AN ANCIENT LEGEND, A POTION OF QUESTIONABLE ORIGIN, AND a single tear: sometimes that's all you need to live happily ever after. When Gaetano Donizetti and Felice Romani—among the most famous Italian composers and librettists of their day, respectively—joined forces in 1832 to adapt a French comic opera for the Italian stage, the result was nothing short of magical. An effervescent mixture of tender young love, unforgettable characters, and some of the most delightful music ever written, *L'Elisir d'Amore* (*The Elixir of Love*) quickly became the most popular opera in Italy.

Donizetti's comic masterpiece arrived at the Metropolitan Opera in 1904, and many of the world's most famous musicians have since brought the opera to life on the Met's stage. Today, Bartlett Sher's vibrant production conjures the rustic Italian countryside within the opulence of the opera house, while Catherine Zuber's colorful costumes add a dash of zesty wit. Toss in a feisty female lead, an earnest and lovesick young man, a military braggart, and an ebullient charlatan, and the result is a delectable concoction of plot twists, sparkling humor, and exhilarating music that will make you laugh, cheer, and maybe even fall in love.

This guide presents *L'Elisir d'Amore* as a romantic comedy that has much in common with the movies, TV shows, and novels that your students encounter every day. It is designed to provide context, deepen background knowledge, and enrich the experience of the *Live in HD* performance. The materials on the following pages include biographical details about the composer, information on the opera's source and creation, and a series of activities that bring the opera into the classroom. By offering an introduction to *L'Elisir d'Amore* that incorporates students' own experiences and creativity, this guide will help them develop the confidence to engage with opera even after they leave the theater.

THE WORK:
L'ELISIR D'AMORE

An opera in two acts, sung in Italian

Music by Gaetano Donizetti

Libretto by Felice Romani

Based on the opera *Le Philtre* (*The Potion*) by Eugène Scribe and Daniel-François-Esprit Auber

First performed May 12, 1832, at the Teatro alla Cannobiana, Milan, Italy

PRODUCTION

Domingo Hindoyan, Conductor

Bartlett Sher, Production

Michael Yeargan, Set Designer

Catherine Zuber, Costume Designer

Jennifer Tipton, Lighting Designer

STARRING

Pretty Yende
ADINA (soprano)

Matthew Polenzani
NEMORINO (tenor)

Davide Luciano
BELCORE (baritone)

Ildebrando D'Arcangelo
DULCAMARA (bass)

Production a gift of The Monteforte Foundation, in honor of Wim Kooyker

YENDE   POLENZANI   LUCIANO   D'ARCANGELO

This guide is divided into five sections.

• THE SOURCE, THE STORY, WHO'S WHO IN *L'ELISIR D'AMORE*, AND A TIMELINE

• CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES: Two activities designed to align with and support various Common Core Standard strands used in ELA, History / Social Studies, and Music curricula

• PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES: Two activities to be used during *The Met: Live in HD* transmission, highlighting specific aspects of this production

• POST-SHOW DISCUSSION: A wrap-up activity that integrates the *Live in HD* experience with students' understanding of the performing arts and the humanities

• STUDENT RESOURCE PAGES: Classroom-ready worksheets supporting the activities in the guide

The activities in this guide will focus on several aspects of *L'Elisir d'Amore*:

• The plot of *L'Elisir d'Amore* in the context of traditional romances, both tragic and comic
• The role of music in creating humorous and relatable characters
• Similarities between *L'Elisir d'Amore* and other stories, works of art, and movies and TV shows that students already know
• Creative choices made by the artists of the Metropolitan Opera for this production
• The opera as a unified work of art, involving the efforts of composer, librettist, and Met artists

This guide is intended to cultivate students' interest in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, whether or not they have any prior acquaintance with opera. 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.

SUMMARY Nemorino, a poor peasant, is in love with Adina, a beautiful and clever woman who owns a farm in his village. She tells Nemorino that she isn't interested in him. One day, a group of soldiers arrives at her farm. They are led by the vain sergeant Belcore, who flirts with Adina and asks her to marry him. Adina tells him she needs time to think about it.

That afternoon, Doctor Dulcamara arrives in town. He is a traveling salesman whose medicine, he claims, can cure any illness. Nemorino buys Dulcamara's a love potion, which he claims will make Nemorino irresistible. (He does not reveal to Nemorino that the "potion" is merely wine!) Nemorino drinks the potion in several large gulps. Drunk, he flirts with the women of the town. Surprisingly, this upsets Adina, who angrily decides to marry Belcore that very day.

The townspeople gather for the lavish wedding banquet. Although she seems happy, Adina is secretly sad that Nemorino is not there. He is desperately looking for Dulcamara, hoping that a second dose of the potion will make Adina fall in love with him before she marries Belcore. Meanwhile, Adina's friend tells the women of the

A scene from *L'Elisir d'Amore*
MARTY SOHL / METROPOLITAN OPERA

town a secret: Nemorino's rich uncle has died and left Nemorino all his money. When Nemorino walks into the town square a few minutes later, the women crowd around him. Adina, jealous, begins to cry. When he sees her crying, Nemorino realizes that Adina loves him. She finally admits that she loves him as much as he loves her. Just then, Dulcamara arrives to tell Nemorino that he has inherited his uncle's fortune. As everyone celebrates, Dulcamara announces that his magical potion not only makes people fall in love, it can also make poor peasants rich.

THE SOURCES The immediate source for *L'Elisir d'Amore* was *Le Philtre* (*The Potion*), a comic opera by Eugène Scribe and Daniel-François-Esprit Auber that premiered in Paris in 1831. Love potions have been a feature of romantic tales for millennia. Scribe's plot, however, featured a clever twist on the traditional trope: the opera's romance is catalyzed not by a love potion *per se,* but by a story *about* a love potion. The opera begins with the heroine reading *Tristan and Iseult* (pronounced eez-OHT), a medieval legend about a knight and princess who fall madly in love after drinking a magic elixir. (For the full story, see the sidebar *Tristan and Iseult: The Medieval Legend*, included in this guide.) Listening to the tale, the opera's hero is inspired to seek out a love potion of his own. *Tristan and Iseult* is rooted in ancient Celtic lore, and many variations of the legend have appeared since the story was first written down in the 12th century. In almost all cases, however, the romance ends in tragedy: Iseult, the princess, is betrothed to the king of Cornwall, and thus she and the knight Tristan can never be together. *Le Philtre* and *L'Elisir d'Amore*, on the other hand, are both comedies with happy endings, in which the main characters are brought together not by a magical drink (the "potion" of the title turns out to be nothing more than wine) but by their own actions. Real magic, the operas seem to suggest, is not to be found in a bottle. Rather, it is to be found in the sincerity, friendship, and respect that can unite two hearts.

SYNOPSIS
ACT I *A small village in the Italian countryside, circa 1830.* Nemorino, a poor peasant, is madly in love with the beautiful landowner Adina. He adores her intelligence, admires her education, and unfortunately believes that she is way out of his league. One day, Adina offers to read the workers on her farm the story of Tristan and Iseult, a knight and princess who fall in love after drinking a magic potion. Along with the crowd, Adina wishes that she had the recipe for such a potion. Her thoughts are interrupted, however, by the arrival of a regiment of soldiers led by the vain sergeant Belcore. When Belcore spots Adina, he announces that he will win her, just as Mars (the Roman god of war) won the heart of Venus (the goddess of love). He promptly asks Adina to marry him, and she says she needs time to think about it. Satisfied that Adina will soon surrender

to his charms, Belcore struts off. Nemorino approaches Adina and asks to speak with her. Teasingly, she replies that his time would be better spent visiting his rich uncle, without whose money Nemorino would starve. Nemorino replies that he *is* dying, not of starvation but of love. Adina warns the earnest young man that she is fickle: her love is like a breeze, jumping from flower to flower and never staying in one place for long. She tells Nemorino that he should approach love like she does, as a passing fancy, and he replies that his love is as constant as a river flowing towards the sea.

A marvelous carriage rolls into the town square. Out steps the traveling salesman Dulcamara. A shameless charlatan who gets rich selling fake medicines, Dulcamara announces that he has a patented potion that will cure all manner of ills. As the gullible villagers clamor to buy a bottle, Nemorino enters the square carrying Adina's book. Shyly, he asks if Dulcamara sells "Iseult's potion." Dulcamara says he has an elixir guaranteed to make its drinker irresistible, although it requires 24 hours to take effect (by which time, Dulcamara will be gone). Overjoyed, Nemorino spends all of his money on a bottle and promptly drinks it down in a few large gulps. The "elixir," however, is nothing but wine, and Nemorino soon begins to feel its effects. Hiccupping and swaying on his feet, he flirts with the women of the town. When Adina arrives,

A scene from *L'Elisir d'Amore*
KEN HOWARD / METROPOLITAN OPERA

Nemorino (who believes that Adina will fall madly in love with him the next day) avoids her, in order to "teach her a lesson." Unfortunately, his confidence does not last long: Adina, annoyed by Nemorino's behavior, agrees to marry Belcore that very afternoon. Nemorino begs her to wait just one day, but she laughs at him. As Adina, Belcore, and the townspeople head to the wedding banquet, Nemorino is left alone in despair.

