

Lucia di Lammermoor

A Guide for Educators



The Met
ropolitan
Opera

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM *LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR*

MURDER, MADNESS, AND A BLOOD-SPATTERED BRIDE: *LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR*

has electrified audiences for almost two hundred years. In 1819, Sir Walter Scott published a novel about an ill-fated maid from the Lammermoor hills. Loosely based on a real-life murder that scandalized seventeenth-century Scotland, Scott's novel was grisly, gory, and one of the most popular books of its day. Emotionally raw and irresistibly morbid, the story soon made its way across Europe; a Danish musical based on the novel even featured a libretto by Hans Christian Andersen! Yet it was Gaetano Donizetti and Salvatore Cammarano—two of Italy's brightest operatic stars—who, in 1835, gave *Lucia di Lammermoor* her immortal voice.

In Donizetti's hands, Lucia became a character at once tragic and terrifying. He reveled in her madness, composing some of his most innovative and virtuosic music to portray her slide into insanity. Yet he also crafted an unforgettable story of passion, vengeance, and familial loyalty in which heartbreaking drama blends seamlessly with breathtaking vocal acrobatics. The soprano called on to perform the title role takes on a challenge akin to giving an Oscar-winning performance while swinging through the air on a trapeze, and this riveting combination of chills, thrills, and powerhouse virtuosity has made *Lucia di Lammermoor* one of the most popular operas of all time. In 1883, Lucia was the second work ever performed by the newly-opened Metropolitan Opera. It has been a beloved staple of the Met's repertoire ever since, and has brought many of the world's greatest sopranos to the Met's stage. And when the spellbinding soprano Olga Peretyatko-Mariotti tackles the title role this season, the result is sure to send shivers down your spine.

This guide presents *Lucia di Lammermoor* as a work which harnesses nineteenth-century musical and scientific innovations to tell a timeless tale of love and loss. It is designed to provide teachers and students with all the background information necessary to make the Final Dress Rehearsal experience fun and accessible. The following pages include biographical information on the composer, an introduction to the opera's literary source, and a brief historical essay that situates *Lucia di Lammermoor* within broader operatic trends. A guided listening exercise and synopses designed for young readers will bring the opera's music and story into the classroom, while activities included at the end of the guide will help students articulate their impressions of the Final Dress Rehearsal performance. Finally, a follow-up conversation will encourage students to reflect creatively on their experience at *Lucia di Lammermoor*, helping them develop the tools and confidence to engage with opera and other performing arts even after they leave the theater itself.

THE WORK:

LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR

An opera in three acts, sung in Italian
Music by Gaetano Donizetti
Libretto by Salvatore Cammarano
Based on *The Bride of Lammermoor* by
Sir Walter Scott
First performed September 26, 1835
at the Teatro di San Carlo, Naples, Italy

PRODUCTION

Roberto Abbado, Conductor
Mary Zimmerman, Production
Daniel Ostling, Set Designer
Mara Blumenfeld, Costume Designer
T.J. Gerckens, Lighting Designer
Daniel Pelzig, Choreographer

STARRING

Olga Peretyatko-Mariotti
LUCIA (soprano)

Vittorio Grigolo
EDGARDO (tenor)

Massimo Cavalletti
ENRICO (baritone)

Vitalij Kowaljow
RAIMONDO (bass)

Production a gift of The Sybil B.
Harrington Endowment Fund

Revival a gift of the Metropolitan Opera
Club

ABOUT THE METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE



Photo: Johnathan Tichler/
Metropolitan Opera

The Metropolitan Opera is a vibrant home for the most creative and talented singers, conductors, composers, musicians, stage directors, designers, visual artists, choreographers, and dancers from around the world.

The Metropolitan Opera was founded in 1883, with its first opera house built on Broadway and 39th Street by a group of wealthy businessmen who wanted their own theater. In the company's early years, the management changed course several times, first performing everything in Italian (even *Carmen* and *Lohengrin*), then everything in German (even *Aida* and *Faust*), before finally settling into a policy of performing most works in their original language.

Almost from the beginning, it was clear that the opera house on 39th Street did not have adequate stage facilities. But it was not until the Met joined with other New York institutions in forming Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts that a new home became possible. The new Metropolitan Opera House, which opened at Lincoln Center in September of 1966, was equipped with the finest technical facilities of the day.

Each season the Met stages more than 200 opera performances in New York. More than 800,000 people attend the performances in the opera house during the season, and millions more experience the Met through new media distribution initiatives and state-of-the-art technology.

This guide includes several sections with a variety of background material on *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

- **The Source, The Story, and Who's Who in *Lucia di Lammermoor***
- **A Timeline: The historical context of the opera's story and composition**
- **A Closer Look: A brief article highlighting an important aspect of Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor***
- **Guided Listening: A series of musical excerpts with questions and a roadmap to possible student responses**
- **Student Critique: A performance activity, highlighting specific aspects of this production; and topics for wrap-up discussion following students' attendance**
- **Further Resources: Recommendations for additional study, both online and in print**
- **Glossary: Common musical terms found in this guide and in the concert hall**

The materials in this guide will focus on several aspects of *Lucia di Lammermoor*:

- The historical events that inspired Sir Walter Scott's novel
- Innovative aspects of Donizetti's score
- The influence of nineteenth-century medicine and science on Lucia's famous "mad scene"
- Creative choices made by the artists of the Metropolitan Opera for this production
- The opera as a unified work of art, involving the efforts of composer, librettist, and Met artists

This guide is intended to cultivate students' interest in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, whether or not they have any prior acquaintance with opera. It includes materials for students with a wide range of musical backgrounds, and seeks to encourage them to think about opera—and the performing arts as a whole—as a medium of both entertainment and creative expression.



**Cory Weaver/
Metropolitan Opera**

SUMMARY

Two noble Scottish families, the Ravenswoods and the Ashtons, are fighting on opposite sides in a civil war. Things are looking bad for the Ravenswoods: except for one young man, named Edgardo, the whole Ravenswood family has been killed in the fighting. The Ashtons have taken over the Ravenswood family's castle, and Edgardo has been forced to flee his ancestral home. When the opera begins, however, the Ashton family has also fallen on hard times. Enrico Ashton, desperate to win back some of his lost money and power, wants his sister, Lucia, to marry the rich Arturo Bucklaw. Yet Lucia has no intention of marrying Bucklaw—because she is secretly in love with Edgardo Ravenswood! Lucia and Edgardo know that Enrico will never let them get married, but they promise always to be faithful to each other.

Edgardo must leave Scotland for a political mission in France. He promises to write to Lucia while he is away, and Lucia is confused when she receives no letters. What she doesn't realize is that her brother, Enrico, has figured out that she and Edgardo are in love and has hatched a plan to end their relationship. He steals Edgardo's letters so that Lucia will think that he has forgotten her. Then he writes a fake letter from Edgardo breaking up with Lucia. Lucia is heartbroken, but she finally agrees to marry Arturo. Her cruel brother forces her to sign a marriage contract that day. With tears in her eyes she signs the paper... just as Edgardo rushes in the door! He has returned from France. Unfortunately, Lucia is already married. Enrico is outraged that Edgardo has returned, and challenges him to a duel.

