I Pagliacci
Music and Libretto by Ruggero Leoncavallo
STUDENT RESOURCE GUIDE
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Michigan Opera Theatre was founded in 1971 by Dr. David DiChiera, but the company’s history begins some ten years earlier. In 1963, DiChiera became director of Overture to Opera, an educational component of the Detroit Grand Opera Association, the organization that would be the framework on which MOT was built.

During this time, DiChiera’s involvement in Opera America, a national service organization for opera companies, put MOT in the mainstream of the opera world. The company became known for its exciting casting, which was, and continues to be, an artful blend of established artists and young, up-and-coming talent. Throughout its history, the company has also earned acclaim for promoting diversity in the arts.

With an ever-expanding audience and a desire to stage larger-scale productions, MOT moved its 1984 spring season to the Masonic Temple Theatre, in Detroit’s New Center Area. The season opened with a stunning production of Anna Bolena, and featured the Midwest premiere of English surtitle translations.

During the 1986-1987 season, mainstage offerings increased to six productions, and the company mounted its first spring grand opera season. MOT also moved into the top ten opera companies in the United States based on operating budget, and ranked seventh based on audience attendance.

In 1989, following its largest season ever—one that brought Luciano Pavarotti to Joe Louis Arena for his historic Detroit concert debut—MOT cast an eye to the future. The decision was made to purchase the Grand Circus Theatre, formerly known as the Capitol Theatre. Though the facility, designed by famed theater architect C. Howard Crane, was in need of extensive restoration, DiChiera and the board of trustees saw it for what it really was—a diamond in the rough—and the Detroit Opera House Project began.

In the fall of 1991, during a press conference prior to his return concert engagement in Detroit, Luciano Pavarotti surprised everyone, promising to return to sing at the opening of the new Detroit Opera House, bringing the project to the attention of the public at large.

In 1993, the wrecking ball came down on the Roberts Furs Building, making way for the construction of a completely new, state of the art, 75,000 square foot stage house to complement the incredible auditorium of the Detroit Opera House. This massive stage would provide the space needed to mount large-scale grand operas, and would also put the Opera House on the map as one of the largest stages between New York and Chicago. To date, MOT is one of only a handful of opera companies that own and operate their own performance venue.

Also in 2003, MOT announced the co-commission of Margaret Garner, a new American opera to be composed by Grammy award winner Richard Danielpour, with libretto by Nobel Prize winning author Toni Morrison. Though the project had begun some years earlier, the formal announcement put MOT back at the forefront of the international opera community. Margaret Garner premiered at the Detroit Opera House in May 2005 to great acclaim, and has now been performed by major opera companies in Philadelphia, New York, Cincinnati and Charlotte.

Dr. David DiChiera, our General Director, was selected as one of the recipients of the 2010 National Endowments for the Arts’ Opera Honors.
Detroit Opera House: Fast Facts

- The Detroit Opera House was originally called the Capitol Theater. Over the years it has also been known as the Broadway Capitol, the Paramount, and the Grand Circus theaters.

- The theater was designed by C. Howard Crane, architect of the Fox Theatre and Orchestra Hall in Detroit.

- It opened January 12, 1922, as Detroit’s first theater built in the true “movie palace” style, and was the fifth-largest theater in the world at the time.

- The first film shown at the Capitol Theater was “The Lotus Eater,” starring John Barrymore, accompanied by a theater pipe organ and the 40-piece Capitol Wonder Orchestra.

- The Capitol Theater was decorated in the Italian Renaissance style, with lavish crystal chandeliers, frescoes, brass fixtures, and marble stairways and drinking fountains. Most of these features are present today in the Detroit Opera House.

- The Detroit Opera House is actually Detroit’s fifth. Previous venues intended for staging opera in the city include a “Detroit Opera House” at Campus Martius from 1869-1963, the “Whitney Grand Opera House” on Griswold and Michigan Avenues, and the “New Detroit Opera House” from 1886-1928 at Randolph and Monroe streets.

- By the late 1960s, the movie programming had become action, kung fu and horror films. Changes in exhibition policies and neighborhood demographics closed the theater in November 1978. The facility reopened in 1980 as a concert theater featuring acts such as Grace Jones, the B-52s, the Plasmatics and the Psychedelic Furs.

- Management attempted an ill-fated rooftop restaurant in 1984, and then abandoned the property without capping the utilities. As a result, when MOT purchased the theater, the stage was damaged by four years’ worth of rain and snow.

- Abandoned from 1984 through 1988, the building had no security or utilities, the pipes froze and caused extensive plaster damage, and the basement and orchestra pit flooded. Scavengers had a free-for-all in the building.

- Michigan Opera Theatre acquired the facility in 1989 and immediately began to stabilize the building. The first of several major campaigns began to raise funds to restore the facility, including an opera ball held in the ruins of the auditorium. Full-scale restoration began in 1994 and the doors opened in 1996.

- The Detroit Opera House’s original seating capacity was 4,250. After its restoration in 1996, it now seats about 2,700. Its stage is the largest in Michigan.
Detroit Theatre District

1. Find the Detroit Opera House. What street is it on?
2. How many theaters are located on Woodward Avenue? Which ones?
3. Which theater is closest to the football and baseball stadiums?

**Fox Theatre (1928)**
Live productions, concerts and films

**Gem & Century Theatres (1927)**
Dinner theater, Off-Broadway and revues

**Detroit Opera House (1922)**
Opera and dance, Broadway tours, concerts

**Fillmore (State) Theatre (1925)**
Concerts and special events

**Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts (1928)**
Live productions, concerts, jazz

**Active Learning**

1. Find the Detroit Opera House. What street is it on?
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In its 400-year history each opera has been shaped by the times in which it was created and tells us much about those who participated in the art form as writers, composers, performers, and audience members.

The first works to be called operas were created in Italy at the end of the sixteenth century. They were inspired by a group of intellectuals known as the Camerata who, like many thinkers of their time in the late Renaissance, admired the culture of the ancient Greeks. They proposed the invention of a new type of musical theater that would imitate Greek drama’s use of music.

The result was a series of operas based on Greek myths, starting with Dafne by Jacopo Peri in 1598. The most famous work of this early period is Claudio Monteverdi’s Orfeo (1607), based on the myth of Orpheus. These early operas had all the basic elements that we associate with opera today, including songs, instrumental accompaniments, dance, costumes, and scenery.

These early operas were performed in the courts of Italian noblemen, but soon opera became popular with the general public. Europe at the time had a growing middle class with a taste for spectacular entertainment.

As opera’s popularity grew, so did the complexity of operas and the level of spectacle. Many opera houses had elaborate machinery that could be used to create special effects such as flying actors and crumbling buildings. There was much debate about whether an excess of visual elements in opera detracted from the quality of the music and drama. Some people even worried that too much comedy in opera could lead to immorality among the public!

During the period from about 1600 to 1750, the Baroque period in music, Italian opera spread across Europe. In fact the Italian style of opera was so popular that even though other countries and regions often had their own traditions of musical drama, the Italian form was usually preferred. George Frederick Handel was a German-born composer who lived and worked in England, but his operas such as Julius Caesar (1724) were in the Italian language and used an Italian style of music. The only nation to develop a national tradition to rival the Italian was France, where operas often included ballets inserted into the story. Jean-Baptiste Lully and Jean-Philippe Rameau are the most famous French Baroque opera composers.

By the middle of the seventeenth century Europe was changing. The growing middle class was more influential than ever, and people were starting to talk about new forms of government and organization in society. Soon the American and French Revolutions (1776 and 1789) would seek to establish the first modern democracies.

Music was changing, too. Composers abandoned the Baroque era’s complicated musical style and began to write simpler music with more expressive melodies. Opera composers could write melodies that allowed characters to express their thoughts and feelings more believably. One of the first operas to use this new style was Christoph Willibald Gluck’s Orfeo ed Euridice (1762).

With the new democratic sentiments came interest in operas about common people in familiar settings, rather than stories from ancient mythology. A good example is Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s The Marriage of Figaro (1786), in which a servant outsmarts a count. Several of Mozart’s operas remain among the most popular today. They include Figaro, Don Giovanni (1788), Cosi fan tutte (1790), and The Magic Flute (1791).

In the nineteenth century operas continued to grow more diverse in their subject matter, forms, and national styles. The Italian tradition continued in the bel canto movement. Operas written in this style, which means “beautiful singing”, included arias with intricate ornamentation, or combinations of fast notes, in the melodies. The most famous bel canto composers are Vincenzo Bellini, Gaetano Donizetti and Gioachino Rossini, whose The Barber of Seville (1816) is one of the most beloved comic operas.
Later in the century the Romantic Movement led many composers to take an interest in their national identities. As a result, operas in languages other than Italian became more common, and new works often reflected pride in a country’s people, history and folklore. Among the operas that show the growth of national traditions are Carl Maria von Weber’s Der Freischütz (Germany, 1821), Mikhail Glinka’s Ruslan and Lyudmilla (Russia, 1842) and Georges Bizet’s Carmen (France, 1875). In Italy Giuseppe Verdi composed in a bold, direct style, and his operas, such as Nabucco and Macbeth, often included elements of nationalism. In Germany Richard Wagner took the Romantic style to the extreme in an ambitious series of operas known collectively as The Ring of the Nibelung (1876) based on Norse mythology.

