

A woman with curly hair, wearing a teal dress and boots, is walking away from the viewer on a dark, paved path at night. A bright spotlight shines from behind her, illuminating the path ahead and creating a strong contrast with the dark surroundings. The background is a dense, dark forest.

# SEATTLE OPERA.

## THE THREE FEATHERS

### STUDY GUIDE

**MUSIC BY LORI LAITMAN | LIBRETTO BY DANA GIOIA**

Commissioned by the Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech,  
with support from the Virginia Commission for the Arts

“The story of *The Three Feathers* teaches us that with  
perseverance, we can find the treasures that have been  
right in front of us all along.”

-Kelly Kitchens, Stage Director

By offering performances that engage with and inform students' worldview, encouraging students to express themselves creatively, and facilitating meaningful dialogue inspired by artistic interactions, Seattle Opera's School Programs are dedicated to introducing the power of the arts to every child.

## HELLO

Thank you for inviting Seattle Opera into your school. We know your schedules are chock full of educational activities. We are grateful that you see the importance of the arts in your school curriculum and have made time for us within your school day.

Opera is all of the arts rolled into one. Yes, it's grand, and because of its scale, it can often be seen as unapproachable. We at Seattle Opera want to help you and your students see the approachable, meaningful, and powerfully personal side of the art form. That is why Seattle Opera chooses operas for its school tours that are timeless, freshly told stories that young audiences can appreciate and enjoy. We also seek ways to help you as educators identify ways that these operas can reinforce some of the standards supported by your curricula.

For centuries in Europe, opera has been known as an art form of the people. Seattle Opera believes it is a matter of social justice to provide all children with opportunities to express themselves, learn and harness the power of all the arts to make social change, and have access to experiences that speak deeply to their hearts and minds.

This study guide is created to help you teach your students a little about the history of opera, and moreover, to help prepare them for the performance of *The Three Feathers*. We have included sections to explain Seattle Opera's approach to opera education, and we've included activities that you can use with your own students. We would love to hear how you might have used this guide, improvements you would recommend, or contributions you might have to offer. If you were inspired to try other activities and would be willing to share your ideas, please feel free to send your activity descriptions to us at [schoolprograms@seattleopera.org](mailto:schoolprograms@seattleopera.org). We will be happy to credit you and share them with others.

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We hope you and your students enjoy the performance!



Barbara Lynne Jamison  
Director of Programs & Partnerships

# BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

To make the most of this opera experience, it is helpful to spend some time exploring the story with your students.

Many of your students may never have attended a play, dance, or musical performance. It might be helpful to familiarize them with art form prior to the performance itself. Prior preparation will also allow all students to connect more deeply with the story.

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## OPERA OVERVIEW: WHAT IS OPERA?

Opera is, quite simply, a type of theater in which a story is acted out through singing.

Stories have been acted out to song for thousands of years. It is how the earliest humans enjoyed themselves around a fire, how the earliest religions and tribes taught their values and laws to their youth, and how mothers and caregivers taught their children to speak. Stories and music are deeply human things. But what about this art form we call opera?

Opera has changed quite a lot since the 1600s, when the term was first used in this way. The 1700s took this tradition beyond Italy, and it was embraced by composers throughout Europe. Each country started to develop its own unique style of musical storytelling. Popular opinion of Opera is influenced significantly by the grand opera style of the 1800s and early 1900s. Before this era, the orchestra would be seated in plain view in front of the stage, the room remained illuminated, and people came and went as they pleased, eating, laughing, and even playing games during performances. It was more than just a show; it was a full evening out. It wasn't until the late 1800s that the lights (candles, really) went out in the hall and the orchestra was hidden in a pit in front of the stage.