ACT II The wedding festivities for Adina and Belcore are in full swing. Dulcamara leads a toast, Belcore gloats, and Adina joins Dulcamara in singing a song, much to the delight of the crowd. Privately, however, Adina is disappointed that Nemorino is not present, and when the notary arrives to sign the wedding contract, Adina stalls. Nemorino, meanwhile, is desperate. He begs Dulcamara for another bottle of elixir, hoping that a double dose will speed up its effect. Alas, he spent his last penny on the first bottle and cannot afford a second. The opportunistic Belcore announces that if Nemorino signs up for the army, he will receive a purse of money right away. Nemorino hates to think of leaving his town, his friends, and especially Adina, but believes that a second dose of potion is the only way to avoid losing Adina forever. Sadly, he signs the conscription papers.

Adina's gossipy friend Giannetta calls together the women of the town and tells them some surprising news: Nemorino's rich uncle has died, leaving Nemorino his entire fortune. When they see Nemorino, now swigging his second bottle of "potion," the girls crowd around him. Adina, meanwhile, has heard from Belcore that Nemorino joined the army, and the news has made her realize how much she will miss him. When she sees the horde of girls fighting over Nemorino, she believes she has lost him forever, and a single tear falls from her eye. Dulcamara, seeing her grief, offers to sell her a bottle of "Iseult's potion," but Adina replies that she has a more effective elixir at her disposal: her natural charm.

Nemorino also saw Adina's tear. Alone, he now realizes what her sorrow really means: she loves him. Soon, Adina enters. She tells him that she has bought back his conscription papers, but Nemorino replies that he'd rather die as a soldier than live without love. Adina, overcome, finally reveals that he is the man of her dreams. Soon, Dulcamara arrives with the townspeople to announce what the women (except Adina) already know: that Nemorino, heir to his uncle's fortune, is suddenly rich. Brandishing bottles of potion, Dulcamara declares that his magical potion not only makes people fall in love, it can even turn poor peasants into millionaires.

CHARACTER		PRONUNCIATION	VOICE TYPE	THE LOWDOWN
Adina	A young woman, owner of a farm	ah-DEE-nah	soprano	Clever and wealthy, Adina likes to flirt with lots of people but secretly is in love with Nemorino.
Nemorino	A peasant, in love with Adina	neh-mohr-EEN-oh	tenor	Poor and shy, he loves Adina but thinks she will never notice him. His name means "little nobody" in Italian, which is how he views himself.
Belcore	A sergeant in the army	bel-COHR-eh	baritone	Extremely vain and unpleasantly pompous, Belcore also has romantic designs on Adina. His name means "beautiful heart."
Dulcamara	A traveling salesman	dool-cah-MAHR-ah	bass	A fast-talking charlatan, Dulcamara claims that his potions can solve any ailment—even a broken heart. His name is a combination of the words "dulce" (sweet) and "amara" (bitter), perhaps pointing to the bittersweet qualities of love.

1797 Gaetano Donizetti is born in Bergamo, a city in northern Italy. Although his family is poor, with six children to support and no money for music lessons, the young boy's talents are evident early and he receives a scholarship to study music with the renowned composer and teacher Simon Mayr at the cathedral of Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo.

1811 The music school at Santa Maria Maggiore puts on its annual play with the 14-year-old Donizetti in the lead role. *Il Piccolo Compositore di Musica* (*The Little Composer*) features a libretto by Mayr, and Donizetti's part includes the lines "I have a vast mind, a quick talent, and ready imagination. I am a thunderbolt at composing."

The young Donizetti

1815 Donizetti travels to Bologna to continue his studies at the Liceo Filarmonico, one of the top music schools in northern Italy. He will return to Bergamo two years later.

1822 Donizetti, not quite 25, is invited by the impresario Domenico Barbaja to Naples. Barbaja is one of the most important producers of opera in Italy, and Naples is the major center of opera in the southern part of the peninsula. (In northern Italy, the operatic capital is Milan). Donizetti will reside in Naples for the next 16 years, although his career will occasionally require travel to other cities in Italy and Europe. At this time, Donizetti also first works with the librettist Felice Romani, with whom he will later collaborate for *L'Elisir d'Amore*. Unfortunately, their first opera, *Chiara e Serafina*, is a flop.

1827 Donizetti signs a new contract with Barbaja, which requires that he compose four new operas per year for the theaters in Naples. Writing only for Barbaja would have been hectic enough, but Donizetti's career has begun to pick up steam in other cities as well, and he enters a period of tremendous productivity.

1828 Donizetti is appointed director of the royal theaters of Naples, a position with considerable power and prestige. Nevertheless, he continues to write operas for many of the other major opera houses in Italy.

The adult Donizetti

1830 *Anna Bolena*, Donizetti's opera about the doomed English queen Anne Boleyn and his third collaboration with Romani, premieres in Milan. It is a tremendous hit.

1832 *L'Elisir d'Amore* premieres on May 12 at the Teatro alla Cannobiana, Milan. It is Donizetti's sixth opera with a libretto by Romani.

1834 *L'Elisir d'Amore* is performed in Naples for the first time, as well as in Berlin. Its popularity quickly spreads around the globe.

1835 Donizetti receives his first commission to write an opera for a theater outside Italy. In fact, the commission, for the Théâtre-Italien in Paris, comes from none other than Gioachino Rossini, the most famous Italian opera composer of the early 19th century, who has lived in Paris since 1824.

1838 Following the untimely death of his wife and a series of disappointing professional setbacks in Italy, Donizetti moves to Paris. Nevertheless, his popularity in Italy continues to grow. Between 1838 and 1848, *L'Elisir d'Amore* is the most frequently performed opera in Italy.

1842 Donizetti relocates again, this time to Vienna, where he assumes the position of court composer for the Habsburg emperor. He will continue to travel to Paris and Italy to compose new operas and help stage old ones.

1846 Donizetti, suffering from the illness that will ultimately end his life, is confined to a hospital outside Paris. His doctors grant his request to be sent back to Bergamo the following year.

1848 Donizetti dies in Bergamo on April 8. Despite his fame, the news of his death is overshadowed by a political uprising against the Austrians who rule northern Italy. He is buried in the Bergamo cemetery, but in 1875 his remains will be moved (along with those of his first music teacher, Simon Mayr) to the cathedral of Santa Maria Maggiore.

Fanny Tacchinardi Persiani as Adina in the 1839 Paris premiere

From Tragedy to RomCom:
Medieval Stories and Magic in *L'Elisir d'Amore*

English Language Arts

IN PREPARATION
For this activity, students will need the sidebar *Tristan and Iseult: The Medieval Legend*; the synopsis available in this guide; the reproducible resources available at the back of this guide entitled *Tragedy vs. Comedy: What's the Difference?*; the audio selections from *L'Elisir d'Amore*, available online or on the accompanying CD; and paper for a creative writing assignment.

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS
English/Language Arts, Poetry, Folk Tales, Creative Writing

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
• To cultivate close reading skills

• To analyze narrative structure through comparison of multiple texts

• To develop familiarity with the plot of *L'Elisir d'Amore*

• To engage with Donizetti and Romani's work through a creative writing project

In the opening scene of Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'Amore*, the charming landowner Adina entertains the harvesters by reading them the story of Tristan and Iseult. An ancient legend, likely of Celtic origin, it was first written down in the 12th century. The story has appeared in many versions over the ensuing centuries, but one feature they all have in common is the famous love potion of Princess (or Queen) Iseult. In contrast to Donizetti and Romani's story for *L'Elisir d'Amore*, however, most versions of *Tristan and Iseult* are tragedies: the love that unites the two young people ultimately leads to their demise. The clever twist of Romani's libretto (and Scribe's libretto for *Le Philtre* before it) was that the "magic potion" turns out to be no potion at all, and the two young lovers are brought together by virtue of their own actions rather than a magic brew. In this activity, students will compare the medieval story with the plot of *L'Elisir d'Amore* and respond creatively in a writing project based on a story of their choosing. Students will:

• become acquainted with the stories of *L'Elisir d'Amore* and the medieval tale *Tristan and Iseult*

• analyze how authors have used potions and other magical elements to direct the plot

• consider the differences between comedies and tragedies

• hone their own storytelling abilities in a supported writing exercise

STEPS
This activity will familiarize students with the plot of *L'Elisir d'Amore* by analyzing how it differs from the stories that inspired it. By comparing an adaptation of the medieval *Tristan and Iseult* with the plot of Donizetti's opera, students will develop a theory for narrative structure in romances, and then use this theory to analyze other magical stories with which they are already familiar. The activity will close with a writing assignment that will synthesize their literary analyses and encourage them to apply their analytic skills to future creative projects.

STEP 1: Distribute the medieval story *Tristan and Iseult* to your students (available in the sidebar *Tristan and Iseult: The Medieval Legend*). Invite your students to read the story, either silently or taking turns reading aloud. In an open discussion, ask them to consider the story in general terms. You may prompt students with the following questions:

• Is this story a comedy or a tragedy?
• What role does the love potion play?
• Whose idea was it to use the potion, and why?
• Did the potion work the way it was supposed to?

STEP 2: Now tell your students that you are going to listen to Adina, a character in *L'Elisir d'Amore,* read a version of the story they have just discussed. Give them a copy of the lyrics (available in the reproducible handouts), and play them the audio excerpt that presents the story (**Track 1**). As your students listen, ask them:

- Based on what you hear, does the music tell you that the story is happy or sad?
- Adina's account of the tale of Tristan and Iseult stops after Iseult drinks the potion and falls in love with Tristan. What do students think will happen next?
- If students imagine the medieval story set as a song, would it sound like this?

