrase means “beautiful singing”. These operas grew from a style of singing emphasizing long phrases, breath control and flexibility in singing both loudly and softly. *The Barber of Seville* (1816) by Gioachino Rossini is a popular example of bel canto.

**Grand Opera** – spectacular opera. It is performed with elaborate sets and costumes. Many people are needed to make it happen. Grand opera involves royalty, heroism, an elaborate ballet scene, and can often last for several hours. Charles Gounod's *Faust* (1869 version) is an example of grand opera.

**Music Drama** – a style of opera that is created by a single artist who writes both the text and the music to advance the drama. This style fuses many art forms, and makes each one as important as the others. *Die Walküre (The Valkyries)* (1870) and other operas by Richard Wagner defined this style.





# COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE

*Don Pasquale* is an example of opera buffa (see previous page for definition). To tell the comedic story, the opera utilizes well-known characters established in *commedia dell'arte*.

Commedia dell'arte, translated as "theatre of the professional", originated in 16th century Italy as the first known professional theatre. The art form uses masked stock characters in sketch performances that are both scripted and improvised.

Because traveling troupes might perform for audiences that spoke a different dialect, stock characters with recognizable costumes, defining traits, and exaggerated movements helped make *commedia dell'arte* a universal and accessible performance art.

## There are three stock character groups:

- **The Servants, or Zanni** – witty, resourceful, mischievous
- **The Masters, or Vecchi** – authoritative, villainous, selfish
- **The Lovers, or Innamorati** – romantic, naïve, impressionable. Their relationship is typically the central plot, advanced by the antics of the Zanni and Vecchi.

**Arlecchino** – the most recognizable Zanni, Harlequin frequently appears in comedies entertaining audiences with his cleverness and acrobatics.



**Pantalone** – a principle Vecchi character, Pantalone's greediness threatens the happiness of the Innamorati



**Scapino** – named for his tendency "to flee" from conflict, Scapino's intelligence and scheming serves his own interests.



**Columbina** – a Zanni that is typically the servant of the Innamorata, or female lover, Columbina is strong, feminine, and the most intelligent character of the story.



**Pierrot** – the consummate sad clown often pining for his love Columbina, Pierrot's naiveté allows him to be taken advantage of by other characters.



## ACTIVITY

Can you match the *Don Pasquale* characters to their *commedia dell'arte* counterparts?

- |              |              |
|--------------|--------------|
| 1. Pasquale  | a. Columbina |
| 2. Ernesto   | b. Scapino   |
| 3. Malatesta | c. Pantalone |
| 4. Norino    | d. Pierrot   |

Consider the Italian terms for the three character groups. How does their translation manifest in *commedia dell'arte* characters? How is the meaning seen in *Don Pasquale* characters?

Answers: 1-c, 2-d, 3-b, 4-a

# CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRAINED VOICE

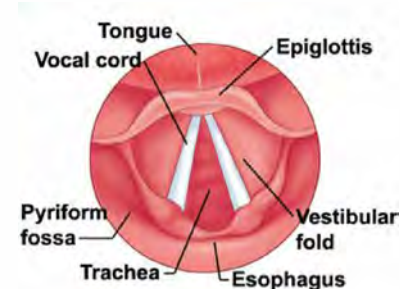
Singing in Europe and America is now generally divided into two categories: classical and popular. What most people think of as *operatic* or *classical* singing developed in Europe hundreds of years ago. This style flourished during the seventeenth century as opera became a popular form of entertainment and operatic music increased in complexity. The most recognizable characteristics of a classically trained voice are:

- an extensive range (the ability to sing both high and low)
- varying degrees of volume (loud and soft)
- resonance in the chest and sinus cavities (produces a “hooty”, full or round sound)
- an ability to project or fill a large space without amplification

