

ONE MOMENT CAN CHANGE YOUR ENTIRE LIFE. THAT IS THE LESSON

welterweight boxer Emile Griffith learns in Terence Blanchard's opera *Champion*. Stumbling into a career as a boxer in the 1950s, Emile harbors a secret: He is bisexual. Somehow, a fellow fighter, Benny "Kid" Paret, finds out what Emile wishes to keep from the world and taunts him with this knowledge before a fight. While they are in the ring together, Griffith issues a devastating 17 blows in seven seconds that place his opponent in the hospital where he later dies from his injuries. As expressions of toxic masculinity dictate not only personal, but professional lives, Emile is haunted by a society that celebrates him for killing a man, though condemns him for loving one.

A gentle man who had originally come to New York City in search of a creative career in hat-making, he is racked with guilt from that night onwards. Emile Griffith found himself constrained in every direction by societal expectations: what he should do, who he should love, and when it was considered acceptable to end another person's life. The Met's production shines a new light on Griffith by showcasing the richness and breadth of his life at different stages and outside of boxing: As librettist Michael Cristofer states, "Emile Griffith never wanted to be a world champion fighter." The Tony Award-winning playwright said in a statement, "He wanted to play baseball. He wanted to make hats. And most of all, he wanted to sing. Bringing his story of forgiveness and redemption to the Met, to have it sung from this great stage, would have made him very, very happy."

This guide shows students how the genre of opera can speak to 21st-century society in its musical style and content. *Champion* addresses contemporary issues of violence, sexuality, and the hopes and dreams of an American immigrant. The materials on the following pages include an introduction to Terence Blanchard's scene-setting music, a short history of fight sports and their troubling complications, and classroom activities that will bring the opera's music and story to life. By delving into *Champion*'s music, drama, and design, this guide will forge interdisciplinary classroom connections, inspire critical thinking, and reveal how new stories can speak to old themes and reimagine the boundaries of the opera stage.



MOORE



BLYTHE



GREEN



OWENS

THE WORK

An opera by Terence Blanchard

Libretto by Michael Cristofer

In two acts, sung in English

Based on the life of boxer
Emile Griffith

First performed June 15, 2013, at the
Opera Theatre of Saint Louis

PRODUCTION

James Robinson Production

Allen Moyer Set Designer

Montana Levi Blanco
Costume Designer

Donald Holder Lighting Designer

Greg Emetaz Projection Designer

Camille A. Brown Choreographer

PERFORMANCE

The Met: Live in HD
April 29, 2023

Latonia Moore Emelda Griffith

Stephanie Blythe Kathy Hagen

Ryan Speedo Green
Young Emile Griffith

Eric Owens Emile Griffith

Yannick Nézet-Séguin Conductor

Commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera.
Originally commissioned by Opera Theatre of Saint
Louis, co-commissioned by Jazz St. Louis.

A co-production of the Metropolitan Opera and
Lyric Opera of Chicago

Production a gift of Lynne and Richard Pasculano,
and C. Graham Berwind, III

Additional support provided by The Ford
Foundation, and the Francis Goelet Trusts

Champion Educator Guide
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The Metropolitan Opera Educator Guides offer a creative, interdisciplinary introduction to opera. Designed to complement existing classroom curricula in music, the humanities, STEM fields, and the arts, these guides will help young viewers confidently engage with opera regardless of their prior experience with the art form.

On the following pages, you'll find an array of materials designed to encourage critical thinking, deepen background knowledge, and empower students to engage with *Champion*. These materials can be used in classrooms and/or via remote-learning platforms, and they can be mixed and matched to suit your students' individual academic needs.

Above all, this guide is intended to help students to explore *Champion* through their own experiences and ideas. The diverse perspectives that your students bring to opera make the art form infinitely richer, and we hope that your students will experience opera as a space where their confidence can grow and their curiosity can flourish.

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OPERA IN THE CLASSROOM

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Critical Inquiries: Questions and thought experiments designed to foster careful thinking

Reproducibles: Classroom-ready worksheets that support the activities in this guide

You will also need the audio selections from *Champion*, available online at metopera.org/championguide.

WHO'S WHO IN CHAMPION

CHARACTER	VOICE TYPE	THE LOWDOWN
Emile Griffith A retired boxer struggling with dementia and haunted by his past	bass	After years of boxing, Emile—now an old man—struggles with both guilt and “dementia pugilistica,” a degenerative illness affecting memory. He relives moments from his youth, including the night he kills Benny “Kid” Paret in the boxing ring.
Young Emile A young prizefighter	bass-baritone	Newly arrived from St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, young Emile hopes to find his mother and make a life for himself in New York City. He plans to sing, play baseball and design hats, but after meeting an amateur boxer and trainer, Emile becomes a welterweight* champion.
Little Emile A child growing up in the Virgin Islands	treble	The youngest version of the three versions of Emile, Little Emile appears in the flashbacks to Emile’s childhood on St. Thomas.
Emelda Griffith Emile’s mother	mezzo-soprano	Leaving her seven children in St. Thomas, Emelda looks for work beyond the Virgin Islands. A charismatic personality, she is overjoyed when Emile joins her in New York City, where she gets to know her oldest child and observe his troubled rise to boxing fame.
Howie Albert Emile’s trainer	baritone	Introduced to Emile by his mother, Howie gives Emile a job at his millinery, a company that makes women’s hats. When Howie, an amateur fighter himself, sees Emile’s potential to become a boxing champion, he becomes Emile’s trainer.
Kathy Hagen Bar owner	mezzo-soprano	The owner of a gay bar near the boxing gyms in New York City, Kathy is someone Emile can confide in.
Benny “Kid” Paret A boxer	tenor	A Cuban boxer who taunts Emile Griffith at a pre-match weigh-in with a Spanish slur for homosexual. In the ring that evening, Benny suffers 17 blows from Emile that put him into a coma before he passes away.
Benny Paret, Jr. Benny Paret’s son	tenor, the same singer who plays Benny Paret	The son of Benny “Kid” Paret, Benny Jr. meets the retired Emile and forgives him for killing his father.
Luis Rodrigo Griffith Emile’s adopted son and caretaker	tenor	Emile’s adopted son, Luis takes care of the aging Emile as he succumbs to dementia. Luis also takes Emile to meet with Benny Paret, Jr.

*Welterweight boxers are fighters who weigh between 140 and 147 pounds.

THE STORY

SYNOPSIS

ACT I: *A nursing home on Long Island.* An elderly Emile Griffith struggles to get dressed, requiring the help of his adopted son and caretaker, Luis. Emile is suffering from dementia, an illness affecting memory and cognition, and Luis reminds him that today he is going to meet with Benny Paret, Jr., the son of a boxer Emile fought decades earlier.

We flash back to the 1950s. A young Emile has just arrived in New York from St. Thomas, one of the U.S. Virgin Islands. He has come to join his mother, Emelda, and to make it big in America as a singer, baseball player, and hat designer. Emelda can't remember which of her seven children Emile is, but she is glad to see him nonetheless and helps to get him a job. He meets Howie Albert, a hat manufacturer, who notices Emile's strength and physique. Rather than boxing hats, Howie suggests, Emile should take on a different kind of boxing and train to become a prizefighter. Emile soon becomes a welterweight champion, but he is lonely and confused by his success. One night he makes his way to a gay bar in Manhattan finds a confidante in the owner, Kathy Hagen. He shares with her cruel details of his childhood when he was punished for his sexuality.