STEP 3: Next, students will dive into the story of *L'Elisir d'Amore.* Distribute the opera synopsis and have your students take turns reading it aloud. (For younger students, the Summary may be more accessible.) Although the actions in *L'Elisir* are motivated by the *Tristan* story, there are several key differences, not least among them the fact that the potion Nemorino drinks is *not* actually magical; he just thinks it is!

Once your students have read the story, distribute the first page of the reproducible handout entitled *Tragedy vs. Comedy: What's the Difference?* Ask them to compare *Tristan and Iseult* with *L'Elisir d'Amore* by focusing on the three main points listed on the following page, and then have them write down their observations on the chart provided.

Matthew Polenzani as Nemorino
KEN HOWARD / METROPOLITAN OPERA

- **WHAT** is the magic potion?
- **WHY** is a magic potion used? Which character uses it, and what do they hope the potion will achieve? (Note that in the medieval version of *Tristan*, there may be multiple answers to this question: both Brangien and Iseult have motivations, each of which can and should be considered.)
- **HOW** does the magical potion effect the narrative? Does it achieve the end originally intended by the person who used it? What makes everything work out well in one story, while the lovers die in the other?

It may be helpful to work through a sample chart on the board while guiding your students through a discussion of the questions above.

STEP 4: Potions and other kinds of magic appear frequently in love stories. Have each of your students select (or divide them into groups and have each group select) another love story with which they are familiar that includes some kind of potion or magic which is crucial to the plot. Some possibilities include:

- *Beauty and the Beast:* the Beast's magic rose
- *The Little Mermaid:* the sea witch's potion, which turns the Little Mermaid into a human (note that the Disney version and the version by Hans Christian Andersen differ considerably, although either would be a good choice for this activity)
- *A Midsummer Night's Dream:* the magic herb that Oberon places on the eyes of the sleeping Titania, and which Oberon and Puck place on the eyes of Demetrius and Lysander
- *Romeo and Juliet:* the potion that Friar Lawrence gives to Juliet to make her appear dead

Call students' attention to the following section of the reproducible handouts. Using the section entitled "Magical Stories," ask students to analyze their story.

POISON!

A 14th-century wooden depiction of Tristan and Iseult in Talinn Town Hall, Estonia
PHOTOGRAPH: PEETER JAHE

TRISTAN AND ISEULT: THE MEDIEVAL LEGEND

King Mark of Cornwall is engaged to marry Princess Iseult (eez-OHT) of Ireland. As the wedding day nears, he sends his knight Tristan to Ireland to bring her to his court.

When Tristan and Iseult set sail to return to Cornwall, Iseult is outwardly calm and friendly. But inside, she burns with a secret fury. Several years before, her uncle had been killed during a battle with the armies of Cornwall, and Iseult recognized Tristan as the man who struck the fatal blow. Thus, Iseult hates the young knight, and as she departs for Cornwall, she swears to avenge her uncle's death.

As it happens, Iseult's mother was a powerful sorceress, and she had given her daughter a chest filled with medicines and potions to take on her journey. One evening, Iseult invites Tristan to share a drink with her. She selects a flask from her medicine chest, and tells her nurse Brangien (brahn-zhee-EHN) to pour it into two goblets. Brangien, however, recognizes the bottle: It contains a deadly poison, and she understands that Iseult plans to kill both Tristan and herself. Hoping to save Iseult at any cost, Brangien chooses a different bottle—a love potion—from the chest. She pours it into the two goblets and delivers it to Tristan and Iseult, who drink it down and immediately fall in love.

Unfortunately, Iseult was still set to marry King Mark, and the love that blossoms between her and Tristan is therefore nothing short of a curse. When Mark learns of Tristan's feelings for his wife, he flies into a rage and banishes Tristan to a distant land. Only then does he learn that Iseult loves Tristan as well. Sorry for the pain he has caused, Mark sends Iseult to join Tristan.

Iseult sets out at once, but Tristan's heart has been broken by the separation. Unaware that Iseult was rushing to his side, he falls into a terrible illness. His beloved Iseult arrives just in time to hold him in her arms as he dies, whereupon she, too, falls lifeless to the ground.

STEP 5: Now it's time for your students to write their own version of the story they have chosen. They may choose to write comic or tragic versions according to their own preference. If their story has a sad ending, how might the potion/magic be used to make the story's ending happy? Similarly, if their story has a happy ending, how might they change it to make the ending sad? (For instance, the final petal of the Beast's rose falls before Beauty can declare her love, and he must remain a beast forever.) In the relevant section of the reproducible chart, have your students write down the key points of their "new" version of the classic story.

STEP 6: Finally, ask your students to write out their adaptation of their chosen story. In their versions, tragedies might become comedies, and vice versa. As a final step, invite your students to present their revised stories to the whole class.

FOLLOW-UP: The story of *Tristan and Iseult* as presented in the sidebar *Tristan and Iseult: The Medieval Legend* is just one of many versions of the story written in the medieval period. In one telling, for instance, two sparrows drop a strand of golden hair through King Mark's window, and Mark declares that he will marry only the woman to whom the hair belongs; of course, it is Iseult. In another version, Tristan wins Iseult's hand for Mark by killing a dragon who has been terrorizing Ireland. We may observe a similar variability in many of the stories we know and love. *The Little Mermaid*, cited above, is a good example: your students will likely be familiar with Disney's version, and may also know the story written by Hans Christian Andersen. Close this activity by inviting your students to consider this aspect of storytelling. Do they like knowing multiple versions of a single story? How much must two versions have in common to be considered variations on a single story, as opposed to two completely different stories? Would they consider *L'Elisir d'Amore* to be an adaptation of *Tristan and Iseult*? Why or why not?

CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY IN *L'ELISIR D'AMORE*

"Just like charming Paris gave the golden apple to the most beautiful woman" sings Belcore when he first meets Adina. He goes on to allude to Ares, the Greek god of war, as well. In fact, Paris is one of several characters from Greek mythology mentioned in *L'Elisir d'Amore*. Who are these figures, and why do they appear in Felice Romani's libretto?


Paris

Paris, a Trojan prince, was the most beautiful man in the entire world. In addition to his good looks, his major claim to fame was an event known as "the judgment of Paris." It all began when the goddess of strife tossed a golden apple inscribed with the words "for the most beautiful" into a crowd of gods in the midst of one of their celebrations. Three goddesses laid claim to the apple, and it was suggested that Paris decide who deserved it. Hoping to sway Paris's decision, each of the goddesses offered him a gift in exchange for his vote: Hera, queen of the gods, offered him royal powers; Athena, goddess of hunting and war, offered him a future of military victories; and Aphrodite, goddess of love, offered him the love of Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world. Paris chose Aphrodite. Unfortunately, Helen was not actually available, since she was married to the Spartan king Menelaus. When Aphrodite, in fulfillment of her promise, caused Helen to fall in love and then run away with Paris, Menelaus and his army followed the young lovers to their hideout in Troy, thereby precipitating the Trojan war.

As the goddess of love, the beautiful Aphrodite was never without her share of admirers. One of them was Ares, the dashing god of war. In fact, according to Greek mythology, Cupid was one of their children. Thus, when Belcore says that he will woo Adina just as the god of war wooed "the mother of Cupid," he is comparing Adina to Aphrodite. Note, however, that Belcore refers to Ares by his Roman name, Mars.

Aphrodite

L'Elisir d'Amore has two other references to Classical mythology. First, Dulcamara describes his love potion as a "Pandora's box." According to legend, the Greek gods put all the ills of the world into a closed box and gave it to a woman named Pandora. Although the gods told her never to open the box, Pandora's curiosity got the better of her and she unlatched the lid, releasing evil into the world. Thus, when we refer to something as a "Pandora's box," what we're saying is that something which appears good may actually cause harm. And finally, when Nemorino's uncle dies and leaves all his money to his nephew, Giannetta declares that he is now "the neighborhood Croesus." Croesus was a king in the sixth century BCE who was renowned for his astonishing wealth.

Sounds Good to Me:
Musical Characterization in *L'Elisir d'Amore*
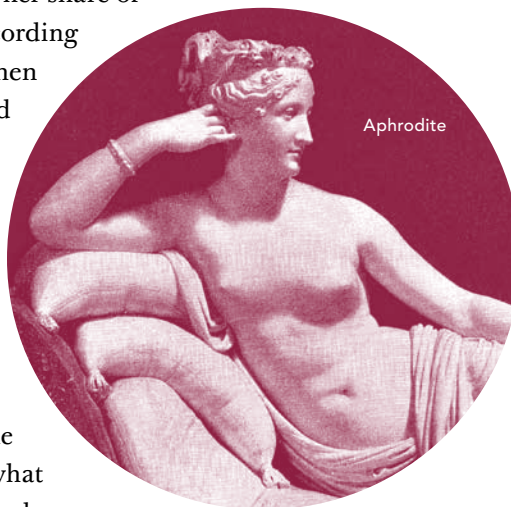
Music

IN PREPARATION
For this activity, students will need the reproducible resources available at the back of this guide entitled *Sounds Good to Me: Musical Characterization in* L'Elisir d'Amore, as well as the audio selections from *L'Elisir d'Amore*, available online or on the accompanying CD.

