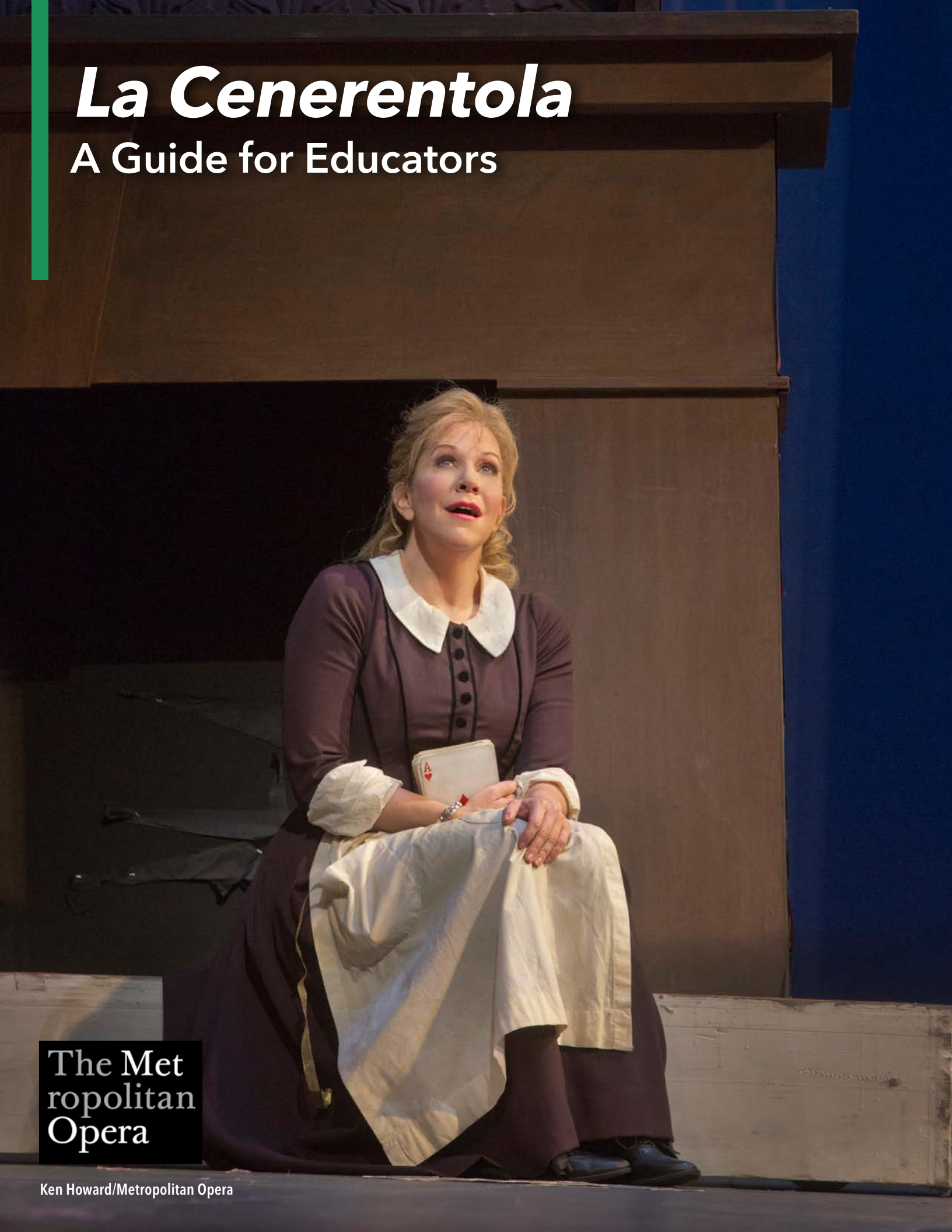


La Cenerentola

A Guide for Educators



The Met
ropolitan
Opera

Ken Howard/Metropolitan Opera

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM *LA CENERENTOLA*

ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A YOUNG COMPOSER NAMED GIOACHINO ROSSINI, whose take on the classic fairy tale “Cinderella” would enchant generation upon generation of opera-goers ...

La Cenerentola is one of Rossini’s most charming works, a comedy featuring no end of twists and turns on the way to its traditional happy ending. But the opera is no bedtime story: It brings its source material firmly, if humorously, down to earth. Magical elements go out the window, while the stately archetypes of fairy tale narratives give way to real, flesh-and-blood characters. And even amid the farcical sequence of bickering relatives, disguised royalty, and mistaken identities, the heroine’s journey from rags to riches ensures that the opera remains emotionally grounded. Cinderella falls in love at first sight, but she also feels the pain of familial rejection, which makes her profound joy and gratitude at the end of the opera (and the idea that she might live happily ever) all the more believable.

When Rossini—barely 25 but already an international superstar—wrote *La Cenerentola* in 1817, he gave the classic tale a shot of realism by setting it in the (then) present day. At the Met, Cesare Lievi’s charming production updates the setting to the 1920s: Peeling wallpaper and ratty feather boas convey the faded glamor of hard-up aristocracy, while at the end Cinderella and her Prince Charming ascend the three fabulous tiers of a society wedding cake. But the truth is that *La Cenerentola* could take place anywhere and in any era. Its warmth, sincerity, and good humor make its characters both relatable and timeless. Rossini’s score is full of unforgettable tunes, and his trademark musical style, fizzing with excitement, gives the singers a chance to truly shine.

This guide presents *La Cenerentola* as a case study in adaptation, demonstrating how opera can enrich and embellish even the most familiar stories. The materials on the following pages are designed to provide context, deepen background knowledge, and enrich the overall experience of this Final Dress Rehearsal performance. By presenting the opera in the context of other versions of the Cinderella narrative and showing how its essential attributes have remained constant over time, it will help students engage critically with the opera while relating the opera to other classroom subjects. This guide also includes biographical data about the composer, information on the opera’s literary source, and a series of activities to bring the opera and its music into the classroom.

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THE WORK:

LA CENERENTOLA

An opera in two acts, sung in Italian
Music by Gioachino Rossini
Libretto by Jacopo Ferretti
Based on the fairy tale “Cendrillon” by
Charles Perrault
First performed January 25, 1817,
at the Teatro Valle, Rome, Italy

PRODUCTION

James Gaffigan, Conductor
Cesare Lievi, Production
Maurizio Balò, Set and Costume
Designer
Gigi Saccomandi, Lighting Designer
Daniela Schiavone, Choreographer

STARRING

Tara Erraught
ANGELINA

Javier Camarena
DON RAMIRO

Vito Priante
DANDINI

Maurizio Muraro
DON MAGNIFICO

Christian Van Horn
ALIDORO

Production a gift of Alberto Vilar

ABOUT THE METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE



Jonathan 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 a variety of materials on Rossini's *La Cenerentola*.

- **The Source, The Story, and Who's Who in *La Cenerentola***
- **A Timeline:** The historical context of the opera's story and composition
- **A Closer Look:** A brief article highlighting an important aspect of Rossini's *La Cenerentola*
- **Guided Listening:** A series of musical excerpts with questions and a roadmap to possible student responses
- **10 Essential Musical Terms:** Musical terminology that will help students analyze and describe Rossini's work
- **Student Critique:** A performance activity highlighting specific aspects of this production, and topics for a wrap-up discussion following students' attendance
- **Further Resources:** Recommendations for additional study, both online and in print

This guide is intended to cultivate students' interest in *La Cenerentola*, whether or not they have any prior acquaintance with opera or the performing arts. It includes activities 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.

In particular, this guide will offer in-depth introductions to:

- The relationship between Rossini's opera and the classic Cinderella story
- A deeper look at how the Cinderella narrative has evolved over time
- Rossini's use of music to create entertaining and memorable characters
- 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



Ken Howard/Metropolitan Opera

SUMMARY

Angelina, known as Cenerentola (Cinderella), is treated miserably by her foolish stepfather, Don Magnifico, and her vain stepsisters. Forced to work as their maid, she dreams of a better life. Then one day, the news comes that Prince Ramiro is looking for a bride, the most beautiful girl in all the land—and he’s holding a ball that evening to find her.

Seeing a golden opportunity for social climbing, Magnifico and his daughters head gleefully to Ramiro’s palace, leaving a heartbroken Cenerentola behind. With help from a mysterious benefactor, though, Cenerentola finds her way to the ball. Dressed to impress, she wows the assembled crowd—including the Prince, who declares his love. But Cenerentola soon tires of the deception, and she throws down a challenge: If the Prince can find her again—and love her for who she truly is—then she will agree to marry him. She leaves Ramiro determined to win both his bride and a fairy-tale ending.



Ken Howard/Metropolitan
Opera

THE SOURCE: THE FAIRY TALE "CENDRILLON" BY CHARLES PERRAULT

Charles Perrault (1628–1703), was a civil servant and writer during the long reign of Louis XIV of France. Yet he is best known today for one of his retirement projects. In 1697, just a few years before his death, Perrault published the *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* ("Stories or Tales from Past Times")—and sealed his reputation for posterity.

The *Histoires*, which soon became known by their unofficial title of *Contes de ma mère l'Oye* ("Tales of Mother Goose") were a collection of literary fairy tales, including such modern favorites as "Puss and Boots," "Sleeping Beauty," and, of course, "Cinderella." Perrault's stories had little to do with the folk tales on which they were distantly based: Written in a polished, sophisticated style, they were intended to appeal to aristocratic audiences, who enjoyed hearing them read at gatherings of intellectuals and fashionable society events. Because the readers were primarily adults, Perrault attached a cynical rhyming moral to each story, which typically offered a religious interpretation of the story's plot and reinforced the strict class divisions of French society.

Despite his intended readership, Perrault's version of "Cendrillon" is essentially the classic version of the Cinderella story children know and love today—wicked stepmother, enchanted pumpkin, glass slippers, and all. (Walt Disney's animated film from 1950, for instance, follows Perrault quite faithfully.) Yet the story underwent some major modifications on its way to becoming the libretto for Rossini's *La Cenerentola*—most notably losing its supernatural elements and substituting a foolish stepfather for a wicked stepmother. In fact, Jacopo Ferretti, the librettist for *La Cenerentola*, wasn't working directly from Perrault's text: Under extreme time pressure, Ferretti borrowed liberally from the libretti to two then-recent operas based on "Cendrillon," one French and one Italian. By doing so he was able to write the text in just 22 days—and craft a libretto perfectly in tune with the *opera buffa* style for which Rossini was already famous.

SYNOPSIS

ACT I: Don Magnifico's mansion

Don Magnifico lives in a tumbledown castle with his daughters, Clorinda and Tisbe, and his stepdaughter, Angelina, known as "Cenerentola" (Cinderella) because she is forced to work as their maid. The Stepsisters squabble constantly over who is more beautiful, even as Cenerentola is dressed in rags. Nevertheless, Cenerentola dreams of a better life. To cheer herself up (and, perhaps, to needle Clorinda and Tisbe), she sings a sad folk song about a king who chose a bride not for her wealth but for her goodness of heart. When a beggar knocks at the door asking for charity, the difference between the generous Cenerentola and her hard-hearted Stepsisters becomes very clear: The Stepsisters tell him to leave, while Cenerentola offers him breakfast. Suddenly courtiers appear to announce that Prince Ramiro is paying a visit to the household. He is looking for the most beautiful girl in all the land and will hold a ball that evening to choose his bride. The Stepsisters cannot wait to tell their father the news, and they wake him from an odd dream featuring a flying donkey landing on a bell-tower. Interpreting the dream as a good omen, Magnifico fantasizes about marrying one of his daughters to the Prince and restoring his family's fortune.

Prince Ramiro enters alone, dressed as his own servant, so he can freely observe the prospective brides. He runs into Cenerentola, and the two are immediately attracted to each other. He asks her who she is, and Cenerentola, suddenly bashful, tries to explain then runs away. Finally, the "Prince" himself arrives—in fact Ramiro's valet, Dandini, also in disguise. Magnifico, Clorinda, and Tisbe fall over themselves flattering him, and he invites them to the ball, hamming up his princely role outrageously. Cenerentola begs her stepfather to let her attend the ball, even if only for an hour, but he refuses harshly; Ramiro is shocked by the way she is treated. The arrival of the Prince's tutor, Alidoro, interrupts the argument: He announces that there should be a third daughter in the Magnifico household. Magnifico lies through his teeth and claims she is dead, to Cenerentola's dismay. Everyone departs for the Prince's palace except Cenerentola, who is left alone and upset. But she is comforted by the mysterious beggar, who reveals himself to be none other than Alidoro in disguise. Alidoro tells her that he will take her to the ball and explains that one day soon she will be rewarded for her good heart.

Prince Ramiro's palace

Dandini, still disguised as the Prince, is fending off Clorinda and Tisbe. But he gets rid of their father by making him master of the wine cellar, where Magnifico amazes the palace servants by showing how much he can imbibe without falling over drunk. In the meantime, Dandini manages to sneak off to covertly share his negative opinion of the two sisters with Ramiro. Both men are confused, however, since Alidoro is certain that the Prince's bride will come from Don Magnifico's household. Clorinda and Tisbe appear again, each desperate to be the chosen one. In an attempt to placate them, Dandini offers Ramiro as a husband to whichever sister the Prince does not marry, but the Stepsisters are outraged at the idea of marrying a servant. Suddenly, Alidoro enters with a mysterious stranger, a beautiful veiled lady. Dandini and Ramiro are both smitten. When the company prevails upon her to remove her veil, everyone is astonished: Surely, they say, she looks rather similar to Cenerentola? Unable to make sense of the situation, they all sit down to supper, feeling like they are in a dream.

ACT II: Prince Ramiro's palace

Magnifico fears that the arrival of the stranger could ruin his daughters' chances of marrying the Prince, but he soon begins daydreaming again about the riches he will possess once he becomes a member of the royal family. Cenerentola, tired of being pursued by Dandini, tells him that she is in love with his servant. Overhearing this, Ramiro is overjoyed and steps forward. Cenerentola, however, says that she is returning home and does not want him to follow her. She gives him one of two matching bracelets, keeping the other herself. If he truly cares for her, she declares, he will find her. She also adds that she will only consent to marry him if he loves her for who she really is. Cenerentola leaves, and the besotted prince resolves to find the mysterious girl and win her hand. Meanwhile Magnifico, who still thinks that Dandini is the Prince, confronts him, insisting that he decide which of his daughters he will marry. When Dandini reveals that he is in fact the Prince's servant, Magnifico is furious.

Don Magnifico's mansion

Magnifico and the Stepsisters return home in a terrible mood and order Cenerentola, again in rags, to prepare supper. A thunderstorm breaks out, and Alidoro cleverly arranges for Ramiro's carriage to break down in front of Magnifico's mansion so the Prince has an excuse to take refuge inside. Cenerentola and Ramiro, no longer disguised, recognize each other immediately by their matching bracelets: They are overjoyed, but everyone else is utterly confused by this apparent romance between a prince and a maid. When Ramiro asks to marry Cenerentola, Magnifico and his daughters respond with cruelty and scorn. Ramiro threatens to have them punished, but Cenerentola asks the indignant Prince to forgive them. The Prince and Cenerentola reappear in wedding finery, and Cenerentola joyfully reflects on how suddenly her fortunes have changed: She was born into hardship and misery, but her days of sitting by the fire are finally over.

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 voice type, normally possessed only by women and boys

MEZZO-SOPRANO

the voice type lying below the soprano and above the contralto; the term comes from the Italian word "mezzo," meaning "middle"

CONTRALTO

the lowest female voice type, also called "alto"

TENOR

the highest standard voice type in adult males

BARITONE

the voice type lying below the tenor and above the bass

BASS

the lowest voice type

WHO'S WHO IN *LA CENERENTOLA*

Character		Pronunciation Guide	Voice Type	The Lowdown
Angelina, known as Cenerentola (Cinderella)	Don Magnifico's stepdaughter	ahn-jeh-LEE-nah / cheh-neh-REHN-toh-lah	Mezzo-soprano	The beautiful and kind heroine is cruelly mistreated by her family, but she ultimately finds a "fairy-tale ending." Like the English Cinderella, her name is derived from the Italian word for cinders— <i>cenere</i> .
Clorinda	Magnifico's elder daughter	cluh-REEN-dah	Soprano	Rude and self-centered, Cenerentola's stepsister is cruel to the heroine and entitled in her dealings with the Prince.
Tisbe	Magnifico's younger daughter	TEEZ-beh	Mezzo-soprano	Cenerentola's other stepsister, as despicable as the first.
Don Magnifico	Cenerentola's stepfather	DON ma-NYEE-fee-koh	Bass	A hard-up baron, the foolish Don Magnifico is hoping to marry his daughters to royalty to restore his family fortune.
Don Ramiro	The Prince of Salerno	DON rah-MEE-roh	Tenor	The local Prince, whose father has declared that he must marry if he is to inherit the throne. But Ramiro wants to marry for love rather than for power.
Dandini	Don Ramiro's valet	dahn-DEE-nee	Baritone	Dandini switches clothes with the Prince so he can inspect the prospective brides and report back to Ramiro.
Alidoro	Don Ramiro's teacher, a philosopher	ah-lee-DOH-roh	Bass	A mysterious guardian angel watching over the proceedings, Alidoro makes sure Cenerentola and Ramiro get their "happily ever after." His name means "Golden Wings" in Italian.

- **1628** Charles Perrault is born in Paris, the child of a well-to-do family. He will spend much of his life as a civil servant and member of the Académie française, an organization dedicated to the promotion and preservation of the French language.
- **1697** In his retirement, Perrault publishes a collection of literary fairy tales for aristocratic audiences, which soon becomes known by the title *Contes de ma mère l'Oye* ("Tales of Mother Goose"). The collection includes such classics as "Little Red Riding Hood," "Puss in Boots," "Sleeping Beauty," and "Cinderella."
- **1792** Gioachino Rossini is born on February 29 in Pesaro, a town on the Adriatic coast of Italy. Both of his parents are musicians: His father plays horn, and his mother is an opera singer.
- **1804** The Rossini family moves to Bologna. Young Gioachino, a talented musician who already enjoys an active career as a performer, begins formal studies in composition. Soon he will begin composing individual arias for operas being performed in the area.
- **1813** Rossini's first huge international success, *Tancredi*, premieres in February at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice. Overnight, Rossini's reputation as Italy's foremost composer is made.
- **1814** An opera based on Perrault's version of Cinderella, Stefano Pavesi's *L'Agatina, o La virtù premiata* ("Agatina, or Virtue Rewarded"), premieres in Milan. Together with a French opera from 1810, also based on Perrault, it will form part of the source material for Rossini's own Cinderella opera.
- **1816** On February 20, Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (*The Barber of Seville*) premieres at the Teatro Argentina in Rome. The opening night performance is a flop. But in August, following slight revisions, the opera is performed again in Bologna, this time to thunderous acclaim.

In December, Rossini agrees to write an opera for the Teatro Valle in Rome. After considering over a dozen possible subjects (including one rejected by the city's censors), Rossini and the librettist Jacopo Ferretti finally settle on Cinderella. Ferretti bases his libretto on Perrault's story, but he also borrows from two recent operas on the same subject.

- **1817** Rossini produces his opera in less than a month, borrowing the overture and other bits and pieces from his own prior works. *La Cenerentola, ossia La bontà in trionfo* (“Cinderella, or Goodness Triumphant”) premieres on January 25 at the Teatro Valle. History repeats itself: As with *The Barber of Seville*, the opera is initially given a frosty reception but soon becomes one of Rossini’s most beloved works.
- **1823** Rossini’s last Italian opera, *Semiramide*, receives its premiere at La Fenice in Venice.
- **1824** By the age of 32, Rossini has written 34 operas and enjoys international acclaim of staggering proportions. In a biography of Rossini published the following year, the French novelist Stendhal writes that “Napoleon is dead, but a new conqueror is now spoken of from Moscow to Naples, from London to Vienna, from Paris to Calcutta.” Rossini officially relocates to Paris.
- **1829** Rossini’s final opera, *Guillaume Tell (William Tell)*, premieres in Paris. Following this, Rossini retires from the stage altogether; for the remaining four decades of his life, he will never write another large-scale opera. Instead, he turns his attention and accumulated wealth to cooking and exchanging recipes with famous chefs.
- **1868** After a short illness, Rossini dies at the age of 76. His last years have been marked by an emergence from his self-imposed musical silence: He has written over 150 short pieces of music, mostly in a humorous vein, under the general title *Péchés de vieillesse* (“Sins of Old Age”) for performance in his Parisian salon.
- **1887** Two decades after Rossini’s death, his widow Olympe transports his remains to Italy. In May they are reinterred at the church of Santa Croce in Florence, where his final resting place may still be visited today.

A TALE AS OLD AS TIME?

Rossini's *La Cenerentola* is based on Charles Perrault's "Cendrillon," but what about "Cendrillon" itself? Going back far enough, the answer ultimately lies outside the world of literature, in folk culture. Long before they were first written down, folk tales circulated orally, passed from one generation of storytellers to another; in this form, they doubtless predate the invention of writing itself. While some modern fairy tales were invented relatively recently, the Cinderella story is very old indeed. The earliest extant written version, recorded by an Ancient Greek geographer named Strabo in the first century BCE, is set in Egypt: A young, enslaved woman named Rhodopis is bathing by the Nile when an eagle swoops down from the heavens and carries away one of her sandals. Upon reaching the city of Memphis, the eagle drops the sandal into the lap of the Egyptian king, who is so taken by the shapely form of the sandal that he orders his soldiers to search the entire kingdom for the maiden from whose foot it came. Rhodopis is found and brought before the king, and they are married.

Folk tales, then, are truly ancient. They are also highly unstable. As they are embellished in each new telling, and as they hop from village to village, culture to culture, individual stories accumulate countless variations, some small, some more significant. We can recognize in the Egyptian sandal the glass slipper it later became, but what happened to the eagle? For a story as popular as Cinderella, in fact, thousands of variations have been recorded. If we wish to trace the story across time, then, it can be helpful to focus our attention on just the essential components of the story: In other words, what is the unchanging core that makes the plot tick?

Fortunately, 20th-century folklorists have already done much of the work for us. In the Aarne-Thompson-Uther Index, a vast catalogue of folk tales from across the globe (it is named after the scholars who invented and refined it), "Cinderella" is categorized as a "Type 510" (or "Persecuted Heroine") story. Tales in this category can be boiled down to five essential components: 1) a mistreated heroine, who 2) receives supernatural assistance, 3) meets a prince, 4) must prove her identity, and 5) marries the prince at the end. Even so, it's the variations that makes any given version memorable. "Aschenputtel," a German version of the Cinderella story, features a particularly gruesome twist at the end: The Stepsisters cut off parts of their feet in their attempts to fit the fateful glass slipper. This version was made famous by the brothers Grimm, folktale collectors who included it in the first edition of their *Children's and Household Tales* in 1812.

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 excerpt's 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 *La Cenerentola* and a libretto. Time stamps in the following activity correspond to the audio clips available at metopera.org/education.

"MIEI RAMPOLLI FEMMININI"

Cenerentola's stepsisters, Clorinda and Tisbe, have just been invited to the Prince's ball, and they rush to tell their father, Don Magnifico, the good news. Magnifico is woken in the middle of a most bizarre dream, in which a donkey sprouts feathers and flies to roost on a bell-tower. This is our first introduction to Magnifico, whose foolish character is often played for laughs.

What to listen for:

- How Rossini changes the musical style and texture to respond to Magnifico's changing feelings and the different elements of his dream
- The use of big, exaggerated gestures poking fun at how seriously Magnifico takes himself
- Magnifico's use of "patter song" when his emotions get the better of him

- (00:05) The aria begins in the middle of the action. "My female offspring, I'll disown you! I'm ashamed of you!" Magnifico cries, annoyed at being interrupted right in the middle of a convoluted dream. After calming down—the music gets quieter, too—he tells his daughters to be quiet and listen.
- (01:29) Over a chugging rhythm in the strings, a jolly, slightly absurd tune marks the beginning of the aria proper. Magnifico relates the elements of the dream, starring a "most serious" donkey.
- (02:09) When Magnifico gets to the part where the donkey roosts on a bell tower, the full orchestra breaks out in excitement. He then imitates the "ding, dong" of the tolling bells to hushed *pizzicato* (plucked) strings.
- (02:36) Magnifico complains that the Stepsisters' chitter-chatter woke him at the best part of his dream. The music comes to a decisive stop.
- (03:13) Magnifico insists that the dream must be interpreted, and the jolly tune from before comes back. Each element is interpreted (the bells, the feathers, the donkey's flight). All that remains is the donkey: The music gets quieter and more mysterious as Magnifico reveals that the ass can only represent one thing—himself!
- (04:18) Rushing triple rhythms in the orchestra and madcap patter singing push the aria to its rousing end, as Magnifico imagines the army of grandchildren his daughters will produce when married to the Prince.

“ZITTO, ZITTO: PIANO, PIANO”

Prince Ramiro (disguised as a servant) and his valet Dandini (disguised as the Prince) manage to sneak away from Don Magnifico and the Stepsisters so they can exchange notes. Then the Stepsisters themselves enter the scene, demanding to know which of them will be the lucky bride. What had been a frenetic duet is suddenly transformed into a madcap ensemble.

What to listen for:

- How the same tune gets passed between Dandini and Ramiro in mirrored versions, mimicking a conversation
- The way Rossini musically distinguishes the four characters on stage
- How all the characters descend into patter singing at moments of maximum confusion

- (00:00) The orchestra introduces the main tune of the ensemble, over an agitated backing in the strings.
- (00:20) “Shhh! Quietly!” Ramiro instructs Dandini. Ramiro then demands that Dandini tell him (“truthfully and accurately”) which of the two Stepsisters is best. *Staccato* (disconnected) syllables, big gaps between words, and fast *coloratura* convey Dandini’s furious whispering.
- (00:55) Following a swift orchestral transition, Dandini replies to Ramiro using the same melody but different words. “In strictest confidence: They’re insolent, capricious, and vain!”
- (01:27) Ramiro and Dandini begin to trade words more quickly: Wasn’t Alidoro convinced that the Prince’s bride would be one of Magnifico’s daughters? As both characters descend into confused patter singing, fragments of the original melody appear one after another while rushing scales get louder and louder in the woodwinds and strings.
- (03:06) The Stepsisters enter, and the original tune comes back. This time, it’s Clorinda and Tisbe demanding to know whom the Prince will marry. The music breaks down as Dandini stalls for time: He can’t marry both, so perhaps the unlucky sister could marry his servant?
- (03:58) The full orchestra comes in to register the Stepsisters’ outrage at this suggestion. Music from the end of Dandini and Ramiro’s conversation comes back, but now all four characters are involved, each using a mixture of *staccato* syllables, *coloratura*, and patter singing. As the confusion reaches its peak, the ensemble is interrupted (and ended) by a fanfare.

“SÌ, RITROVARLA IO GUIRO ... NOI VOLEREMO, DOMANDEREMO”

Prince Ramiro and Cenerentola have declared their love for each other at the ball, but Cenerentola has tired of all the disguises and deceptions. She gives Ramiro a bracelet matching her own and tells him to come find her. In this aria, the love-struck Ramiro cannot contain his excitement at the thought of finding his love again. It’s the tenor’s moment to shine, and—if done right—it will bring the house down in applause.

What to listen for:

- The way Ramiro’s vocal writing reflects his noble character, with a wide range and several show-stopping high notes
- How Rossini integrates the chorus into both the slow middle section and the fast conclusion of the aria

- (00:00) A trumpet fanfare marks the beginning of Ramiro’s aria. Ramiro sings a brief opening statement—“I’ll find her again, I swear it”—ending on a high note and a dramatic flourish.
- (00:39) The aria gets going in earnest, with strings playing rapid fanfare rhythms. Ramiro’s vocal melody, featuring lots of excitable *coloratura*, winds its way repeatedly to a glittering high note.
- (01:49) A softer section begins with a flute solo in a slow triple meter. Ramiro vows to find and embrace his lover with an impassioned, beautiful vocal melody. A chorus softly urges him on in the background.
- (03:44) The flutes and trumpets play a signal, and the music adopts a much faster triple meter. Ramiro and the chorus trade lines excitably: “We shall fly, we shall ask! We shall seek, and we shall find!”
- (04:04) Ramiro sings a new tune, filled with rushing *coloratura*. At (04:38), a Rossini *crescendo* begins as the chorus keeps singing “We shall find” over and over.
- (05:11) Ramiro repeats the same tune, but this time it gives way to a concluding section that ends on a long, dramatic high note.

"NACQUI ALL'AFFANNO ... NON PIÙ MESTA"

Cenerentola and the Prince have finally received their happy ending and are now married. To the gathered chorus and her family, Cenerentola sings of her joy. As in many of his comic operas, instead of an ensemble finale Rossini gives us a show-stopping aria for the heroine, offering her a chance to finally show off her vocal chops in a solo setting. As the farewell to both the character and the opera as a whole, the aria is guaranteed to have the audience bursting into applause at its conclusion.

What to listen for:

- How Rossini uses coloratura to bring out details of the libretto and to communicate Cenerentola's overflowing emotions
- How the singer brings her own personality to the ornamentation of the aria
- The way Rossini gradually builds the aria's intensity so the audience is at a fever pitch by its end

- (00:44) Following a full orchestral introduction, Cenerentola begins to sing softly about her humble beginnings (characterised by hardship and crying) to the accompaniment of strings and horns. At first, her vocal line is only lightly ornamented, but it quickly blossoms into a rapid rush of high notes.
- (01:46) Cenerentola describes her change of fortune as being like a bolt from the blue ("come un baleno rapido"), and her vocal line rushes all the way up and down the scale in delight. She repeats the gesture, adding additional ornaments and a cadenza (an improvised embellishment).
- (03:26) A new, more cheerful section begins with pizzicato strings as Cenerentola tells her miserable relatives to wipe away their tears: She will always be their daughter, their sister, their friend. A magical, unexpected key change and even more high notes mark this emotional declaration.
- (04:18) A Rossini crescendo, featuring all the other characters and the chorus, prepares the way for the second part of the aria.
- (05:12) The second section begins with a chirpy staccato tune for the piccolo—the highest-pitched woodwind instrument. It is immediately imitated (with additional ornaments) by Cenerentola, who sings that no longer will she "sit sadly by the fire, crying to herself."
- (06:01) Following a brief interjection from the chorus, Cenerentola sings an even more embellished repetition of the main tune.
- (06:43) The tune is heard for the last time in a breathless arrangement decorated with very fast runs up and down the scale, while the rest of the cast provides a quiet backdrop of chopped-up syllables.
- (07:29) The whole ensemble comes together in a series of sweeping crescendos, each of which culminates in an ecstatic high note from Cenerentola, and then the curtain comes down.

Bel canto

A predominantly Italian vocal style of the late 18th and 19th 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.

Coloratura

A rapid and elaborate ornamentation by a solo singer, including intricate melodic figures, rapid scales, and trills. Requiring vocal agility and a wide and high range, coloratura showcases a singer's virtuosity. At the time Rossini was writing *La Cenerentola*, singers were expected to be able to improvise ornaments on the spot.

Finale

The last portion of an act, a finale consists of several musical sections that accompany an escalation of dramatic tension. 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 and generate excitement. Rossini was well known for his Act I finales, especially in comic operas like *La Cenerentola*. At the very end of an opera, however, he was more likely to opt for a virtuosic solo aria for the hero or heroine.

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, but in Rossini's operas, the mezzo-soprano is usually the star of the show—especially in comic works like *La Cenerentola*. In his tragedies, on the other hand, the character with a "mezzo" range is more likely to be the (male) hero: In the early 1800s, heroic male roles were associated

with very high voices, a relic of the 18th-century tradition of the castrato. By Rossini's time, these high parts were typically sung by women dressed as men; they are called "trouser roles" as a result.

Opera buffa

A term applied to Italian comic operas from the mid-18th through mid-19th centuries. The plot of an opera buffa often features scenes and characters from everyday life, addresses a light or sentimental subject, and concludes with a happy ending. Opera buffa had its last hurrah with Rossini, whose comedies are much better known today than his serious works. The generation after Rossini, however, was much more taken with tragedy and hybrid, "semi-serious" genres, and opera buffa declined considerably in popularity as a result.

Overture

An instrumental piece that occurs before the first act as an introduction to an opera. Overtures set the mood for the opera and often feature musical themes that will occur later in the work. In Rossini's day, however, operas were written so quickly that overtures were often borrowed from a previous work to save time.

Patter

A "patter song" is a comic effect, found in many styles of music theater, in which the goal is to sing as many words as possible as fast as possible in the shortest amount of time. Like a tongue-twister, patter requires the singer to spit out a constant flow of syllables and consonants and is usually played for laughs. Patter songs typically have humorous texts and were associated with low-class characters (like Dandini) or exceptionally immoral nobles (like Don Magnifico). However, patter shows up frequently in Rossini's vocal writing for other characters too, especially in the finales of his comic operas when everyone on stage is feeling overwhelmed by events.

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. Because recitative is so formulaic, it was often the last part of an opera to be written; in fact, Rossini contracted out the writing of *La Cenerentola's* recitatives to another composer.

Repetition

Repetition is a foundational component of how music becomes meaningful. From songs to symphonies, the climax of a piece of music is often the point at which a melody that we've already heard comes back again—sometimes in a completely new guise. Many standard types of operatic aria require the singer to repeat entire sections, but in Rossini's operas, repetition is everywhere. A "Rossini crescendo" depends on the immediate and continuous repetition of a musical phrase for its effect; Rossini's singers were expected to embellish his melodies whenever they were repeated; the effect of Rossini's comic ensembles often relies on characters repeating each other's lines in disbelief. Repetition is one of the most noticeable features of Rossini's style, and it can be heard in many different places throughout *La Cenerentola*.

Rossini crescendo

A crescendo is a gradual raising of volume: When music "crescendos," the performers begin at a softer dynamic level and get incrementally louder. One of the most famous types of crescendos in opera, closely associated with Rossini and thus known as the "Rossini crescendo," involves pairing an increase in volume with repeating melodic and rhythmic phrases, higher instrumental registers, and the gradual addition of instruments in order to create a particularly dramatic or comedic effect.

IN PREPARATION

For this activity, students will need the reproducible handout “Opera Review: *La Cenerentola*,” found in the back of this guide.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND *LA CENERENTOLA*

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. Students will consider the creative choices that have been made for the particular production they are watching and examine different aspects of the performance.

The enclosed performance activity is called “Opera Review: *La Cenerentola*.” The reproducible handout for this activity, available at the back of this guide, will invite students to think of themselves as opera critics, taking notes on what they see and hear during the performance and critiquing each singer and scene on a five-star scale. Students should bring this activity sheet to the final dress rehearsal and fill it out during intermission and/or after the final curtain. When you return to class, students can use their “Opera Review” sheets as they review and discuss their experience.

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION

Students will enjoy starting class with an open discussion of the Met performance. What did they like? What didn't they like? Did anything surprise them? What would they like to see or hear again? This discussion should be an opportunity for students to review their performance activity sheets and express their thoughts about the visual design of the Met production, the singers' performances, and *La Cenerentola's* music and story.

Rossini's *La Cenerentola* gives us Cinderella without the magic, yet it still manages to touch our hearts. Part of the reason for this is that Rossini's characters are much more human than their fairy-tale counterparts. The Wicked Stepmother in Perrault's story doesn't need a reason to be wicked: She just is. But is it really fair to call Don Magnifico wicked? He's vain, foolish, and self-obsessed, and he certainly treats Cenerentola badly. All the same, we get a sense of why he and his daughters might act the way they do—a sense of genuine motivations and aspirations, unpleasant though they might be. In fact, even though Rossini's opera is a comedy and the tone stays light throughout, the opera implicitly asks us whether there isn't something more troubling about characters that actively choose to be cruel rather than just being cruelty personified.

Your students will find it interesting to dissect how the opera compares to the classic fairy tale. The following questions can serve as starting points for discussion; you may find it helpful to refer to the "Closer Look" essay in this guide, *A Tale as Old as Time?*

- Are Don Magnifico and his daughters bad people? Why or why not—and how did they get that way?
- Rossini's Cinderella doesn't have a stepmother but rather a stepfather. Does this change the way you think about Cinderella's relationship with her stepparent?
- The philosopher Alidoro replaces the Fairy Godmother in this opera. Given Alidoro's role in the plot and his portrayal on stage, do you think he might have magic powers?
- In this version, Cinderella doesn't lose a glass slipper at the ball for the Prince to find; instead, she chooses to give the Prince her glass bracelet. Why do you think she does this? Which version do you prefer?
- Prince Ramiro and Dandini disguise themselves for their visit to the Magnifico household. Do you think it's fair of them to trick Cenerentola's stepfather and stepsisters in this way?
- Cenerentola ends the opera by forgiving her family. What do you think would happen next, if there were a sequel?
- Can you identify the five components of the Persecuted Heroine narrative in other fairy tales you know? What about your favorite films or TV shows?

Finally, remember that opera is a multi-medial 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 them for any final thoughts and impressions. What did they find most memorable?

IN PRINT

Abbate, Carolyn and Roger Parker. *A History of Opera*. Updated edition. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Sons, 2015.

- Two of the world's most famous opera scholars come together in this accessible single-volume history of opera from its invention to the present day, written for a non-specialist audience. Chapter 8 ("Rossini and transition") is devoted solely to Rossini and concludes with a section on *La Cenerentola*.

Fisher, Burton D., ed. *Rossini's La Cenerentola*. Opera Journeys Libretto Series. Boca Raton, FL: Opera Journeys Publishing, 2010.

- An English translation of the libretto to *La Cenerentola* with the original Italian in parallel.

Jones, Christine A. *Mother Goose Refigured: A Critical Translation of Charles Perrault's Fairy Tales*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2016.

- A modern translation of Perrault's original "Mother Goose" collection from 1697, with further information on Perrault's background, the origins of the tales, and their influence.

Osborne, Richard. *Rossini: His Life and Works*. 2nd edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

- A scholarly biography of Rossini that considers the man, the myth, and the music in an accessible and engaging way.

ONLINE

"Cecilia Bartoli - La Cenerentola - Non piu mesta." YouTube video, 3:12. Posted by Gabba02, February 28, 2007: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qVZNx39xYiA>

- The Italian mezzo-soprano Cecilia Bartoli is well known for her interpretations of Rossini's heroines. Here she sings "Non più mesta," the show-stopping final aria from *La Cenerentola*, from a Metropolitan Opera production in 1997. With English subtitles.

"The MET: Live in HD 2018 - Cendrillon (Cinderella) excerpt." YouTube video, 3:24. Posted by FAMAHongKong, October 21, 2018: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mn0wguVuMbc>

- Rossini and his librettist chose to excise the supernatural element from the Cinderella story, resulting in the loss of one famous character—the Fairy Godmother. But Rossini wasn't the only composer to adapt Perrault's "Cendrillon." In 1899, the French Romantic composer Jules Massenet would write his own Cinderella opera, sticking much more closely to Perrault's story. Here the Korean American soprano Kathleen Kim sings the role of the Fairy Godmother in Massenet's work, as she prepares to transform Cinderella for the ball.

Reviewed by _____

Have you ever wanted to be a music and theater critic? Now's your chance!

As you watch *La Cenerentola*, use the space below to keep track of your thoughts and opinions. What did you like about the performance? What didn't you like? If you were in charge, what might you have done differently? Think carefully about the action, music, and stage design, and rate each of the star singers. Then, after the opera, share your opinions with your friends, your classmates, and anyone else who wants to learn more about Rossini's opera and this performance at the Met!

THE STARS:	STAR POWER	MY COMMENTS
Tara Erraught as Angelina	*****	
Javier Camarena as Don Ramiro	*****	
Vito Priante as Dandini	*****	
Maurizio Muraro as Don Magnifico	*****	
Christian Van Horn as Alidoro	*****	
Conductor James Gaffigan	*****	

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN/STAGING
Clorinda and Tisbe admire themselves while Cenerentola sings her favorite song			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
A beggar knocks on the door, and messengers announce Prince Ramiro's ball that evening			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Don Ramiro (in disguise) meets Cenerentola			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Dandini, disguised as the Prince, arrives at Casa Magnifico			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Cenerentola begs Don Magnifico to go to the ball			
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
Alidoro comforts Cenerentola			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Don Magnifico becomes master of the wine cellar			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Dandini and Ramiro exchange notes on the Stepsisters			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
A mysterious veiled woman appears at the ball			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Magnifico and his daughters worry about the mystery woman			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Cenerentola leaves the ball but gives the Prince a bracelet so he can find her			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Ramiro is determined to find Cenerentola			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Dandini reveals his true identity to Don Magnifico			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Magnifico and the Stepsisters return home, and a thunderstorm breaks out overhead			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Prince Ramiro arrives at Don Magnifico's household and asks to marry Cenerentola; everyone is confused			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Cenerentola sings joyfully about her sudden reversal of fortune and brings the house down!			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5