That evening, the wedding celebration is in full swing, but Lucia and Arturo are nowhere to be seen. Suddenly, Lucia appears at the top of the stairs, covered in blood. She has murdered Arturo. The horrified guests look on as Lucia, crazy with grief, imagines that she is marrying her true love, Edgardo. Then she collapses. Meanwhile, Edgardo waits at the Ravenswood cemetery, where he is scheduled to fight his duel with Enrico. A kind old priest arrives and tells him that Lucia has died. When he hears this, Edgardo despairs and stabs himself with his own dagger.



Martin Smith/English
National Opera

THE SOURCE: *THE BRIDE OF LAMMERMOOR* BY SIR WALTER SCOTT

Sir Walter Scott's family loved to tell the gruesome story of a grief-stricken bride. On August 24, 1669, Janet Dalrymple, daughter of a Scottish nobleman, married Lord David Dunbar of Baldoon. The marriage had been orchestrated by Janet's mother, a domineering woman who saw the union as politically expedient for the Dalrymple family. Janet, however, was in love with a different man, Lord Rutherford, and the arranged marriage drove her to the depths of despair. On the night of the wedding, Janet was found covered in blood and holding a knife over her grievously injured groom. Dunbar's wounds soon healed, but Janet never recovered from her psychotic episode; she died on September 12, nineteen days after her ill-fated wedding. Sir Walter Scott was born in 1771, over a century after Janet Dalrymple's death, yet the tragic tale was an integral part of his childhood. His great aunt, Margaret Swinton, claimed to have known Janet's little brother, and the story was, in effect, a prized family possession. In 1819, Scott published *The Bride of Lammermoor*, a novel based on the Dalrymple incident. He changed the name of the main character from Janet to Lucy, cast her brother as the villain instead of her mother, murdered the groom, and transposed the events to the hills of Lammermoor, in Southern Scotland; the remaining details were essentially unchanged. The novel soon became wildly popular, both in England and abroad. Nevertheless, Scott's family always viewed the story as a proprietary part of their family mythology, and Scott's mother took great pride in explaining to friends and acquaintances how the novel differed from her own version of the Dalrymple tale.



**Cory Weaver/
Metropolitan Opera**

SYNOPSIS

Act I: Ravenswood Castle, Scotland.

Watchmen search the gardens and forests surrounding Ravenswood Castle. They have heard there is an intruder on the castle grounds, and they intend to find him. Ironically, the “intruder” is none other than Edgardo Ravenswood, last surviving member of the family that once owned the castle. Banished from his ancestral home when the Ashton family took over his land, Edgardo has secretly taken up residence in the ruins of an old tower on the Ravenswood property.

The Ashton family fortunes, however, have taken a turn for the worse, and Lord Enrico Ashton is desperate. Hoping to restore his wealth and influence, Enrico plans to make his sister, Lucia, marry the wealthy Lord Arturo Bucklaw. Raimondo Bidebent, a kind priest who has always wished Lucia well, reminds Enrico that Lucia is still mourning her dead mother and thus cannot be expected to fall in love any time soon. Enrico’s friend Normanno, however, has a different opinion: he knows that Lucia goes every morning to meet a strange man on the castle grounds, and suspects it is Edgardo Ravenswood. Enrico angrily declares he’d rather see Lucia dead than let her marry Edgardo, his mortal enemy.

Lucia and her friend Alisa come to the garden fountain where Lucia and Edgardo always meet. According to a local legend, a jealous man from the Ravenswood family once stabbed the woman he loved by the fountain. Lucia thinks she has seen the murdered woman’s ghost in the water, which bubbled and turned blood-red when the ghost appeared. Edgardo arrives. He tells Lucia that he must leave for France on a political mission, but hopes to ask Enrico for her hand in marriage before he goes. Lucia begs him to keep their love secret, since she knows how furious her brother would be if he knew. Promising always to be faithful to one another, Lucia and Edgardo exchange rings. Edgardo hurries away.

Act II: Lucia's wedding day.

Many weeks have passed since Edgardo's departure for France. Enrico has tried everything to convince Lucia to marry Arturo, but neither sweetness nor threats have worked. Every time Enrico brings up the subject, Lucia says she is already engaged to Edgardo. Secretly, however, Lucia wonders why Edgardo never writes to her. What she doesn't realize is that Enrico and Normanno have devised a wicked trick: they have stolen Edgardo's letters and replaced them with a fake letter breaking off Lucia and Edgardo's engagement. Raimondo doesn't realize that Enrico is a cruel liar, and he believes the false letter from "Edgardo" is real. He tells Lucia to marry Arturo for her family's sake. Heartbroken, Lucia finally agrees.

A great trumpet fanfare announces Arturo's arrival at the castle. Enrico has told everyone that Lucia will marry Arturo, and a large crowd has gathered to greet him. Lucia, however, is nowhere to be seen. When she finally enters, Lucia seems frightened and distracted. Enrico tells her to sign the marriage contract immediately. With a shaky hand, she signs the paper—just as her beloved Edgardo rushes through the door! Enrico is shocked by his enemy's unexpected appearance, Edgardo is heartbroken by Lucia's marriage, and both men are furious at each other. The party descends into chaos while Lucia, horrified that she has signed her life away at the very moment of Edgardo's return, sits all alone, lost in her own, sad world.

Act III: That evening.

As a storm rages outside, Enrico comes to the ruined tower to pay Edgardo a visit. The marriage contract is signed, and Lucia cannot back out of the wedding, but Enrico is still furious about his sister's love for his arch enemy. He has come to challenge Edgardo to a duel. The two men agree to meet the following morning in the Ravenswood cemetery.

Back at the castle, the guests celebrate Lucia and Arturo's wedding. Suddenly, Raimondo enters. He has terrifying news: he was walking through the upstairs hallway when he heard screams. He opened the door of Lucia's room and found Lucia clutching a dagger – and Arturo dead in a pool of blood. Lucia has clearly gone mad. As he says this, Lucia appears at the top of the stairs. She is covered in blood and still carries the bloody dagger. Slowly, hesitantly, she descends the staircase toward the gathered guests. "Edgardo," she says, staring at the dagger with a ghoulish smile on her face, "Arturo is gone. Now I can be yours again!" In a fit of delirium, she acts out her wedding to Edgardo. The guests look on, horrified, as she tears her bloody veil to pieces and collapses at the foot of the stairs.

Edgardo waits at the Ravenswood cemetery for his fight with Enrico. He has lost his whole family, and now Lucia. Standing among the tombs of his ancestors, he feels ready join them in death. A group of somber men arrive, lamenting the fate of a "poor girl." "Who is this poor girl?" Edgardo asks. "It is Lucia," they reply, "Love has driven her mad." Raimondo arrives to tell Edgardo that Lucia has died. Edgardo can hardly believe his ears. Crazy with grief, he thinks he sees Lucia's ghost walking through the graveyard. Taking out his dagger, Edgardo drives it into his own heart.