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS
Music, Acting, Theater, Reading Comprehension

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
• To acquire musical vocabulary

• To gain familiarity with the characters and story of *L'Elisir d'Amore*

• To analyze musical and poetic choices made by Donizetti and Romani

• To encourage students' creativity through supported acting exercises

Opera may seem daunting at first: the plots are complicated, the music is unfamiliar, and everything happens in a foreign language. But at its heart, there is fundamentally little difference between opera and movies, plays, and TV shows, since the ultimate goal for all of these is to depict a story about interesting characters. This is especially true of *opera buffa* ("comic opera"; the word *buffa* comes from the same root as the English word "buffoon"), which creates humor not only through funny situations but also through finely wrought musical characterizations of the people onstage. This exercise invites students to engage with *L'Elisir d'Amore* by performing Romani's texts as monologues and then analyzing Donizetti's musical depictions of the characters they have just played. Students will:

• explore the individual attributes of each character and creatively express the characters' personalities through an acting exercise
• analyze musical excerpts from *L'Elisir d'Amore*
• learn both basic and advanced terminology for discussing music and opera

STEPS
In this exercise, students will begin by considering, in general terms, what each main character in *L'Elisir d'Amore* might sound like. As the activity unfolds, students will slowly be introduced to opera terminology. Some of the vocabulary is very basic, and some is more complicated; in all cases, it is intended to facilitate your students' discussion and engagement with the music. Additional information on vocabulary words in **bold** can be found in this guide under the *Ten Essential Musical Terms.*

STEP 1: If you haven't already discussed the plot of *L'Elisir d'Amore* (for instance, in the activity *From Tragedy to RomCom*, presented above), you should begin by distributing the summary or synopsis of *L'Elisir d'Amore* to your students. Then distribute the reproducible handouts included at the end of this guide entitled *Sounds Good to Me: Musical Characterization in* L'Elisir d'Amore. Ask your students to think about how each of the main
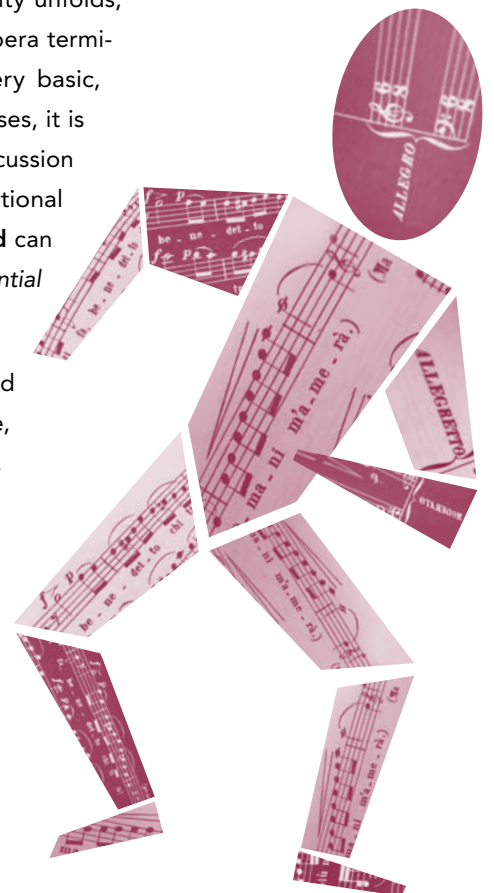
characters would talk if they were characters on a TV show. The following questions will help them brainstorm:

- Does this character speak loudly or softly?
- Does s/he speak quickly or slowly?
- Does s/he use big, flashy words?
- Does s/he like to jump into conversations and/or be the center of attention, or is s/he quiet and/or shy?
- Does s/he have a particular accent?

Now have them write down a few of their ideas on the handout in the spaces provided.

STEP 2: Write the following two terms on the board and explain them to your students. (More advanced students may like to learn some of the additional music terminology, in bold. These terms are also included in the *Ten Essential Musical Terms*.)

DYNAMICS: how loud the music is
TEMPO: how fast the music goes

When we discuss dynamics in music, we typically use Italian terminology: *forte* is loud, *piano* is soft. In between there is *mezzo forte* ("medium loud") and *mezzo piano* ("medium soft"). At the far ends of the spectrum, you can also say that music is *fortissimo* ("very loud") or *pianissimo* ("very soft"). *Crescendo* means "getting louder"; *diminuendo* means "getting softer."

Tempo indications are more complex. There are a great many words (typically in Italian) that are used to explain how fast a piece of music should go, but they rarely mean simply "fast" (*presto*) or "slow" (*lento*). Rather, they usually describe an emotion that is then associated with a faster or slower tempo. For instance, *allegro* is typically interpreted as a quick tempo, but the Italian word literally means "happy." Similarly, *vivace* means "lively," and thus indicates quite a fast tempo, while *adagio* means "at ease," and is thus relatively slow. Explain to your students that the tempo of a piece is closely correlated with an emotion, and therefore using emotions to describe what they are hearing in a piece of music is not only acceptable—it is correct and traditional!

STEP 3: Distribute the lyrics (available on the reproducible handouts) for the main characters' first arias. An **aria** is a solo number, typically with orchestral accompaniment. Give your students some time to read over the lyrics, and ask for volunteers to perform them as spoken monologues in front of the class. The student should perform the aria "in character," drawing on their observations from Step 1 about how the character would speak. Then invite their classmates to describe the performance by discussing the dynamics and tempo of the monologue. If time permits, have several students perform each monologue, so that the class may experience a variety of possible interpretations. (Note that it might be useful to read over Step 4 below before taking your students through this step, as it includes tips for helping your students interpret each scene.)

STEP 4: Now it's time to consider Donizetti's music. Explain to your students that when Donizetti sat down to write *L'Elisir d'Amore*, he had to do exactly what they have just done: decide how Felice Romani's libretto should sound. The only difference is that he was writing for opera singers instead of actors who speak their lines. Moreover, your students now have some basic musical terminology at their disposal. All they need to do is apply the terminology to a sung version of the text instead of a spoken version.

As you play each aria, invite your students to discuss how Donizetti's version of the text compares to their performances thereof. Remind them also that there is no right or wrong version; their ideas are every bit as legitimate as Donizetti's, and listening to the arias is meant to augment their understanding of the characters and how they express themselves, rather than to provide a definitive characterization. All of the arias are provided on the accompanying CD in two formats: first, they are divided into shorter tracks, so that you can focus on specific stanzas or portions of the aria;

FUN FACT: In his epic poem *The Odyssey*, the Greek author Homer described Ares as "impetuous, drunken, and quarrelsome." From this perspective, Belcore's assertion that he is "just like Ares" actually seems quite apt!

then, the whole aria is presented in a single track. The descriptions below are meant to provide jumping-off points for discussion by introducing one of the main musical ideas of each aria.

Nemorino, "Quanto è bella" (Tracks 2–5)

Nemorino's aria begins with the flutes playing a simple melody. Flutes have long been associated with pastoral music, inspired by the idea of shepherds playing pipes as they watch their sheep. Nemorino is not a shepherd, but a poor peasant, and his simple, lyrical music reflects his humble status. For instance, his melody is mostly syllabic, with only one syllable per note. The melody is smooth and gentle, without any of the big leaps or fast notes we will hear in the other arias. Toward the end of the aria, Nemorino will repeat the line "I can't inspire any affection in her heart" over and over. Why would Donizetti choose to repeat this line in particular? Ask your students to describe the shape of Nemorino's melody and the emotion that this shape expresses: when it gets higher, for instance, does that make it sound desperate? Make it sound like a question? Make it sound like he is begging?

Adina, "Della crudele Isotta" (Tracks 6–10)

If you have worked through the classroom activity *From Tragedy to RomCom* with your students, they will already be familiar with portions of Adina's aria. Now they will hear both the story of Tristan and Iseult (as she reads it), and her reactions to the story. Listen to the very high, fancy singing (with lots of fast notes and jumps) during the second and fourth portions of the aria, in which Adina describes her own feelings. This is a style of singing called **coloratura**, and is one of the most impressive types of singing in opera. (Note that in Tracks 7 and 9, you will also hear the **chorus** of assembled crowd members singing; they simply repeat the words that Adina has just sung.)
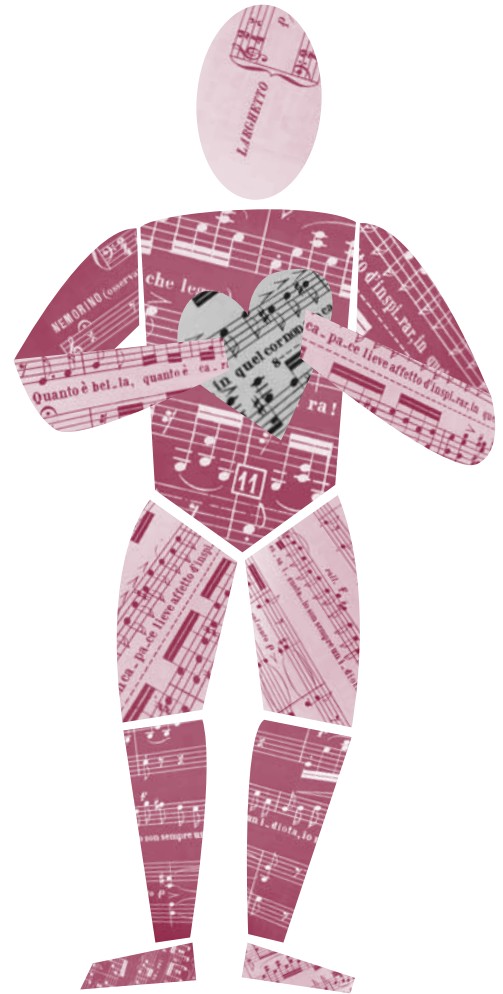
Belcore, "Come Paride vezzoso" (Tracks 11–14)

Belcore is, as he himself declares, "both a gentleman and a sergeant." As such, Donizetti uses musical tools typically associated with noble characters, but uses them to turn Belcore into a parody of himself. Listen especially for the melismas in Belcore's aria. A **melisma** is the spreading of a single syllable of text over many individual notes. Melismas, a very fancy vocal technique, were associated with high-class characters and heroes. In Belcore's case, however, Donizetti uses them to make the sergeant sound pompous and ridiculous. Melismas are also often used to highlight a particularly important word. Ask your students: if you were to choose a few words that you think are particularly important for Belcore, which words are they? Are those the words with melismas?