In the twentieth century opera became even more diversified and experimental, to the point that it sometimes became difficult to distinguish it from other forms of musical theater. Some composers such as Giacomo Puccini (La bohème, 1896), Claude Debussy (Pelléas et Mélisande, 1902), Richard Strauss (Salome, 1905), and Benjamin Britten (Peter Grimes, 1945) continued to write operas that were similar in many ways to those of the nineteenth century. Others, horrified by the destructive effects of World War I (1914-1919) and other aspects of modern life, created works with radically experimental and dissonant music. These operas often explored topics that were either disturbing (Wozzeck by Alban Berg, 1925) or absurdist (The Rake’s Progress by Igor Stravinsky, 1951).

American opera also came into its own in this century, beginning with George Gershwin’s Porgy and Bess (1935) which incorporated jazz and blues styles of music. In the latter part of the century a repetitive and hypnotic style known as minimalism was exemplified in Phillip Glass’s Einstein on the Beach (1976), a piece that would hardly be recognized as an opera by earlier standards. The late twentieth century even saw a return to some of the traits of Romantic opera in works such as John Corigliano’s The Ghosts of Versailles (1991).

Today, opera is a living art form in which both new works and those by composers of the past continue to be performed. It remains to be seen what the future of opera will be, but if history is any indication, it will be shaped by the creativity of librettists, composers and other artists responding the changing times in which they live.

Article courtesy of the Opera Company of Philadelphia
If this is your first time attending an opera performance, you may be nervous or a bit unsure what you’re in for. But fear not—what you can expect is a thrilling night of big voices, bigger emotion, and over-the-top excitement.

For this performance, you will be attending the final dress rehearsal—which is traditionally the last time the performers and musicians will rehearse the opera before opening night. The dress rehearsal is performed to the same caliber as a normal performance, although it may be stopped for a few minor corrections.

Attending a live opera performance is a bit different from watching a show on television or going to see a movie—instead of getting a shrunken image presented to you on a screen, the performers will be in full presence right before your eyes—which means just as you can see and hear them, they can also see and hear you. Therefore, it is very important that you remain quiet and polite during the performance, as the production team, musicians, and cast will be hard at work in full concentration.

If you are especially moved by a grand aria or a tremendous emotional performance, please feel free to applaud! Just make sure you wait until you hear the rest of the audience clapping, as to not distract the current scene.

Quick tips for a smashing opera experience:

- Turn off cell phones completely. Other people can hear when your phone vibrates!
- Make sure you use the bathroom before the rehearsal begins or at intermission so you don’t miss any of the opera or interrupt the people around you.
- Photography and recording are not allowed during the performance, so leave your camera behind. (But feel free to bring binoculars to give you a better view of the stage!)
- Applaud after arias. If you are unsure about when to clap, listen and applaud when you hear others clapping. Some people like to shout “Brava!” for female singers and “Bravo!” for male singers.
- Don’t bring food, beverages, or candy into the auditorium.
- No talking, whispering, or making noise while the opera is in progress.
- Enjoy the opera!
Aria - A solo song. In opera, arias are often used to tell the audience what the character is thinking or feeling—like a monologue in plays.

Recitative - Literally, “to recite.” Lines that are sung rather than spoken, and forward the action of the story. They are often followed by arias or ensembles which tell how the characters feel about the situation.

Ensemble - Group singing, or the group itself. An ensemble can be a chorus of 50 or a duet—it just has to have more than one singer singing at the same time.

Duet - Two people singing together.

Trio - Three people singing together.

Quartet - Four people singing together.

Opera - The plural form of the Latin word, opus, which literally translated means “work”. A play that is sung, usually with orchestral accompaniment.

Soprano - The highest female voice. Nedda is a soprano.

Mezzo soprano - The middle female voice—in a choir, a second soprano or first alto.

Contralto - The lowest female voice.

Tenor - The highest male voice. Canio is a tenor.

Baritone - The middle male voice. Sylvio and Tonio are baritones.

Bass - The lowest male voice.

Trouser or pants role - In some operas, a mezzo soprano plays a young man or a boy whose voice hasn’t changed yet. This is a very old operatic convention.

Set - Short for “setting”. The scenery the singers/actors work on.

Conductor - The leader of the orchestra and singers. Just like on a train, the conductor keeps everything on track.

Props - Short for “properties.” Anything onstage that is not part of the set or the costumes.
Opera is a rich and historic art-form that has enriched and inspired the lives of people all across the globe for centuries. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that its history is riddled with interesting facts and peculiar notations. Compiled is a list of some of the most fascinating opera trivia. As you read through the list, you might end up asking yourself, “really?”

- **Mozart’s First Opera**

  Mozart composed his first opera, *Bastien und Bastienne*, at the age of only twelve. It premiered in Vienna in 1768.

- **Short Composers**

  Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms and Wagner were all 5 feet tall or less.

- **World’s record for highest vocal note produced by a male**

  According to the Guinness Book of Records, Adam Lopez (Australia) holds the world record for highest vocal note produced by a male. That pitch is designated C#8 in note-octave notation; it is one half step above the highest note on a standard grand piano. Before achieving this record, Lopez held the previous Guinness Record for singing a D7 in 2003. He broke his own record in June 2005.
• **World Record for Longest Applause**

Thunderous clapping echoed around the Vienna Staatsoper on the warm summer evening of July 30, 1991, for one hour and 20 minutes, setting a new record for the world's longest applause ever. The audience, who had just reveled in the performance of a lifetime by Placido Domingo in Otello, responded by rising to their feet and clapping through encore after encore - 101 curtain calls to be exact!

• **Most Curtain Calls** *(A curtain call is the appearance of performers or a performer at the end of a performance to receive applause from the audience)*

On February 24, 1988 Luciano Pavarotti received 165 curtain calls and was applauded for 1 hour 7 minutes after singing in Gaetano Donizetti's L'Elisir d'Amore at the Deutsche Oper in Berlin, Germany. The greatest recorded number of curtain calls ever received at a ballet is 89 by Margot Fonteyn de Arias and Rudolf Nureyev after a performance of Swan Lake in Austria, in October 1964.

• **What's In a name?**

The word “opera” comes from the Latin opus, or "work." The term "soap opera" was first recorded in 1939 as a derogatory term for daytime radio shows that were sponsored by soap manufacturers.

• **"Bravo!" Or is it, "Brava"?**

After an opera, it is appropriate to yell bravo for a man and brava for a woman. If you want to cheer for two or more singers, use the plural form, which is bravi. If the group consists only of women, yell brave (BRAH-vay).
Leoncavallo was born on April 23rd, 1857 in Naples, Italy. His father, Cavaliere Vincenzo Leoncavallo, was president of the high court of justice in his village, and his mother, Virginie d'Aurion, was the daughter of a celebrated Neapolitan painter.

Leoncavallo received his musical education while growing up at the conservatory of Naples, Italy, where he achieved the title of maestro at the young age of 18. After finishing school in Naples, he moved to Bologna to continue his studies with the Italian poet, Corducci, receiving a Doctor of Letters diploma at the age of 20. While studying in Bologna, he became interested in the literature of the Italian Renaissance.

Inspired by fellow operatic colleges in Bologna, Leoncavallo wrote the libretto and music for his first opera, Chatterton, a dramma lirico. However, the impresario who had promised to put it on at a local theatre in Bologna turned out to be a crook, and vanished with the funds. After this setback, Leoncavallo left Bologna.

After a short stay in Egypt with an influential uncle, Leoncavallo traveled to Paris in 1882. There, he fell in with a distinguished opera crowd and landed a job as a singing teacher, repetiteur, and accompanist at the Eldorado music-hall.

While in Paris, he wrote the libretto for an opera called I Medici, which garnered himself enough fame in the eyes of the opera elite to land him a position working with the famed Giulio Ricordi, allowing him a way out of Paris and into the inspiring atmosphere of Milan, Italy. After completing the score for I Medici in October 1891, Leoncavallo faced a major setback when Ricordi chose to make a deal for Pucini's Edgar, instead of featuring I Medici.

Faced with a tremendous blow to his blossoming career, Leoncavallo utilized his setback and mustered the creative drive to write both the libretto and music for Pagliacci in only five months, finishing in March of 1892. After a failed attempt to pitch Pagliacci to his now estranged friend Ricordi, Leoncavallo turned to Ricordi’s rival, Edoardo Sonzongo, who agreed to carry both Pagliacci and I Medici.

After a short-lived run, I Medici turned out to be a devastating failure. The libretto was said to be too complex and intricate, and was hounded for its inability to grasp audiences. This failure would inspire Leoncavallo to renovate the simpler libretto of Pagliacci, so that it would be more accessible to audiences.

While Pagliacci grew to garner much success, it also marked the artistic rise and fall for Leoncavallo. He produced a piece in the early years of the 20th century called Der Roland, but, like I Medici before it, the opera failed to make an impression on audiences. Leoncavallo continued to create operas and operettas into his later life, but with little success, and ultimately relied on the royalties garnered from Pagliacci to sustain a living.
**PROLOGUE**

The evening begins with a prologue delivered directly to the audience by the singer who will play Tonio, a hunchback character from the story that's about to unfold. He asks the audience see beyond the façade of the performers’ costumes and make-up, and remember the human being there, who suffer the same trials and tribulations as everyone else. He then orders the show to begin.