VOICE TYPE

Since the early 19th century, singing voices have usually been classified in six basic types, three male and three female, according to their range:

SOPRANO

the highest-pitched type of human voice, normally possessed only by women and boys

MEZZO-SOPRANO

the female voice whose range lies between the soprano and the contralto (Italian "mezzo"=middle, medium)

CONTRALTO

the lowest female voice, also called an alto

COUNTERTENOR

a male singing voice whose vocal range is equivalent to that of a contralto, mezzo-soprano, or (less frequently) a soprano, usually through the use of falsetto

TENOR

the highest naturally occurring voice type in adult males

BARITONE

the male voice lying below the tenor and above the bass

BASS

the lowest male voice

WHO'S WHO IN *LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR*

Character		Pronunciation Guide	Voice Type	The Lowdown
Lucia	A young noblewoman from Scotland	loo-CHEE-yah	soprano	A young woman in love with her family's arch enemy. When her brother forces her into a marriage of political convenience with a man she does not love, the grief will drive her mad.
Edgardo	Lord of Ravenswood	ed-GAHR-doe	tenor	Lucia's boyfriend, but unfortunately, also her brother's worst enemy. This makes it impossible for Edgardo and Lucia to be together.
Enrico Ashton	Lord of Lammermoor, Lucia's brother	ehn-REE-ko	baritone	Desperate to save his family's fortune and reputation, Enrico is prepared to sell his sister's happiness to the highest bidder, regardless of the ultimate cost.
Lord Arturo Bucklaw	Lucia's fiancé	ar-TOO-roe	tenor	Enrico's political ally and the man Lucia must marry.
Raimondo Bidebent	A priest, and Lucia's tutor	rye-MOHN-doe	bass	Despite his loyalty to Enrico, he feels sorry for Lucia and wants to help her.
Alisa	Lucia's companion	ah-LEE-zah	mezzo-Soprano	Lucia's friend and confidante, she worries that Lucia's relationship with Edgardo will end in disaster.
Normanno	Leader of Enrico's guards	nor-MAHN-no	tenor	Enrico's cruel sidekick, he helps Enrico trick Lucia into believing Edgardo doesn't love her.

- 1797** Gaetano Donizetti is born in Bergamo, a city in northern Italy. Although his family is poor, with six children to support and no money for music lessons, the boy's talents are soon evident, and he receives a scholarship to study music at the cathedral of Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo.
- 1811** The music school at Santa Maria Maggiore puts on their annual play, *Il Piccolo Compositore di Musica* ("The Little Music Composer"). Donizetti, only fourteen years old, is cast in the lead role. His part includes the prescient lines: "I have a vast mind, a quick talent, and ready imagination. I am a thunderbolt at composing."
- 1815** Donizetti travels to Bologna to continue his studies at the Liceo Filarmonico, one of the top music schools in northern Italy. He will return to Bergamo two years later.
- 1819** Sir Walter Scott completes his novel *The Bride of Lammermoor* in April; it is published in June. It will become one of the most popular books of the nineteenth century.
- 1822** Donizetti, not quite twenty-five years old, is invited by the impresario Domenico Barbaja to Naples. Barbaja is one of the most important producers of opera in Italy, and Naples is the operatic capital of the southern part of the peninsula. (In northern Italy, the preeminent city for opera is Milan.) Donizetti will reside in Naples for the next sixteen years.
- 1827** Donizetti signs a contract with Barbaja, committing himself to composing four new operas per year for the Neapolitan theaters. The following year, he is appointed director of the royal theaters of Naples, a position of considerable power and prestige. His Neapolitan obligations constitute a full-time job, yet Donizetti continues to write operas on the side for the other major opera houses in Italy as well.
- 1830** *Anna Bolena*, Donizetti's opera about the doomed English queen Anne Boleyn, premieres in Milan. It is a tremendous hit and soon appears in Paris and London, giving Donizetti his first taste of international fame.



Gaetano Donizetti

- **1835** At the end of May, Donizetti writes to the Neapolitan theatrical censors asking them to approve an opera based on Walter Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor*. Donizetti completes the opera on July 6. From beginning to end, he has composed the work in fewer than six weeks, and is eager to bring the new opera to the stage. Unfortunately, the Teatro di San Carlo is on the verge of bankruptcy. The soprano cast as Lucia threatens to go on strike until the singers are paid, and rehearsals for the new opera do not begin until the middle of August. After this bumpy beginning, *Lucia di Lammermoor* finally premieres on September 26 at the Teatro di San Carlo. It is an instant hit.

This same year, Donizetti receives his first commission to write an opera for a theater outside Italy. In fact, the commission, for the Théâtre-Italien in Paris, comes from none other than Gioacchino Rossini, one of the most famous composers in the world.

- **1837** *Lucia di Lammermoor* premieres in Paris, its first performance outside of Italy. The following year, it is performed in London. By the end of the decade, the opera will have been performed to thunderous acclaim on four continents.
- **1838** Following the untimely death of his wife and a series of disappointing professional setbacks in Italy, Donizetti moves to Paris. Nevertheless, his popularity in Italy continues to grow. Between 1838 and 1848, one out of every four operas performed in Italy is by Donizetti.
- **1842** After living in Paris for four years, Donizetti is offered a position as music director at the court of Vienna. He is thrilled by the offer, which is wildly prestigious, comes with an enormous salary, and involves (as Donizetti himself will boast) "doing nothing." Yet Donizetti is far from idle. He splits his residence between Vienna and Paris, makes regular voyages to Italy, and continues composing operas at a tremendous rate.
- **1846** Suffering from the illness that will ultimately end his life, Donizetti is confined to a hospital outside of Paris. The following year, his doctors will grant his request to be sent back to Bergamo.
- **1848** Donizetti dies in Bergamo on April 8. Despite Donizetti's fame, the news of his death is overshadowed by a political uprising against the Austrians who rule northern Italy. He is buried in a local cemetery, but in 1875, his remains will be moved to Bergamo's cathedral of Santa Maria Maggiore.
- **1838** On October 23, the Metropolitan Opera celebrates its grand opening. The very next night, the Met performs *Lucia di Lammermoor* for the first time. It has remained a beloved staple of the Met's repertoire ever since.

MADLY IN LOVE: LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR AND OPERATIC INSANITY

Lucia di Lammermoor’s “mad scene” is one of the most famous moments in all of opera—and with good reason. It is a musical and emotional roller-coaster ride, filled with fake blood, hallucinations, and stunning coloratura. Yet mad scenes (and the extraordinary displays of virtuosity they engendered) have always been popular in opera. So what makes Lucia’s madness so memorable?

In one of the earliest operas ever written, Claudio Monteverdi’s *L’Orfeo* (1607), the Greek musician Orpheus goes mad with grief after his wife, Eurydice, is bitten by a snake and dies. *L’Orfeo* predates *Lucia di Lammermoor* by more than two centuries, yet the basic musical and dramatic elements of the mad scene were already present in Monteverdi’s work. Sharp contrasts of speed and volume mimicked unpredictable mood swings, agitated music in the orchestra represented the hero’s turbulent mental state, and the death of a beloved (or love otherwise denied) would become the main catalyst for a hero’s breakdown. (Note that the “mad” in “mad scenes” always refers to insanity, never anger.) Operatic styles would evolve over time, yet these fundamental traits of the mad scene remained the same.

For Donizetti, however, Lucia’s mad scene called for much more than the standard compositional tricks. His first clever trick was to bring back a melody from the opera’s Act I love duet, in which Lucia and Edgardo promise always to be faithful to one another. During the Act III mad scene, the orchestra plays this love theme as Lucia, crazed with grief, fantasizes that she is marrying Edgardo. By the end of the nineteenth century, the reprise of musical motifs would be a common compositional trick, but in 1835, when Donizetti wrote *Lucia di Lammermoor*, it was a highly innovative move. Moreover, the libretto makes clear that no one besides Lucia can hear the “celestial sound” of the duet’s melody, so the recurring melody is like an auditory hallucination.