We think of operas as being something from the past, and while opera has a centuries-long history, operas are still being written today. They are being presented in new ways too. Sometimes in abandoned buildings or mansions, sometimes in small cafés, and sometimes in gardens. The art form continues to evolve. In addition to *The Three Feathers*, which was written in 2014, other stories of today include *The Little Prince* (Rachel Portman, 2003), *Robin Hood* (Ben Moore, 2017), *Dead Man Walking* (Jake Heggie, 2000), *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* (Mason Bates, 2017), *Charlie Parker's YARDBIRD* (Daniel Schnyder, 2015), and many, many others.

# ACTIVITY: AT THE OPERA

**Purpose:** to understand and apply new vocabulary

**Best for grades:** PK-3, but can be adapted for all ages

**Skills used:** Defining/Describing, Questioning, Responding to Cues

**Time:** ~10 minutes

## INTRODUCTION

This activity is ideal as a fun way to begin your KWL chart. Many students will have some idea of what opera is. Some may have seen an opera in your school, at a theater, on television, or in movies. Have students contribute elements of their understanding of what an opera, or musical drama, is.

While listening to students' ideas on what an opera is, be sure to guide them toward the following terms, if they aren't included. Please see the Glossary section on page 15 for definitions. Familiarity is important in order for students to enjoy singing.

*bravo!*

*conductor*

*stagehand*

*orchestra*

*libretto/librettist*

*applause*

*soprano*

*composer*

*forte*

*costumes*

*bass*

*chorus*

*pianissimo*

*audience*

*characters*

"At the Opera" is a song written in cumulative form, which is a form that invites students to pick up on cues to join in wherever they're most comfortable, with repetition to reinforce learning cues.

# AT THE OPERA.

Laura Marris, BL Jamison

Barbara Lynne Jamison

At \_\_\_\_\_ the o - pe - ra

**A** **B**

1. The aud-i-ence ap-plauds. Li-sten to them shout, "Bra - vo! Bra - vo!" clap, clap, clap.

**C** **A tempo**

At \_\_\_\_\_ the o - pe - ra 2. The con - duc - tor bows. The aud-i-ence ap-plauds.

Li - sten to them shout, "Bra - vo! Bra - vo!" clap, clap, clap. At \_\_\_\_\_ the o - pe - ra

**D** **E** **rall.** **A tempo**

3. Stage - hands raise the cur - tain and the sto - ry comes to life! The con - duc - tor bows. The

aud - i - ence ap - plauds. Li - sten to them shout, "Bra - vo! Bra - vo!" clap, clap, clap.

**F**

At \_\_\_\_\_ the o - pe - ra 4. The or - ches - tra plays do sol do sol do.  
(I - V - I - V - I)

Stage - hands raise the cur - tain and the sto - ry comes to life! The con - duc - tor bows. The

aud - i - ence ap - plauds. Li - sten to them shout, "Bra - vo! Bra - vo!" clap, clap, clap. At \_\_\_\_\_ the

o-pe-ra 5. The cho - rus sings for - te, and some - times pian-

**H**

is - si - mo. The or - ches-tra plays do sol do sol do. Stage-hands raise the cur-tain and the  
(I - V - I - V - I)

*rall.* *A tempo*

sto-ry comes to life! The con-duc-tor bows. The aud-i-ence ap-plauds. Li-sten to them shout,

**I**

"Bra - vo! Bra - vo!" clap, clap, clap. At\_\_\_\_\_the o-pe-ra. 6. The so-pra-no sings high, and the

**J**

bass sings low. The cho - ruses sings for - te, and some - times pian-

is - si - mo. The or - ches-tra plays do sol do sol do. Stage-hands raise the cur-tain and the  
(I - V - I - V - I)

*rall.* *A tempo*

sto - ry comes to life! The con - duc - tor bows. The aud - i - ence ap-plauds.

*rall.*

Li-sten to them shout, "Bra - vo! Bra - vo!" clap, clap, clap. At\_\_\_\_\_the o-pe-ra

## ACTIVITY: KWL

**Purpose:** activate prior knowledge, organize information, identify

**Skills used:** Defining/Describing, Questioning, Predicting

**Time:** ~15 minutes

### INTRODUCTION

Have students fill in a KWL chart to organize what they already know, what they want to know, and what they've learned about opera in general or this specific story. You'll want to complete the first two columns before the performance, and fill in the final column once you've seen the opera.