It is 1962. Emile meets Benny "Kid" Paret in the ring. At a weigh-in before their fight, Paret taunts him, calling him a Spanish slur for homosexual. Emile is enraged. He tries to explain his anger to Howie but struggles to make his coach understand. Left alone, Emile reflects on what it means to be a man. As Emile and Paret prepare to fight, Paret





continues to taunt Emile. Driven to the edge, Emile delivers more than 17 blows in less than seven seconds, leaving Paret in a ten-day coma from which he will never recover.

ACT II: *Back in his present-day apartment, Emile is haunted by Paret's ghost.* Another flashback brings us to the mid-1960s. Emile is a successful fighter winning titles and trophies around the world. Yet he remains troubled by Paret's death. He tries to distract himself by enjoying life. He denies his romantic feelings for men and takes a young bride named Sadie, a decision everyone, including his mother, warns against.

It is now the early 1970s. After his marriage, Emile's luck has changed, and he now finds himself on a losing streak. He has also started to display signs of trauma-related dementia. Howie tries to console Emile, but Emile rejects him and everyone else around him. Emile returns to Kathy's bar to find comfort, but outside in the street he is taunted by a group of kids who beat him violently, exacerbating his pre-existing brain injuries.

Back in the present, Emile relives the attack and Luis tries to comfort him. Emile asks Benny Paret, Jr. for forgiveness when they meet in a park in New York City, but Benny Jr. explains that Emile must forgive himself. Back at home, the torment of his past begins to subside, and Emile is able to finally live one day at a time.

Griffith Lives With Nightmare, Saying He Just Wanted to Win

6

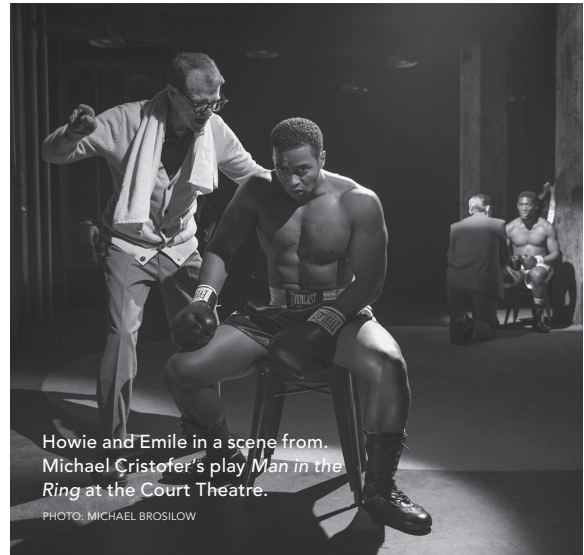
THE COMPOSITION OF CHAMPION

- 1945** Michael Procaccino, who will later gain fame as a playwright, actor, and director under the name Michael Cristofer, is born on January 22 in Trenton, New Jersey.
- 1962** Composer Terence Blanchard is born in New Orleans, Louisiana. He begins piano lessons at age five before switching to the trumpet at age eight.
- 1977** Cristofer's play *The Shadow Box* wins the Pulitzer Prize in Drama and a Tony Award for Best Play. Three years later, Cristofer also writes the screenplay for the film of *The Shadow Box*, which is directed by Paul Newman and stars Joanne Woodward and Christopher Plummer.
- 1978** Blanchard enrolls at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts.
- 1988** Blanchard begins his long-term collaboration with filmmaker Spike Lee by playing on the soundtrack to the film *School Daze*. Four years later, Blanchard composes the music for Lee's film *Malcolm X*, the soundtrack of which is subsequently arranged into a suite for Blanchard's quintet.
- 2008** Blanchard's album *A Tale of God's Will (A Requiem for Katrina)*, based on music he composed for the 2006 documentary film *When the Levees Broke*, wins a Grammy Award for Best Large Jazz Ensemble Album.
- 2012** The Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and Jazz St. Louis co-commission an opera from Blanchard, who suggests the story of Emile Griffith. This same year, Blanchard writes the music for the multiracial Broadway revival of *A Streetcar Named Desire*.
- 2013** *Champion* has its premiere at the Loretto-Hilton Center for the Performing Arts at Webster University on June 15. It is Opera Theatre's 24th premiere in 38 seasons.
- 2014** *Champion* is named one of five finalists for the International Opera Award, a prize recognizing global operatic excellence.

2016 *Man in the Ring*, a stage play about Griffith's life written by Cristofer, premieres at Court Theatre in Chicago.

Meanwhile, opera companies around the United States are embracing *Champion*. SFJAZZ and Opera Parallèle in San Francisco collaborate on a new production of *Champion* for chamber orchestra that premieres on

February 21. On March 5, 2017, a third production of the opera is premiered by Washington National Opera at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. In 2018, *Champion* arrives in Terence Blanchard's hometown when it is performed by New Orleans Opera, and a production at Michigan Opera Theater is scheduled for 2020.



Howie and Emile in a scene from Michael Cristofer's play *Man in the Ring* at the Court Theatre.

PHOTO: MICHAEL BROSILOW

2019 Blanchard is nominated for an Oscar for Best Original Score for *BlacKkKlansman*, and the film's track "Blut und Boden (Blood and Soil)" wins a Grammy for Best Instrumental Composition.

Blanchard's second opera, *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*, premieres at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.

2020 *Champion* is scheduled to open at Michigan Opera Theater on April 5, but the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic in March forces the company to cancel the show.

Blanchard's long-term collaboration with Spike Lee continues with *Da 5 Bloods*, a film directed and co-written by Lee and released by Netflix. Blanchard's score is nominated for an Oscar for Best Original Score.

2021 On September 27, *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* opens the Metropolitan Opera's season. The first opera by a Black composer to be performed by the Met, and the first opera on the Met's stage after the 18-month closure occasioned by Covid-19, *Fire* is a major event on the New York cultural calendar and an instant success. Less than a month later the Met adds *Champion* to the 2022–23 season.

EMILE GRIFFITH

1938 Emile Griffith is born on February 3 in Charlotte Amalie, the largest city on the U.S. Virgin Island of St. Thomas. His childhood is unstable and often miserable. After his father leaves the family, his mother, Emelda, heads to Puerto Rico for work, leaving Emile and his siblings first with their grandmother, and then with their deeply abusive cousin Blanche. Desperate to escape Blanche's beatings, the young Griffith begs to be allowed to live at the juvenile detention facility, Mandal.

Emelda, meanwhile, moves from Puerto Rico to New York. Over the following years, she will send for each of her children in turn, starting with the oldest, Emile. His four biological siblings and three stepsiblings soon join them.

1956 While working in the supply room at Howard Albert Millinery, a hat factory in Manhattan's Garment District, Griffith makes the acquaintance of the factory's owner and one-time amateur boxer, Howie Albert. Spotting Emile's talent at an early age, Albert convinces Griffith to start boxing and becomes his trainer.

1957 Howie Albert enters Griffith in the amateur Golden Gloves tournament, a prestigious event held annually at Madison Square Garden. Griffith loses his bout but makes a profound impression on those present.

1958 A year later, Griffith wins the Golden Gloves tournament in February. On June 2, he makes his professional boxing debut, which he wins.

1959–60 New York City cracks down on bars and other venues that cater to gay clientele. In the space of one year, more than 40 gay bars in the city are raided by the police and closed. This crackdown on locales that cater to gay clients echoes widespread anxiety over homosexuality during the 1950s: Homosexuality, considered a sin and disease, is illegal in all but one state and punishable by prison, and during the "Lavender Scare" of the 1950s, hundreds of federal workers are fired for alleged or suspected homosexuality and many more are shunned by their communities.



The welterweight championship bout covered in the *New York Times*, September 30, 1961.