Donizetti’s second major innovation was the use of the “glass harmonica,” an instrument invented in 1761 by Benjamin Franklin. The glass harmonica is based on the same acoustic principle as “playing” a wine glass: if you dip your finger in water and rub it around the rim of a crystal goblet, an eerie, ethereal sound will result. Franklin’s invention was essentially to tune a series of such goblets to different pitches in order to play a melody. The glass harmonica gave Lucia’s mad scene a spooky, supernatural atmosphere, yet Donizetti’s use of the instrument was likely based on more than just its ghostly timbre. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was generally believed that glass harmonicas had a physiological effect on listeners. The Viennese doctor Anton Mesmer (from whose name we get the word “mesmerize”) claimed that the glass harmonica’s sound could cure illness; other doctors believed that the instrument’s vibrations could drive listeners—and especially women—crazy. It was thus the perfect instrument for Donizetti’s delirious Lucia. Unfortunately, the musician scheduled to play the glass harmonica at *Lucia di Lammermoor*’s 1835 premiere quit a few days before the first performance, and Donizetti had to call in a flutist to play the lines. Today, opera companies can choose whether they want to use the flute or the glass harmonica to bring Lucia’s wild, wonderful mad scene to life.



Dame Joan Sutherland sings the title role in the Mad Scene of *Lucia di Lammermoor*
 Louis Mélançon/Metropolitan Opera Archives

The Guided Listening Activities are designed to introduce students to a selection of memorable moments from the opera. They include information on what is happening dramatically, a description of the musical style, and a roadmap of musical features to listen for. Guided Listening Activities can be used by students and teachers of varying levels of musical experience.

IN PREPARATION

For this activity, teachers will need access to a recording of *Lucia di Lammermoor* and the libretto.

"REGNAVA NEL SILENZIO ... QUANDO RAPITO IN ESTASI"

Lucia goes every night to meet Edgardo by a fountain on the Ravenswood estate. One night, as she waits with her companion, Alisa, for Edgardo's arrival, she admits that she has had a frightening vision. According to local lore, a Ravenswood man once stabbed his beloved in a fit of jealousy, and Lucia has seen the murdered woman's ghost in the fountain's bubbling waters. Alisa suggests that the ghost is a dark omen, and warns that Lucia's relationship with her brother Enrico's arch enemy cannot end well, but Lucia refuses to listen.

What to listen for:

- The "double aria" format (explained below) and the dramatic structure of the scene as a whole
- How different orchestral timbres creates the emotional backdrop for Lucia's story
- The coloratura and ornamentation that make the arias sound flashy and virtuosic

- (00:00) The first aria in a "double aria" pair establishes or describes a dramatic problem, something that will be solved over the course of the opera. Like any good storyteller, Lucia begins by setting the scene. She describes a dark, silent night, broken only by a ray of moonlight glowing on the fountain. The orchestra's gentle, steady accompaniment perfectly illustrates the stillness of the evening and the soft splashing of the fountain's water.
- (00:55) A solo flute plays a short melody as Lucia recalls hearing a "soft lament," as though the flute itself is singing the plaintive, wordless song that Lucia describes.
- (01:11) If you are following along with the libretto text and translation, you might notice that, up to this point Lucia, has sung each word only once, and her melody has been very smooth. When she arrives on the words "l'ombra mostrarsi a me" ("the specter appeared to me"), however, her melody gets choppy and jagged, and she repeats the phrase several times, indicating a strong outburst of emotion.
- (01:38) Lucia returns to her smooth, narrative melody. When she says she saw the ghost's "lips move as if speaking," you will hear the solo flute again.
- (02:36) Lucia once again gets very emotional as she describes the water of the fountain turning into blood. Listen to the way her voice seems to tremble as she sings.
- (03:27) Between the two solos of the double aria form, there is typically a portion of dialogue that helps clarify what is going on. Here, Alisa expresses her concern about Lucia's romance and warns Lucia to proceed with caution. Ask your students how this section compares to what came before. Does it help them understand what is happening onstage? Why and how?
- (04:13) The second aria in the double aria pair is called a cabaletta, and it is used to express the main character's emotions. Cabalettas are always very virtuosic, and are a great opportunity for a singer to show off their vocal prowess. Listen especially for two kinds of ornamentation: trills (when a singer oscillates quickly between two notes, like at 04:36), and melismas (when a single syllable of text is set to many different notes, like at 05:31). The frequent leaps from low to high notes (for instance, at 05:37) also make the aria sound exciting and impressive.
- (05:36) "When I am near Edgardo, heaven seems to open for me," Lucia says. Listen to how her melody slows down and gets very expansive, illustrating the gates of heaven opening in front of her.
- (06:05) Despite Lucia's optimism, Alisa is still worried. The quick notes in the orchestra perfectly illustrate her anxiety.
- (06:30) Interrupting Alisa with a single long note, Lucia returns to her melody from the beginning of the *cabaletta*. Listen carefully, however, and you will notice that the melody has even more ornaments than it did before. This is a common technique in cabalettas, since it makes the end of the aria sound extra impressive. Note that these embellishments were not written down by Donizetti; rather, Donizetti expected his singers to write or improvise their own embellishments, a tradition that continues to this day.

"CHI MI FRENA IN TAL MOMENTO?"

Even though Lucia loves only Edgardo, her brother, Enrico, is forcing her to marry Lord Arturo Bucklaw. A large group of wedding guests assembles at the castle, and Lucia signs the marriage contract. Just then, there is a commotion in the hall... and Lucia's beloved Edgardo rushes in! As the guests look on, Enrico, Edgardo, Lucia, Arturo, Raimondo, and Alisa all describe the complex emotions they are feeling. This is an example of an ensemble scene; since it includes six individual lines of music all working together, it is called a "sextet."

What to listen for:

- How Donizetti organizes smaller groups of singers within the larger ensemble to reflect the characters' relationships
- The slow addition of voices to create a musical trajectory across the scene
- The use of a special technique, called "pizzicato," in the orchestra

- (00:00) The brass instruments play a short introduction. Brass have traditionally been used to herald the arrival of the nobility, and here they announce Edgardo's entrance.
- (00:12) The strings begin playing, but not with their bows. Rather, the strings are plucked, an effect called "pizzicato." This makes the accompaniment seem light but agitated.
- (00:18) Edgardo and Enrico begin singing. Although they are singing at the same time, they are actually singing different melodies and lyrics. Edgardo wonders what is keeping him from attacking Enrico, and he realizes that it is the anguish he sees on his beloved Lucia's face. Enrico, too, observes Lucia's pain and confusion. Does Enrico's response to Lucia's expression surprise you? Based on the lyrics, do you think Edgardo and Enrico are speaking to each other, or to themselves?
- (01:06) Lucia and Raimondo begin singing. Listen carefully and you will hear that Lucia sings the same melody that Edgardo just sang. It may be difficult to hear, but Raimondo sings the same melody that Enrico sang. Why do you think Donizetti had Lucia and Edgardo sing the same melody?
- (01:11) Occasionally you will hear musical interjections from Enrico and Edgardo; here, Enrico repeats the line "è mio sangue" ("she's my sister"); at (01:17), Edgardo repeats "chi mi frena?" ("What restrains my fury?"). By weaving these fragments into the larger musical texture, Donizetti adds musical and dramatic complexity to the ensemble scene.
- (01:50) The three male voices drop out for a few seconds as Lucia sings a soaring melisma on the words "even tears have forsaken me." She has been betrayed or abandoned by all the men in her life, and her short solo reflects her loneliness and pain.
- (02:03) Finally, Alisa, Arturo, and the chorus of onlookers join the ensemble. Although Alisa and Arturo both have solo melodies, their entry alongside the chorus implies that they are little more than bystanders watching the tragic events unfurl.
- (02:16) As a soprano, Lucia has by far the highest vocal range of any of the main characters in the scene. Thus, it is easy to hear her voice piercing through the rich texture of the ensemble, an effect which makes her seem isolated and alone despite the mass of people around her.