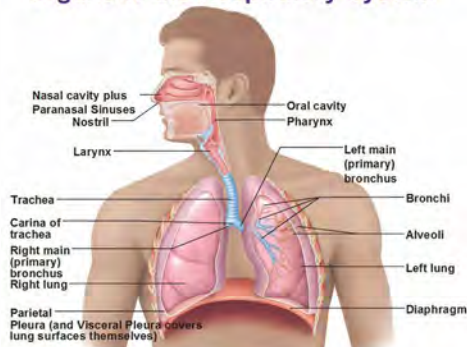
Very few people are born with the capability to sing this way. Classical singers take voice lessons about once a week and practice every day for many years in order to develop a beautiful operatic sound. In fact, most trained voices are not mature enough to perform leading roles on a big stage until they're at least 28 years old. Compare that with the most popular singers on the radio today who could release their first albums as teenagers!

## THE VOCAL CORDS

Science tells us that all sound is made by two things vibrating together. The same concept applies when we talk or sing. The sounds we make are really just the vibration of two little strands of tissue called the vocal chords. The vocal chords are held in the larynx, which is sometimes called the voicebox or (in boys) the Adam's Apple. When you want to say something, your brain tells your vocal chords to pull together until they're touching lightly. Then, air pushes through them, and the vocal chords begin to vibrate, opening and closing very quickly. This vibration creates a sound. The pitches you sing are dependent on the speed at which the chords vibrate. A faster vibration creates a higher pitch. The length of the chords also affects the pitch of the voice. Longer chords equal a lower voice.



## Organs of the Respiratory System



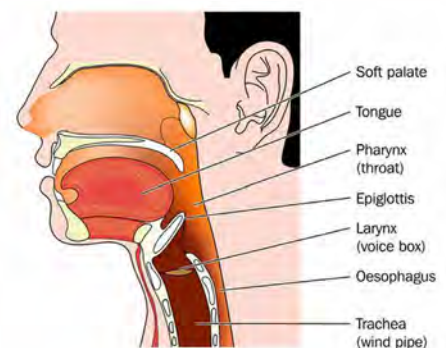
## BREATHING/SUPPORT

In order to sing long phrases with a lot of volume and a good tone, singers must breathe in a specific manner, making use of the whole torso area (lungs, ribs, diaphragm and viscera). As they breathe in, each part of this network does its job: the lungs fill up, which forces the ribs to expand and the diaphragm (a flat muscle below the lungs) to move down. As the diaphragm descends, the viscera (stomach, intestines and other organs) are forced down and out. Expelling the air, or singing, is essentially a slow and controlled movement of those muscles. If all of the air escapes from the lungs quickly, the tone of the voice will sound breathy and will lack intensity. Successful opera singers must be able to isolate the diaphragm and ribs, controlling the rate at which they return to their original positions. This allows for a consistent stream of air that travels from the lungs, through the larynx and out of the mouth.

## RESONANCE

One of the most obvious characteristics of an operatic voice is a full, resonant tone. Singers achieve this by lifting their soft palate. This is a part of the mouth that most people don't ever think about and it can be difficult to isolate. Here are some simple exercises to feel where it is and hear the resonance in your voice when you lift it: Start to yawn. Feel that lifting sensation in the back of your mouth? That is the soft palate going up. With a relaxed mouth, slide your tongue along the roof of your mouth, from your teeth back toward your throat. You should feel your tongue go up, then down (that's your hard palate), then back up again. That soft, fleshy area at the very back is your soft palate. Say the word “who” like you would say it in normal conversation. Now, say “hoowoo” like a hoot owl. Can you hear the difference?

Say the sentence “How do you do?” as if you were an old British woman. Lifting the soft palate is the foundation for the resonance in a singer's voice. With a lot of practice, a singer can lift his or her palate as soon as they begin to sing, without even thinking about it.



# CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRAINED VOICE

If you sing in a choir at school or church, you're probably already familiar with the different kinds of voice types. We have the same kinds of voice types in opera, but there are a few differences:



**Butterfly from *Madama Butterfly***

**Sopranos** are the highest female voice type, with a range similar to a violin. In opera, they usually sing roles like the daughter, the girlfriend or wife. They can be princesses and good girls, but they can also have some tricks up their sleeves!

**Mezzo-sopranos** are similar to your choral altos. Their sound is darker and warmer than a soprano. They often play older women, sometimes they play evil women, and sometimes they even play young boys! They can be witches but they can also be attractive – sometimes both at the same time.



**Carmen from *Carmen***



**Faust from *Faust***

**Tenors** are the highest male voice type – they often sing roles like the hero, the prince, the boyfriend. They can sound like a trumpet in both range and color. Tenors can be athletic and energetic and they can also be sensitive and emotional. They get all the good high notes and a lot of the applause!



**Figaro from *The Barber of Seville***

**Baritones** fit between choir tenors and basses – not as high as the tenors, but not as low as the basses. They can play both good and bad characters: sometimes they're the boyfriends or brothers – or the ringleader for some comedic shenanigans – but in serious operas they can sometimes be the bad guys.

**Basses** are the lowest male voice type – they can sound like a bassoon, tuba or low trombone. In a serious opera they can represent age and wisdom (and sometimes evil geniuses), in a comic opera they can make you laugh. Sometimes they steal the show with their super low notes and provide a comforting presence with their warm rumbling tones.



**Sarastro from *The Magic Flute***

Think of your favorite story, movie or television show. If that story was to be turned into an opera, what kind of voice types would be best for each of the characters?

You can hear different kinds of voice types in popular music too. Think about your favorite singers – do they have high voices or low voices? What do you like best about the way they sing?



# STANDARDS

During the 17th century, women were not allowed to sing onstage, not even in a chorus so men would sing the soprano/mezzo/alto parts.

The term "opera" comes from the Latin opus, or "work."

**Opera composers** would sometimes hire a group of people to cheer their works or boo the works of their rivals.

## Reading:

ELACC(6-12)RL, ELACC(6-12)RI  
*Don Pasquale* synopsis

## Writing:

ELACC(6-12)W  
Become an opera critic

## Language/Vocabulary:

ELACC(6-12)L(4-6)  
Introduce Vocabulary and Terms and activities

## Science:

S(6-12)CS1, S7L2, S8P4, SPS9, SAP1  
Operatic Voices

## Social Studies:

Government/Civics: SS(6-7)CG(6-7)

## World Geography:

SSWG5, SS7G9, SS7G12

## History:

SSuSH(9-16), SS6H6, SSWH11, SSWH14, SSWH15, SSWH17, SSWH18  
About the Composer  
Commedia Dell'arte

## Music:

M(6-8)GM.6, M(6-8)GM.8, M(6-8)GM.9  
Opera 101  
Meet the composer  
Commedia Dell'Arte  
Voice types

## Theater:

TAMS(6-8).8, TAHSMTI.8, TAMS(6-8).9, TAHSFTI.9  
Opera 101  
Important Jobs at the opera and theatre  
Commedia Dell'Arte



# POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

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## Become an Opera Critic

Reviews of performances are important to every opera company. They help the company know how the performance was enjoyed in the outside world, and get other people excited about coming to see the show!

To write your own review, you can focus on two different elements – what you saw and what you heard.

### Writing About What We See:

A review often combines two things – facts and feelings. It is a piece of straight reporting in which the reviewer tells the reader what he or she saw (facts), and an opinion piece in which the reviewer tells the reader what they liked or didn't like about those elements (opinions). Here is an example of a reviewer reporting what they saw:

"The town plaza is suggested by Paul Steinberg's dizzyingly colorful set, with a mosaic floor and walls and piñatas hanging from above."

For the first part of your review, briefly describe what you saw on stage – report what the sets, costumes and lights looked like. These are the facts about the show. Next, give your opinion about whether you liked these choices. Did they help tell the story effectively?