1961 On April 1, Griffith meets welterweight world champion Benny “Kid” Paret in the ring in Miami. Griffith wins the bout—and the title of world champion. It’s the start of an ongoing rivalry between the two boxers. In a rematch on September 30, Paret beats Griffith, and the world-champion title returns to “the Kid.” Yet while the loss to Paret in the ring stings, Griffith seems far more deeply impacted by an event at the pre-match weigh-in, when Paret uses a homophobic Spanish slur to taunt him.

1962 On March 24, Griffith and Paret meet in New York’s Madison Square Garden for their third bout. Remembering the effect his taunts had on Griffith in their previous match, Paret once again takes the opportunity of the weigh-in to taunt Griffith’s sexuality. Griffith is furious. His coach, Gil Clancy, steps between the boxers before Griffith can punch Paret then and there, but Griffith’s fury is not quelled. That evening, in the boxing ring, their fight is exceptionally brutal. It ends when Paret slumps down on the ropes, on his way into the coma from which he will never recover.

Griffith is named the winner—and welterweight champion once again—as Paret’s trainers crowd around him. The television announcers, meanwhile, are desperate to avoid dead air on live TV. For the first time ever, the new technology of slow-motion replay is used on a sports broadcast, zooming in on the blows dealt to Paret.

In the early morning hours of April 3, in hospital, Benny Paret is declared dead due to his brain injuries. He leaves behind his two-year-old son, Benny Jr., and his wife, Lucy, who is pregnant with their second child. Nearly 40,000 people attend memorial services that are held in New York and Miami. Paret is buried in Miami’s Our Lady of Mercy Cemetery on April 7; Lucy declines Griffith’s request to attend.

Paret’s death—broadcast live on national television—sparks both a homicide investigation against Griffith and a broader conversation about whether boxing should be banned. Neither the investigation nor the ban come to fruition, but Griffith will never be able to shake the trauma of knowing that he had killed another man in the ring.

1969 For years, police have been staging raids at gay bars in New York. But in June, the clientele at the Stonewall Inn decide to fight back. The protest launches the modern gay rights movement (to this day, gay pride celebrations take place in June to honor the Stonewall protests), but Emile still feels an overwhelming pressure to keep his sexuality hidden.

- 1971** Hoping to quiet the ongoing rumors about his sexuality, Griffith marries Sadie Donastorg, a young woman from his Virgin Island birthplace of Charlotte Amalie. The marriage will last only two years.
- 1977** After 112 professional bouts and five world championship wins, Griffith finally hangs up his boxing gloves. His final fight is on July 30 in Monte Carlo.
- 1978** Following his retirement, Griffith begins working as a trainer at a boxing gym in Manhattan. He works with several boxers and prepares them for their fights. He also takes a job as a corrections officer at a youth detention center in New Jersey, where he meets a young detainee named Luis Rodrigo. After Luis's release, Emile adopts him as a son.
- 1992** Griffith, who has been embracing his bisexuality more openly, is attacked by a gang outside a gay bar. He suffers severe injuries, including blows to the head, that take more than six months to heal. After the assault, the first signs of memory loss and confusion that will mark Griffith's slide into dementia appear.
- 2004** Filmmakers Dan Klores and Ron Berger, who are creating a documentary about Griffith and Paret's fight, arrange a meeting between Griffith and Paret's son, Benny Jr. The two men meet in Central Park. It is a difficult encounter for both, but Benny Jr. makes it clear that he bears Griffith no ill will. Griffith leaves the meeting greatly relieved, finally unshouldering some of the guilt of the past forty years.
- 2013** Emile Griffith dies on July 23 at the age of 75, after suffering from dementia for many years.

FRIDAY NIGHT FIGHTS



FUN FACT

The story of how Emile Griffith met coach Howie Albert quickly made the rounds of the New York boxing world. At the time, Griffith was working in the supply room of Albert's hat factory, preparing hats for shipment. One sweltering summer day, he asked to take off his shirt. Struck by his physique, Albert inquired if the young man had ever done any boxing. Griffith responded in the affirmative. "Where?" Albert asked. "Right here!" Griffith replied, indicating the boxes that he had been stocking that day.

Fight sports have always been a part of public entertainment, from ancient Roman gladiator games to medieval jousting and contemporary mixed martial arts. The beginnings of contemporary boxing are typically traced to late-19th-century England, when the ninth Marquess of Queensbury endorsed a code generally accepted to outline the rules of the sport. The golden age of boxing in the United States started in the 1920s with fighters such as Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney, and in the 1950s, boxing benefitted from the television broadcast of matches combined with the emergence of legendary figures such as Muhammad Ali and Sugar Ray Leonard. Friday boxing broadcasts, "Friday Night Fights," were communal experiences that strengthened bonds of family and friends in much the same way that sports entertainment does today. Yet this opportunity for familial bonding was not entirely wholesome, especially for the athletes involved.

Benny "Kid" Paret's death sparked a conversation about the safety of the sport of boxing. Yet Paret was only one of many boxers who have died as a result of boxing injuries. And for many other fighters, the sport's long-term physiological effects can be horrific. "Boxer's brain," from which Griffith himself suffered, is a term used to describe traumatic brain injuries that result in dementia and other problems for professional boxers, including Muhammad Ali. Chronic traumatic brain injury (CTBI) occurs in approximately 20% of professional boxers and results in various degrees of cognitive and behavioral impairments. Those who suffer with CTBI experience symptoms similar to Alzheimer's disease but cannot be treated with the same medications; the most effective form of treating CTBI is thought to be prevention.

CTBI and other similar syndromes have been observed in football players, leading to recent discussions around the safety of the sport. In 2017, *TIME* magazine reported that degenerative brain disease was found in 87% of former football players, and a large

post-mortem study found that 110 out of 111 deceased National Football League players suffered from what is called chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE). This disorder has been linked to dementia, suicidal thoughts, and declines in memory, cognitive abilities, and mood. In 2013, the NFL even implemented a four-year initiative to accelerate the diagnosis and treatment of traumatic brain injuries called Head Health Initiative.

The more modern medicine understands about how the brain functions, the more scrutiny contact sports have received. At the same time, boxing and football are hugely lucrative parts of the athletic and entertainment industries. Even for many players, the possibility of a large paycheck can overcome the fear of long-term brain injury. It is thus unlikely that these sports will ever cease to exist. But the stories of Emile Griffith, Benny Paret, and those like them, remind us that there can be a real human cost to our entertainment. As consumers, we can advocate for rigorous safety standards and lasting change.

DEMAND GROWING FOR BAN ON BOXING

Paret, Hurt in Ring, Given Little Chance

By GORDON S. WHITE Jr.

Benny (Kid) Paret remained unconscious and in critical condition at Roosevelt Hospital last night with brain injuries suffered when he lost the world welterweight title to Emile Griffith Saturday night at Madison Square Garden. The 24-year-old Cuban boxer given little chance of recovery.

Reaction to Paret Knockout
Heard in U.S. and Abroad

The ringside cries in Madison Square Garden Saturday night to "stop the fight" when it was clear that Benny (Kid) Paret, battered into insensibility yesterday

MUSICAL TIME TRAVEL

While it is quite common for films to “time travel,” particularly with flashbacks and daydreams, the action of a traditional opera tends to move in a linear fashion, rarely stretching across large expanses of time and almost never traveling into the past. In *Champion*, however, Terence Blanchard, who has been composing film music for more than three decades, tells Emile Griffith’s story through the recollections of the aging boxer now suffering from dementia. In the scenes from the past—including flashbacks to Emile’s hometown in Virgin Islands, his arrival in New York, and his fateful fight with Benny Paret—Blanchard uses music to create separate sonic spaces, and to evoke these distinct eras and places.