**ACT I**

In a village in southern Italy, a crowd welcomes a traveling troupe of players. Canio, their leader, greets the villagers and invites them to a play that evening. The men urge Canio to join them for a drink at a nearby tavern, but they teasingly warn him not to leave his young wife, Nedda, alone with Tonio, who—they say—might make the same kind of romantic advances to her in real life that his character will in the play. Canio answers that while his role as a jealous husband on stage creates comedy, the same situation in real life would end differently. He then departs with the Villagers.

Thinking she is alone, the young Nedda reflects on the potential danger of her husband's jealousy. But she refuses to be burdened by such fears. The sight of birds flying overhead triggers the memory of a song she once heard in childhood, and she begins to dream of a life more free. Tonio overhears her fanciful outburst and takes the liberty of declaring his love for her. Even though she scorns and ridicules him, he tries to kiss her. When he persists, she grabs a whip and strikes him. Cringing with pain, Tonio swears that she will pay dearly for her actions. No sooner has Tonio gone off than Silvio appears. He is a young villager with whom Nedda has been having an affair. He wants her to leave her husband and run away with him. Nedda at first refuses, but finally she gives in to Silvio's impassioned pleadings. Tonio, returning from the tavern, catches sight of the lovers and, seeing the opportunity for revenge, runs off to fetch Canio. The enraged husband arrives just in time to hear his wife promise to meet Silvio later that night. At Canio's approach, Silvio escapes unrecognized into the woods. Canio demands that Nedda reveal the identity of her lover. She refuses. Canio, beside himself with rage, is about to kill her when Beppe, another member of the troupe, stops him. He reminds Canio that the villagers are assembling for the performance and tells Nedda to get dressed for the play. Canio reflects ironically that he now must go on stage as Pagliaccio—the Clown—and make people laugh, even though his heart is breaking.
ACT II

The villagers gather excitedly to see the performance. The play presented by Canio and his troupe is a mirror of the previous, real life, events. Tonio plays the part of the stupid servant Taddeo, who declares his love for Colombine (played by Nedda). She scorn him to make way for her real lover, Harlequin (played by Beppe), who arrives for an intimate supper. This cozy scene is interrupted by the unexpected arrival of the husband, Pagliaccio (played by Canio). Harlequin escapes as Colombine promises to meet him later that night, using the same words that Nedda used to Silvio that very afternoon.

As Canio proceeds to play his part, the tragic reality of the situation begins to overshadow the make-believe. He insists that Nedda name her lover. She laughs him off and tries to continue the comedy. But Canio, carried away, reproaches her for her ingratitude and her betrayal. Some of the spectators begin to wonder whether the actors are playing parts or are actually in earnest. Nedda reminds Canio that she has never been a coward and persists in her refusal to name her lover. Pushed beyond the breaking point, Canio seizes a knife and stabs Nedda. With her last breath she cries out for Silvio, who has been watching the play. He runs onto the stage and Canio, now aware that Silvio is his wife's lover, stabs him to death. Amid the agitation of the horrified onlookers, Tonio ends the “performance” (and Leoncavallo’s opera) by stating simply: “The comedy is finished.”

Courtesy of Portland Opera’s Pagliacci Study Guide

Say What?
Character Pronunciation Guide

Pagliacci..........................................................Pahl-yaht-chee
Canio.............................................................Kah-nee-oh
Tonio..............................................................Toh-nee-oh
Beppe (Peppe was the original intent).......................Behp-pay
Silvio..............................................................Seel-vee-o
Meet the Artists

Antonello Palombi
Canio
*Head of the Troupe*
Palombi has performed the role of Canio with the Dallas Opera and Palm Beach Opera. He made his Michigan Opera Theatre debut as Ramades in the opera *Aida*.

Gregory Carroll
Canio
*Head of the Troupe*
Carroll has received rave reviews for his past performances as Canio in *Pagliacci*. This will be his Michigan Opera Theatre debut.

Jill Gardner
Nedda
*Canio’s wife*
Gardner will be making her Michigan Opera Theatre debut with her role as Nedda. She has also performed this role with the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Gordon Hawkins
Tonio
*The Fool*
Hawkins made his Michigan Opera Theatre debut with his role in *Porgy and Bess*. He’s previously performed the role of Tonio with the Seattle Opera in 2008.

Luis Ledesma
Silvio
*Nedda’s Lover*
Ledesma has previously performed the opera *Pagliacci*, as the role of Tonio, for the San Antonio Opera.
Steven Mercurio is an internationally acclaimed conductor and composer whose musical versatility encompasses the symphonic and operatic worlds. He is also a sought after collaborator for many award winning recordings, arrangements and film projects.

For the stage, he has conducted more than 45 different operas in six different languages. He has conducted opera and symphonic pieces for several telecasts and made a number of acclaimed recordings. As a composer, Steven Mercurio’s compositions include songs, chamber works, and pieces for large orchestra.

Mercurio is a familiar face at the Michigan Opera Theatre, having conducted a number of productions; including *Tosca, L’Elisir d’Amore, Turnadot, Porgy and Bess, Werther, Elixir of Love, A Masked Ball, Otello, Don Giovanni, Rigoletto, Nabucco, La Boheme, Un Ballo in Maschera, Madama Butterfly, Aida,* and *La Rondine.*

Maestro Mercurio is also an acclaimed and sought after arranger. He has created arrangements for a wide array of artists, including Andrea Bocelli, Placido Domingo, Fabio Armiliato, Carl Tanner, Ben Heppner, Bryn Terfel, Marcello Giordani, Secret Garden and Sting.

Bernard Uzan's extensive background in the arts includes success as a general director, artistic director, stage director, designer, librettist, actor, artist manager, and most recently a published novelist.

Uzan is no stranger to the Michigan Opera Theatre, having directed and/or produced a number of shows here including *Manon, Samson et Dalila, Marriage of Figaro, Le Nozze di Fiargo, Rigoletto,* and *Tosca.*

Uzan has also served as General and Artistic Director of L’Opera de Montreal from 1988 to 2002. During his tenure, he brought financial success and artistic renown for its productions. He expanded the number of productions from 4 to 7, the number of yearly performances from 22 to 40, and brought the company out of a 1.2 million dollar deficit leaving it in 2002 with a surplus of over 1 million on an approximate budget of 7 million dollars.

In 2002, he founded the Uzan Division of Pinnacle Arts Management, which has quickly established itself in the operatic community for their formidable roster of both young and renowned artists, including singers, stage directors, designers, and conductors. The company started with 5 artists in 2002 and currently represents over 80 artists today with 3 full-time employees.
Meet the Artists: 
An Interview with Jill Gardner

How did you first get into opera/singing?
I’ve always sang, and I grew up with a strong musical background. Growing up in North Carolina I did many styles of singing; gospels, musical theatre—I’ve always been a big belter. I got my undergraduate degree in piano, and it wasn’t until my time in college when I really began to develop a love for opera—I couldn’t get enough. What really attracted me to opera was the ability to combine my love for music with dramatic theatricality.

What helps you identify with a role and get into character?
The first thing I do for any role I’m interested in is to listen to the music—to take it in, and decide if there’s something I’m drawn to and can fully express. I enjoy doing verismo roles, which entail highly intense singing and dramatic performances. The challenge of these roles is almost like being in a triathlon—intensely preparing and readying yourself to commit mentally, physically and emotionally for a tremendous physical singing challenge—you have to be a risk taker! In order to prepare for a role I also do a wealth of external research so that I’m able to expose and embody the multi-layered dimensions of the character—it’s a lot more than just standing and singing!

What draws you to the character of Nedda?
Nedda’s wild! She’s very passionate. Though she comes from nothing, she’s drawn to the theatrical world. What’s interesting about her relationship with Canio is that in a way he saves her from this life of poverty, and exposes, trains, and immerses her into a world that she wouldn’t have been able to experience without him. Nedda’s youth and passion for life itself is ultimately what sabotages her relationship with Canio, as her desire for freedom and uninhibited love leads her to develop a relationship with Silvio. Though she recognizes the dangers in doing so, she’s willing to risk it all and truly live a life from love.

What are some challenges you face taking on the role of Nedda?
The role requires extremely passionate singing and performance, so it’s really important to know how to pace. Having a secure technique is also vital—it’s important to utilize a vocal technique that is not going to hurt you, but still deliver. And the key to it all is making the whole process look effortless—working endlessly to live by the demands of the piece, a combination of the vocals and the dramatic motivations. That kind of duality keeps me out of prison! I’m so charged by the thrill of it. This type of role is not for the faint of heart—an opera singer needs to be equipped to sing with utter understanding and control so that they can let it go and let it fly, committing to the dramatic situation. It needs to be raw.
What do you think is appealing about *Pagliacci* to audiences?

It’s short, concise, dealing with the subject matter of real people in the entertainment industry, and the raw emotions these people who live so closely together have to deal with. The backbone of this piece has a true surrealist quality indicative of painters like Salvatore Dali or Frida Kahlo, with an inability to distinguish fantasy (La Commedia) from reality (the real-life drama). The multi-layered quality of the show adds a layer of excitement and suspense for the audience, who begin to feel as if they are on stage with the chorus, watching the drama play out. Leoncavallo beautifully captured the dark psychological situations that these characters are experiencing.

