WHY KIDS LOVE Opera



Join Gretel in a fairytale opera and an opera company for children

Sharon Parsons

Nelson Literacy Directions

WHY Kids Love Opera

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Dear Reader

I love being part of the audience at opera performances. In this book I want to show you why opera is so exciting to watch and perform.

With the help of the kids in the Canadian Children's Opera Company (CCOC) and their dedicated artistic director, Ann Cooper Gay, you will find out why they ALL LOVE performing opera!

> **OPERA IS SIMILAR TO MOVIES AND PLAYS – A STORY IS PERFORMED AND SUNG BY ACTORS AND MUSICIANS ON A STAGE.**

One of the CCOC's favourite opera performances is *A Dickens of a Christmas* in Chapter 6.

I hope you enjoy reading about opera as much as I enjoyed writing this book!

My sincere thanks to the following people for their time, information, images and enthusiasm for this book:

The Canadian Children's Opera Company (CCOC), particularly Ann Cooper Gay, their artistic director, and assistant conductor, Errol Gay.

Sharon Parsons

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a Canadian Children's Opera Company Chorus



a performer in the fairytale opera, Hänsel and Gretel

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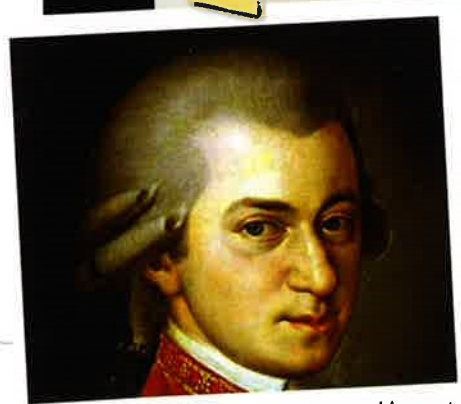
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opera make-up



Mozart

1 Kids Love Opera!

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The COCC's Kids' **Emails** Tell Why

The children at the Canadian Children's Opera Company (CCOC) in Toronto, Canada, love opera. They learn how to perform in children's operas as well as in adult operas. This is what they had to say.

I love opera because it always has an interesting story!
Marina – age 10

I love opera because there's lots of acting. The singers pretend to die. In a few operas they don't die but I still like that.
Evangeline – age 8

I love opera because I really, really, really like singing and having fun with the new songs I learn. Music makes my heart happy.
Eli – age 7

I love opera because I get to sing and act; both things that I love!
Celia – age 9

I love opera because it is beautiful to listen to, is enjoyable to sing and is fun to act out. I actually like it more than pop music!
Michaela – age 9



Marina at the opera



a scene from the CCOC's production of A Dickens of a Christmas.

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I love opera because you get to express your musical side and you get to be imaginative. I love being at the opera, as I have made some great friends!
Steven – age 10

Because ... it's DRAMA and SINGING!! I love opera. And I have a great teacher, too.
Eliza – age 6

I love opera and singing with the Canadian Children's Opera Company because I can use my big voice!
Alexandra – age 12



Gordon sings Tiny Tim in the finale of A Dickens of a Christmas.

Opera turns poets into singers, singers into actors, and actors into families.
Eileen – age 11

I love opera because it has acting and music.
Simon – age 10



Erin Cooper Gay, vocal coach, conducting the Intermediate Chorus in excerpts from the opera, The Mikado.

It is fun and you can get a musical tune, which is magic.
Perry – age 7

Opera is Fun

Opera is for any kid
Who can act and move and sing:
If you like having fun on stage,
Maybe opera is your thing?

2 The Artistic Director

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Ann Cooper Gay

Interview in Texas

Ann Cooper Gay is the artistic director of the Canadian Children's Opera Company (CCOC).

Ann, thank you for your time today. Why are you in Texas and not in Canada?

I grew up in Texas and my husband and I spend time near Dallas every year. We drive three days each way from Toronto.

Why do you drive and not fly?

We like to take our two dogs with us.

What breeds are the dogs?

One is a Golden Retriever and the other is at least – partially – an Australian cattle dog. We love them!

As a child, were you interested in music?

Oh yes! I played the piano, organ, and flute, and I loved anything to do with music from the age of five.





Ann and her two dogs

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What does an artistic director do?

In my case, the job covers many aspects. I was an opera singer for many years and I love kids, so it's natural that I would get involved with this sort of performance company. One of my jobs is to select operas that kids will enjoy performing and from which they will learn as well. We want to educate our kids about the arts, and also about life skills and values, too.

My other jobs include:

- auditioning kids for roles
- directing operas
- conducting orchestras
- organising staff to make costumes, do make-up and hair, and make props.

Ann, thank you. It was great to talk with you.

Arts and Social Studies

Opera Stage Director

Ann sometimes takes on the job of stage director, directing the children on:

- *where to go or stand*
- *what to do*
- *how to act*
- *when to move*
- *why they should do what they do.*



Ann conducts the CCOC's Chorus at their 40th anniversary gala.



Ann tastes a little cake icing.

Economics

Opera Costs

One of Ann's jobs is to ensure that sufficient money is raised to put the CCOC's operas on stage. Ann wants to present high quality productions, and they are expensive. Many people donate money to make these productions possible.

One Favourite Opera

One of Ann's favourite operas for children is *Hänsel and Gretel*. The story of *Hänsel and Gretel: An Opera* is in Chapter 4.

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3 After School Opera on Stage

Chorus Kids

After attending regular school, the children in each of the CCOC's Choruses rehearse the music for their opera performances. They also learn how to act and move on stage.



a CCOC Chorus

Arts and Music

Chorus Groups

At the CCOC, the children are grouped into choruses:

- Ruby Chorus: 5 to 6 year olds
- Apprentice Chorus: 7 to 8 year olds
- Intermediate Chorus: 9 to 11 year olds
- Principal Chorus: 10 to 16 year olds
- Youth Chorus: Kids over 16 years and boys with changed voices.



a scene from The Hobbit *opera, composed by Dean Burry*

Upstage: The back

Stage Right: The performers' right side

House Left: The audience's left side

Downstage: The

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scenes from A Dickens of a Christmas, *composed by Errol Gay*





or rear of the stage

Stage Left: The performers' left side

House Right: The audience's right side

front of the stage