Each of the opera’s ten scenes are indicated with the ring of a bell, like the boxing bell that demarcates the ten rounds of a fight. (Audio Track 1) This unique and specific use of sound allows Blanchard to break up the opera’s story into a series of distinct memories. Each ring of the bell indicates to the audience that we are moving to a different moment in Emile’s life. Furthermore, Blanchard, a versatile jazz musician, writes music that alludes to the time and place of each scene. In Round One, “Bamboshay,” Emile’s first recollection is of his early aspirations to become a hatmaker. As he prepares to leave his home in St. Thomas for New York City to pursue his dream, the music takes on a Caribbean flavor in the form of a lively creole dance called the Bamboshay. (Audio Track 2) Upon his arrival in New York City, the music once again shifts locales, and Emile and his mother sing a duet in the style of jazzy lounge music. In Round Five, “The Fight,” the scene of Emile’s fateful fight with Benny “Kid” Paret, Blanchard juxtaposes recorded spoken voices calling the fight’s outcome with the cheers and jeers from the choral audience. As the intensity grows, the choir sounds increasingly apocalyptic, foreshadowing the fight’s deadly outcome (Audio Track 3).

Blanchard also allows the opera to time-travel through characterization. He has created three different “Emiles”: the 70-year-old suffering from dementia, the prize fighter in the prime of life, and the young boy in St. Thomas, each portrayed by a different singer and, therefore, with a necessarily different voice type. In Round Three, “From Here to There,” the boxing bell shifts the action quickly from the 1950s nightclub of Kathy Hagen’s gay bar, where Emile has found solace, to Emile’s childhood as he recalls his cousin Blanche reprimanding him for “having the devil in him.” In a trio, Old Emile, Young Emile, and Little Emile pray together for strength. (Audio Track 4) Like in film, the casting of the same character at different stages of life allows the work to convincingly capture the many stages of a deeply poignant life.

CRITICAL INQUIRY

In what ways does the music of opera anticipate film music? What similarities do they share and what differences? How would you incorporate elements of film music into an operatic composition?

HATS OFF!

Before he became a boxing champion, Emile Griffith dreamed of being a milliner—a maker of women's hats. In the first half of the 20th century, hats were a daily accessory, and America's fashion capital, New York City, was home to scores of millinery shops. Clinton Street on the Lower East Side was known as "millinery row," and according to a 1920 guidebook, as many as 16 hat shops could be crammed into each block from Houston to Grand Street. Hats were also often included in the collections of premier fashion designers, including Coco Chanel and Christian Dior: Chanel, in fact, began her career as a milliner.

Following World War I, the most common style of hat was called a "cloche," a bell-shaped hat that neatly covered the women's hairstyle of the day, the bob. Floppy sun hats and berets could also be seen on the era's film starlets, such as Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich. Turban-style headdresses were also popular in the 1930s, especially when made with glittering gold materials. In menswear, styles such as bowlers, fedoras, and panama hats were also considered trendy. Miniature hats, nothing more than a bow with some netting, were popular in the 1940s, a time during World War II when hats were heavily taxed as a luxury item. Brimless hats called Calots were also popular. The most common hat styles of the 1950s, when Griffith arrived in New York, were wide-brim hats (like the one Audrey Hepburn wears in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*), pillbox or "tilt" hats (made famous by Jacqueline Kennedy), and half-hats or Juliette caps, which sat nearly flush on the head and covered the head from the back to nearly the front, like a very large headband. Hats began to fall out of everyday fashion in the late 1960s.

Yet in some communities and contexts, hats continue to play a crucial role in fashion and self-expression. In the Black American community, there has been a long tradition of hat-wearing, especially at religious events. Sunday hats can be colorful and flamboyant, constructed from a variety of materials including straw, felt, and fur and elaborately decorated with sequins, feathers, flowers, and rhinestones. The unique tradition of church hats in the Black community was documented in the 2000 book *Crowns* by photographer Michael Cunningham and award-winning journalist Craig Marberry.

CRITICAL INQUIRY

What other kinds of specialized skills, such as millinery, do you know of? Do you have any hobbies that might surprise people? What are some of the challenges associated with balancing multiple, contrasting hobbies or skills?



An article in the *New York Times* showed Griffith at work in Howie Albert's hat shop, March 7, 1965.

PHILOSOPHICAL CHAIRS

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Materials

Philosophical Chairs
Reproducible Sheet

COMMON CORE:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6–12.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7–12.1e

Seek to understand other perspectives and cultures and communicate effectively with audiences or individuals from varied backgrounds.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11–12.1d

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.

Each topic statement is deliberately open-ended yet ties into a number of the themes present in *Champion*—including the pain of regret, the power of forgiveness, and the difficulty of being yourself when the whole world thinks you're someone different. Set the stage for this conversation mindfully. Offer students a brief overview of the opera's plot, setting, and context, and remind them how to build a safe space for productive conversation. Some of the topics might be confusing or hard—that's okay! As you and your students explore and learn about *Champion*, you can return to these statements: What do they have to do with the opera's story? How might these questions help us explore the opera's story, history, and themes?

Each topic statement is deliberately open-ended yet ties into a number of the themes present in *Champion*—including issues surrounding identity and sexuality, how our actions affect others, and how we resolve conflict with one another. Set the stage for this conversation mindfully. Offer students a brief overview of the opera's plot, setting, and context, and remind them how to build a safe space for productive conversation. Some of the topics might be confusing or hard—that's okay! As you and your students explore and learn about *Champion*, you can return to these statements: What do they have to do with the opera's story? How might these questions help us explore the opera's story, history, and themes?

THE STATEMENTS

- Everyone has secrets.
- You can't run away from your past.
- Society should clearly delineate gender norms.
- All men experience anger, rage, and a desire to fight.
- The world needs more masculinity.
- Your identity is personal.
- You are who the world says you are.
- Teasing and taunting others is harmless.
- "Man up" is a harmless phrase.
- Who you love defines who you are.
- My words and actions affect others' self-worth.
- My words and actions affect my own self-worth.
- You should be quick to judge yourself.
- You will only feel guilty if you've done something wrong.
- It is easier to forgive others than yourself.
- Everyone deserves a second chance.
- I am enough.

A NOTE TO FACILITATORS: Between statements, provide some clarity as to why that particular statement was chosen. Explain to students where and how each particular theme shows up in the opera, or invite students to offer their own explanations.

STEP 1. INQUIRE

Invite students to read one of the statements—out loud as a class, to themselves, or in small groups. As they read, they should ask themselves:

- Do I understand the statement?
 - If not, what questions might clarify it for me?
- What immediately comes to mind when I read the statement?
 - What is my initial reaction: Do I agree or disagree?
- What led me to that decision?
 - What opinions do I hold with regards to this statement?
 - What life experiences may have led me to believe this way?

STEP 2. RESPOND

Ask students to commit to one side. They can agree or disagree, but there is no middle ground. (Many will not be completely comfortable committing to one side over the other—that's part of the game. It will help foster conversation and debate.)