What was it like to be such a young performer on the opera scene when you first started your career?

Very exciting. It takes a lot of drive and perseverance, but because it is my passion, I was hell bent and it’s what I wanted. What’s difficult in the beginning is that nothing comes easy—this is a career that very few people are handed. Going through the audition process I had to remember that rejection is bound to happen, and oftentimes it can be over factors that are completely out of my control. This can be disheartening at times, but you have to dig deep and have a lot of faith and trust. The real discipline is knowing there’s never an end—it’s your own personal development that keeps you going.

What advice would you give to young people who are interested in pursuing a career in the performing arts?

For people who are thinking of becoming a singer, they should build as many skills as they possibly can. It’s important to have a diverse musical and theatrical skill set to be appealing to audiences, which means not only studying singing but also becoming educated in movement, acting, and other areas of study that will enhance yourself as a well-rounded performer. And of course, it’s important to keep persevering and working to hone your craft, and always be willing to challenge yourself.

If you had not been involved in singing or theatre as your career, what would you be doing?

A NASCAR driver. Danica Patrick is one of my idols! Or a lawyer, I would really enjoy arguing and defending cases. I also find humanitarian work to be very fulfilling.
PROLOGUE

Introduction

Two mimes representing tragedy and comedy bring on a stage trunk and struggle to open it, from the trunk comes Tonio. The two mimes leave the stage, pushing the trunk.

TONIO
Excuse me! (bowing)
Ladies and gentlemen,
forgive me for appearing alone.
I am the Prologue.
Since the author is putting on the stage again the old Comedy of Masks, he would like to revive some of the old customs and so sends me out again to you.
But not to say, as of old, "The tears we shed are feigned! Do not alarm yourselves at our sufferings and our torments!"
No.
The author instead has sought to paint for you a scene from life.
He takes as his basis simply that the artist is a man and that he must write for men.
His inspiration was a true story.
A horde of memories was one day running through his heard, and he wrote, shedding real tears, with sobs to mark the time!
So you will see love, as real as human beings' love: You will see the sad fruit of hate.
You will hear agonies of grief, cries of rage and bitter laughter!
So think then, not of our poor theatrical costumes but of our souls, for we are men of flesh and blood.
Breathing the air of this lonely world Just like you!

I have told you his plan.
Now hear how it is unfolded.
calling towards the stage
Come. Let's begin!

He goes in, and the curtain rises.
I have told you his plan.
Now hear how it is unfolded.
calling towards the stage
Come. Let's begin!

He goes in, and the curtain rises.

ACT ONE

The scene is a crossroads in the country, at the entrance to the village. At the angle of the road, a large tree on broken ground. Almost in front of the tree, on the road, is planted a rough pole from the top of which flies a flag such as is common at popular fairs. The right of the stage is almost completely taken up with a travelling theatre. Behind the theatre there is a little wall.

The sound of an out-of-tune trumpet is heard, alternating with the banging of a drum, together with laughter, gay shouts, urchins whistling and approaching voices. Attracted by the sound and the din, a crowd of villagers of both sexes in holiday attire run in from the avenue, while Tonio the fool looks down the road to the left and then, worried by the approaching crowd, lies down in front of the theatre. It is three in the afternoon, and the August sun is burning hot.

VILLAGERS (arriving gradually)
Here they are!
They're back again.
Pagliaccio's here.
Everyone, grownups and children, follows his quips, everyone applauds his jests.
And he greets us gravely as he passes and returns to beating his big drum.
Already among the cries the children are throwing their caps into the air,
shouting and whistling once again.

CHILDREN (within)
Hey, whip up the donkey, 
good Arlecchino!

VILLAGERS
They're throwing their caps into the air. 
Shouting and whistling once again.

CANIO (within)
Go to the devil!

PEPPE (within)
Take that, you scamp!

A group of urchins runs in from the left.

VILLAGERS AND CHILDREN
Here's the cart!
Stand back, they're arriving.
Great Heavens, 
what a row!

A picturesque cart painted in varied colors and drawn by a donkey comes in, led by Peppe in Harlequin costume, while he drives the children back with his whip. On the front of the cart is sprawled Nedda in a costume between that of a gypsy and an acrobat. Behind her is placed the big drum. At the back of the cart stands Canio, in clown's clothes, holding a trumpet in his right hand and the drumstick in his left. The villagers joyously surround the cart.

ALL
Long live Pagliaccio!
Hurrah! You are the prince of clowns.
You banish all woes with your gaiety.
Hurrah!
Everyone applauds his jests, 
follows his quips.
And he greets us gravely as he passes.
Long live Pagliaccio!
Great Heavens, 
what a row!

CANIO
Thank you ...

ALL
Hurrah!

CANIO
Thank you ...

ALL
Bravo!

CANIO
May I ...

ALL
When is the play?

CANIO (banging loudly and repeatedly on the drum to drown the voices)
My friends!

ALL (approaching and stopping their ears)
Ugh! You're deafening us! Have done!

CANIO (with affected courtesy, taking off his hat with a comic gesture)
May I be allowed to speak?

ALL (laughing)
Ha, ha! We must give in; 
be quiet and listen.

CANIO
Your humble 
and obedient servant 
has prepared a grand performance 
for eleven o'clock tonight. 
(makes a comic bow) 
You will see the troubles 
of poor Pagliaccio, 
and how he's revenged 
by a clever trap. 
You will see Tonio's 
big bulk tremble 
and what a tangled 
Skein of intrigue he'll devise. 
Come and honour us, 
ladies and gentlemen, 
tonight at eleven!

ALL
We'll come, and you treat us 
to your humour. 
Tonight at eleven!

Tonio comes forward to help Nedda down from the cart; but Canio, who has already jumped down, boxes his ears.

CANIO
Get away from there. 
He takes Nedda by the arms and lifts her down.
VILLAGERS (laughing at Tonio)
Take that, gallant fellow!

CHILDREN (whistling)
Do you good!

Tonio shakes his fist at the urchins, who run away; then goes off grumbling and disappears under the curtain on the right of the theatre.

TONIO (to himself)
I'll get my own back ... you scoundrel!

A VILLAGER (to Canio)
Say, will you take a drink with us at the crossroads? Will you?

CANIO
With pleasure.

PEPPE (reappearing behind the theatre, and throwing the whip he is still holding down in front of the theatre)
Wait for me ... I'm coming too!

He goes in at the other side of the theatre to change his clothes.

CANIO (calling to the back)
Hi, Tonio, are you coming?

TONIO (from within)
I'm seeing to the donkey. Go on ahead.

A VILLAGER (jokingly)
Look out, Pagliaccio, he wants to stay here alone so as to pay court to Nedda.

CANIO (sarcastically, but frowning)
Oh! You think so? (half serious, half ironic)
Such a game, believe me, it's better not to play on me, my friends; and I speak now to Tonio and indeed to everyone.
The stage and life are not at all the same thing; if up there Pagliaccio surprises his wife with a handsome gallant in her room, he preaches a comic sermon, then calms down and allows himself to be beaten with a stick! ...
And the audience applauds and laughs gaily.
But if in earnest I should surprise Nedda ...
The story would finish differently, as truly as I'm speaking now ...
Such a game, believe me, it's better not to play on me.

NEDDA (to herself)
I don't understand.

SOME VILLAGERS
But do you seriously suspect her?

CANIO (somewhat perturbed)
I? ... Of course not! ... Forgive me ...
I adore my wife.

Canio kisses Nedda on the forehead. A bagpipe is heard offstage: all rush to the left, looking into the wings.

CHILDREN AND WOMEN (shouting)
The bagpipers! ... The bagpipers! ...

MEN
Our friends are going towards the church. They are accompanying the procession which is gaily going in couples to vespers.

In the distance, bells sound for vespers.

WOMEN
Let us go. The church bell calls us to service.

CANIO
Yes, but remember!
At eleven tonight!

The bagpipers arrive from the left in festive attire, with bright colored ribbons and flowers in their pointed hats. They are followed by a troop of villagers, also in holiday clothes. The crowd already on the stage exchanges greetings and smiles with these, then all divide into couples and groups, join the procession and move off singing, down the avenue at the back, behind the theatre.
VILLAGERS
Let us go! Let us go!
Ding dong, the vespers sound,
boys and girls quickly, in couples
come to church, ding dong!
Already the sun is about to kiss the heights.
Your mothers are watching you
so beware.
Everything is radiant with light and love,
but the old people supervise
the ardent lovers!
Ding dong, the vespers sound,
boys and girls.

_During this chorus, Canio enters behind the theatre
and takes off his clown's coat, then returns and after
smilingly waving goodbye to Nedda, goes off with
Peppe and five or six villagers. Nedda remains alone._

NEDDA (thoughtfully)
What fire there was in his look!
I lowered my eyes
for fear he should read
my secret thoughts.
Oh! if he caught me ...
He's so brutal ...
But enough: no more.
These are idle, fearful dreams!
O how glorious is the August sun!
I feel full of life, and, my senses glowing
with secret desire, I know not what I long for!
_(gazing at the sky)_
Oh what a flight of birds,
and what a chatter!
What do they seek? Where are they going?
Who knows? ...
My mother, who could tell fortunes,
understood their warbling,
and sang this song to me as a child:
Hey!
The birds chirp up aloft,
freely launched in flight like arrows.
They defy the clouds and the burning sun
and onward they fly
through the boundless sky.
Let them roam through the atmosphere,
ever eager for the glorious infinite blue:
They too follow a dream,
a chimera, as onward they fly
Through the gilded clouds.
Though the wind freshen
and the tempest roar,
with pinions spread they brave all dangers;
rain or lightning, nothing defers them,
and onward they fly

_NEDDA (interrupting him banteringly)_
That you love me? Ah! Ah!
You'll have time to tell me so
this evening, if you must ...