Dulcamara, "Udite, udite" (Tracks 15–19)

Dulcamara's aria is a particularly good place to talk about **tempo**. He begins rather slowly, making an impression with his bold claims. As the aria progresses, however, he gets faster and faster. By the time he gets to the end of this excerpt, he is singing tremendously quickly: this is a special type of singing, called **patter**, which was typically used for humorous effect. In contrast to Adina's flashy coloratura or Belcore's wild melismas, however, Dulcamara's patter uses only a few repeated notes in a narrow melodic range. Moreover, patter singing isn't just about speed in general, but specifically means singing as many syllables as possible in the shortest possible time. Hence, it is the musical version of a tongue-twister! (Invite your students to read the translated text of **Track 18** as quickly as they can: is it difficult?)

STEP 5: Ensemble, "Tran, tran, tran" (Tracks 20–24)

There is one final musical example in this exercise: an **ensemble**. Comic opera made great use of scenes in which many characters all sing at the same time. The trick is to weave the lyrics and music together in a way that allows each melody to retain its individual identity while complementing all the other melodies. It is also important to construct the scene in such a way that it is clear who was talking to whom. In this ensemble, from the end of Act I, Adina, Nemorino, and Belcore are all present onstage. At first, they take turns speaking, but soon they are all talking over one another.

Divide your students into small groups, and ask them to "stage" the scene. Can they figure out which lines are spoken to other characters? Which lines are directed to the audience? Which lines are spoken under a character's breath, only for him/herself to hear—although the audience will of course hear everything? How might your students organize themselves onstage so that it is clear to their audience what is going on? Once again, invite your students to perform the scene, and to observe the many different solutions the class has devised.

Potions and Politics

In Act I of *L'Elisir d'Amore*, the traveling salesman Dulcamara declares that he will sell his potion to the Italian villagers at a deeply discounted price because he "is also from this country." At first glance, this may seem to be no more than a clever sales pitch. The story gets more interesting, however, if we consider that in 1832, when *L'Elisir d'Amore* was premiered, the political entity we today know as "Italy" didn't yet exist. At the time, the Italian peninsula was a jigsaw puzzle of small kingdoms, duchies, and republics. As a citizen, you owed political allegiance to whichever king or government happened to be running your region.

Around the turn of the 19th century, however, a growing discontent with the political status quo began to come to a head. For some years, the idea that people with a common history and language should be able to rule themselves as a unified "nation state" had been percolating in Europe. Across the continent, politicians and intellectuals began to demand that political borders reflect cultural heritage and identity. The great military powers had other ideas, however, and continued fighting wars and redrawing the map of Europe.

Napoleon's armies invaded Italy in 1796. The Austrian army marched into northern Italy in 1815. In response to these foreign invasions, a group of patriots began working to unify the Italian peninsula under a common Italian government. Chief among these were Victor Emanuel, King of Sardinia; the intellectual Giuseppe Mazzini; and the military leader Giuseppe Garibaldi. This movement came to be called the Risorgimento, or "Resurgence."

Although Italy would not be unified until 1861, the strong desire for an Italy governed by and for the Italians is humorously indicated by Dulcamara's promise of preferential prices for his fellow Italians. In addition, Belcore's invasive presence in Adina and Nemorino's town mirrors the real-life invasion of Italy by the Austrian army. Although it is uncertain whether or not Donizetti himself had strong political opinions, the turbulence of the time inevitably touched not only his life but also his death, which was overshadowed in news reports by an uprising against the Austrians in Italy.

Finally, play the music (**Tracks 20–24**). Can your students identify the different voices? How does Donizetti continue to make the characters' personalities and feelings evident, even with so much going on in the music and onstage?

FOLLOW-UP: Like any good narrative, *L'Elisir d'Amore* depicts its characters' development over the course of the opera. Conclude this activity by inviting your students to consider how each character's music might change later in the opera to reflect their personal growth. Will Nemorino's music get louder, for instance, as he finds the confidence to approach Adina? There are no right or wrong answers here; rather, this discussion is intended to improve students' familiarity with the opera's characters and plot and to facilitate their understanding of the opera when they see it in its entirety.

Ten Essential Musical Terms

Aria A self-contained piece for solo voice, typically with orchestral accompaniment. Arias form a major part of larger works such as operas or oratorios.

Bel canto An Italian term that literally translates to "beautiful singing." It describes a style of singing which emphasizes long legato lines, virtuosic ornamentation, flexibility and agility in fast-moving passages, a lighter timbre, and sheer vocal beauty. The operas of Rossini, Donizetti, and Bellini are considered the prime examples of this style; thus, the term may also refer to the era in the first half of the 19th century when the works of these three composers dominated the operatic stage.

Chorus A group of performers singing together with multiple voices per part. In opera, a composer may use a chorus to represent larger groups of characters, such as townspeople, soldiers, or guests at a party. Some operas involve a great deal of singing for the chorus, others require very little or none at all. The chorus's music can range from simple unison melodies to complex, multi-part singing with a high degree of rhythmic independence.

Coloratura From the Italian word for "coloring," coloratura refers to florid, elaborate vocal passages with heavy ornamentation. It may also refer to a singer who possesses the vocal agility necessary to perform such music.

Ensemble In contrast to an aria, an ensemble is a musical number in which multiple characters sing at the same time. Ensembles are typically classified by how many characters they include: duos, trios, quartets, quintets, etc. Opera buffa is known for its frequent ensemble scenes, especially the exciting and virtuosic ensemble finale with which acts often end.

Dynamics The relative volume of musical sound. When indicated in a score, dynamics are communicated by a set of standard Italian terms and symbols: f for forte, p for piano, mf for mezzo-forte, and so on. The concept of dynamics comprises not only the degree of loudness, but also the movement between different volume levels: crescendo means "growing louder," and diminuendo means "growing softer."

Melisma A group of several notes sung while remaining on the same syllable of text. Melismatic singing is the opposite of syllabic singing, in which a single note is sung for each syllable of the text. Melismas show off a singer's breath control, vocal flexibility, and virtuosity. They can vary in length and complexity, often combining step-wise movement from note to note with larger, more difficult leaps.

Opera buffa The Italian term for comic opera. Opera buffa originated in Naples in the early 18th century, where it grew out of comic interludes that were played between acts of serious operas. Particular features of opera buffa are the inclusion of characters from lower classes and a high concentration of ensemble pieces.

Patter A comic style of vocal delivery in which the text is performed extremely rapidly. The comedic effect is caused not only by this fast declamation, but also by the text itself, which is usually humorous. Patter song could be described as the musical equivalent of a tongue twister.

Tempo Literally meaning "time" in Italian, tempo refers to the speed of a section of music. It is indicated in a score by a variety of conventional (often Italian) words that not only provide direction on the composer's desired rate of speed, but also carry associations of gesture and character. Additional tempo markings may indicate when a composer asks for a section of music to be sped up (accelerando) or slowed down (ritardando or rallentando).

Supporting the Student Experience during *The Met: Live in HD* Transmission

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

Each Performance Activity incorporates a reproducible sheet. Students should bring this activity sheet to the *Live in HD* transmission and fill it out during intermission and/or after the final curtain. The activities direct attention to details of the production that might otherwise go unnoticed.

One of the fun things about seeing a Met production through a *Live in HD* transmission is that you can see the exquisite costumes in more detail than anyone in the auditorium. For *L'Elisir d'Amore*, the first activity sheet, *Dressed to Impress: Costumes in* L'Elisir d'Amore, invites your students to sketch and think about the production's costumes as though they themselves were the costume designer. Before you go to the *Live in HD* performance, explain to your students that costumes aren't just clothes that a singer wears, but carefully crafted outfits (including accessories, makeup, and wigs) that help project a character's personality. Distribute the handout to your students, and instruct them to choose one costume from the production and sketch it in the space provided. After the *Live in HD* performance, ask your students to share their sketches and explain how the details they noticed helped bring the character to life.

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

The Performance Activity reproducible handouts can be found in the back of this guide. On the next page, you'll find an activity created specifically for follow-up after the *Live in HD* transmission.

IN PREPARATION
For this activity, students will need the Performance Activity reproducible handouts found in the back of this guide.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND *L'ELISIR D'AMORE*

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.7
Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting what they "see" and "hear" when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2
Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

Making *L'Elisir d'Amore* Modern

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

• To review students' experience with Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'Amore*

• To make final observations about the story and characters of the opera

• To find points of similarity between *L'Elisir d'Amore* and the students' own experiences

• To consider how the students' *Live in HD* experience may inform their understanding of opera, music, movies, and other forms of arts that they will consume in the future

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND *L'ELISIR D'AMORE*

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.