## ACTIVITY: WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

**Purpose:** to understand how our voices can convey emotions and intent

**Best for grades:** 3-5, but can be adapted for younger students

**Skills used:** Listening, Independent Speaking, Compare/Contrast, Evaluating/Analysis, Describing, Improvising, Creating/Designing

**Time:** ~15 minutes

### INTRODUCTION

In opera, the characters sing most—often all—of the words. When performers sing and act a story, there are many things they do that help the audience understand what their characters feel, think, and do (e.g. body language, facial expressions, use of certain words). Because opera is primarily sung, how a performer uses the voice is an important part of understanding the character's intentions.

### SET-UP

Have your entire class, or select volunteers, sit in a circle. Choose a sentence from the selections below, or create one of your own.

### ACTIVITY

Going around the circle one student at a time, have each person repeat the same sentence. Notice how each student says the sentence differently—or the same. Have students play with different ways of saying the sentence. Can the other students identify what elements they are hearing?

Elements to consider:

high or low (pitch)

loud or quiet (volume, which is called 'dynamics' in music)

smooth and connected (legato)

short and detached (staccato)

ascending or descending pitch (melodic direction)

How does saying the sentence change if the student pretends to be happy, sad, excited, surprised, secretive, angry, or lonely? What happens if the statement is turned into a question? What elements change?

"I had oatmeal for breakfast today."

"My hat is blue."

"The Sounders won."

"My water has ice in it."

"The tree is gone."

### CONCLUSION

Composers and performers use these elements to help tell the story through music. Though this exercise uses speaking voices, when we use our singing voices, we can use the same elements; they are just elongated or magnified.

## WHO'S WHO IN AN OPERA?

Opera integrates many different art forms, including **music, drama, dance, painting, literature, film, and video.**

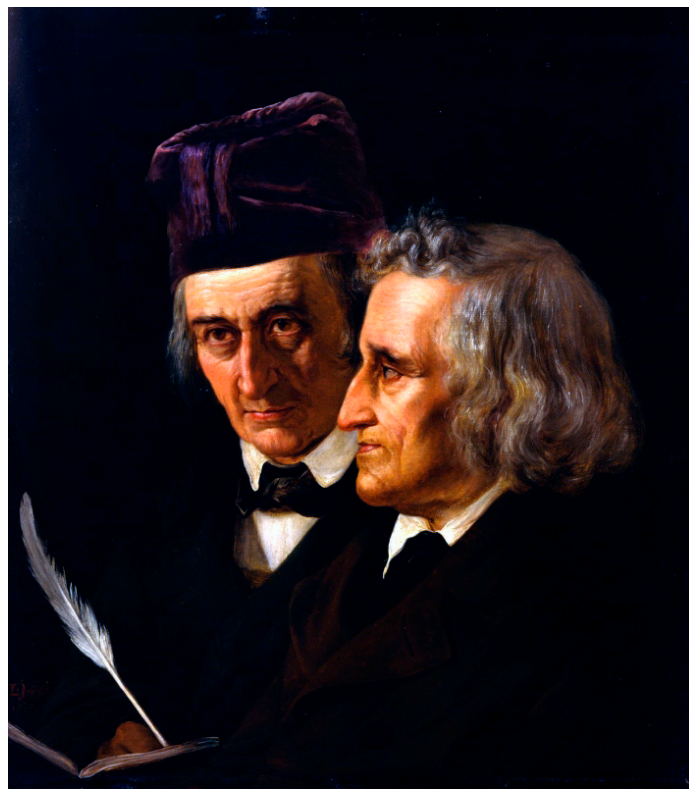
It also fuses with these arts with other fields like **mechanics and robotics, carpentry, architecture, electrical and acoustical engineering, technology, mathematics,** and many more. In fact, for many operas, there are at least as many—and often more—people working behind the scenes in these areas than number of people singing on the stage. *The Three Feathers* has five singers, a pianist, and a stage manager who will come to your school.

