

ONE OF THE MOST ENDURINGLY SUCCESSFUL OF THE GREAT VIENNESE operettas, *The Merry Widow* is a frothy comedy of love filled with memorable tunes, elegant settings, and realistically drawn, likeable characters. Composer Franz Lehár was the leading exponent of the “Silver Age” of operetta, the years between 1900 and 1920 that produced some of the most musically sophisticated scores of the genre, following operetta’s first wave of popularity (often referred to as the “Golden Age”), which began around the mid-19th century with the works of Johann Strauss, Jr. and other composers.

In her new Met production, director and choreographer Susan Stroman, together with her design team, has created a sparkling art nouveau setting for this charming tale while also taking a close look at the heart of the piece—the merry widow of the title, a woman who embodies modern sensibilities and pursues her own desires.

This guide is intended to help your students appreciate the musical and comedic riches of Lehár’s masterpiece. They will explore the interactions of the main characters and consider how this operetta reflects the place of women in 19th-century Europe. The activities on the following pages are designed to provide context, deepen background knowledge, and enrich the overall experience of this *Live in HD* transmission. This guide also aligns with key strands of the Common Core Standards.

THE WORK: *THE MERRY WIDOW*

An operetta in three acts,
sung in English

Music by Franz Lehár

Libretto by Victor Léon and Leo Stein, based on the play *L’Attaché d’Ambassade* by Henri Meilhac

English translation by Jeremy Sams

First performed December 30, 1905,
at the Theater an der Wien, Vienna,
Austria

PRODUCTION

Andrew Davis, Conductor

Susan Stroman, Production

Julian Crouch, Set Designer

William Ivey Long, Costume Designer

Paule Constable, Lighting Designer

Susan Stroman, Choreographer

STARRING

(In order of vocal appearance):

Thomas Allen

BARON MIRKO ZETA (baritone)

Kelli O’Hara

VALENCIENNE (mezzo-soprano)

Alek Shrader

CAMILLE DE ROSILLON (tenor)

Renée Fleming

HANNA GLAWARI (soprano)

Nathan Gunn

DANILO (baritone*)

*Originally written for a tenor, the role is also frequently sung by baritones.

Production a gift of The Sybil B. Harrington
Endowment Fund



FLEMING



O'HARA



SHRADER



GUNN

This guide includes four sections and three types of activities.

- **THE SOURCE, THE STORY, WHO'S WHO IN *THE MERRY WIDOW*, AND A COMPOSER TIMELINE**
- **CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:**
Three 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, integrating the *Live in HD* experience into the 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 address several aspects of *The Merry Widow*:

- The use of subtext in dramatic and literary works to convey characters' motivations
- The representation of women's experience of marriage and its relationship to the operetta's historical context
- The dance forms distinctive to the popular genre of operetta and their musical characteristics
- 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 *The Merry Widow*, 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.

Costume sketches for the Embassy Ball scene by William Ivey Long



THE SOURCE: *L'ATTACHÉ D'AMBASSADE* BY HENRI MEILHAC Meilhac was a prolific playwright and librettist who specialized in probing the comic foibles of his fellow men. Ironically, his fame today rests almost exclusively on the libretto he co-wrote for Bizet's *Carmen*—hardly one of the light-hearted pieces that formed the bulk of his creative output. His three-act comedy *L'Attaché d'Ambassade* ("The Embassy Attaché") dates from 1861, close to the beginning of his long career. Unlike the blockbuster successes of his later operetta libretti for Jacques Offenbach, it did not find a large audience and closed after only 15 performances at the Théâtre du Vaudeville in Paris. But it found greater success in a German translation at the Carltheater in Vienna, where it was regularly revived.

Inspired by one of these revivals in 1905, the librettist Leo Stein was moved to adapt Meilhac's stage comedy into an operetta libretto. With his frequent collaborator Victor Léon (himself the stage manager at the Carltheater), he brought the idea to the management of Vienna's Theater an der Wien, which liked the idea of a new operetta with a glittering Parisian setting. After the theater's first choice of composer did not produce the desired result, Lehár was asked to step in. The immediate success of *The Merry Widow* (or *Die Lustige Witwe* in the original German) without a doubt was due not only to its profusion of sensuous melodies and dances but also to Meilhac's expert weaving of romance, witty dialogue, and dramatic conflicts.