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

L'Elisir d'Amore takes place in Italy in the early 19th century, but that doesn't mean that the characters, their feelings, and their actions are antiquated. In fact, filmmakers and theater directors alike have often re-imagined very old love stories in quite modern settings. Invite your students to imagine that they are directing a new movie that sets *L'Elisir d'Amore* in their own school. What would the movie be like? The following questions will help guide your discussion:

• Do you sympathize with any of the characters in *L'Elisir d'Amore?* For instance, have you ever had an unrequited crush (like Nemorino), or received unwanted attention (like Adina)?

• How might you "update" the characters? Do the characters in *L'Elisir d'Amore* remind you of anyone in the modern world—either celebrities or your friends?

• Real magic potions don't exist, and (of course!) you should never use alcohol or other substances to get people to do things they don't want to do. Without a potion, how might a high-schooler today get the attention of someone they like? An amusing selfie or text, for instance? By inviting them to a party?

• Would you change the story in any way? Add or adapt characters, names, or other details?

Belcore and Adina
KEN HOWARD / METROPOLITAN OPERA

To conclude the discussion, ask your students what other kinds of stories they like that are told with or through music and song. How do pop songs compare to the opera they have just seen; can your students think of any similarities? How about movie music? If your students were in charge of the music for their movie of *L'Elisir d'Amore*, would they write new music (and if so, what would it sound like)? Would they use pre-existing music (and if so, what)? Would the characters sing the music, or would it just be in the background? And has their experience at the opera changed the way they think about telling stories in general?

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

1   Adina reads the story of Tristan and Iseult

2   Nemorino watches Adina and thinks of how much he loves her

3   Nemorino appreciates how intelligent and well-educated Adina is, and thinks that she is out of his league

4   Nemorino returns to the opening of the aria and worries that he will never get Adina's attention

5   The aria "Quanto è bella, quanto è cara" in its entirety

6   Adina begins reading the story of Tristan and Iseult

7   Adina wishes she had the recipe for the love potion

8   Adina continues reading

9   Adina repeats her earlier sentiments

10   The aria "Della crudele Isotta" in its entirety

11   Belcore introduces himself

12   Adina remarks sarcastically that Belcore is "so humble"

13   Belcore continues proclaiming his own wonderfulness

14   The aria "Come Paride vezzoso" in its entirety

15   Dulcamara introduces himself

16   Dulcamara begins to describe his "medicine"

17   Dulcamara launches into a long list of his medicine's miraculous effects

18   Dulcamara continues describing the effects of his potion

19   Excerpts from "Udite, udite, o rustici" in a single track

20   Belcore enters singing, and Adina and Nemorino respond to his arrival

21   Adina begins to flirt with Belcore

22   Belcore exults and Nemorino laughs out loud

23   All three characters talk at the same time

24   The ensemble "Tran, tran, tran" in its entirety

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

From Tragedy to RomCom: Magic and Medieval Stories in *L'Elisir d'Amore*

Use this chart to record your thoughts on how the medieval story of *Tristan and Iseult* differs from the plot of *L'Elisir d'Amore*.

	Tristan and Iseult	L'Elisir d'Amore

What is the potion?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Why is it used?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How does it affect the story?

_____

_____

_____

_____

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CLASSROOM ACTIVITY
From Tragedy to RomCom: Magic and Medieval Stories in *L'Elisir d'Amore*
(CONT'D)

Magical Stories

Use this chart to record your thoughts on how the potion or other magical elements affect your chosen story, and to brainstorm how you might rewrite the story to give it a new ending. In particular, consider how you might turn a sad story into a happy one, or turn a happy story into a sad one.

The story I chose:_____   My version of the story

What is the potion or magic?_____

_____

_____

_____

Why is it used?_____

_____

_____

_____

How does it affect the story?_____

_____

_____

_____

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

From Tragedy to RomCom: Magic and Medieval Stories in *L'Elisir d'Amore*

(CONT'D)

TRACK 1

Adina reads the story of Tristan and Iseult.

ADINA: Della crudele Isotta
il bel Tristano ardea,
né fil di speme avea
di possederla un dì.
Quando si trasse al piede
di saggio incantatore,
che in un vasel gli diede
certo elisir d'amor,
per cui la bella Isotta
da lui più non fuggì.

For the cruel Isolde,
the dashing Tristan burned with passion,
and he did not even have a glint of hope
of ever possessing her.
Then he found himself at the feet
of the wise magician,
who gave him a flask
of a certain love potion,
that the beautiful Isolde
could not resist.

Elisir di sì perfetta,
di sì rara qualità,
ne sapessi la ricetta,
conoscessi chi ti fa!

Such a perfect potion
of such rare quality,
if only you knew the formula,
and someone to make it for you!

VILLAGERS: Elisir di sì perfetta,
di sì rara qualità,
ne sapessi la ricetta,
conoscessi chi ti fa!
Leggi, leggi, leggi!

Such a perfect potion
of such rare quality,
if only you knew the formula,
and someone to make it for you!
Read on, read on, read on!

ADINA: Appena ei bebbe un sorso
del magico vasello,
che tosto il cor rubello
d'Isotta intenerì.
Cambiata in un istante
quella beltà crudele
fu di Tristano amante,
visse a Tristan fedele;
e quel primiero sorso
per sempre ei benedì.

As soon as he drank a sip
from that magic flask,
Isolde's cold heart
quickly melted.
That beautiful, cruel woman
changed in an instant,
and she became Tristan's lover.
She lived faithfully for Tristan,
and for that first sip,
he always gave thanks.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY
Sounds Good to Me: Musical Characterization in *L'Elisir d'Amore*

Use this handout to record your thoughts about how each character might talk. You can also use it to make notes about how your classmates perform each character's monologue.

Nemorino (NEH-mohr-EE-noh) is a humble peasant. Although he loves Adina, he thinks she will never notice him.

_____

_____

_____

Adina (ah-DEE-nah) is a young woman who owns a farm. Clever and wealthy, she likes to flirt with lots of people but secretly is in love with Nemorino.

_____

_____

_____

Belcore (bel-COHR-eh) is an extremely vain sergeant in the army. He would like to marry Adina, although he really only cares about himself.

_____

_____

_____

Dr. Dulcamara (DOOL-cah-MAHR-ah) is a traveling salesman who claims that his miraculous potions can solve any ailment—even a broken heart.

_____

_____

_____

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Sounds Good to Me: Musical Characterization in *L'Elisir d'Amore* (CONT'D)

Nemorino's Aria

Nemorino, a poor peasant, is in love with Adina. Here, he admires her from afar, wishing that he had the courage to tell her about his feelings but fearing that she could never be interested in someone as humble as himself.

TRACK 2

Nemorino watches Adina and thinks of how much he loves her.

NEMORINO: Quanto è bella, quanto è cara!	She is so beautiful! She is so sweet!
Più la vedo, e più mi piace...	The more I see her, the more I like her.
ma in quel cor non son capace	But I am not able to inspire
lieve affetto ad inspirar.	even the slightest affection in her heart.

TRACK 3

Nemorino appreciates how intelligent and well-educated Adina is, and thinks that she is out of his league.

NEMORINO: Essa legge, studia, impara...	She reads, studies, learns…
non vi ha cosa ad essa ignota...	There is nothing she doesn't know.
Io son sempre un idiota,	I am so stupid,
io non so che sospirar.	I barely even know how to breathe.
Quanto è cara, quanto è bella!	She is so beautiful! She is so sweet!

TRACK 4

Nemorino returns to the opening of the aria and worries that he will never get Adina's attention.

NEMORINO: Quanto è bella, quanto è cara!	She is so beautiful! She is so sweet!
Più la vedo, e più mi piace...	The more I see her, the more I like her.
ma in quel cor non son capace	But I am not able to inspire
lieve affetto ad inspirar.	even the slightest affection in her heart.

TRACK 5

The aria in its entirety

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Sounds Good to Me: Musical Characterization in *L'Elisir d'Amore* (CONT'D)

Adina's Aria

To entertain the workers on her farm, Adina reads them the story of Tristan and Iseult. Occasionally, she pauses in her reading to think how nice it would be to have a love potion of her own, so that she could get the man of her dreams to fall in love with her. Note that the lyrics in italics are the words of the story that she is reading; the others are Adina's own thoughts.

TRACK 6

Adina begins reading the story of Tristan and Iseult.

ADINA: *Della crudele Isotta*
il bel Tristano ardea,
né fil di speme avea
di possederla un dì.
Quando si trasse al piede
di saggio incantatore,
che in un vasel gli diede
certo elisir d'amore,
per cui la bella Isotta
da lui più non fuggì.

For the cruel Isolde,
the dashing Tristan burned with passion,
and he did not even have a glint of hope
of ever possessing her.
Then he found himself at the feet
of the wise magician,
who gave him a flask
of a certain love potion,
that the beautiful Isolde
could not resist.

TRACK 7

Adina wishes she had the recipe for the love potion; the villagers repeat her sentiments exactly.

ADINA: Elisir di sì perfetta,
di sì rara qualità,
ne sapessi la ricetta,
conoscessi chi ti fa!

Such a perfect potion
of such rare quality,
if only you knew the formula,
and someone to make it for you!

VILLAGERS: Elisir di sì perfetta,
di sì rara qualità,
ne sapessi la ricetta,
conoscessi chi ti fa!
Leggi, leggi, leggi!

Such a perfect potion
of such rare quality,
if only you knew the formula,
and someone to make it for you!
Read on, read on, read on!