## WHERE DID THE THREE FEATHERS COME FROM?

*The Three Feathers* is based on a very old fairy tale told by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, also known as The Brothers Grimm.

If folktales don't have a known author, why do the Grimm Brothers get all the credit? The Grimm Brothers lived between 1785 and 1863. During their lives, they collected folk stories from around Europe. In most cases, this was the first time these stories had been written down and published. Some of the stories that are popular today because they published them are: Cinderella, Hansel and Gretel, Rapunzel, Sleeping Beauty, Snow White, and The Frog Prince.

The Grimms' original *The Three Feathers* is somewhat different than the version in our opera. Folktales tend to evolve over time and place, so that the moral is clear to the reader. Originally published in 1800s Europe, this story needs to be presented quite differently to resonate with today's audience over 150 years later. The moral remains the same, while the details have changed...just like a true folktale! The opera you will see has 21st century characters and 21st century problems to solve.



Wilhelm Grimm (left) and Jacob Grimm in an 1856 painting by Elisabeth Jerichau-Baumann



## ACTIVITY: WHAT IS A FOLKTALE?

Folktales are fictional stories that have been handed down through many generations.

### Folktale traits typically include:

- Folktales were passed down by telling the stories (orally) long before they were ever written down.
- No one knows who originally created the story (anonymous).
- Folktales grow out of a specific culture, and they reflect the values, beliefs, and customs of that culture.
- Folktales are not tied to a specific time or location.
- The characters may be people or animals.
- Folktales often contain morals to teach an important lesson that can be applied to the real world.

### There are different types of Folktales, including:

**FABLES** often feature animals acting like humans to teach the reader a lesson.

**FAIRY TALES** are often stories about royalty and animals using magic to teach the reader about good and evil.

**LEGENDS** are stories about regular people and sometimes animals that use magic or an unusual (fictitious) situation to explain how something in nature came to be.

**MYTHS** are stories that describe something in nature using gods/goddesses or super-powers, often to explain forces of good/evil.

**TALL TALES** use a seemingly ordinary person with exaggerated features or abilities to solve a specific problem, often linked to a certain historical period.

Can you name a Folktale that you've read in each of these categories?

Fable: \_\_\_\_\_

Fairy Tale: \_\_\_\_\_

Legend: \_\_\_\_\_

Myth: \_\_\_\_\_

Tall Tale: \_\_\_\_\_

## ACTIVITY: READ *THE THREE FEATHERS*

Once upon a time, there was an old king who had three daughters: Gilda, Tilda, and the youngest, Dora. One day, the King called his daughters together for an announcement. Gilda and Tilda entered first in a great fluster, as usual; Dora, the youngest, followed along, engrossed in reading a book, as usual.

The King announced that with his advancing age, he was growing frail. He had become concerned about who would rule the kingdom when he died. He felt it was time to identify which one of his daughters would inherit the throne.

The King then described how, of all the greatest treasures of the kingdom, three magic feathers remained the most valuable. These three feathers would help decide his successor to the throne.

The King instructed his daughters to take a feather, hold it in the air, and let it guide each of them on her way. He then commanded each princess to bring him the most beautiful cloak in the world. “You have only one day to complete the challenge,” he concluded. This challenge would decide the kingdom’s next ruler.

Gilda and Tilda shrugged their shoulders and held their feathers high, each certain that she would return victorious. Dora, however, didn’t know where to even begin such a challenge—and she was angry with herself for always disappointing her father. Why would this time be any different?

Just then, the feather started to move in her hand; it jumped and danced and led her down to a world she had never visited before. In the middle of this world slept a “Frog King,” and in the middle of his hat, her feather came to rest. Terrified but determined, Dora slowly made her way to the throne and she reached out to touch the feather.