Tonio
Nedda!

NEDDA
Tonight!
When you're pulling faces
There on the stage.
TONIO
Don't laugh, Nedda!
You don't know how tears
wring grief out of me!

NEDDA
But for now
you can spare me the annoyance.

TONIO
Suddenly I'm in a spell,
love has overcome me!
Nedda!
with wild force
No, it is here I must tell you,
and you shall hear me,
that I love you and want you,
and that you shall be mine!

NEDDA (with studied insolence)
Oh really, master Tonio!
Does your back itch today,
or do you need
To have your ears pulled
to cool your ardour?

TONIO
You mock me! You'll regret it!
By the Cross of the Saviour!
Beware, for you will pay dearly for it.

NEDDA
You threaten me? ... Do you want me
to go and call Canio?

TONIO (moving towards her)
Not before I've kissed you.

NEDDA (recoiling)
Take care!

TONIO (still advancing, opening his arms to seize her)
Soon you shall be mine!

NEDDA (retreating towards the little theatre, sees the whip left by Peppe, takes hold of it and strikes Tonio across the face)
Scoundrel!

TONIO (giving a howl and retreating)
Ah! By the holy Virgin of the Assumption,
Nedda, I swear to you ...
you shall pay for this! ...

He goes off, threatening, to the left.

NEDDA (motionless, watching him go)
Viper, go!
Now you have revealed yourself,
Tonio the fool!
You have a mind as deformed and hideous
as your body!

SILVIO (half his body appearing as he climbs the low wall on the right, calling softly)
Nedda!

NEDDA (hastening towards him)
Silvio! At this hour,
what folly ...

SILVIO (gaily vaulting over and coming towards her)
Bah! You can be sure
that I'm taking no risk.
I saw Canio and Peppe in the tavern
from far off! ...
But I came here with care, through
the wooded path I know.

NEDDA
Had you been a moment sooner
you'd have run into Tonio.

SILVIO (laughing)
Oh! Tonio the fool!

NEDDA
The fool can be dangerous.
He loves me ...

SILVIO
Ah!

NEDDA
He told me so just now ...
and in his bestial frenzy,
trying to kiss me, he dared to rush on me ...

SILVIO
By Heaven!

NEDDA
But with the whip
I cooled the ardour of the filthy dog.

SILVIO
Will you live forever amid these worries?
Nedda! Nedda! Decide my fate.
O stay here, Nedda!
As you know, the fair is over
and everyone will be gone tomorrow.
Nedda!, Nedda!
And when you too have left here,
what will become of me ...
Of my life?

**NEDDA (touched)**
Silvio!

**SILVIO**
Nedda, Nedda, answer me.
If it is true that you love Canio no more,
if it is true that you hate
the nomadic life you lead,
if your great love is not a fiction,
let us go tonight!
Nedda, fly with me.

**NEDDA**
Do not tempt me!
Do you want to ruin my life?
Hush, Silvio, no more ...
It is folly, it is madness!
I trust in you,
to whom I have given my heart.
Do not take advantage of me,
of my feverish love!
Do not tempt me! Pity me!
And yet, who knows! It's better to leave.
Fate is against us,
what we say is in vain.
But from my heart
you can't be removed,
I will live only for that love
that you have planted in my heart!
Ah!

**SILVIO**
Ah! Nedda, let's flee!

**NEDDA**
Don't tempt me!
Do you want to be killed?

**SILVIO**
Nedda, stay!

**NEDDA**
Stop, Silvio, no more ...
it's crazy, lunacy!

**SILVIO**
What will become of me ...

**NEDDA**
I'm telling the truth ...

**SILVIO**
... when you're gone?

**NEDDA**
... you, to whom my heart belongs!

**SILVIO**
Stay!

**NEDDA**
Don't abuse me ...

**SILVIO**
Nedda!

**NEDDA**
... or my feverish love!

**SILVIO**
Let's flee!

**NEDDA**
Don't tempt me ... have pity on me!

**SILVIO**
Ay! Come on!
Ah! Fly with me.
No, you no longer love me!

**NEDDA**
What!

*Tonio appears at the back, on the left*

**TONIO (having seen him, to himself)**
I've caught you, you strumpet!

*He hurries off by the path, threatening.*

**NEDDA**
Yes, I love you, I do!

**SILVIO (lovingly trying to persuade her)**
Yet you leave tomorrow morning? ...
Then tell me why you have bewitched me
if now without pity you wish to leave me?
Why did you give me those kisses
in that burning ecstasy of pleasure?
Even if you forget those fleeting hours,
I cannot, and I still want
that burning ecstasy, those ardent kisses
which filled my heart with such fever!
NEDDA
I have forgotten nothing;
this love that shines in your eyes
has thrown me into confusion.
I want to live close by your side,
in the spell of a life of calm
and peaceful love.
I give myself to you:
You alone shall rule me, and I take y
ou and yield myself completely
Let us forget everything!

SILVIO
Let us forget everything!

NEDDA
Look into my eyes!
Kiss me! Let us forget everything!

SILVIO
I look at you, and kiss you.
Let us forget everything!

While Silvio and Nedda, still speaking, move towards the low wall, Canio and Tonio appear stealthily by the path.

TONIO (holding Canio back)
Go slowly
and you'll surprise them.

Canio advances cautiously, still held back by Tonio, and not able, from where he is, to see Silvio climbing the wall.

SILVIO
At dead of night I'll be down there.
Come down carefully and you'll find me.

Silvio disappears as Canio nears the angle of the theatre.

NEDDA (to Silvio, who has disappeared below)
Until tonight,
and then I'll be yours forever!

CANIO (who from where he is has heard these words, gives a shout)
Ah! ...

NEDDA (turns in terror and calls towards the wall)
Fly!

With one bounce Canio is at the wall: Nedda throws herself before him, but after a brief struggle he pushes her aside, vaults over the wall and disappears. Tonio stays on the left looking at Nedda, who, as if nailed to the wall, tries to hear if there is any sound of a struggle.

NEDDA
O Heaven ... Protect him! ...

CANIO (offstage)
Coward, where are you hiding?

TONIO (laughing cynically)
Ha! ... ha! ...

NEDDA (has turned at Tonio's laughter and says to him scornfully)
Bravo! Bravo, dear Tonio!

TONIO
I did what I could!

NEDDA
That's what I thought!

TONIO
But I don't give up hope
of doing much better ...

NEDDA
You fill me with disgust and loathing.

TONIO
Oh, you don't know
how happy that makes me!

Meanwhile Canio has jumped over the wall again and returns to the stage very pale, wiping the sweat off his face with a dark-coloured handkerchief.

CANIO (with intense anger)
Derision and scorn!
Nothing! He knows
that path too well.
No matter; for now you shall tell me
the name of your lover.

NEDDA
Who?

CANIO (furiously)
You, by the living God! ...
(taking a stiletto from his belt)
And if this very moment
I have not already
cut your throat,
it is because before fouling
this blade of mine
with your vile blood,
you shameless creature,
I want his name. Speak!

NEDDA
Your threats are in vain.
My lips are sealed.

CANIO
His name, his name,
woman, without delay!

NEDDA
No! No, I'll never tell you.

CANIO (furiously rushing on her with raised dagger)
By the Madonna!

Peppe, who has entered from the left, runs to Canio at
Nedda's reply and seizes the dagger, which he throws
away among the trees.

PEPPE
Master! What are you doing! ...
For the love of Heaven ...
The people are coming out of church
and are coming towards our theatre
Come, pray calm yourself!

CANIO (struggling)
Let me be, Peppe.
His name! His name!

NEDDA
No!

PEPPE
Tonio, come and hold him.

CANIO
His name!

NEDDA
Never!

PEPPE
We must go; people are coming.
Control yourself.
(Tonio takes Canio by the hand while Peppe turns to
Nedda)
And you, take yourself off

And go and get dressed.
You know that Canio
Is violent, but honest!
He pushes Nedda under the canvas and disappears
with her.

CANIO (holding his head in his hands)
Treachery! Treachery!

TONIO (softly to Canio)
Calm yourself, my master.
It is better to pretend;
her lover will be back.
Trust me.
(Canio makes a despairing gesture, but Tonio digs him
with his elbow.)
I will watch her.
Now we must begin the play.
Who knows, he may return
to see the show and betray himself!
Now come. You must pretend
if you would succeed.

PEPPE (coming out from the theatre)
Come, master,
Go and dress yourself.
And you, Tonio, beat the drum.

Tonio goes behind the theatre and Peppe also goes
back inside, while Canio despondently makes his way
slowly to the curtain.