STEP 3. DISCUSS

Share out! Use the following questions to guide discussion:

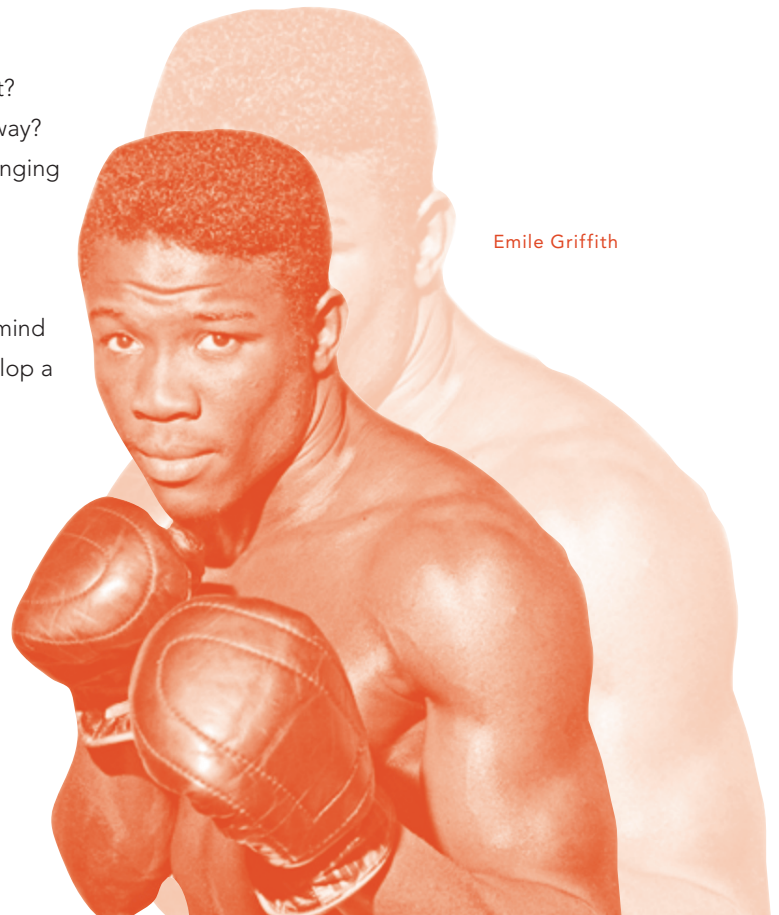
- Does anyone feel very strongly either way? Why or why not?
- Does anyone feel conflicted? Why or why not?
- Give voice to what you thought about in the first step:
 - What led me to make my decision?
 - What opinions do I hold with regards to this statement?
 - What life experience may have led me to believe this way?
- What might you have not considered that others are now bringing up in the discussion?
- Did any new questions arise during the discussion?

As the conversation continues, students are free to change their mind about whether or not they agree with the statement—or develop a more nuanced perspective.

Repeat steps 1 through 3 for each statement.

FUN FACT

The year 2013 marked the first time a male athlete of a major American team sport identified as openly gay. Washington Wizards player Jason Collins made history when he wrote "I'm a 34-year-old NBA center. I'm Black, and I'm gay" in an issue of *Sports Illustrated*. Previously, queer athletes, such as NBA center John Amaechi, have waited until retirement to reveal their sexuality. Collins's announcement was so historic that it was even mentioned in a post on Twitter from the account of the White House.



Emile Griffith

FIGHTING WORDS

At a weigh-in on March 24, 1962, welterweight champion Emile Griffith is called a “maricón” by his opponent, Benny “Kid” Paret. The word in English can be likened to the epithet “faggot,” but “maricón” means much more and is far worse. The word is often used to deliberately attack, demean, emasculate, and belittle a member of the LGBTQ+ community. For several decades, members of the LGBTQ+ community have been taunted, insulted, and disparaged. Throughout this activity, students will build awareness of the prevalence of anti-LGBTQ+ slurs, discuss the impacts of slurs on others, learn about milestones in the American Gay Rights Movement, and discuss ways to build a more inclusive community.

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

History, SEL, Self-Reflection, Community Building

MATERIALS

Statements, Timeline Reproducibles

STEP 1. INQUIRE

First, provide students with a summary of Emile Griffith’s story that serves as the backdrop of Terence Blanchard’s opera, *Champion*. Consider showing the first few minutes of Dan Klores and Ron Berger’s 2005 documentary, *Ring of Fire: The Emile Griffith Story*. If students have not already done so, have them read the opera’s synopsis. Highlight the disparaging comment that Paret made to Griffith at weigh-in and set the stage for the activity students are about to engage in.

Have students stand in the middle of the classroom. Post signs on either ends of the classroom that read “Strongly Agree” and “Strongly Disagree.” Tell students you will read a variety of statements that will allow the class to reflect on their experiences hearing and responding to anti-gay slurs. After each statement is read, students should silently move along the continuum to designate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statement. Again, before beginning, point out the corresponding signs you placed in your classroom and remind students they may stand anywhere along the continuum. Students should respond with their first reaction and commit to being honest. The rules of engagement used in the Philosophical Chairs activity (see page 31) should apply in this activity. Remind students of the rules of engagement before beginning. Finally, allow time for your class to comprehend, consider, and discuss (if they feel comfortable doing so) each statement before moving to the next statement.

NOTE: While the activity may be uncomfortable for some participants, it is important for students to understand the prevalence of anti-gay slurs and the effect they can cause on others. The Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network, GLSEN’s, 2013 National School Climate Survey noted that “71.4% of LGBTQ+ students heard “gay” used in a negative way (e.g., “that’s so gay”) and 64.5% heard other homophobic remarks (e.g., “dyke” or “faggot”) frequently or often at school” (GLSEN).

THE STATEMENTS

- I have heard the phrase “that’s gay,” “stop being gay,” or “no homo,” before.
- I often hear the word “gay” used in a derogatory manner.
- When I hear “that’s so gay,” it is often aimed at an object, not a person.
- Phrases such as “that’s so gay” and “no homo” are insulting to LGBTQ+ individuals.
- Expressions such as “that’s so gay” and “no homo” are okay to use.
- It bothers me when I hear others saying phrases such as “that’s gay” and “no homo.”
- It would be impossible to get our campus-body to be more mindful of the words they use.
- I think about how others might feel before saying something like “that’s gay.”
- I am willing to stand up against anti-gay slurs.
- Your words can be very harmful to others.

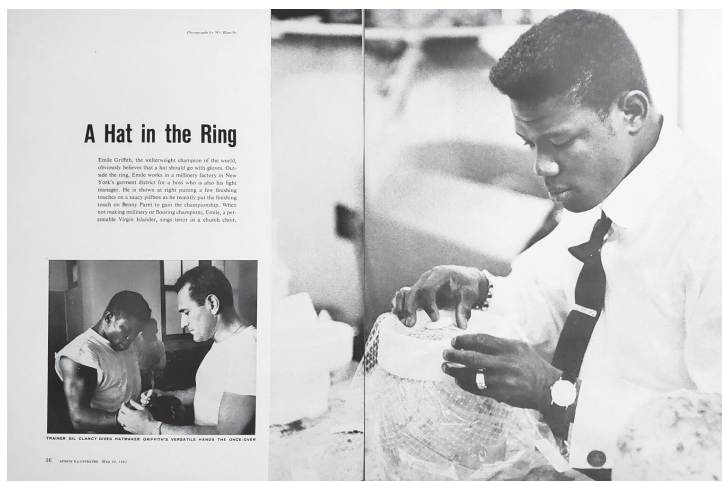
STEP 2. REFLECT

Once all the statements have been read, have students form a circle (or any other configuration) so that everyone may see one another. Reflect on the activity by asking the following questions:

- Was there a particular statement that was more difficult to respond to than others? Which one and why?
- Did anything surprise you throughout the activity?
- Was there ever a time during the activity in which you were an outlier? How did this make you feel?
- Have any of the statements read or comments shared made you think differently about something? If so, what was the statement, what did it make you feel, and how has it made you think differently?