The Frog King, awakening suddenly in alarm, yelled at Dora and called her a thief. Dora, speaking gently, calmed him down enough to explain her dilemma—how she has always felt like she disappoints her father and wants nothing more than for him to be proud of her, and to be proud of herself. She pointed to her feather upon his head and politely asked if she could have it back.

The Frog King felt great pity for Dora. Consoling her, he offered to give her the cloak she would need to win the challenge. “But,” he said sternly, “then you must go away and never come back here.”

Very pleased with the outcome, Dora hastily agreed, took the cloak, and left at once, determined never to return.

The next day, as the deadline approached, the daughters entered their father’s court. Gilda and Tilda presented their cloaks first. Then, the King motioned to Dora to take her turn. Dora presented the cloak from the Frog King, placing it upon her father’s shoulders. “Well, well, this is nice,” he said, admiring his gift. Smiling at Dora, he nodded approvingly. “...And just my style.”

Tilda whined, “No, Daddy, no! Don’t choose her.”

Gilda chimed, “How do we know that Dora didn’t cheat?”

The King considered their points. Surely, Dora had always disappointed—maybe she did cheat. He stood with his decision and announced, “I declare the contest a tie. I will offer you another challenge in order to make my determination. You will each bring to me a crown worthy of a king. Now raise your magic feathers in the air. Let the second trial begin.”

The two older sisters raised their feathers in the air and went on their ways. Dora, much more confident this time, tossed her feather into the air. She watched it flutter

and fly; she chased it until it landed, once again, on the crown of the Frog King in the world below.

Squinting his eyes at Dora in anger, the Frog King snarled in his croaky growl, "You! What are you doing here? I told you to go away! I told you never to return."

Dora reached out to take the glowing feather as she explained to the Frog King her new dilemma. He was ready to give her anything so she would go away. Immediately, the Frog King started his magical incantation, and presented her with a beautiful crown. Dora thanked the Frog King and quickly turned to flee.

Just as before, the King awaited his gift from each of his daughters. Once again, Gilda and Tilda presented their gifts first. Neither pleased the King. "Princess Dora, did you bring anything?" Dora clapped her hands, and an assistant entered with a brilliant crown, and placed it directly on the King's head.

The King gleamed. He loved it much better than his old crown. But just as he opened his mouth to declare Dora this challenge's winner, the older princesses started to cry. "So unfair!" they bawled.

The King once again considered his daughters' requests. Believing that his tasks had been more about himself than his daughters, he set one final challenge: each princess must find a young partner strong and true, with whom she will share the throne. "Toss your feathers in the air. Let the final challenge begin," he decreed. And with that, the two older sisters tossed their feathers in the air, and went off on their ways. Once again, Dora confidently tossed her feather into the air. And once again, the feather fluttered about and led her right back to the world of the Frog King.

As she once again approached the Frog King, she was not looking forward hearing him croak at her again.

Looking around for her feather, Dora realized that her feather had landed in the hands of another person this time. This person, however, would not easily give up the feather. Try as she might, she could not pry it from him.

"Take him with you," the Frog King demanded. "You wanted a partner? You can have him. I have so many children I won't miss him...or you! Good riddance to you, the feather, and him together."

Back in the palace, the King sat on his throne, awaiting the return of his daughters.

Gilda and Tilda presented their choice of partners, neither of which pleased the King. Then Dora approached with her partner from the Frog Kingdom. Dora's partner approached the King with kindness and respect. She introduced him as the Prince Egbert, son of the King who kindly gave her the cloak and the crown.

The King rose from his throne and congratulated each princess on her efforts for the three challenges. "After much consideration," he continued, "I have chosen the princess and her partner who will inherit the crown and rule the kingdom. The winner shall be my daughter," he paused, "Princess Dora and Prince Egbert!"

"No! No!" Gilda and Tilda cried. "It can't be so!" But indeed, it was so. And Dora did not disappoint but ruled with kindness, intelligence, and courage.

## ACTIVITY: MEET THE CHARACTERS

Who are the characters in this story? Choose words from the character traits list that describe each character. Can you think of character traits that are not in the list to use?