CANIO
To act! ...
While gripped by frenzy,
I no longer know
what I'm saying or doing!
And yet ... I must ... force yourself!
Bah, are you a man?
You're a clown!
Put on your costume
and powder your face.
The audience pays and wants to laugh.
And if Arlecchino
steals Colombina from you,
laugh, Pagliaccio ...
and everyone will applaud!
Turn into jest your anguish and your sorrow,
into a grimace your sobs and your grief.
Laugh, clown, at your broken love,
laugh at the pain which poisons your heart!

In deep emotion he goes and sits at his makeup table,
devastated, and falls asleep. The curtain falls slowly.
INTERMEZZO

ACT TWO

~The next scene before the start of act two is an addition included by director Uzan Bernard, and is set to the music of Zaza~

Canio, still sitting at his makeup table, dreams of his youth when he met Nedda, then a very young girl. At this moment, Canio is replaced by a double, performed by a super. Audience sees Canio, still a young man, teaching a very young Nedda how to be a performer and an acrobat. Four other acrobats complete the troupe of actors, one representing Nedda at the age of 18. Time passes, and Canio becomes too old for the acrobatics, so he leaves his position to a younger acrobat. Finally, we see Canio, Nedda and Arlechino performing some excerpts of the commedia.

Returns to the table where Canio is now sitting and waking up. The tragedy mime returns, and starts to bring him to his costume for the performance. On the way, tragedy shows Canio that comedy is now dead on the stage—representing that the story of Pagliacci is a tragedy that won against comedy.

Then returns to the same scene as in Act One.

Tonio appears from the side of the theatre with the big drum and places himself in the angle left of the proscenium of the little theatre. Meanwhile people are arriving from every side for the performance, and Peppe is putting out benches for the women.

VILLAGERS (off-stage)
Oh! Oh, ho!
arriving
Right away! Let's make haste, friends!
Right now, let's go quickly, friends ...

TONIO
Come forward, come forward!

WOMEN
... for the play ought to begin.

MEN
Good heavens, run to get there on time!
The play ought to begin.

TONIO
Yes, from the beginning!

VILLAGERS
Right away, friends, let's hurry.
The play ought to begin.

TONIO (beating the drum)
Let's have it, come forward!

MEN
Look, how the girls are running!
What a rush, Lord!
Take your places, pretty ladies!

WOMEN
Lord, what a rush
to get in first!

TONIO
Take your places! Walk up!

VILLAGERS
Let's find a place well to the front!
Let's try to get
Well in front!
Now then, hurry up!
Get on with the play.
Why are you waiting?
We're all there.

TONIO
Walk up! Walk up!

Silvio enters at the back and takes a seat in front on the left, greeting his friends.

WOMEN (pushing and trying to sit down)
But don't push,
It's too warm, hey!
Hey, Peppe, help us
There's a seat near you!

MEN
Look! They're fighting!
They're calling for help.
Come, settle down, no shouting.
Ha! ha!
Come, seat yourselves!
Sit down, now, no shouting!

PEPPE
Sit down
And stop shouting!

Nedda comes out dressed as Colombina, with a plate to collect money. Peppe tries to settle the women.
Tonio re-enters the theatre, taking the big drum away.

SILVIO (softly to Nedda, paying for his seat)
Nedda!

NEDDA
Be careful!
He didn't see you.

SILVIO
I'll be there waiting for you.
Don't forget ...

VILLAGERS
Come here! Move quickly!
Why delay?
Why? Come!
Let's begin!
Why do you delay?

PEPPE
Heavens, what a row!
First you must pay!
Nedda, collect the money!

VILLAGERS (trying to pay all at the same time)
Here, this way!

Nedda, after leaving Silvio, takes more money for seats and then goes inside the theatre with Peppe.

THE PLAY

NEDDA - COLOMBINA

PEPPE - ARLECCHINO

CANIO - PAGLIACCI

TONIO - TADDEO

The theatre's curtain rises. The stage, poorly painted, represents a little room with two side doors and a practical window at the back. A table and two rough chairs of straw stand on the right. Nedda, dressed as Colombina is anxiously walking up and down.

COLOMBINA
My husband Pagliaccio will return only late tonight.
And why ever isn't that idiot Taddeo here yet?

The sound of a guitar is heard off-stage: Colombina rushes to the window, showing signs of amorous impatience.

ARLECCHINO (off-stage)
O Colombina, your faithful, loving Arlecchino is close at hand,
Calling you and sighing for you,
o wait for your poor swain!
Show me your sweet face,
for I long to kiss your little mouth without delay.
Love plagues me and torments me! Ah!
O Colombina, open your window to me,
for close at hand, calling you and sighing for you
is your poor Arlecchino!

COLOMBINA (turning restlessly downstage again)
The moment approaches to give the agreed signal,
and Arlecchino is waiting!

She sits down agitatedly, turning her back to the door on the right. This opens and Tonio enters in the costume of the servant Taddeo, with a well-laden basket on his left arm. He stops to gaze at Nedda with a mock-tragic air.
TADDEO
It is she!
Heavens, how beautiful she is!
The audience laughs.
If I could but reveal
to this beauteous creature
this love of mine
which would move the stones!
Her husband's far away, why not risk it?
We are alone and no one can suspect us.
Come on; let's try. Ah!

COLOMBINA (turning round)
Is that you, you dog?

TADDEO (without moving)
Yes, it's me.

COLOMBINA
And Pagliaccio has left?

TADDEO (as before)
He's left.

COLOMBINA
What are you standing there for?
Where's the chicken you bought?

TADDEO
Here it is, divine maid!
throws himself on his knees and offers the basket with
both hands to Colombina, who goes toward him
Yes, here are both of us
at your feet,
for the moment has come,
o Colombina,
to open my heart to you.
Will you hear me?
From the day ...

Colombina goes to the window, opens it and makes a
signal, then turns to Taddeo.

COLOMBINA (snatching the basket from him)
How much did you spend at the shop?

TADDEO
One fifty.
From that day my heart ...

COLOMBINA
Don't bother me, Taddeo!

him.

TADDEO
I know that you are pure
and chaste as the snow!
But though you show yourself harsh,
O cannot put you out of my mind!

ARLECCHINO (taking him by the ear, giving him a kick
and forcing him to rise)
Go and get some air!

TADDEO (retreating comically towards the right hand
door)
Heavens! they love each other!
I yield at your words
to Arlecchino
My blessing on you! ...
There ... I'll watch over you

Exit Taddeo. The audience laughs and claps.

COLOMBINA
Arlecchino!

ARLECCHINO (with exaggerated emotion)
Colombina! At last
love has yielded to our prayers.

COLOMBINA
Let's have dinner.
She takes from the drawer knives, forks and spoons
for two. Arlecchino fetches the bottle, then both sit at
the table, facing one another.
Look, my dear
what a splendid
little meal I've prepared!

ARLECCHINO
Look, my love,
what divine nectar
I have brought!

COLOMBINA and ARLECCHINO
Love loves the odours
of wine and food!

ARLECCHINO
My greedy Colombina!

COLOMBINA
My dearest toper!
ARLECCHINO (taking a small phial from under his tunic)
Colombina!
Take this drug,
give it to Pagliaccio
before he goes to bed,
and then let's fly together.

COLOMBINA
Yes, give it me.

TADDEO (throwing open the right hand door and crossing the stage with exaggerated alarm)
Beware!
Pagliaccio is here, beside himself
with rage ... and looking for a weapon!
He knows all. I'm off to shut myself in!

He rushes in to the left and locks the door.

COLOMBINA (to Arlecchino)
Fly!

ARLECCHINO (jumping through the window)
Pour the philtre in his wine.

Canio in the costume of Pagliaccio appears in the right-hand doorway.

COLOMBINA (at the window)
Until tonight,
I'll be yours for ever!

CANIO (to himself, putting his hand to his heart)
In Heaven's name!
The very same words!
(advancing to play his part)
Courage!
(aloud)
A man was here with you!

NEDDA
What nonsense!
Are you drunk?

CANIO (staring at her)
Drunk? Yes ... for the last hour.

NEDDA (resuming the play)
You've come back early.

CANIO (intently)
But in time!
Does it worry you,
dearest wife?

resuming the play
Ah! I thought you were alone,
pointing to the table
But the table's laid for two.

NEDDA
Taddeo was sitting with me;
he's locked himself in there
for fear.
toward the left door
Come on, speak! ...

TONIO (from within, in pretended fear, but meaningly)
Believe her. She is pure!
And those pious lips of hers
would scorn to tell a lie!
The audience laughs loudly.

CANIO (angrily to the spectators)
Death and damnation!
thickly to Nedda
Have done! I too have the right
to behave like any other man.
His name!

NEDDA (smiling coldly)
Whose name?

CANIO
I want the name of your lover,
of the vile wretch
in whose arms you lay,
a shameless creature!

NEDDA (still acting her part)
Pagliaccio! Pagliaccio!

CANIO
No, I am Pagliaccio no longer:
If my face is white, it is with shame
and the longing for revenge!
My manhood claims its rights again,
and my bleeding heart
needs blood to wash away the shame,
o vile woman! ...
No, I am a buffoon no longer!...
I was a fool to pick you up,
an orphan, by the roadside,
half dead from hunger,
and offer you a name and a love
which was mad and passionate!