FUN FACT

Emile Griffith made no secret of his love for ladies’ hats. At a pre-bout press conference in 1961, for instance, he spoke eloquently about Jacqueline Kennedy’s pillbox hats and offered predictions on forthcoming hat fashions. As a result, the New York press lovingly dubbed him “The Mad Hatter.”



A 1961 *Sports Illustrated* magazine story on Griffith focused on his background as a maker of ladies’ hats, hinting that such esthetic pursuits were incongruous in a professional boxer. Griffith himself exploited this perception of incompatibility of the delicacy of hatmaking and the brutality of the boxing ring. After Benny Paret’s death the following year, Griffith spoke to the press: “They say how come a sweet little boy like you who designs hats can turn tiger and hurt a man’s brain?”

- What do people mean when they refer to something as “gay?” Where do you think this stems from? Why does “gay” continue to be used in a derogatory manner, fully well knowing it is harmful to others?
- Be honest with yourself: how often do you really think about certain words before you say them? (Students should reflect on this, but do not need to respond aloud.)
- Does the fact that some slurs are common use make it okay to use them in everyday speech?
- In what ways, specifically, do anti-gay slurs harm others?
- How would you feel if part of your identity was used as an insult?
- Think about a particular time in which words were used to harm you, chipping away at aspects of your identity. How did those words affect you?

Bring the discussion back to *Champion*. Ask students to imagine themselves in Emile Griffith’s shoes. What do you think he felt when Paret called him a “maricón”? How do you feel about his coaches telling him to “save it [his response] for the ring?”

STEP 3. DISCUSS

Students will next learn about milestones in the American Gay Rights Movement. Create several sets of cards with events from the timeline below written on them. Do not write the date on the cards. Break students up into small groups of three or four individuals. Pass out a stack of timeline cards to each group. Have each group read through the stack and arrange them in chronological order. Once they feel comfortable with their order, have them guess the years in which each event occurred. Outside resources such as the internet should not be consulted. Once each group has completed the

TIMELINE

1952 The American Psychiatric Association lists homosexuality as a sociopathic personality disturbance.

1953 President Dwight D. Eisenhower signs an Executive Order banning homosexuals from working for the federal government or any of its private contractors.

1962 Illinois repeals its sodomy laws, becoming the first U.S. state to decriminalize homosexuality.

1973 The board of the American Psychiatric Association votes to remove homosexuality from its list of mental illnesses.

1982 Wisconsin becomes the first U.S. state to outlaw discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

2004 Massachusetts becomes the first state to legalize gay marriage.

2010 The U.S. Senate repeals “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy, allowing members of the LGBTQ+ community to serve openly in the U.S. Military.

2015 The U.S. Supreme Court declares same-sex marriage legal in all 50 states.

2020 The U.S. Supreme Court rules that federal law protects LGBTQ+ workers from discrimination.

2021 The State Department announces the first U.S. passport with an X gender marker has been issued, identifying X for non-binary, intersex, and gender non-conforming persons applying for a U.S. passport.

task, have the class complete a gallery walk observing their peers' timelines, identifying similarities and differences. Have students come back together, and as a whole class arrive upon a shared agreement for the proper timeline of events. Once settled, share with students the accurate timeline.

STEP 4. RESPOND

After sharing with students the correct order of the timeline, ask them if there is anything that surprises them—the order, the dates, and/or any specifics of a particular event. Remind students that the history detailing the fight for LGBTQ+ rights in the U.S. is neither ancient history nor complete. Systemic change begins locally, with individuals. Ask students:

- What are ways you can build a more welcoming and inclusive community at our school?
- What does kindness look and sound like in action and speech?
- What challenges are there to building an inclusive community?
- How might we advocate for others and stop the use of slurs?

Conclude the activity by using the GLSEN's Head, Heart, and Feet activity. On the board or a large sheet of butcher paper, draw a large picture outlining a person with a large head, a heart for the torso, and two big legs. Pass out three post-its to students or have them write directly on the image a word or phrase that represents what they *learned* on the *head*, what they *felt* on the *heart*, and what actions they plan on doing on the *feet*.

DIVING DEEPER — NO NAME-CALLING WEEK

Participate in GLSEN's *No Name-Calling Week*, a week organized by K–12 educators and students to end name-calling and bullying in schools. The week, which is typically celebrated nationally during January, is focused on putting an end to anti-LGBTQ+ harassment and bias-based bullying. Consult with your school's GSA and encourage students to take the lead on planning a week-long advocacy and awareness event. The GLSEN's website contains numerous resources that will benefit educators, students, and school leaders.

DIVING DEEPER — STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

If students are interested in learning more about LGBTQ+ history and the figures who have made a lasting impact of gay rights over the years, have students learn the stories of the following individuals: Sylvia Rivera, Bayard Rustin, Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldúa, Angela Davis, Harvey Milk, James Baldwin, Blair Imani, and Patricio "Pat" Manuel.

LIFE-SIZE BIOGRAPHIES

FUN FACT

The Madison Square Garden where Emile Griffith faced off against Benny Paret is not the Madison Square Garden you can visit today, which is located between 31st and 33rd streets in Midtown Manhattan and opened in 1968. The original venue was located a mile uptown, on 8th Avenue and 50th Street.

Who are you? What events have shaped who you have become? What will people remember you by?

Champion is a biographical opera that tells the life story of welterweight boxing champion, Emile Griffith. In this activity, students will identify aspects of a biography, learn about African American singers' journey to the Met, and stage a biographical opera of their own.

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

English Language Arts, History, Writing, Theatre Design

MATERIALS

Butcher paper, markers, magazines, posterboard

STEP 1. INQUIRE

Begin by asking students if they have ever read a biography before. Ask students to share examples from their own reading. If students have not yet read a biography, share with them that a biography is, in its most simple form, a book that tells someone's life story. Ask students the following questions:

- What goes into telling a good story?
- What keeps you engaged when you are reading?
- If you are meeting someone for the first time, what things do you want to find out about them?
- How might an author structure someone's life story when writing a biography?

It is likely that students will identify the standard beginning, middle, and end story-telling model. If this is the first (and most likely response), ask students how else might an author tell someone's life story? After students brainstorm share with them that the opera they will learn about, *Champion*, does not quite follow a standard story-telling model. Rather, the opera tells the story of welterweight boxing champion Emile Griffith through a variety of flashbacks. (See Deep Dive | Musical Time Travel) Consider showing the first few minutes of Dan Klores and Ron Berger's 2005 documentary, *Ring of Fire: The Emile Griffith Story*. If students have not already done so, have them read the opera's synopsis.

STEP 2. GRADUAL RELEASE: GUIDED INSTRUCTION

Next, as a class, map out Emile's story by creating a "Life-Size Biography"—an activity that students will complete themselves in the next part of this activity. To create a life-size biography, first cut six feet of butcher paper (any color will do). Then, have a student trace the outline of one of their peers on the butcher paper. Once the student has been traced, cut out the outlined body and place the newly created figure on the board. Tell students they are going to create a life-size biography by identifying and jotting down key aspects of Emile's life onto various parts of the body. Before doing so, however, students must bring Emile to life. Have students draw Emile's face and add elements of his boxing outfit such as black boxing shorts and red gloves to his figure. Once Emile has been created, have students identify and write the following aspects of his life story onto the figure. As they complete this part, encourage students to reference the synopsis.

Head: What is Emile's full name and what is one word or phrase that captures his identity? (e.g., Welterweight Champion)

Heart: What is Emile passionate about?

Torso: Who had a big impact on Emile's life: What are their names, and who are they? Additionally, what are three things that interested you about Emile's life?

Left arm: What made Emile famous?

Right arm: Family history: When and where was Emile born? Does he have any siblings? Is he married?

Legs: What challenges did Emile face?