**The King**  
**The Frog King**  
**Gilda**  
**Tilda**  
**Dora**

active	excited	nice
adventurous	expert	noble
ambitious	fair	obedient
angry	faithful	peaceful
argumentative	friendly	pleasant
arrogant	funny	polite
bold	generous	powerful
brave	gentle	quiet
bright	good	quirky
calm	grateful	rational
cheerful	happy	responsible
clever	helpful	selfish
confident	honest	sensible
cooperative	hopeful	serious
courageous	intelligent	skilled
courteous	joyful	smart
curious	kind	thankful
daring	lively	thoughtful
dependable	loving	trustworthy
determined	loyal	understanding
eager	magical	victorious
easygoing	mature	virtuous
energetic	mysterious	wise

## ACTIVITY: SO CHARMING

In the story of *The Three Feathers*, the King believes that his feathers have magic qualities, somewhat like a good luck charm.

Ask your students to describe a good luck charm they have now or used to have. How did it become a good luck charm for them? Have them tell (or write) a story about a time the good luck charm seemed to work. Why did it work?

# CREATING THIS OPERA

The great fairy tales inevitably teach powerful moral lessons.

In the case of *The Three Feathers*, it is the insight that the smallest and least powerful person may triumph through courage, dedication, and loyalty. The theater provides them with a magical space in which they can see stories of their own growth and mastery enacted with humor and zest.

—Dana Gioia, Librettist

Musical themes run throughout the opera (leitmotifs) and these help the audience identify characters and situations. The opening fanfare, with its regal rhythms, sets the stage for this imaginary Kingdom. Each Princess has a different range and distinctive music. The King is a baritone, and “The Treasure Song,” with its rhythmic bounciness, reveals his childlike delight in the magic of the feathers. Even the feathers have their own music. The final scene incorporates many of the leitmotifs that the audience will be able to recognize.

—Lori Laitman, Composer



Photo © Christian Steiner

## LORI LAITMAN, COMPOSER

Described by *Fanfare Magazine* as “one of the most talented and intriguing of living composers,” Lori Laitman has composed multiple operas, choral works, and songs. Her opera, *The Scarlet Letter* (2016), with librettist David Mason, premiered with Opera Colorado and was released on the Naxos record label. *The Three Feathers* (2014), Laitman’s children’s opera with librettist Dana Gioia, based on a Grimm’s fairy tale, was commissioned by the Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech. Laitman’s chamber opera with Leah Lax, *Uncovered* (2018), was a finalist for the Domenic J. Pellicciotti Prize. Laitman was graduated magna cum laude from Yale College and received her MM from The Yale School of Music.



## DANA GIOIA, LIBRETTIST

Poet Laureate of California, Gioia is the author of five collections of poetry, including *Interrogations at Noon* (2001), which won the American Book Award, and *99 Poems: New & Selected* (2016). His three critical collections include *Can Poetry Matter?* (1992), which was a finalist for the National Book Critics Award. Gioia has written four opera libretti and edited twenty literary anthologies. He served as Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts from 2003 to 2009 where he helped create the largest federal art programs in American history. He holds the Judge Widney Chair of Poetry and Public Culture at the University of Southern California.

# DIRECTOR'S TALK



Seattle Opera sat down to talk with stage director Kelly Kitchens to discuss her take on this Folk Tale Opera by Lori Laitman and Dana Gioia. Here's a peek at what we learned.

**Seattle Opera:** Kelly, you're the stage director of *The Three Feathers*. What is the role of a stage director?

**Kelly Kitchens:** First and foremost, a stage director must have a strong passion for storytelling and connection to the story being told. The stage director is responsible for the creative interpretation of that story and overseeing the practical implementation of that vision. The stage director works closely with the creative team, production team, the organization's staff, and producers in all stages of this process. To bring a story to life, directors must communicate, collaborate, and coordinate across a wide range of disciplines. It's a lot of work—but it's work that is incredibly rewarding, inspiring, and energizing.