He falls dejectedly into a chair.
SOME WOMEN
My dear, it makes me weep!
The play is so real!

SOME MEN
Silence down there!
What the devil!

SILVIO (to himself)
I can scarcely restrain myself!

CANIO (resuming and gradually becoming excited)
I hoped, such was
the blind madness I felt,
if not for love, for pity kindness!
And cheerfully I imposed
every sacrifice on my heart,
and trustingly believed more in you
than in God himself!
But only vice inhabited
your heedless soul;
you have no heart ...
you are ruled only by your passions.
Go, you are not worth my grief,
you worthless wretch;
in my contempt I could
crush you beneath my feet!

VILLAGERS
Bravo!

NEDDA (coldly, but seriously)
Well then,
if you think me so unworthy,
send me away this moment.

CANIO (mockingly)
Ha! Ha! You'd like
nothing better than to run
to your lover straight away.
You are sly!
No, by God, you shall stay
and tell me
the name of your lover.

NEDDA (trying to resume the play, with a forced smile)
Well, well, I never knew
you were so frightening!
But there's no cause for tragedy here,
for Taddeo here will tell you
that the man who was with me
just before was ... the timid
and harmless Arlecchino!

laughter in the crowd, quickly checked at Canio's attitude

CANIO (violently)
Ah! You mock me!
Do you still not understand
that I will not give you up?
His name, or your life! His name!

NEDDA (bursting out)
No, by my mother's soul!
I may be unworthy,
whatever you like, but I am
not dishonourable, by Heaven!

VILLAGERS
Are they in earnest?
It's turned serious.
Shut up down there!
It's turned dark and serious.

SILVIO
I can bear it no longer!
This is a strange play!

PEPPE
We must go out there, Tonio!

TONIO
Hush, fool!

PEPPE
I'm afraid!

NEDDA
My love is stronger
than your scorn!

CANIO
Ah!

NEDDA
I will not speak.
No! Even if you kill me!

CANIO (shouting, seizing a knife from the table)
His name! His name!

NEDDA (defiantly)
No!

SILVIO (drawing his dagger)
Saints above!
He's in earnest ...
The women retreat in fright, upsetting the benches and blocking the men's path, so that Silvio has to struggle to get to the stage. Meanwhile Canio, in a paroxysm of rage, has suddenly grasped Nedda and struck her from behind, while she tries to run towards the audience.

PEPPE and THE CROWD
What are you doing!

CANIO (to Nedda)
Take that! Take that!
In your death agony
You'll tell me!

PEPPE and THE CROWD
Stop! Stop!

NEDDA (falling in agony)
Help ... Silvio!

SILVIO (who has almost reached the stage)
Nedda!

At Silvio's voice, Canio turns like a wild beast, rushes towards him and instantly strikes him.

CANIO
Ah! It is you! Welcome!

Silvio falls as if struck by lightning.

MEN
Stop him!

WOMEN (screaming)
Jesus Maria!

As some throw themselves on Canio to disarm him and stop him, he, motionless and stupefied, lets his knife fall.

TONIO
The play is over!

The two mimes come back, and push Tonio in the trunk, while Canio sobs on the body of Nedda by the villagers.
Review Questions

Who was your favorite character, and why?

________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

What was your favorite musical performance or song?

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________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

Which scene did you find the most emotional?—Either happy, sad, tragic, exciting, etc.

________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

What was your favorite part of the performance? Explain (For example, the costumes, the orchestra, the acting, the singing, etc.)

________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
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________________________________________________________________________________
Playing the roles of the characters adds fun to the reading of the libretto. It allows you to take ownership of the opera in your own classroom. But do you know how to act?

One of the greatest teachers of acting was Constantin Stanislavski. He lived in Russia and taught his students to become “one” with the characters in the play. Prior to this, actors had often looked stiff or wooden. They would even hold poses as they recited their lines. If you have ever seen a silent movie, where actors over-act to help the audience understand the plot, you’ll have an idea of how many actors performed in theaters.

Stanislavski developed the idea that actors should not just tell a story. He felt that they should help the audience believe that the actors were really the characters they were playing. He called this idea “realistic acting”.

Stanislavski said, “the actor must first of all believe in everything that takes place onstage, and most of all, he must believe what he himself is doing. And one can only believe in the truth.”

In learning to act, Stanislavski’s performers had to master the following techniques. The goal is not to memorize them, but to know them so well that, once onstage, the actor becomes the character understudy.

Goals of the techniques:

1. Make the performer’s outward activities natural and convincing.
2. Have the actor or actress convey the inner truth of his or her part.
3. Make the life of the character dynamic and continuous.
4. Develop a strong sense of the ensemble.

Techniques for realistic acting:

(Remember, in acting, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts)

1. The actor must be relaxed in his or her role. All action should appear natural.
2. The actor must have strong concentration. Know your lines and stay in character.
3. The actor must know the importance of specifics. Every little thing counts. All gestures, tones of voice, and facial expressions reflect the inner truth of the character.
4. The actor must capture the inner truth of the character being performed. How does this character feel at this very moment in the play?
5. The actor must have the emotional recall that reflects the inner truth of the character.
6. The actor must know the who, what and how of the action onstage as it reflects the whole of the piece.
7. The actor must become one with the others in performance so that they show the audience ensemble is playing. Ensemble playing is when actors are one with their roles and share a common understanding of the director’s vision.

Active Learning

Act out the libretto, or part of it, in class. Does this help you better understand the story? Do you feel more connected with the characters?

MOT’S production of Pagliacci
The phrase “art imitates life” was much more than just a clever commentary for the creative Ruggero Leoncavallo. It is said that the libretto for his opera Pagliacci was inspired and based on true events that occurred during his own youth, growing up as a boy in Calabria, Italy. In the nearby village of Montalto, his father presided as a judge over a brutal double murder case—the likes of which bear a noticeable similarity to his fictional operatic tale.

As the story goes, a family friend of the Leoncavallo family, named Scavello, was in love with a woman in his village. However, Scavello had a rival for her affections, a man by the name of Luigi D’Alessandro. After suspecting that the sought after woman was at the D’Allesandro residence, Scavello arrived to the property and assaulted the house servant who would not answer his inquisitions. Upon the assault, Luigi and his brother chased after Scavello in a rage. According to records, on the night of March 5th 1865, as Scavello was coming out of a theater, he was ambushed and brutally stabbed by both Luigi and his brother, who had been waiting for Scavello’s exit outside. The official documents read roughly, “Proceedings filed against Luigi and Giovanni D’Alessandro, who were charged with premeditated murder committed with weapons and insidious lurking on the evening of 5 March 1865, upon the person of Gaetano Scavello of Carmine.”

Shortly after Scavello’s death, the brothers reportedly proceeded to kill the lusted after woman as well—who was left unidentified in the later court proceedings. Just before his death, Scavello was able to name Luigi and his brother as his assassins.

The murder of such a close family friend had a deep impact on the young Leoncavallo. In later years, he would go on to add fanciful details to the original story, none of which cannot be backed with full legitimacy. These new claims asserted that he had witnessed the murder before his very eyes, or, in a more fanciful tale, that the murderer was in fact a clown who had killed his wife, after finding a note from Scavello concealed in her clothes. Whatever the original story may be, it is very likely that Leoncavallo pulled some sort of dark creative inspiration from this horrific childhood memory to create the basic plotline of Pagliacci.

“The village of Montalto, Italy

Active learning:
Leoncavallo utilized his own life experiences to create the tragic tale of Pagliacci. If you were to create an opera based on some of your past experiences, which would you use and why?

“I remembered, then, the bloody tragedy that had gouged the memories of my distant childhood, and to the poor servant murdered under my eyes; and in not even twenty days of feverish work, I threw down the libretto of Pagliacci.”

~~Ruggiero Leoncavallo
In Leoncavallo's Pagliacci, the second scene is a play within a play, where Canio, Nedda, Tonio and Beppe are performing a scenario that resembles what is happening in their real lives—though their play is intended as a comedy, and the "real life" consequences are tragic. The characters they all play—Columbina, Arlecchino, Pagliaccio, and Taddeo—are stock characters from the commedia dell'arte. But what is commedia dell'arte?

The short answer is that it is an "unwritten, improvised drama" that was particularly popular during the 16th and 17th centuries, though it was actively touring from the 14th through 18th centuries. Unfortunately, the short answer is woefully inadequate to describe this most influential of theatrical forms, which touched every playwright from Shakespeare and Moliere to Beaumarchais and whose archetypes reach into the modern theater, influenced operas, and have even crept into our everyday speech. "Zany," "pants" and "harlequin" are all everyday words that come from the commedia. (Zany comes from the servant characters which are referred to as a genus as zanni. Pants is from the character Pantelone, whose costume included pantaloons, hence his name. Before commedia they were known as "Venetian breeches." Harlequin is the French version of the name Arlecchino, the most famous commedia character).

Commedia dell'arte translates literally as "comedy of artists" and can be understood as "comedy of professionals." Rather than the commedia erudite which was theater performed by amateurs from written scripts, commedia dell'arte was performed by professional actors and actresses in the streets on makeshift stages. Sometimes the best companies would perform in the theaters of noble families. In commedia dell'arte, although the words were improvised, the scenarios were clearly laid out and internalized by the players. Each player specialized in a particular "mask" or character, which they would play throughout their careers. There were several categories of mask one could specialize in. The characters were called masks because they literally wore masks which exaggerated the features and were, again, specific to the character they represented.