TRACK 8

Adina continues reading.

ADINA: *Appena ei bebbe un sorso*
del magico vasello,
che tosto il cor rubello
d'Isotta intenerì.
Cambiata in un istante
quella beltà crudele
fu di Tristano amante,
visse a Tristan fedele;
e quel primiero sorso
per sempre ei benedì.

As soon as he drank a sip
from that magic flask,
Isolde's cold heart
quickly melted.
That beautiful, cruel woman
changed in an instant,
and she became Tristan's lover.
She lived faithfully for Tristan,
and for that first sip,
he always gave thanks.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY
Sounds Good to Me: Musical Characterization in *L'Elisir d'Amore* (CONT'D)

TRACK 9

Adina repeats her earlier sentiments, wishing once again that she could have a potion of her own.

ADINA: Elisir di sì perfetta,
di sì rara qualità,
ne sapessi la ricetta,
conoscessi chi ti fa!

Such a perfect potion
of such rare quality,
if only you knew the formula,
and someone to make it for you!

VILLAGERS: Elisir di sì perfetta,
di sì rara qualità,
ne sapessi la ricetta,
conoscessi chi ti fa!

Such a perfect potion
of such rare quality,
if only you knew the formula,
and someone to make it for you!

TRACK 10

The aria in its entirety

Belcore's Aria

A fanfare is heard in the distance, and soon a troop of soldiers marches into the town. They are led by the vain sergeant Belcore, who sees Adina and immediately begins to flirt with her.

TRACK 11

Belcore introduces himself (to both Adina and the watching crowd) comparing himself to Paris, a mythological figure renowned for his handsomeness.

BELCORE: Come Paride vezzoso
porse il pomo alla più bella,
mia diletta villanella,
io ti porgo questi fior.
Ma di lui più glorioso,
più di lui felice io sono,
poiché in premio del mio dono
ne riporto il tuo bel cor.

Just like charming Paris
gave the apple to the most beautiful woman,
I give these flowers to you,
my lovely little country girl.
But I am more triumphant than he,
happier than he,
because in exchange for my gift,
I have claimed your beautiful heart.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY
Sounds Good to Me: Musical Characterization in *L'Elisir d'Amore* (CONT'D)

TRACK 12

Adina remarks sarcastically that Belcore is "very modest." Her friends laugh at him with her, and Nemorino worries that she finds Belcore attractive.

ADINA: *(aside to her friends)* È modesto il signorino!

The little gentleman is so humble!

HER FRIENDS: Sì davvero.

Yes, absolutely.

NEMORINO: Oh! mio dispetto!

Oh! Such a tease!

TRACK 13

Belcore continues proclaiming his own wonderfulness, now comparing himself to Mars, the god of war and declaring that Adina will soon fall in love with him.

BELCORE: Veggo chiaro in quel visino
ch'io fo breccia nel tuo petto.
Non è cosa sorprendente;
son galante, e son sergente;
non v'ha bella che resista
alla vista d'un cimiero;
cede a Marte, iddio guerriero,
fin la madre dell'amor.

I clearly see in your little face
that I have begun to conquer your heart.
It's not so surprising.
I'm gallant; I'm strong.
There is not a single beauty that can resist
the sight of me in my helmet.
Even the mother of love
gave in to Mars, the divine warrior.

ADINA: (È modesto!)

(He's so humble!)

GIANNETTA AND CHORUS: (Sì, davvero!)

(Oh yes, absolutely!)

NEMORINO: (Essa ride... Oh! mio dolor!)

(She's laughing! Oh, my pain!)

BELCORE: …cede a Marte, iddio guerriero,
fin la madre dell'amor.

Even the mother of love
gave in to Mars, the divine warrior.

TRACK 14

The aria in its entirety

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY
Sounds Good to Me: Musical Characterization in *L'Elisir d'Amore* (CONT'D)

Dulcamara's Aria

A magnificent wagon pulls into the town square, and out steps Dr. Dulcamara, purveyor of wondrous "medicines." In reality, he is a charlatan, nothing more than an excellent salesman who is particularly good at selling plain wine in fancy bottles. In this scene, he advertises his potion while introducing himself to the people of the town.

TRACK 15

Dulcamara introduces himself.

DULCAMARA: Udite, udite, o rustici;	Listen! Listen up, you peasants!
attenti, non fiatate.	Pay attention! Be quiet!
Io già suppongo e immagino	I can only assume and imagine
che al par di me sappiate	that immediately upon seeing me,
ch'io sono quel gran medico,	you realize that I am that famous doctor,
dottore enciclopedico,	that encyclopedic scholar
chiamato Dulcamara,	known as Dulcamara.
la cui virtù preclara	My genius is eminent
e i portenti infiniti	and my miraculous deeds
son noti all'universo… e in altri siti.	are known all over the universe… and in other places.

TRACK 16

Dulcamara begins to describe his "medicine."

DULCAMARA: Benefattor degli uomini,	Healer of mean, curer of diseases,
riparator de' mali,	in just a few days
in pochi giorni io sgombero,	I will be gone.
io spazzo gli spedali,	I clean out the hospital
e la salute a vendere	and them am off to sell health and well-being
per tutto il mondo io vo.	around the world.
Compratela, compratela,	Come and buy! Come and buy!
per poco io ve la do.	For a low, low price I can make you healthy!
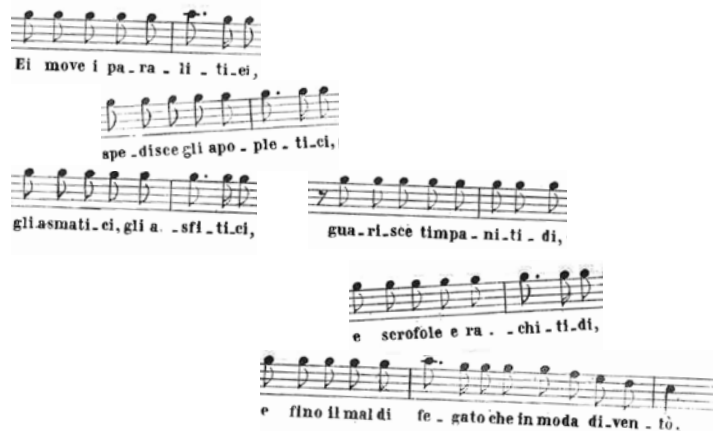
CLASSROOM ACTIVITY
Sounds Good to Me: Musical Characterization in *L'Elisir d'Amore* (CONT'D)

TRACK 17

He launches into a long list of his medicine's miraculous effects.

DULCAMARA: È questo l'odontalgico
mirabile liquore,
dei topi e delle cimici
possente distruttore,
i cui certificati
autentici, bollati
toccar, vedere e leggere
a ciaschedun farò.
Per questo mio specifico
simpatico prolifico,
un uom settuagenario,
e valetudinario,
nonno di dieci bamboli
ancora diventò.
Per questo «Tocca e sana»
in breve settimana
più d'un afflitta vedova
di piangere cessò.

And this is the miraculous
tooth-ache medicine;
it also gets rid
of mice and bedbugs.
I'll let everyone
read for himself
its authentic, bona fide
certification papers.
With my particularly potent
personal prolificacy powder,
a shriveled-up seventy year-old man
will turn into
the grandfather
of ten children.
With this "Touch-And-Be-Healthy,"
in just one week
more than one grieving widow
will stop crying.

O voi, matrone rigide,
ringiovanir bramate?
Le vostre rughe incomode
con esso cancellate.
Volete voi, donzelle,
ben liscia aver la pelle?
Voi, giovani galanti,
per sempre avere amanti?
Comprate il mio specifico,
per poco io ve lo do.

Oh you dry old matrons,
Do you yearn to be refreshed?
Your pesky wrinkles
can all be wiped out.
You young girls, do you want
to have a peachy complexion?
You gallant young men,
do you want to always have lovers?
Buy my medicine,
you can have it for almost nothing.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Sounds Good to Me: Musical Characterization in *L'Elisir d'Amore* (CONT'D)

TRACK 18

As he continues describing the effects of his potion, the patter really takes off!

DULCAMARA: Ei move i paralitici,
spedisce gli apopletici,
gli asmatici, gli asfitici,
gl'isterici, i diabetici,
guarisce timpanitidi,
e scrofole e rachitidi,
e fino il mal di fegato
che in moda diventò.
Mirabile pe' cimici, mirabile pel fegato,
guarisce i paralitici, spedisce gli apopletici…
Comprate il mio specifico,
voi vedove donzelle,
voi giovani galanti,
per poco io ve lo do.
Avanti, avanti, vedove.
Avanti, avanti, bamboli.
Comprate il mio specifico,
per poco io ve lo do.
Sì, sì, per poco io ve lo do.

This makes the paralyzed walk.
It calms the apoplectic,
the asthmatic, the asphyxiated,
the hysteric, the diabetic.
It cures whooping cough,
tuberculosis, and rickets.
It even cures liver pains
that are all the rage these days.
A miracle remedy for bedbugs and bad livers.
It makes the paralyzed walk and the apoplectic calm.
Buy my special formula,
you maiden widows,
you strapping young lads.
I'll sell it cheap!
Come on up, widows!
Come on, children!
Buy my special formula.
I'll sell it cheap!
Yup, I'll sell it cheap!