ACT I *The Grand Salon of the Pontevedrian Embassy in Paris.* The scene opens at a ball in honor of Pontevedro. The Pontevedrian ambassador, Baron Mirko Zeta, reveals that his home country is nearly bankrupt and hopes that their Parisian guests will help them raise the money they need. He's pleased when he sees his young wife, Valencienne, flirting with Camille de Rosillon, a handsome young Frenchman, assuming she's merely trying to win French support for Pontevedro. In fact, Camille has declared his love for Valencienne and writes "I love you" on her fan.

Meanwhile, Zeta eagerly awaits the arrival of the guest of honor, Hanna Glawari, a wealthy widow from Pontevedro. Zeta wants to keep her from marrying a Parisian man so that her millions will stay in their country. He plans to match her with Danilo Danilovitch, a womanizing aristocrat from his country. Two Frenchmen, Cascada and St. Brioche, overhear Zeta's conversation about Hanna and plan to wed the widow.

When Hanna makes her appearance, the Parisian men shower her with compliments. After she departs for the ballroom, Valencienne realizes she has lost her fan—the one with Camille's incriminating message—and she rushes out to look for it.

Danilo finally arrives, fresh from a night of carousing at Maxim's, and takes a quick nap in the Grand Salon. Hanna finds him and they talk, revealing that they were once in love, but that Hanna was considered too far beneath Danilo's status for him to marry her. He says he's not interested in marriage and insists he'll never say "I love you."

VOICE TYPE

Since the early 19th century, singing voices have usually been classified in six basic types, three male and three female, according to their range:

SOPRANO

the highest-pitched type of human voice, normally possessed only by women and boys

MEZZO-SOPRANO

the female voice whose range lies between the soprano and the contralto (Italian “mezzo” = middle, medium)

CONTRALTO

the lowest female voice, also called an alto

COUNTERTENOR

a male singing voice whose vocal range is equivalent to that of a contralto, mezzo-soprano, or (less frequently) a soprano, usually through use of falsetto

TENOR

the highest naturally occurring voice type in adult males

BARITONE

the male voice lying below the tenor and above the bass

BASS

the lowest male voice

In the meantime, Zeta’s chief of staff, Kromow, finds Valencienne’s fan and thinks it belongs to his wife, Olga. Zeta, wanting to spare Olga the scandal, convinces him it is Valencienne’s. Meeting with Danilo, Zeta orders him to marry Hanna but Danilo refuses. When the “Ladies Choice” dance is announced, Hanna selects Danilo, and after some flirtatious bantering the two finally dance.

ACT II *The terrace and garden of Hanna’s villa.* The following day, Hanna hosts a party at her villa. Danilo arrives late, and Zeta orders him to work at keeping the Parisian men from Hanna—particularly Camille. His assistant Njegus reveals that Camille is already in love with a mystery woman. Zeta wants to know who this woman is so he can marry her off to Camille, leaving Hanna free for a Pontevedrian suitor. He believes the fan is the key to her identity and orders Danilo to determine its owner.

Hanna comes across the fan and, seeing its inscription, assumes it is a gift to her from Danilo. But still, he will not say “I love you,” and she will not accept him until he does. He tells her about his favorite Parisian nightspot, Maxim’s, and they waltz. They are interrupted by Zeta, still searching for the identity of Camille’s secret lover. The men agree to meet in the pavilion to discuss the matter.

Camille and Valencienne finally find her missing fan, and this time Valencienne writes “I am a respectable wife” on it. Njegus watches as Valencienne and Camille enter the pavilion. Zeta arrives to meet Danilo in the pavilion, but Njegus delays him from entering so that he won’t learn of his wife’s tryst with Camille. Njegus sneaks Hanna into the pavilion to take her place. Hanna emerges, announcing that she and Camille are engaged. Danilo departs in a huff for Maxim’s, which Hanna takes as proof of his love.

ACT III *Chez Maxim.* Arriving at Maxim’s in search of Danilo, Camille and Valencienne sneak off to enjoy one of the private rooms. Zeta and the other Pontevedrians appear, and the grisettes (dancing girls) entertain them. They’re joined by Valencienne, who is dressed as a grisette.

Eventually both Danilo and Hanna arrive at Maxim’s, and he forbids her to marry Camille. When she explains that she was merely safeguarding another woman’s reputation, Danilo is delighted but still won’t declare his love.

