

MASSENET

Cendrillon

A Guide for Educators

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The Met
ropolitan
Opera **HD**
LIVE

Cendrillon

It is the most beloved fairy tale of all time: A young woman of unmatched grace and goodness overcomes the abuse of her stepfamily, profits from the help of a fairy godmother, and wins the heart of a royal suitor to live happily ever after. For almost 2,000 years, versions of the Cinderella story have been told across the globe, inspiring interpretations by myriad authors, playwrights, musicians, and filmmakers. There is much to recognize in Jules Massenet’s fin-de-siècle version of this story, including a carriage formed from a pumpkin, a midnight curfew, and a singular glass slipper. Yet Massenet’s title character is rendered at once stronger and more human than her literary forebear, as Massenet and librettist Henri Caïn augment the opera’s comedy, romance, and wistfulness with Cendrillon’s remarkable ability to forgive.

The Met’s production, by director Laurent Pelly, quite literally brings the story-book tale to life. Inspired by an edition of Perrault’s *Cendrillon* illustrated by Gustave Doré that Pelly read as a child, the production is steeped in the physical, typographical materials of the fairy tale. The set evokes the pages of a book, with black and white text forming its walls and the shapes of characters and props appearing as large cut-out letters. With its blend of humor and darkness mirroring the tensions of the fairy tale genre itself, the production constructs a haunting, magical landscape brought to life by over-the-top characters and impeccable design.

This guide is intended to help your students appreciate *Cendrillon* as well as introduce them to different versions of the Cinderella story from diverse cultural and historical contexts. By analyzing key differences between the various retellings, students will explore stylistic and structural elements of the narrative, think deeply about what exactly makes the fairy tale so compelling, and consider what their own version of this classic story might be. The materials on the following pages include an introduction to the key components of the Cinderella story, an overview of Massenet’s life and work, and classroom activities that will bring the opera’s music and story to life. By delving into *Cendrillon*’s music, drama, and design, this guide will forge interdisciplinary classroom connections, inspire critical thinking, and help students enjoy the magic of Massenet’s charming work.



DiDONATO



COOTE



KIM



NAOURI



BLYTHE

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THE WORK

An opera in **four acts, sung in French**

Music by **Jules Massenet**

Libretto by **Henri Caïn**, based on the **fairy tale *Cendrillon* by Charles Perrault**

First performed **May 24, 1899**, at the **Opéra-Comique, Paris**

PRODUCTION

Laurent Pelly
Production

Barbara de Limburg
Set Designer

Laurent Pelly
Costume Designer

Duane Schuler
Lighting Designer

Laura Scozzi
Choreographer

Gary Halvorson
Live in HD Director

PERFORMANCE

The Met: Live in HD
April 28, 2018

Joyce DiDonato
Cendrillon

Alice Coote
Prince Charming

Kathleen Kim
Fairy Godmother

Laurent Naouri
Pandolfe

Stephanie Blythe
Madame de la Haltière

Ying Fang
Noémie

Maya Lahyani
Dorothee

Bertrand de Billy
Conductor

Production a gift of The Sybil B. Harrington Endowment Fund

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Cendrillon is produced in association with the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London; Gran Teatre del Liceu, Barcelona; Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, Brussels; and Opéra de Lille. This production was first performed at The Santa Fe Opera