STEP 3. GRADUAL RELEASE: COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

After the class has collectively created the life-size biography of Emile Griffith, students should be grouped in pairs or trios for the next part of the activity.

Terence Blanchard's *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*, the triumphant season opener of the 2021–22 season, was the first time the Met staged an opera by a Black composer. This season, the Met welcomes back six-time Grammy Award–winner Blanchard with a Met premiere of *Champion*. In this next part of the activity, students will discover a number of African American performers who have made significant contributions to opera, paving the way for generations to come.

NOTE FOR TEACHERS: In 2019 the Met shared a new exhibit, “Black Voices at the Met,” which celebrated the many and great contributions made by African American artists at the Met. The exhibit chronicled the decades-long struggle for racial equality in our nation’s leading opera house. The exhibit is now presented in a digital format on the Met’s website allowing this vital resource to be more widely available to all. We encourage schools to purchase the companion CD, *Black Voices Rise: African American Artists at the Met, 1955–1985*, to add to their libraries. The CD includes 15 tracks and an informational booklet with liner notes and biographies of each performer.

Begin this next part of the activity by sharing the following insights written by Met scholar and UNT College of Information faculty member Dr. Maurice Wheeler:

“The history of African American performers at the Metropolitan Opera began late in the 19th century, much earlier than many contemporary opera enthusiasts would have imagined. Yet, it was not until 1955, when contralto Marian Anderson made her Met debut as Ulrica in Verdi’s *Un Ballo in Maschera*, that an African American artist took center stage in a principal role. Media attention surrounding Anderson’s first appearance shined a spotlight on the rank injustices that preceded that moment and, in tandem with contemporary political events, ushered in a new age for opera in the United States. The succeeding 30 years of musical history at the Met were profoundly shaped by the artistry of black singers... It is now inconceivable to consider opera in America and elsewhere without the voices of the black singers who have risen to stardom around the globe.” —Dr. Maurice Wheeler

In the pairs or small groups you have arranged, students will create a Life-Size Biography of one of the following African American artists:

Elizabeth Greenfield*	Grace Bumbry	Derek Lee Ragin
Sissieretta Jones*	Martina Arroyo	Terence Blanchard+
Paul Robeson*	Shirley Verrett	Latonia Moore+
Hemsley Winfield	Leona Mitchell	Ryan Speedo Green+
Marian Anderson	Kathleen Battle	Eric Owens+
Dorothy Maynor*	Jessye Norman	Eric Greene+
Robert McFerrin	Barbara Hendricks	Denyce Graves
Mattiwilda Dobbs	Florence Quivar	Angel Blue
Reri Grist	Simon Estes	Will Liverman
Leontyne Price	Roberta Alexander	John Holiday
George Shirley	Harolyn Blackwell	Walter Russell III

*artists who, although they did not perform at the Met, have made significant contributions to opera
+individuals that are a part of the Met’s premiere of *Champion*

The activity students complete remains the same as the Emile Griffith Life-Size Biography, however now with a new person. Have students search for information about the artist they have been assigned by completing research through the Met's website, digital newspaper articles, recorded interviews and performances, program notes, artist's websites, and written biographies.

Head: What is the artist's full name and what is one word or phrase that captures their identity?

Heart: What is the artist passionate about?

Torso: Who had a big impact on the artist's life: What are their names, and who are they? Additionally, what are three things that sparked you about your artist's life?

Left arm: What made the artist famous?

Right arm: Family history: When and where was the artist born? Do they have any siblings? Are they married?

Legs: What challenges did the artist face?

At the conclusion of the activity, students should complete a gallery walk learning about the African American artists who have made significant and lasting impacts throughout their careers.

"It is not as difficult to arrive as it is to remain... Opportunity is given, but longevity is earned." —Barbara Hendricks

STEP 4. GRADUAL RELEASE: INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

To conclude this activity, students will now have a chance to imagine a biographical opera of their own. Tell students that before a team of collaborative artists begins working on a production, they often gather to create a collage of their ideas. In this final part of the activity students will create a mood board detailing aspect of a new biographical opera.

First, students should choose an individual whose life will be the center of their biographical opera. Students may either interview someone they know (Story Corps' *The Great Thanksgiving Listen* has numerous resources for helping students craft an interview) or research information on someone of their choosing.

Once students have compiled notes from their interview or research, have them answer the following:

- What is the setting of your biographical opera? Will the opera stay in one place and time period, move thorough the individual's life chronologically, or move back and forth through the various settings via flashbacks like *Champion*?
- What will the music sound like?
- What will the costumes and stage design look like?

FUN FACT

Griffith's first professional boxing matches were fought at St. Nicholas's Arena. Located at 69 West 66th Street in Manhattan, the Arena was located just one block from where Lincoln Center and the Metropolitan Opera now stand.

- What props will be used?
- Will any special lighting or stage effects be used?

After students have brainstormed, they will now create a mood board that shows their vision for their new production. Students may cut out images from magazines and newspapers or print off images from the web that communicate the setting, costumes, storyline, and stage design, and place them on a large posterboard. Have students consider using a variety of colors, textures, patterns, and images to articulate their new production's vision.

Once completed, have students complete a gallery walk to view their peers' mood boards. Have students make observations—what do they see? Can they clearly identify the setting? What questions do they have for the producer to better clarify their vision?

DIVING DEEPER — SING FOR YOUR LIFE

In the Met's premiere of *Champion*, bass-baritone Ryan Speedo Green sings the role of Young Emile Griffith. Ryan's journey to the Met's stage has been anything but easy. Yet, through hard work, commitment, and perseverance, Ryan is one of the Met's shining stars. It was on a school field trip with the Governor's School to see the Met's production of Bizet's *Carmen*, where a youthful Ryan proclaimed, "I'm going to sing at the Met." To learn about Ryan's journey, read Daniel Bergner's biography *Sing for Your Life: A Story of Race, Music, and Family*.

OPERA IN JAZZ

Terence Blanchard, a six-time Grammy Award–winner, trumpet player, and composer notes that his opera *Champion* is an opera in jazz, not a jazz opera. In an interview he shares, “I’m trying to take American folklore that I know, that I’ve experienced, which is jazz, and bring that into the operatic world, but not totally use the entire piece to make a statement about jazz.” In this activity, students will be introduced to the genre of jazz, explore the history of jazz, and improvise using the blues scale.

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Music History, Music Performance

STEP 1. INQUIRE AND DISCUSS

Begin by showing students the National Museum of American History’s brief clip titled “What is Jazz,” available on YouTube.

Dr. John Edward Hasse, Curator of American Music at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History, shared “Jazz is like love. It’s something we recognize when we encounter it. It’s very hard to define.” Ask students the following questions:

- What do you make of Dr. Hasse’s idea that “Jazz is like love”? What does he mean? Do you agree or disagree with his statement?
- In what ways does jazz express, as Dr. Hasse noted, core American values—freedom, risk-taking, cultural diversity, innovation, creative collaboration, and democracy?
- Terence Blanchard, the composer of *Champion*, expressed that his work is an opera in jazz, and not a jazz opera. What do you think he means? What are the differences between the two?
- *Champion* is scored for chamber orchestra, jazz quartet, soloists, and chorus. How might singing an opera in jazz be different from singing an opera composed by Mozart, Rossini, Puccini, or Verdi?
- Do you think the infusion of music traditions outside of the classical realm enhances opera? If so, in what specific ways?
- If you were composing music for a new opera, what types of music might you be interested in infusing into the classical tradition?
- What do you think the future sound of opera is? Do you think composers will continue to create operas infused with music from other traditions outside of the classical realm? What other possibilities, aside from jazz, do you think composers might utilize in the future when writing a new opera?