TRACK 19

The above excerpts from Dulcamara's aria in a single track

The Ensemble ["Tran, tran, tran"]

Nemorino drinks deeply from the "potion" (really wine), the effect of which he soon feels. When Adina enters, however, he decides to play it cool. Adina is surprised—and somewhat hurt—that Nemorino seems no longer to be pining for her love. This scene begins when Belcore's voice is heard from offstage; soon, the vain sergeant appears. Note that lyrics in parentheses are spoken to the audience, rather than to the other characters onstage.

TRACK 20

Belcore enters singing, and Adina and Nemorino respond to his arrival.

BELCORE: Tran tran, tran tran, tran tran.
In guerra, ed in amor
l'assedio annoia e stanca.

Tran tran, tran tran, tran tran.
In war and in love,
a siege is boring and tiresome.

ADINA: (A tempo vien Belcore.)

(Here comes Belcore now.)

BELCORE: Io vado all'arma bianca
in guerra ed in amor.

I go hand-to-hand,
in combat and in love.

NEMORINO: (È qua quel seccator.)

(Here's that bore.)

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CLASSROOM ACTIVITY
Sounds Good to Me: Musical Characterization in *L'Elisir d'Amore* (CONT'D)

TRACK 21

Adina, frustrated by Nemorino's coldness, begins to flirt with Belcore. She and Belcore use the idea of "conquering the piazza" as a metaphor for winning Adina's love.

ADINA: Ebben, gentil sergente
la piazza vi è piaciuta?

Well then, my fine sergeant,
did you like the piazza?

BELCORE: Difesa è bravamente,
e invano ell'è battuta.

She is well defended,
and it she is attacked in vain.

ADINA: E non vi dice il core
che presto cederà?

Doesn't your heart tell you
that she will soon give in?

BELCORE: Ah, lo volesse Amore!

If Love wills it!

ADINA: Vedrete che vorrà.

You'll see that it does.

BELCORE: Quando? Sarìa possibile!

When? Will it be possible?

NEMORINO: (A mio dispetto io tremo.)

(I'm trembling, darn it.)

BELCORE: Favella, o mio bell'angelo.
Quando ci sposeremo?

Predict for me, my beautiful little angel.
When will we get married?

ADINA: Prestissimo.

Very soon.

NEMORINO: (Che sento!)

(What am I hearing?)

BELCORE: Ma quando?

But when?

ADINA: Fra sei dì.

In six days!

TRACK 22

Hearing Adina declare that she will marry Belcore in six days, Nemorino is delighted: he believes that the love potion will require only one day to take effect, and that by tomorrow, Adina will only too gladly leave Belcore for him. As the conceited Belcore exults, Nemorino laughs out loud. (Listen for repetitions of the text, for Nemorino's laughter, and for the long melisma of the self-important Belcore at the end of the track.)

BELCORE: Oh! gioia! Son contento.
Fra sei dì!

Oh, what joy! I'm so happy!
In six days!

NEMORINO: *(laughing)* Ah ah! va ben così.

Hahaha! Everything is just fine.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY
Sounds Good to Me: Musical Characterization in *L'Elisir d'Amore* (CONT'D)

TRACK 23

All three characters—Adina, Nemorino, and Belcore—start to talk at the same time. Adina is surprised, and more than a little hurt, that Nemorino is so happy that she has agreed to marry Belcore. Belcore, meanwhile, wonders why Nemorino is laughing at him in such an annoying fashion, and threatens to beat him up if he doesn't leave. Nemorino declares that Adina's love is as good as won.

[the characters sing simultaneously]

|	
BELCORE: Che cosa trova a ridere cotesto scimunito? Or or lo piglio a scoppole se non va via di qua.	What is this idiot laughing about? I'll take him by the scruff of his neck if he doesn't get out of here.
ADINA: E può si lieto ed ilare sentir che mi marito! Non posso più nascondere la rabbia che mi fa.	And can he find out so cheerfully and happily that he is my husband? I can't hide how angry he makes me any longer.
NEMORINO: Ah ah! va ben. Gradasso! Ei già s'immagina toccar il ciel col dito: ma tesa è già la trappola, doman se ne avvedrà.	Haha! Everything is going fine. He thinks he is already at the finish line. But the trap is already set! He'll find out tomorrow!

TRACK 24

The ensemble in its entirety

At the Met: *Dressed to Impress*

Below is a template similar to those used by professional costume designers. During the *Live in HD* performance, select one costume that you particularly like and sketch it in as much detail as possible. You can write additional observations in the space provided. Remember to think about hats, jewelry, shoes, and other accessories. Then, at the bottom of the page, explain how this costume helped bring the character to life.
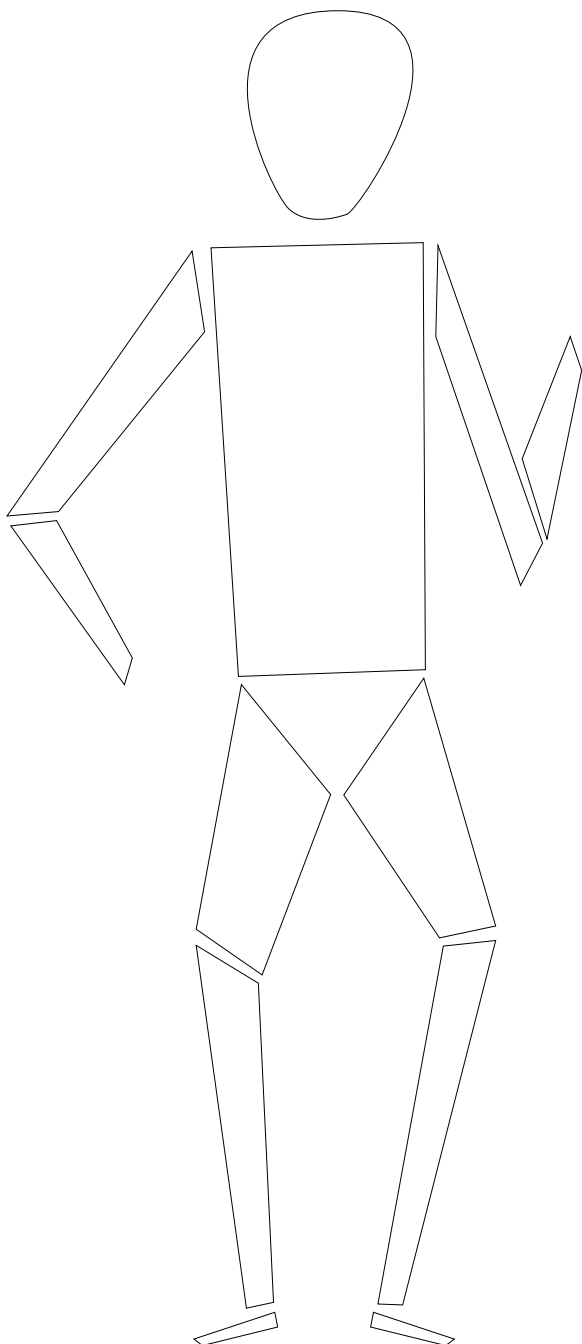
HOW THE COSTUME HELPS BRING THE CHARACTER TO LIFE:

_____

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OTHER OBSERVATIONS:

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L'Elisir d'Amore: My Highs & Lows

FEBRUARY 10, 2018

CONDUCTED BY DOMINGO HINDOYAN

REVIEWED BY _____

THE STARS	STAR POWER	MY COMMENTS
PRETTY YENDE AS ADINA	☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆	
MATTHEW POLENZANI AS NEMORINO	☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆	
DAVIDE LUCIANO AS BELCORE	☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆	
ILDEBRANDO D'ARCANGELO AS DULCAMARA	☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆	

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN/STAGING
NEMORINO SINGS OF HIS LOVE FOR ADINA MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
ADINA READS THE STORY OF TRISTAN AND ISEULT MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
BELCORE ARRIVES MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
DULCAMARA ADVERTISES HIS MARVELOUS MEDICINE MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
NEMORINO BUYS A "POTION" MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
NEMORINO'S DRUNKEN SCENE MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
BELCORE COMES TO THE TOWN SQUARE MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

NEMORINO BEGS ADINA TO WAIT ONE DAY   1 2 3 4 5   1 2 3 4 5   1 2 3 4 5
    MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:

EVERYONE LEAVES FOR THE WEDDING   1 2 3 4 5   1 2 3 4 5   1 2 3 4 5
    MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:

THE WEDDING BANQUET   1 2 3 4 5   1 2 3 4 5   1 2 3 4 5
    MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:

NEMORINO JOINS THE ARMY   1 2 3 4 5   1 2 3 4 5   1 2 3 4 5
    MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:

GIANNETTA HAS NEWS ABOUT NEMORINO   1 2 3 4 5   1 2 3 4 5   1 2 3 4 5
    MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:

NEMORINO DRINKS HIS SECOND BOTTLE OF POTION   1 2 3 4 5   1 2 3 4 5   1 2 3 4 5
    MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:

ADINA EXPLAINS SHE HAS A SPECIAL POTION OF HER OWN   1 2 3 4 5   1 2 3 4 5   1 2 3 4 5
    MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:

NEMORINO RECALLS ADINA'S TEAR   1 2 3 4 5   1 2 3 4 5   1 2 3 4 5
    MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:

ADINA BEGS NEMORINO TO STAY   1 2 3 4 5   1 2 3 4 5   1 2 3 4 5
    MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:

DULCAMARA CLAIMS HE HAS SOLVED EVERYTHING   1 2 3 4 5   1 2 3 4 5   1 2 3 4 5
    MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE: