Arts Education Conference: Cultivating Conditions for Growth

Storytelling with Opera

Lyric Unlimited
LYRIC OPERA of CHICAGO

DEPARTMENT of ARTS EDUCATION
What is opera?

- Storytelling through music
  - The Story = Setting + Characters + Beginning/Middle/End
  - Problem / Conflict ---> Answer / Resolution

- Opera combines multiple art forms
  - Drama
  - Music
  - Movement
  - Visual arts (the “production”)
Why use opera in the classroom?

- Supports teachers’ ELA learning objectives (reading, writing, speaking)
- It’s student centered and allows students to express academic knowledge in new and expressive ways
- Develops artistic skills and understandings
- Supports students’ social and emotional development (SEL - empathy, teamwork, achieving goals)
- It could potentially foster social justice initiatives
- It’s super fun!
Lyric’s Elementary Opera Residency Program

● 12 or 18 sessions (60 minutes each, usually once a week)
● Teachers select a focus or theme based on:
  ○ An existing story, book, myth, fairy tale, legend, fable, etc.
  ○ Curricular content area, unit of study, or reinforcement of academic skills
  ○ SEL themes or challenges in the classroom or school
● Activities
  ○ Team building and acting games
  ○ Creative writing and decision making
  ○ Learning 2-4 songs
  ○ “Blocking” and fully staging an opera
  ○ Movement and possibly dance (optional)
  ○ Visual arts days focused on production elements (optional)
The plan for today:

- Walk through introductory games which will lead into...
- Writing activities which will...
- Help create a *libretto* (the words of the opera!) which will...
- Open up the opportunity to add MUSIC which will...
- Help everyone in the room express and connect!

You will receive:

- A handout outlining the movement games and writing exercises we do today, a plot analysis form and list of opera terminology
- Time to ask questions and discuss
“When you speak, you sing!”

*physical, vocal and creative warm-ups to promote comfort, imagination and skills for improvising, writing and performing*

1. Circle up and pass
   a. A ball
   b. A sound and gesture
   c. Phrases
2. Move in the space
   a. Change emotion (*tempo*)
   b. Sigh (*sing*)
   c. Stand like a statue (*physical connection and levels*)
3. Reshape the River
   a. Tableau
   b. Come alive
Let’s make a Libretto!

1. Lists
2. Interviews
3. Reshape the River
4. Worksheet
Lists: Setting, Characters, Scenes

Characters:
- Ruling house of Verona
- Prince
- Count Paris
- Capulets
  - Juliet
  - Lord and lady
  - Tybalt
  - (Nurse)
- Montagues
  - Romeo
  - Lord and Lady
  - Benvolio
  - (Friar Lawrence)
  - (Mercutio)

Setting:
- Verona, Italy

Scenes:
1. Fight in Square
2. Party Scene
3. Balcony
4. Married
5. Tybalt kills Mercutio
6. Romeo kills Tybalt
7. Romeo banished
8. Juliet fakes death
9. Romeo/Juliet die
10. Families reconcile
Interviews

A great way to get started AND to fill in the blanks in the script - also a great tool to assess how much kids are following what's going on. Later in the process, it’s an interesting way to explore “inner monologues” or SEL concepts like “perspective.”

1. Move in the space as a character

2. Freeze as a statue of that character and answer interview questions

3. Teacher audio records and transcribes into script, or students sit and write a monologue
Reshape the River

A fun way to demonstrate writing in the script format and create content

1. Students “strike a pose” to create a tableau, or mold volunteers into “statues”

2. Come alive! Students in the tableau start talking

3. The dialogue is transcribed into a script or is used as a starting point for small group script-writing
**Setting:** Party at the Capulet’s house

**Characters:** Romeo, Server, Juliet, Tybalt (Juliet’s cousin), Lord Capulet (Juliet’s dad)

**Scene description:** From across the room, Romeo sees Juliet, and asks a server who she is. The server does not know. Romeo is transfixed. Moving through the room, Tybalt hears and recognizes Romeo’s voice. Realizing that there is a Montague present, Tybalt gets mad. Capulet overhears Tybalt and reprimands him, telling him that the youth will not be harmed at his feast. As Capulet moves on, Tybalt vows that he will not let this indignity pass. *(adapted from SparkNotes)*
Let's add Music!

When our emotions get too big for talking, **WE SING.**
(or play instruments...or dance...or create other forms of art!)

Music Teachers -- apply the music you are already teaching, including instruments

Classroom Teachers -- explore your own interests, and those that fit the curriculum

Kids -- think about the music you like to hear/make and how it fits

*There's a place for us, somewhere a place for us.*
*Peace and quiet and open air wait for us, somewhere.*
Wait, what are we doing?

Games → Writing → Music → Performance = STUDENT (and teacher!) CONNECTION
Go make an opera.

#ArtsEdConChi

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