"IL DOLCE SUONO ... SPARGI D'AMAR PIANTO"

Lucia and Arturo's wedding celebration is in full swing when Raimondo suddenly arrives, a look of horror on his face. He has just found Arturo lying in a pool of blood—and Lucia standing over him holding a bloody knife. Soon, Lucia appears at the top of the stairs, drenched with Arturo's blood. Flashing between tenderness and fury, paranoia and joy, Lucia acts out her "wedding" to Edgardo. She tears her bloody veil to pieces, then collapses at the foot of the stairs. This is one of the most famous "mad scenes" in all of opera.

What to listen for:

- The quick changes and sharp contrasts in what Lucia says and sings, a classic hallmark of mad scenes
- The return of a melody from earlier in the opera, which makes it seem like Lucia is hearing things
- Lucia's extraordinarily fast and flashy coloratura (this is one of the most difficult arias ever written)

- (00:00) From somewhere, seemingly far away, there comes a soft melody. In some productions, this is played by an unusual instrument called the glass harmonica; here, it is played by flutes. This flute solo is the "sweet sound of Edgardo's voice" that Lucia imagines she is hearing.
- (00:53) Lucia begins speaking directly to Edgardo. Since Edgardo is not at the wedding celebration, Lucia is evidently seeing things.
- (01:36) The solo flute returns. "An icy chill pierces my breast," Lucia says, "and every one of my nerves is trembling." In some performances, this melody is played by glass harmonica, and in the early nineteenth century, when Donizetti wrote *Lucia di Lammermoor*, it was actually believed that the sound of the glass harmonica could affect the nervous system and drive people (and especially women) crazy.
- (02:06) The orchestral accompaniment suddenly becomes agitated. "Sit with me by the fountain for a while," Lucia begs Edgardo. The fountain, of course, is both their private meeting place and the place where Lucia saw the blood-covered ghost. The soaring melismas reflect Lucia's strange euphoria, while the short, choppy melodies reflect her mental instability.
- (02:54) Flutes begin to play the main melody from the Act I love duet. (If your students are curious, you can find recordings of this duet by searching for "Verranno a te sull'aure.") Although the compositional technique of bringing back musical motifs would become common later in the nineteenth century, in Donizetti's time it was considered very innovative.
- (03:06) Quick as a blink, the music becomes breathless and agitated once again, as Lucia imagines that she sees the ghost rising from the water. Only one minute before, Lucia was inviting Edgardo to sit with her at the fountain. Now, however, the fountain has become a place of horror, as the imagined ghost pushes Lucia and Edgardo away from each other. Lucia's hallucination is getting more and more powerful and frightening with each passing moment.
- (03:35) With another abrupt emotional change, Lucia moves from abject terror to giddy happiness as she imagines standing with Edgardo in front of an altar strewn with roses. She thinks she hears the "celestial" sound of a wedding hymn, and, turning to Raimondo, says that he must hear it, as well. Of course, the assembled guests see no altar and hear no music, and they are terrified by Lucia's hallucinations.
- (06:08) With a crazed laugh, Lucia begins acting out her wedding to Edgardo. She can smell the incense in the church, and sees the minister standing before her. Now there are two flutes playing in the background, perhaps representing the two figures she imagines standing before the altar: Edgardo and herself.
- (07:45) The guests watch Lucia's breakdown with horror. The members of the chorus sing in unison, but Lucia sings something completely different, since her version of reality is now entirely divorced from theirs.
- (08:27) Listen to how Lucia's melody interacts with the melody of the solo flute, which represents the voice of her beloved Edgardo. Sometimes Lucia and the flute sing together, sometimes they take turns; in other words, it is just like a duet!
- (10:52) Lucia sings the melody from the Act I love duet herself, but breaks off half-way through the phrase and returns to her wordless coloratura.
- (11:41) Enrico rushes in. He is appalled by what Lucia has done. Raimondo tries to defend her, and Lucia seems to be begging her brother for forgiveness. Then, Enrico realizes that Lucia thinks he is Edgardo. Ask your students: is there a point at which it becomes clear that Lucia is still delirious, and has no idea to whom she is really speaking?
- (14:26) Taking her bloody veil in her hands, Lucia begins to tear it to pieces. The veil represents her unhappiness on earth, and now she wishes only to be with Edgardo in heaven. This is the beginning of the cabaletta of this scene, and you might notice that its structure is similar to the cabaletta "Quando rapito in estasi," discussed above. Again, listen especially for the soaring melismas, very fast trills, and big leaps to sparkling high notes.
- (16:14) The onlookers are appalled by what has happened to Lucia, and even Enrico feels bitter remorse for the cruel scheme that drove Lucia to her wits' end.
- (16:28) Lucia repeats the cabaletta's melody and text, now with additional ornamentation. As in "Quando rapito in estasi," it is up to the soprano to add the embellishments that best suit her interpretation of the character and her voice. The soprano singing this excerpt is Natalie Dessay; does she sing any embellishments you particularly like?
- (18:24) By now, Lucia is on the brink of death, and the soprano who plays her has been singing non-stop for about twenty minutes. Nevertheless, she goes out with a bang, singing a stunning E-flat—one of the highest notes a human can sing!

IN PREPARATION

For this activity, students will need the *My Highs & Lows* reproducible handout found in the back of this guide.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND *LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR*

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-12.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-12.1d

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

ENCOURAGING STUDENT RESPONSE IN ATTENDING THE FINAL DRESS REHEARSAL

Watching and listening to a performance is a unique experience that takes students beyond the printed page to an immersion in images, sound, interpretation, technology, drama, skill, and craft. Performance activities help students analyze different aspects of the experience and engage critically with the performance. They will consider the creative choices that have been made for the particular production they are watching and examine different aspects of the performance.

The Student Critique activity incorporates a reproducible sheet. Students should bring this activity sheet to the final dress rehearsal and fill it out during intermission and/or after the final curtain. The activity directs attention to details of the production that might otherwise go unnoticed.

The activity sheet is called *My Highs & Lows*. It serves to guide students toward a consistent set of objective observations, as well as to help them articulate their own opinions. It is designed to enrich the students' understanding of the art form as a whole. The ratings system encourages students to express their critique: use these ratings to spark discussions that require careful, critical thinking.

The *My Highs & Lows* handout can be found at the back of this guide.

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION

Start the class with an open discussion of the Met performance. What did students like? What didn't they? Did anything surprise them? What would they like to see or hear again? What would they have done differently? The discussion offers an opportunity to apply the notes on students' My Highs & Lows sheet, as well as their thoughts about the visual design of the Met production – in short, to see themselves as *Lucia di Lammermoor* experts.

Lucia di Lammermoor features one of the most famous characters ever written for the operatic stage, and many of the world's greatest singers have relished tackling the challenges of the title role. Yet bringing the opera to life requires much more than a soprano capable of singing dizzily high notes. Before, during, and after each performance of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, a tireless team of directors and designers works behind the scenes to create the intricately-detailed show you see on the stage. Now that your students have attended the Final Dress performance, ask them to think about how the many elements of the opera—music, acting, costumes, stage sets, wigs, makeup, etc.—work together to tell Lucia's tragic tale. The following questions may facilitate your discussion.

- Ghosts are an important part of *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Lucia recalls seeing a ghost by the fountain, and at the end of the opera Edgardo sees Lucia's ghost wandering in the graveyard. Do you think these ghosts were real, or were Lucia and Edgardo imagining things?
- Why does Enrico force Lucia to marry Arturo? Is it fair for him to demand this sacrifice from his sister? Do you think he has her best interests at heart?
- Both Enrico and Edgardo are driven by the desire for revenge. Why? Do either of them achieve this goal?
- How did Lucia's madness affect how you viewed the character? Did you feel sorry for her? Frightened of her? Could Lucia's breakdown have been avoided?
- Would you like to sing (or act) a role like Lucia? Why or why not? What would be particularly challenging about such a role?

Donizetti's opera was originally set in the seventeenth century, yet Met director Mary Zimmerman moved the action forward to the nineteenth century. Setting an opera in a new time or place is a common technique in opera direction, since the major themes of an opera like *Lucia di Lammermoor*—illicit love, familial allegiance, and the tension between the two—are timeless. Begin by asking your students to think of other stories (from novels, movies, TV shows, etc.) that deal with similar themes. Then ask them to imagine they are directing a production of *Lucia di Lammermoor* that moves the action into a different time or place. How would they do it? For instance, they might imagine the Ravenswoods and Ashtons as rival mob families, or as British and American families fighting each other during the Revolutionary War. What would the stage look like for this new production? What would the costumes look like? How might this new setting change the audience's perception of Lucia's story?

Lastly, remember that opera is a multi-media art form: any and all aspects of the performance your students have just seen—including the act of seeing it live—are important factors contributing to the overall experience. Ask your students for any final thoughts and impressions. What did they find most memorable?

FURTHER RESOURCES

IN PRINT

Finger, Stanley and David A. Gallo. "The Music of Madness: Franklin's Armonica and the Vulnerable Nervous System." *Neurology of the Arts: Painting, Music, Literature*, ed. Frank Clifford Rose, 207-235. London: Imperial College Press, 2004.
A fascinating history of the glass harmonica, with special focus on the instrument's medical uses.

Scott, Walter. *The Bride of Lammermoor*. Edited by J. H. Alexander, with an introduction by Kathryn Sutherland. London: Penguin, 2000.
The Penguin Classics edition of Sir Walter Scott's novel, with an extensive introduction, a chronology of Scott's life and work, and further suggested reading.

ONLINE

Ashley, Tim. "Out of their minds." *The Guardian*, July 4, 2002. <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2002/jul/05/shopping.artsfeatures>
A good introduction to the genre of "mad scenes" in nineteenth-century opera.

The Metropolitan Opera. "Lucia di Lammermoor: Behind the Scenes." <http://www.metopera.org/discover/video/?videoName=lucia-di-lammermoor-behind-the-scenes&videoid=957883269001>
A behind-the-scenes video from the Met's 2011 Live in HD transmission of Lucia di Lammermoor. A remarkable look at how the giant scenery at the Met fits together—and fits onstage!

The Metropolitan Opera. "I Puritani: 'Vien, diletto, è in ciel la luna' (Anna Netrebko)." <http://www.metopera.org/discover/video/?videoName=i-puritani-vien-diletto-e-in-ciel-la-luna-anna-netrebko&videoid=2168047846001>
If your students are intrigued by Lucia's mad scene, they may enjoy watching another of opera's great mad scenes: "Vien, diletto," from Vincenzo Bellini's I Puritani. The above link is from a recent performance at the Metropolitan Opera; a synopsis of the opera's plot can be found here: <http://www.metopera.org/Discover/Synposes-Archive/I-Puritani/>

Parker, Roger. "Lucia di Lammermoor's mad tragedy in Donizetti's mad life." *The Guardian*, January 28, 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2010/jan/28/lucia-di-lammermoor-donizetti>
A brief history of how Lucia's mad scene has changed over time, written by one of the world's leading opera scholars.

The Royal Opera House. "The sound of opera's great 'Mad Scene'—the Glass Harmonica," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfN1Y_8Ngxk
A musician tasked with playing the glass harmonica for Lucia's mad scene explains how the instrument works, discusses why Donizetti used a glass harmonica, and plays short excerpts from Donizetti's score.

Sarkis, Stephanie A. "11 Warning Signs of Gaslighting in Relationships." *Psychology Today*, January 22, 2017. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/here-there-and-everywhere/201701/11-warning-signs-gaslighting-in-relationships>
Gaslighting is a form of manipulation and abuse in which an abuser repeatedly tells a victim that the victim's perception of reality is faulty. (For more on the history of the term, see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaslighting>.) After reading Lucia di Lammermoor's synopsis and/or seeing the opera, your students might find it educational to discuss the nature of the relationship between Lucia and her abusive brother. This article lists eleven common techniques of "gaslighting"; how many of these are familiar from how Enrico treats Lucia?

act/scene

Acts and scenes are ways of categorizing sections of operas. An act is a large-scale division of an opera, and each opera will typically include from two to five acts. Acts can be subdivided into scenes, which are often differentiated by a change in setting or characters.

adagio

Literally “at ease,” adagio is a tempo marking that indicates a slow speed. An adagio tempo marking indicates that the performer should play in a slow and leisurely style.

allegro

Italian for “cheerful” or “joyful,” Allegro is the most common tempo marking in Western music, indicating a moderately fast to quick speed.

aria

A song for solo voice accompanied by orchestra. In opera, arias mostly appear during a pause in dramatic action when a character is reflecting musically on his or her emotions. Most arias are lyrical, with a tune that can be hummed, and many arias include musical repetition. For example, the earliest arias in opera consist of music sung with different stanzas of text (strophic arias). Another type of aria, da capo arias, became common by the eighteenth century and feature the return of the opening music and text after a contrasting middle section. Nineteenth-century Italian arias often feature a two-part form that showcases an intensification of emotion from the first section (the cantabile) to the second section (the cabaletta).

articulation

The smoothness or hardness with which a note is begun and ended. Articulation is a way of indicating the degree to which each note connects to the next, and can be seen while watching the bow of a stringed instrument player. A note can be attacked sharply and made short, or it can flow smoothly into the next note.

baritone

Literally “deep sounding,” a baritone is what a typical male voice sounds like—the term refers to a male singer with a low but not extremely low vocal range. A baritone will sing notes that are higher than those sung by a bass and lower than those sung by a tenor. Uncommon until the nineteenth century, baritone roles have grown in popularity in opera since the works of Verdi, who often reserved the voice type for villains.

baroque

A period of music history lasting from approximately 1600 to 1750. The beginning of the Baroque period coincides with the invention of opera as a genre, and its end coincides with the death of the composer Johann Sebastian Bach. The Baroque period saw the rise of modern tonality, an expansion of performing forces, and increased ornamentation. The term “baroque” means bizarre or exaggerated, and was used by critics in the Eighteenth century critics who preferred a simpler and less-ornamented style.