As the guests reassemble, Danilo announces that Hanna will not marry Camille, but he will not reveal the identity of Camille’s mistress. Njegus produces the missing fan, which he found in the pavilion. Zeta finally recognizes it as his wife’s, declares himself divorced, and proposes to Hanna. She informs him that, according to her late husband’s will, if she remarries, she will lose her fortune. Hearing this, the men at the ball lose interest in marrying Hanna, except for Danilo, who finally declares his love for her. They agree to marry, and Hanna amends her account of the will: upon remarrying she will lose her fortune—to her new husband. Valencienne returns and tells Zeta to read the other side of her fan, which reads “I am a respectable wife.” With the couples reunited, the men sing about the mystery of women.

WHO'S WHO IN *THE MERRY WIDOW*

CHARACTER		PRONUNCIATION	VOICE TYPE	THE LOWDOWN
Hanna Glawari (the “merry widow”)	A beautiful, charming, and rich young widow	HAH-nah GLAH-vahr-ee	Soprano	As a wealthy widow, Hanna attracts many suitors who want her money.
Count Danilo Danilovitch	Secretary at the Pontevedrian embassy	dah-NEE-low dah-NEE-lo-vich	Tenor	A ladies’ man, Danilo was once in love with Hanna.
Baron Mirko Zeta	Pontevedro’s ambassador in Paris	MEER-koh ZAY-tah	Baritone	An older man married to a lovely young woman, Zeta is a bit pompous and foolish.
Valencienne	The young and beautiful wife of Baron Zeta	val-en-cee-EN	Mezzo-soprano	She loves Camille but wants to retain her respectability as a married woman.
Camille de Rosillon	A young Frenchman	cah-MEEL duh roh-see-YAWN	Tenor	A charming suitor who woos Baron Zeta’s wife Valencienne
Kromow	Chief of staff to the Pontevedrian embassy	KROH-mahv	Baritone	A jealous fool who constantly suspects that his wife is flirting with other men
Olga	Wife of Kromow	As in English	Mezzo-soprano	A flirtatious woman who is carrying on an affair with St. Brioche
Cascada and St. Brioche	Rival suitors for Hanna’s hand in marriage	cah-SCAH-dah; SAN bree-OSH	Baritones	Both men want Hanna only for her money.
Njegus	Baron Zeta’s assistant	NYAY-goosh	Baritone	A comedic character who facilitates some of the action
Bogdanovitch and Pritchitch	Attachés to the embassy	bog-DAHN-oh-vich PRIH-chitch	Baritones	As embassy officials, they support Zeta’s actions.
Sylviane	Wife of Bogdanovitch	sill-vee-AHN	Mezzo-soprano	She is having an affair with Cascada.
Praskowia	Wife of Pritschitsch	prahs-KOH-vee-ah	Contralto	She is a catty snob who looks down on Hanna and thinks Danilo is in love with her.
Lolo, Frou Frou, Margot, Cloclo, Jouvou, and Dodo	Grisettes (dancing girls) at Maxim’s	froo-FROO zhoo-ZHOO (otherwise as in English)	Sopranos	It’s clear they are all very familiar with Danilo—and the other men of the Pontevedrian embassy.

Franz Léhar



- c. 1770** The dance form of the waltz first appears in European music. It gradually supplants the minuet, an earlier and more stately triple-meter dance form, and eventually becomes so popular that some composers build entire careers on specializing in waltz composition. Johann Strauss, Jr. was so accomplished in the genre that he became known as the “Waltz King.”
- 1801** The Theater an der Wien opens, run by impresario Emanuel Schikaneder (best known as the librettist of Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte*). Designed to provide greater technical flexibility and space for more lavish sets, the theater hosts both plays and operas during its early decades, before becoming the home of classic Viennese operetta in the 1860s.
- 1860s** The wildly successful works of Jacques Offenbach in Paris establish the popularity of the operetta genre and inspire imitations in other languages across Europe.
- 1861** Henri Meilhac’s comedy *L’Attaché d’Ambassade* premieres in Paris. It later provides the source for *The Merry Widow*.
- 1867–68** Johann Strauss, Jr. premieres *An der Schönen, Blauen Donau* (“By the Beautiful Blue Danube”) and *Geschichten aus dem Wienerwald* (“Tales from the Vienna Woods”), two of his most popular waltzes.
- 1870** On April 30, Franz Lehár is born in Komárom, a small town astride the Danube on the border of modern-day Hungary and Slovakia, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.
- 1874** Johann Strauss finds international success as an operetta composer with *Die Fledermaus*. His move from waltz composition into operetta emphasizes the genre’s focus on dance music.
- 1882** Lehár enters the Prague Conservatory, where he takes lessons in violin, music theory, and composition. Recognizing his talent, Antonín Dvořák encourages him to pursue a career as a composer.
- 1888** Following his graduation, Lehár is called up for military service and plays in a succession of infantry regiment bands as violinist and later as bandmaster.