"I'm trying to take American folklore that I know, that I've experienced, which is jazz, and bring that into the operatic world, but not totally use the entire piece to make a statement about jazz."

TERENCE BLANCHARD PORTRAIT BY CEDRIC ANGELES



STEP 2. DISCOVER

Create a shared Google Slides deck (or any other digital resource) that your students can access to with a title slide that reads "History of Jazz." Add a slide for each of the following topics:

- Ragtime (1900–1930)
- New Orleans Jazz/Dixieland (1900–1930)
- Big Band Swing (1930s)
- Bebop (1940s)
- Cool and Hard Bop (1950s)
- Avant Garde/Free Jazz (1960s)
- Fusion (1960s)
- Modern Jazz (current trends)

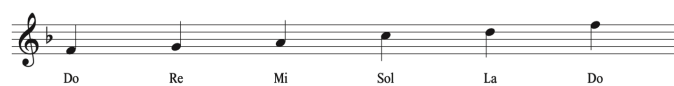
Place students in small groups. Have each group create a slide that includes musicians, sound clips, and style features. Once each group has completed their slide, play the slideshow, and have each group stand up and present on their aspect of jazz history.

After each group has presented, have students discuss what similarities and differences they heard from the excerpts played from each period of jazz history. Do any of the sub-genres include aspects of others that came before it? Alternatively, are any of the sub-genres of jazz reactionary to what came before it?

STEP 3. IMPROVISE

Jazz music is rooted in improvisation (spontaneous performance where musicians determine what they play or sing as they are performing), polyrhythms (poly- from the ancient Greek word for "many"; where multiple patterns are superimposed on top of one another), syncopation (emphasizing offbeats), a vocal tone quality (the quality of pitches played by instrumentalists are often described in similar ways to the voice: "dark," "light," "airy," "growly," "raspy," "bluesy," "throaty," or "nasally"), higher tertian harmonies (stacking thirds to create 7th, 9th, and 13th chords), and a variety of scales (organized sequence of pitches). Whereas most music in the Western classical tradition is primarily major or minor, there are many different scales that are incorporated in jazz music that widen the tonal and harmonic palette. One scale that has been used often in jazz music is the blues scale.

While the blues scale has roots in the pentatonic scale, you may be thinking, "How can that be? The pentatonic scale doesn't sound blue... It's very bright and joyful; the opposite of blue!" This is because the blues scale is more closely related to the La-pentatonic scale which sounds much darker in nature. First, sing and/or play the Do-pentatonic scale:



By simply keeping the order of the notes in the Do-pentatonic scale the same, but now starting on La instead of Do, the timbre (the tone color, or quality of sound) is much different. Now, sing and/or play the La-pentatonic scale.



From here, the La-pentatonic scale, the blues scale is near complete. By adding to the La-pentatonic scale Ri, the raised second of this scale, we now have a blues scale.



Practice singing and improvising the blues scale on neutral syllables such as “Dooby-Dooby-Doo,” in common time (4/4)—a simple quadruple meter. Singing with such syllables is an example of scat, also called “scat singing”—using onomatopoeic and nonsense syllables in lieu of words when improvising. Rhythmically, swing all eighth notes—another style feature of blues music.



Go around the room improvising using the blues scale where one person sings a call, and another sings a response—a style of singing that is rooted in African folk music and yet another style feature of jazz music.

Terence Blanchard's opera is a unique fusion of jazz and opera that fluidly moves across and within disciplines. If students show interest in digital composition, have them create a fusion track by completing the following steps:

- Record an excerpt of a piece of classical repertoire that they or a friend are working on
- Upload the audio recording to a DAW (Digital Audio Workstation)* of their choosing
- Compose new music or use the DAW's loop library to layer a different style of music that complements the classical style of the recording, creating a new fusion track.
- Export the track and share it, seeking feedback.

DIVING DEEPER — EXPLORING THE ARCHIVES

The National Museum of American History in Washington D.C. houses countless jazz artifacts and hosts numerous jazz performances and programs throughout the year. If you're unable to visit in person (1300 Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20560), the Smithsonian's website is an excellent resource to further discover the rich history of jazz.

PHILOSOPHICAL CHAIRS

Active listening, critical thinking, and respectful dialogue are learned skills: Everyone can acquire them, and no one can perfect them without practice. Philosophical Chairs is designed to help us develop these skills while also learning about opera.

You might find these statements challenging—and you might find it challenging to talk with someone whose views differ from your own. That’s the point! Take your time with each statement, embrace uncertainty, and know that changing your mind as you learn new information is a sign of strength. Before you begin your discussion, take some time to review the rules of engagement:

Be sure you understand the statement. If something is unclear, ask!

Face each other. Body language helps show that you’re listening.

Only one speaker at a time. Everyone will get their turn to speak.

Think before you speak. Be sure that what you’re going to say is what you really mean, and remember that we can disagree while still being kind.

Summarize the previous person’s comments before adding your own. This will show that you have heard their thoughts and are responding thoughtfully to what they said. It will also help avoid misunderstandings and faulty assumptions.

Address ideas, not the person. Challenging ideas or statements is great—but only if we respect the individuality and inherent value of the person who expressed them.

Three before me. After you’ve spoken, you may not make another comment until three others have shared their thoughts.

THE STATEMENTS

- Everyone has secrets.
- You can’t run away from your past.
- Society should clearly delineate gender norms.
- All men experience anger, rage, and a desire to fight.
- The world needs more masculinity.
- Your identity is personal.
- You are who the world says you are.
- Teasing and taunting others is harmless.
- “Man up” is a harmless phrase.
- Who you love defines who you are.
- My words and actions affect others’ self-worth.
- My words and actions affect my own self-worth.
- You should be quick to judge yourself.
- You will only feel guilty if you’ve done something wrong.
- It is easier to forgive others than yourself.
- Everyone deserves a second chance.
- I am enough.

Opera Review: *Champion*

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

As you watch *Champion*, 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, classmates, and anyone else who wants to learn more about the opera and this performance at the Met!

THE PERFORMANCE, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN / STAGING
Emile's apartment in Hempstead, Long Island MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Young Emile in St. Thomas, the US Virgin Islands MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Emile travels to New York and finds his mother. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Emelda, Emile's mother, reflects on motherhood. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Emile meets Howie Albert, a hat manufacturer. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Emile quickly develops into a talented welterweight. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Alone, Emile sings of feelings of loneliness and confusion in the midst of his success. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Emile goes to gay bar in Manhattan and meets Kathy Hagen, the owner. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Confiding in Kathy, Emile reveals the demons from his past. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆

THE PERFORMANCE, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN / STAGING
At weigh-in, Emile encounters Benny Paret who disparages him. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Emile and Howie talk frankly about Benny's disparaging comments and reflect on the world they live in. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Emile and Benny prepare for their fight in the ring. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Emile knocks out Benny, putting him in a coma. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Emile is haunted by the ghost of Benny Paret. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Emile, winning matches, denies his identity, and cannot seem to shake off the trauma of Benny's death. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Emile begins displaying signs of "boxer's brain." Howie realizes that Emile's days in the ring are numbered. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Emile seeks comfort at Kathy's bar. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Outside on the street, Emile is taunted, berated, and brutally beaten. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Back in the present, Emile is shaken by a nightmare of the attack on the street. Luis seeks to comfort him. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆

THE PERFORMANCE, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN / STAGING
In a public park in New York City, Emile asks Benny Jr. for forgiveness. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Emile finds a new way forward. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆

Use this space to write a short review of the opera as a whole:

[illegible]