**SO:** What's the most crucial element of any production?

**KK:** Collaboration around a great score. Whether making theater or attending theater, there is nothing like an ensemble passionately, skillfully, creatively telling a story together that effectively reaches its audience. In that moment, magic happens. That kind of storytelling opens minds and hearts; worlds expand.

**SO:** What is special about this particular version of *The Three Feathers*?

**KK:** This opera is such a fun conflation of several fairy tales and tropes. It has a little bit of *King Lear* (a capricious, aging king deciding which of his three children should inherit the kingdom); a little bit of *The Magic Flute* (our protagonist must pass several tests in order to achieve the ultimate goal); and a little bit of the original Brothers Grimm tale (centered around the character type of a quiet, unnoticeable one who unexpectedly wins the day). It's also quite wonderful that the librettist made our unlikely adventurer—the one who develops courage, gains confidence, and rightly inherits ruling power—a female protagonist. Our particular production takes the events out of a mystical fairy tale kingdom and sets it in the present day to reflect and connect the relevance of the story to the world right outside our doors.

**SO:** What is the significance of the feathers in this opera?

**KK:** There is a play on cost versus worth in this opera. In the opening, the King talks about gold and riches bringing him no joy. The thing he holds most dear are three magic feathers that, when used, will reveal true character and worth. The journey the feathers take us on show that true treasures are often found in unexpected places and in unexpected people. The very people that the world may discard or unfairly reject as "less worthy" may actually be the truest of heart and courage. These feathers ask us to open our eyes a little wider, and to connect with those who are different than us.

**SO:** What would you like the audience to take away or learn from this opera?

**KK:** This story deals with value and worth on several levels. At the opening of the story, Dora struggles with what so many young people do: comparing yourself to others and finding yourself lacking. Over the course of the opera, Dora learns that self-worth is something that must be cultivated from within and that all of us bring different points of view and gifts to the world around us. Once you realize that your individuality is a strength and that comparing yourself to others is a trap, you can not only walk with confidence through the world, but you can also make a greater difference in it.

# GLOSSARY

**act**

a segment of a dramatic work that contains within it a clear rising action, climax and resolution; an act is often made of several scenes, and a dramatic work may have one or more acts within it

**aria**

a solo song in opera, usually with a clear melodic structure

**baritone**

a male who sings in a medium-low vocal range, between tenor and bass

**bass**

a male who sings in the lowest vocal range

**bravo**

an emphatic acclamation of approval for a job well done

**chorus**

a group of singers who sing and act together, either in unison or in harmony; a musical number written for such a group

**composer**

a person who writes music

**conductor**

a person who leads a musical performance

**countertenor**

a male singer who sings in a very high vocal range, similar to a mezzo-soprano or soprano

**crescendo [kresh EHN doh]**

from Italian; to gradually grow louder

**diminuendo [di min yoo EHN doh]**

from Italian; to gradually grow quieter

**duet**

a piece for two musicians to perform together; the musical number written for these two musicians

**dynamics**

used in music to describe the volume of the music

**ensemble**

from French; the team work within a group of performers; also refers to musical numbers for a smaller group of musicians

**finale [fin AL eh]**

The final music at the end of an act

**forte [FOR teh]**

from Italian; "strong", is used in music to indicate a loud dynamic

**legato [leh GAH toh]**

from Italian; smooth and connected

**leitmotif [LIGHT moh teef]**

from German; a musical theme that helps guide the action by representing a character or an idea

**librettist**

a person who writes the words/lyrics to a dramatic musical work

**libretto**

from Italian; "little book," the words/lyrics to a musical drama

**maestro [MY stroh]**

from Italian; "master," the conductor and music director

**melisma [mel IHZ mah]**

a sung musical phrase that uses many different pitches on a single syllable

**melody**

the main tune of a piece of music

**mezzo-soprano [MEHD zoh soh PRA noh]**

a female who sings in a medium-high range

**musician**

a person who sings or plays an instrument

**orchestra**

a group of instrumental musicians; in an opera or ballet, they are most often found playing in the orchestra pit in front of the stage