bass

The lowest sounding line in music. Bass also refers to the lowest singing range for the male voice. Opera composers often choose a bass voice to sing one of two opposite types of roles: comic characters or dramatic and serious characters. For example, Mozart and Rossini wrote comic parts for bass voice, using musical repetition and low register for comic effect. Wagner and Mozart wrote serious parts for bass voice, focusing on the gravity that a low register can contribute to the overall musical texture.

bel canto

Referring to the Italian vocal style of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, bel canto singing emphasizes lyricism and ornamentation in order to showcase the beauty of the singer's voice. Its focus on lyrical embellishment directly contrasts with a contemporary Germanic focus on a weighty, dramatic style. Bel canto singing is most closely associated with the music of Gioachino Rossini, Vincenzo Bellini, and Gaetano Donizetti.

cadenza

An ornamented musical elaboration played in a free style by a soloist to display his or her virtuosity. Cadenzas are typically improvised—that is, created by a performer on the spot—though they can also be written out in advance. They most frequently occur near the end of a piece, at a point of harmonic tension when the piece is about to conclude.

chorus

A section of an opera in which a large group of singers performs together, typically with orchestral accompaniment. Most choruses include at least four different vocal lines, in registers from low to high, with multiple singers per part. The singers are typically from a particular group of people who play a certain role on stage—soldiers, peasants, prisoners, and so on. Choruses may offer a moral or commentary on the plot, or participate in the dramatic action.

Classical

A period of music history lasting from approximately 1750 to 1830, bordered by the earlier Baroque period and the later Romantic period. Contrasting with the ornamentation common to the preceding Baroque period, Classical music is characterized by simple and elegant melodies, regular harmonic accompaniment, and contrasts between melodic themes. The composers most closely associated with the Classical period include Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Ludwig van Beethoven.

coloratura

A rapid and elaborate ornamentation by a solo singer, particularly common in operas of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Requiring vocal agility and a wide and high range, coloratura showcases the virtuosity of a singer by featuring repeating melodic figures, rapid scales, trills, and other embellishments.

conductor

The person who directs the orchestra, setting the tempo, giving interpretive directions to the musicians, and generally holding all the musical elements of a performance together. In orchestra performance, the conductor typically stands on a podium in front of the players and uses a baton to communicate the meter and tempo, and his or her non-baton hand to indicate dynamics, phrasing, and articulation to the musicians. The gestures of a conductor can be likened to a non-verbal language that the musicians understand.

contralto

A deep female voice, with a vocal range that extends lower than that of a mezzo-soprano. Contraltos are known for having a very wide range and for the power and depth of sound with which they can sing. As is the case for roles for basses, many of the earliest roles in opera for contraltos are comic roles, though nineteenth-century composers also wrote dramatic roles for female singers with a lower range.

crescendo

A gradual raising of volume in music achieved by increasing the dynamic level. When music crescendos, the performers begin at a softer dynamic level and become incrementally louder. One of the most famous types of crescendos in opera, the Rossini crescendo, includes an increase in volume together with repeating melodic and rhythmic phrases, higher instrumental registers, and the gradual addition of instruments in order to create a particularly dramatic effect.

diminuendo

A gradual lowering of volume in music achieved by decreasing the dynamic level. During a diminuendo, the performers begin at a louder dynamic level and become incrementally softer.

dynamics

A musical trait pertaining to loudness and softness. During the eighteenth century, composers began indicating their desired intensity of volume in music by writing words such as piano (soft) and forte (loud) into the musical score. Dynamics encompass a spectrum from pianissimo (very soft) to piano (soft) to mezzo piano (moderately soft), all the way up to fortissimo (very loud). Music can shift to another dynamic level either suddenly or gradually, through a crescendo or diminuendo.

ensemble

A musical piece for two or more soloists, accompanied by orchestra. Types of ensembles include duets (for two soloists), trios (for three soloists), and quartets (for four soloists). Sometimes singers will respond directly to one another during an ensemble. At other times, singers will each sing to themselves as if the other singers were not on stage. In ensembles, multiple characters may simultaneously express very different emotions from one another.

finale

The last portion of an act, a finale consists of several musical sections that accompany an escalating dramatic tension. Finales frequently consist of multiple ensembles with different numbers of characters. When it occurs at the end of an early act in the opera, a finale may create a messy situation—and the resolution of this situation will only happen in subsequent acts. One type of finale common in comic operas, a chain finale, features characters entering or exiting from the stage to create unexpected combinations of characters, in turn increasing the opera's dramatic tension.

forte

Meaning "loud" or "strong" in Italian, forte is a dynamic level in music that indicates a loud volume. Adding the suffix "-issimo" to a word serves as an intensifier—since forte means "loud," fortissimo means "very loud."

harmony

The simultaneous sounding of pitches to produce chords, and the relationship between different chords as they succeed one another. Throughout much of Western music, systems of rules govern these progressions to help create our sense of musical tension, expectation, and conclusion. Tonal harmony is based on progressions of chords in relationship to a tonic (or home) key. In the 19th century, as composers sought novel sounds to reflect the originality of their invention, they began to employ chords and progressions of greater dissonance and greater distance from the home key. As such dissonances moved beyond mere sound effects into the musical structure itself, the traditional theory of tonal harmony began to become insufficient as a way to understand and describe musical structure.

intermission

A break between acts of an opera. At the beginning of an intermission, the curtain will fall (that is, close) on stage, and the lights in the auditorium, called the house lights, will become brighter. Intermissions provide audiences with a chance to walk around, talk with one another, and reflect on what they have seen and what could happen next. The break in the performance may also correspond with a change of time or scene in the story of the opera—the next act may take place hours or months later, or be set in a different location. Usually lights will dim and a bell may sound to indicate that the intermission is drawing to a close and the opera is about to resume.

legato

A type of articulation in which a melody is played with smooth connection between the notes. A legato passage does not include any pauses between notes or any accents at the beginnings of notes, as the notes blend into one another without a break. In contrast, a passage that is played staccato features notes played in a separated manner.

Leitmotif

From the German for “leading motive,” a leitmotif is a recurring musical idea, or motive, that represents a particular person, object, idea, emotion, or place. This musical idea is usually a few seconds in length and can occur in the music’s melody, harmony, rhythm, or a combination of the three. Leitmotifs are most closely associated with the operas of Richard Wagner, where they are used repeatedly throughout the opera to provide unity; they also less frequently appear in operas of other composers, including Giuseppe Verdi and Richard Strauss.

libretto

The text of an opera, including all the words that are said or sung by performers. Until the early eighteenth century, a composer would frequently set music to a pre-existing libretto, and any given libretto could thus be set to music multiple times by different composers. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, collaboration between the author of the libretto, known as the librettist, and the composer became more frequent. Some opera composers, most notably Richard Wagner, are known for writing their own text.

maestro

A title of respect used to address a conductor. The term is often applied to conductors with several decades of experience. However, performers often use this honorific when addressing the conductor.

melody

A succession of pitches that form an understandable unit. The melody of a piece consists of the tune that a listener can hum or sing. During arias, the singer will usually sing the main melody, though other instruments may play parts of the melody. Sometimes, such as during ensembles, multiple melodies can occur simultaneously.

mezzo-soprano

A female voice with a range between that of a contralto and soprano. A mezzo-soprano's voice is slightly deeper than that of a soprano, so mezzo-sopranos are often cast in supporting roles as older women, including nurses, confidantes, or maids.