### Writing About What We Hear:

Critics need to have a great vocabulary of descriptive words when they write about what they hear so that the people reading their reviews can imagine what it was like to be there. People use lots of different adjectives to describe the voices of opera singers. Here's a review that's chock-full of great adjectives:

"The light, smoky baritone of George Gagnidze only hints at Rigoletto's outsize emotions, and the sweet, pure soprano of Lisette Oropesa keeps Gilda sweet but inert. The handsome, hyperactive tenor Vittorio Grigolo has two registers, bellowing and crooning, and the conductor, Marco Armiliato, has his hands full trying to keep up with Mr. Grigolo's wayward tempos."

Sometimes it is very hard to describe the way music makes us feel. While there are definitely objective facts we can evaluate when we listen to music (qualities like loud or soft, fast or slow) most of the time we listen subjectively. This means that every opinion is valid – you don't have to know anything about opera to be moved by someone's singing or a beautiful instrumental solo.

Write a few sentences about the character you liked best and why. How did the music help tell you who the character was? Think of five adjectives to describe the way that person's voice sounded to you. How did it made you feel to listen to **them**?

### Sum It All Up

In your opinion, what did you like best about the production? What did you think could use some improvement? Would you recommend that other people come see this opera?

# POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

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## #1 Write a Letter

**Goal:** To reflect on the performance experience and to practice writing skills.

**When:** After the performance.

**Explanation:** After the show, students will write letters to *Don Pasquale* performers or to ArtsBridge donors whose support keeps field trip tickets accessibly priced for school groups.

### Activity:

1. After attending the performance, discuss the experience with your students. Use the following discussing questions to guide the conversation:

- a. What was the show about?
- b. What parts of the show were most exciting?
- c. Which character did you enjoy the most? Why?
- d. What did the characters learn?

2. Next, invite students to write a letter to the performers or to ArtsBridge donors about their theater experience.

#### a. Letter Example #1

Dear *Don Pasquale* Performers,  
My favorite part of the show was....  
While watching your show I felt... because...  
I have drawn a picture of the scene when....  
If I could be in your show, I would play the part of ... because...

#### b. Letter Example #2

Dear ArtsBridge donors,  
Thank you for helping my class go to the Cobb Energy Centre to see *Don Pasquale*! My favorite part of the show was.... While I was watching the show I felt... because... I have drawn a picture of the scene when... This experience was special because...

3. After writing the letter, students can illustrate a scene from the performance.
4. Last, mail the letters to use and we'll make sure they get to the right people.

ArtsBridge Foundation  
Attn: Education Department  
2800 Cobb Galleria Parkway  
Atlanta, GA 30339

### Follow-Up Discussion Questions:

1. What did you choose to share in your letter? Why?
2. How does receiving a letter make you feel?
3. How do you think the recipient of your letter will feel when he or she receives your letter? Why?
4. Why do you think the performers choose to make being a performer their career?
5. Why do you think people give money to help students like you attend ArtsBridge performances at the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre?

# RESOURCES AND SOURCES

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## Web Sources

<http://www.streetmusician.co.uk/Assets/Vocal%20chords%20diagram.gif>

[http://encarta.msn.com/media\\_461517091/Diaphragm\\_and\\_Respiration.html](http://encarta.msn.com/media_461517091/Diaphragm_and_Respiration.html)

[http://64.143.176.9/library/healthguide/en-us/images/media/medical/hw/hwkb17\\_073\\_003.jpg](http://64.143.176.9/library/healthguide/en-us/images/media/medical/hw/hwkb17_073_003.jpg)

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Gaetano-Donizetti>

[http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/comm/hd\\_comm.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/comm/hd_comm.htm)

## Great recordings of *Don Pasquale* on Youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=46RYece3mB0>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JzRu\\_T5w9pA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JzRu_T5w9pA)