Commedia dell'arte influenced all subsequent theater and its masks can still be seen in modern sitcoms, classical theater and opera. Its terminology has become everyday language. It was commedia that introduced the concept of the professional actor and even introduced actresses to the general public—previously, women on stage had been banned. It is no exaggeration to claim that without commedia dell'arte acting, theater, movies and opera would look very different.

Below is a summary of some of the most famous commedia masks:

**Arlecchino**: Never pathetic, always knows: he is never the loser. Never just does something. For example, if, in the heat of the moment, his slapstick gets left on the ground, he somersaults to pick it up again. His paradox is that of having a dull mind in an agile body. Since, however, his body does not recognize the inadequacy of the mind which drives it, he is never short of a solution: the fact that he cannot read, for example, does not hinder him from divulging the contents of a letter. He responds to everything—hunger, love, danger—in a way that is taken to apocalyptic proportions and then forgotten entirely—until the next time.

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**Pagliacci Character Guide**

-Canio: Pagliaccio (a member of the zanni)
-Nedda: Columbina
-Tonio: Taddeo (a member of the zanni)
-Peppe: Arlecchino/Harlequin
Columbina: The only lucid, rational person in commedia dell’arte, analogous to Maria in Twelfth Night. Autonomous and self-sufficient, she has no negative attributes; she has enough to eat, decent clothes and no ambition to be rich. She can read and write: in fact she is very fond of books and owns several. She sings, dances, captivates, but has gone beyond her procurer origins to become a self-educated woman. The main difference between her and zanni is that whereas Arlecchino thinks on his feet, Columbina uses her brain and thinks things through. Although capricious and coquettish she is good at her job, careful with money, and will, with great reluctance, make an excellent housekeeper one day. Although she is very sexually knowing she is sometimes a virgin, when it suits her.

Pantalone: Has two characteristics only: greed and trouble with his prostate gland. Pantalone operates on the assumption that everything can be bought and sold, and this turns out to be true, with the exception of loyalty (and love). But he also loves money for its own sake and will therefore only part with it when there is no other option. He always wants to marry his daughter to a wealthy man – and avoid giving her a dowry (a gift). When things do not go his way he quickly slips into emotional extremes, particularly enraged petty tyranny. He has a long memory and never forgets or forgives the slightest past transgression. Pantalone is action, not words.

Innamorati: The lovers exist very much in their own world—and in their own world within that world. Self-obsessed and very selfish, they are more interested in what they are saying themselves and how it sounds than in what the beloved is saying. They are primarily in love with themselves, secondarily in love with love, and only consequentially in love with the beloved. What they learn, if anything, from the tribulations of the scenario is the need to reverse these priorities. They do, however, come off better than most other Commedia characters: there is no viciousness in them, and less to be reproached for – except vanity and vapidness, which, given their parents, they can hardly be blamed for. They represent the human potential for happiness.

Modified from Portland Opera’s Pagliacci Study Guide
Written by Alexis Hamilton

Active Learning

The stock characters in commedia dell’arte may have different lines, but they ultimately all serve the same function to maintain a consistent identity. This still occurs in today’s entertainment, but in a slightly different fashion. Choose your favorite television show—whether drama, sitcom, etc., and try to find similarities between those characters and the commedia stock characters listed. What is their function on the show? A hopeless “immorati?” The greedy and materialistic “Pantalone?” Or a witty and independent “Columbina?”
The opera Pagliacci is a tragic and dramatic tale, with its characters entrenched in deeply emotional quandaries. Listed below are a few of the major themes that are present within the show, and a brief explanation of how the characters manifest and perpetuate them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LOVE</td>
<td>A prominent theme in just about any opera, love plays a major role in the plot of Pagliacci. In essence, it is ultimately the source of all conflict between the characters—be it the presence of love, or its absence. Nedda’s lack of affection for Canio is ultimately what leads her to betray him and desire to run away with Silvio, while Canio’s passionate love mixed with a sense of possession over Nedda is what drives his main source of aggression and frustration, and ultimately, upon realization of Nedda’s absence of affection, what leads him to murder both Nedda and Silvio in the final scene.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BETRAYAL</td>
<td>The character interaction in Pagliacci is rampant with betrayal. Nedda and Tonio lead the pack in terms of betrayers, while Canio stands out as the most pitiful of the betrayed. Nedda expresses her betrayal of Canio by boldly having an affair with Silvio, while Tonio acts as a betrayer to both Canio and Nedda by playing devil’s advocate and intentionally sabotaging the couple’s relationship, through subtle yet effective means. Canio, unfortunately, is left as a sad representation of the dark deeds a man can commit when feeling entirely betrayed and broken-hearted.</td>
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<tr>
<td>FREEDOM</td>
<td>For the characters of Pagliacci, freedom, in one sense or another, is something that each holds dearly. Most prominently, Nedda’s famous aria speaks of how she wishes to fly away like the birds she sees on a daily basis. There is also a repetition of the phrase, “fly away,” throughout the opera, which refers to escaping from the current situation to ultimately a place more peaceful and less troublesome. Nedda’s longing for freedom, whether from the drama of the commedia or the possession of Canio, leads to her fatal demise, as Canio refuses to grant her the freedom she so deeply longs for.</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRONY</td>
<td>Pagliacci is a show that is filled with dark irony, and for the unfortunate Canio, he is most commonly the victim. The theme of, “a play within a play” turns into hell on earth for Canio, who has to play the dreadfully foolish clown Pagliaccio—embodying the very essence of joy. While in reality, his heart breaks with the realization of Nedda’s infidelity. The parallels between the commedia performance and reality are too much for Canio to bear—and in the last scene during the commedia, the irony ultimately becomes overwhelming, and he breaks character in the show to deal with his real-life conflict with Nedda.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Sources

Page 10, 14, 15, 37: Portland Opera Pagliacci Study Guide

Page 11, 12: http://www.sierrachamberopera.org/HTMLPages/kidsaboutopera.html


English Language Arts Content Standards
Standard 1, 2, 3 Meaning and Communication
All students will read and comprehend general and technical material. All students will demonstrate the ability to write clear and grammatically correct sentences, paragraphs, and compositions. All students will focus on meaning and communication as they listen, speak, view, read, and write in personal, social, occupational, and civic contexts.
Standard 4. Language
All students will use the English language effectively.
Standard 6. Voice
All students will learn to communicate information accurately and effectively and demonstrate their expressive abilities by creating oral, written, and visual texts that enlighten and engage an audience.
Standard 7. Skills and Processes
All students will demonstrate, analyze, and reflect upon the skills and processes used to communicate through listening, speaking, viewing, reading, and writing.
Standard 8. Genre and Craft of Language
All students will explore and use the characteristics of different types of texts, aesthetic elements, and mechanics—including text structure, figurative and descriptive language, spelling, punctuation, and grammar—to construct and convey meaning.
Standard 9. Depth of Understanding
All students will demonstrate understanding of the complexity of enduring issues and recurring problems by making connections and generating themes within and across texts.
Standard 10. Ideas in Action
All students will apply knowledge, ideas, and issues drawn from texts to their lives and the lives of others.
Standard 12. Critical Standards
All students will develop and apply personal, shared, and academic criteria for the employment, appreciation, and evaluation of their own and others’ oral, written, and visual texts.

Social Studies Content Standards
Standard I.2 Comprehending the Past
All students will understand narratives about major eras of American and world history by identifying the people involved, describing the setting, and sequencing the events.
Standard I.3 Analyzing and Interpreting the Past
All students will reconstruct the past by comparing interpretations written by others from a variety of perspectives and creating narratives from evidence.
Standard II.1 Diversity of People, Places, and Cultures
All students will describe, compare, and explain the locations and characteristics of places, cultures, and settlements.
Standard III.3 Democracy in Action
All students will describe the political and legal processes created to make decisions, seek consensus, and resolve conflicts in a free society.
Standard VII.1 Responsible Personal Conduct
All students will consider the effects of an individual’s actions on other people, how one acts in accordance with the rule of law, and how one acts in a virtuous and ethically responsible way as a member of society.
Mathematics Content Standards
Standard II.2 Position
Students identify locations of objects, identify location relative to other objects, and describe the effects of transformations (e.g., sliding, flipping, turning, enlarging, reducing) on an object.
Standard III.1 Collection, Organization and Presentation of Data
Students collect and explore data, organize data into a useful form, and develop skill in representing and reading data displayed in different formats.
Standard IV.2 Representation and Uses of Numbers
Students recognize that numbers are used in different ways such as counting, measuring, ordering and estimating, understand and produce multiple representations of a number, and translate among equivalent representations.

Science Content Standards
Standard I.1 Constructing New Scientific Knowledge
All students will ask questions that help them learn about the world; design and conduct investigations using appropriate methodology and technology; learn from books and other sources of information; communicate their findings using appropriate technology; and reconstruct previously learned knowledge.
Standard II.1 Reflecting on Scientific Knowledge
All students will analyze claims for their scientific merit and explain how scientists decide what constitutes scientific knowledge; how science is related to other ways of knowing; how science and technology affect our society; and how people of diverse cultures have contributed to and influenced developments in science.