opera buffa

A term applied to Italian comic operas from the mid-eighteenth through mid-nineteenth centuries. The plot of an opera buffa often features scenes and characters from everyday life and addresses a light or sentimental subject, concluding with a happy ending.

opera seria

An eighteenth- or nineteenth-century Italian opera employing a noble and serious style. The plot of an opera seria often upholds morality by presenting conflicting emotions such as love versus duty, or by modeling enlightened rulers.

operetta

Featuring spoken dialogue, songs, and dances, an operetta is a short theatrical piece. Shorter in duration than operas, operettas typically feature a light subject matter, incorporate melodies composed in a popular style, and feature spoken dialogue. Most popular from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, the genre is the precursor of the American musical.

ornamentation

An embellishment to the melody, rhythm, or harmony of music, intended to make a melody more expressive or ornate. Ornamentation can be either indicated through symbols written into the music or improvised by the performer.

overture

An instrumental piece that occurs before the first act as an introduction to an opera. After the conductor enters the orchestra pit and takes a bow, the music for the overture begins. Most overtures are a few minutes in duration, and set the mood for the opera—even featuring musical themes that will occur later in the opera.

piano

Abbreviated p in a musical score, piano indicates a soft dynamic level. Musicians may achieve a piano sound by using less bow, less air, or less force. In opera, soft music will often correspond with emotions of sadness or moments in the plot when a character is reflecting on a course of action or emotional state. Pianissimo is “very soft,” and can be so quiet that an audience may need to listen carefully in order to discern its melody and harmony.

pitch

The quality of a musical sound corresponding to its perceived highness or lowness. Scientifically, pitch can be measured as the number of vibrations (or repetitions) of a sound wave per second, which is called its frequency. A sound with a low frequency, like a bass drum, will sound low and have a low pitch, while a sound with a high frequency, like a siren, will sound high.

prima donna

Meaning “first lady” in Italian, the prima donna is the leading female role in an opera. The term may apply to the role or to the singer herself, who usually sings in the soprano register and is the star of the show. Since the nineteenth century, the term has also been applied to a singer of any gender with a self-centered and demanding personality.

recitative

A type of vocal writing between speech and song that imitates the accents and inflections of natural speech. Composers often employ recitative for passages of text that involve quick dialogue and the advancement of plot, since the style allows singers to move rapidly through a large amount of text. Recitative may be accompanied either by keyboard or by the whole orchestra.

rhythm

Rhythm refers to the way music unfolds over time; it is a series of durations in a range from long to short. Along with pitch, it is a basic and indispensable parameter of music. Rhythm is perceived in relation to an underlying beat and within the context of a meter. Western musical notation indicates to the performer the exact duration of each note or rest.

Romantic

A period of music history lasting from approximately 1830 to 1900. Beginning in literature and later adopted by composers, romanticism reflected a newfound focus on individuality, nature, and emotional extremes. Music from the Romantic period often explores music’s redemptive power, focusing on the sublimity of nature, love, and the mysterious. Composers began to experiment with shortening and lengthening the standard forms and durations of musical works, and also added more expressive harmonies to convey the originality of their musical vision.

score

The complete musical notation for a piece, the score includes notated lines for all of the different instrumental and vocal parts that unite to constitute a musical composition. In an opera orchestra, the conductor follows the score during rehearsals and performances, while each performer follows his or her individual part.

Singspiel

Literally “sung play,” a Singspiel is an opera with spoken dialogue. Singspiels are typically in German and are from the Classical or early Romantic eras. The plot of a Singspiel is usually comic in nature, and its music may include songs, choruses, and instrumental numbers that are separated by spoken dialogue.

solo

A piece, musical passage, or line for a lone singer or other performer, with or without instrumental accompaniment. The most common type of solo in opera is the aria, which is composed for a single voice with orchestral accompaniment.

soprano

The highest singing range for the female voice. Roles composed for soprano singers are typically among the leading roles in the opera and require soprano singers to show off their virtuosic flexibility and range.

tempo

Literally “time” in Italian, tempo refers to the speed of a piece of music. Tempo is indicated in a score by a variety of conventional (often Italian) words—such as *allegro*, *adagio*, *vivace*, *moderato*, *grave*, and many more—that not only provide direction on the composer’s desired rate of speed, but also carry associations of gesture and character. For instance, *vivace* indicates not only a brisk speed but also a lively spirit. Additional tempo markings may indicate when a composer asks for a section of music to be sped up (such as “*accelerando*”) or slowed down (such as “*rallentando*”).

tenor

The highest natural male vocal range. By the nineteenth century, the tenor had become the most common vocal range for male leading roles in operas. Tenor roles often feature high-pitched notes for male voice in order to showcase the singer’s range and power. A related voice type is the countertenor, with a range above that of a tenor and similar to that of a contralto.

theme/motive

Themes are the melodic ideas that are musical building blocks for a piece. A theme is often recognizable as a distinct tune and may reappear in its original form or in altered form throughout the piece. A motif (or motive) is a brief musical idea that recurs throughout a musical work. Motives can be based on a melodic, rhythmic, or harmonic component, and their repetition makes them recognizable to the listener. In opera, musical motives are often symbolically associated with specific characters or dramatic ideas.

timbre

Pronounced TAM-bruh, a French word that means “sound color.” It refers to the complex combination of characteristics that give each instrument or voice its unique sound. Just as we can recognize each other by the differences in our speaking voices, operatic singing voices are distinguishable by their unique timbres. Listeners can also identify orchestral instruments by their timbre without being able to see them. The creative combination of different instrumental timbres is one of the artistic aspects of orchestration.

trill

A rapid alternation between two pitches that are adjacent to one another. Trills are a type of ornamentation, serving to embellish the melodic line, and appear regularly within coloratura passages. Trills also may appear near the end of a piece in order to prolong the musical tension before the music concludes.

verismo

A movement in Italian theater and opera in the late 19th century that embraced realism and explored areas of society previously ignored on the stage: the poor, the lower-class, and the criminal. Its characters are driven by passion to defy reason, morality, and the law. In order to reflect these emotional extremes, composers of verismo opera developed a musical style that communicates raw and unfiltered passions. Musically, verismo operas react against the forced ornamentation of the *bel canto* style and instead emphasize a more natural setting of the text to music. Before its exploration on the operatic stage, the verismo aesthetic first developed within the realm of literature.

LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR: MY HIGHS & LOWS

March 19, 2018

Conducted by Roberto Abbado

Reviewed by _____

THE STARS:	STAR POWER	MY COMMENTS
Olga Peretyatko-Mariotti as Lucia	*****	
Vittorio Grigolo as Edgardo	*****	
Massimo Cavalletti as Enrico	*****	
Vitalij Kowaljow as Raimondo	*****	

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN/STAGING
Enrico's sister is in love with his enemy, and he is not happy about it			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Lucia describes the ghost in the fountain			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Edgardo is torn between vengeance and love			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Lucia and Edgardo exchange rings			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Enrico gives Lucia a fake letter			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Raimondo convinces Lucia to marry Arturo			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Arturo arrives at the castle			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN/STAGING
Arturo and Lucia sign the marriage contract			
My opinion of this scene	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Edgardo crashes the party			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Enrico challenges Edgardo to a duel			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
The wedding celebration			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Lucia's mad scene			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Edgardo waits at the cemetery for Enrico			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
News of Lucia's death			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Edgardo kills himself			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5