**overture**

a piece of music at the beginning of the opera, played by the instruments

**pianissimo [pya NEE see moh]**

from Italian; very quiet

**pitch**

a frequency (high or low) of sound; also a tone within a musical scale

**quartet**

a piece for four musicians to perform together; the musical number written for these four musicians

**recitative**

a style of singing in an opera that is speech-like, often used to move the story forward

**scale**

a series of pitches that work together to establish a tonal framework to a piece of music

**scene**

a small segment of a dramatic work, within an act, that contains a certain group of characters or a specific setting

**score**

the written representation of a work of music

**solo**

a piece for one musician to perform alone; the musical number written for this musician, often with another instrument or orchestra playing a supporting role

**soprano**

a person who sings in the highest vocal range; most often sung by female or unchanged male voice, but sometimes by adult males who have trained specifically to sing in this range

**stagehand**

a person who works backstage in theater to set up scenery, rigging and other special effects for a production.

**tempo**

the speed of the beat in a piece of music; how fast or slow music is performed

**tenor**

a person who sings in a high male range; in a chorus, the range between a baritone and a mezzo-soprano

**theme**

the main idea in a piece of music that often reappears and evolves throughout the work

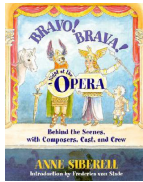
**trio**

a piece for three musicians to perform together; the musical number written for these three musicians



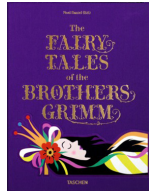
# STORIES GALORE

Seattle Opera's production of *The Three Feathers* is but one adaptation of this story. To further explore fairy tales, including other versions of this folktale, you and your students may enjoy these books, compiled by The Seattle Public Library Youth Services Librarian Lauren Mayer.



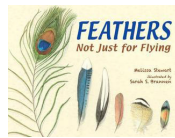
**Bravo! Brava! A Night at the Opera: Behind the Scenes with Composers, Cast, and Crew** by Anne Siberell

Everything you want to know about opera – in front of, and behind, the curtain!



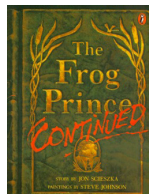
**The Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm** by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm

Includes "The Three Feathers."



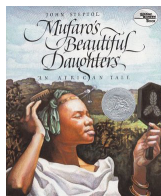
**Feathers: Not just for Flying** by Melissa Stewart, illustrated by Sarah S. Brannen

All the things that feathers can do!



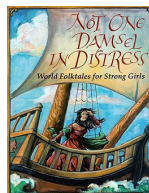
**The Frog Prince, Continued** by Jon Scieszka, illustrated by Steve Johnson

What happens after the "happily ever after"? A funny twist on the familiar fairy tale!



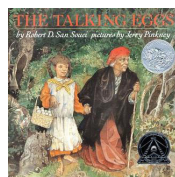
**Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale** by John Steptoe

Nyasha is kind and considerate; Manyara is selfish and mean. Which sister will marry the king?



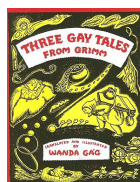
**Not One Damsel in Distress: World Folktales for Strong Girls** collected and told by Jane Yolen, illustrated by Susan Guevara

Stories featuring fearless and heroic women.



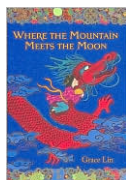
**The Talking Eggs: A Folktale from the American South** by Robert D. San Souci, illustrated by Jerry Pinkney

A Creole folktale in which kindness is rewarded.



**Three Gay Tales from Grimm** translated and illustrated by Wanda Gág

Includes "The Three Feathers."



**Where the Mountain Meets the Moon** by Grace Lin

Minli sets off on a quest to better her family's fortune, with the help of a goldfish and a talking dragon.