- 1899** Lehár is appointed bandmaster of the 26th infantry regiment band, a post previously held by his father, which allows him to move to Vienna.
- 1902** Having found an audience for his dances and marches and a resulting financial flexibility, Lehár leaves military service to focus exclusively on conducting and composition. Before the end of the year, two of his operettas are performed at the Theater an der Wien and the Carltheater, respectively.
- 1905** *The Merry Widow* premieres at the Theater an der Wien on December 30. Its immediate success establishes not only Lehár's international reputation but revitalizes the genre as a whole, ushering in a new era of popularity known as the "Silver Age" of operetta.
- 1920** Lehár begins a fruitful collaboration with the tenor Richard Tauber and over the following nine years writes six operettas conceived with Tauber in the leading role.
- 1929** *Das Land des Lächelns* ("The Land of Smiles"), the most successful of Lehár's later compositions, premieres. With its second and third acts set in China, it maintains the characteristically exotic locale and characters of many "Silver Age" operettas. (*The Merry Widow*, while set in Paris, features the inhabitants of the fictional country of Pontevedro, a thinly veiled version of Montenegro, a nation in the Balkans.)
- 1935** Lehár founds his own publishing house and buys back the rights to most of his compositions in order to profit from their publication. From this point, he concentrates mainly on publishing activities rather than composition.
- 1948** Having suffered from ill health for some time, Lehár dies on October 24 at his villa in Bad Ischl, an Austrian spa town near Salzburg.



*English Language Arts***IN PREPARATION**

For this activity, students will need the reproducible resources available at the back of this guide.

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

English Language Arts, Poetry, Music

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To analyze the libretto
- To explore the idea of subtext
- To interpret characters' motivations and predict their future actions
- To prompt curiosity about the Met's production of *The Merry Widow*

He Said/She Said: Introducing Hanna and Danilo

The dramatic action of *The Merry Widow* is driven by the flirtation between Hanna Glawari and her former lover, Count Danilo Danilovitch. As often happens in situations like that, the two rarely come right out and say what they're actually thinking. In Jeremy Sams's new English text, Hanna and Danilo are constantly forcing each other, the characters around them, and the audience, to guess at the subtext of their words—that is, at what they *really* mean. In this activity, students will do some detective work, listening in on several conversations to see what they can infer about the couple's past relationship and current feelings. Students will:

- learn and become familiar with the literary concept of subtext
- interpret motivations, or subtext, based on characters' words
- based on their interpretations, predict what they think will happen between the two characters
- translate their interpretations into a character's diary entry

STEPS

Students will read or perform three scenes that establish the relationship between Hanna and Danilo early in the operetta. As a class, they will interpret these interactions and make inferences about the nature of the relationship between the two characters. Then they will write a diary entry in the voice of one of the two main characters.

STEP 1: Introduce the concept of subtext and explain that it refers to a meaning that is not directly revealed. Tell students that they will often encounter subtext in literary



Costume designs by
William Ivey Long for
Hanna and Danilo

and dramatic works when characters don't say exactly what they're thinking or feeling. With subtext, we must infer the meaning beneath their words and actions.

In an open discussion, encourage students to think about examples of subtext in their own lives. Can they think of a situation when they suspected someone wasn't revealing what he or she truly thought or felt? Ask for specific instances when they thought this might be occurring. Questions to ask may include:

- What sorts of things do people sometimes want to keep to themselves?
- Why do they want to keep these things secret?
- How can you tell when someone isn't telling the whole truth?
- Can they think of any instances in which people might want to conceal the truth of what they feel, but don't succeed? How do they give themselves away?

STEP 2: Introduce *The Merry Widow*, outlining the situation at the start of the operetta. (Do not distribute the full synopsis yet.) The scene opens at a grand ball and everyone is eagerly awaiting the arrival of the main character, Hanna Glawari (the "merry widow" of the title).

Distribute the reproducible handout *Introducing Hanna and Danilo* and explain that beneath the printed text of three short scenes, there is space to note the subtext of each line.

Have three students read out loud the parts of Zeta, Hanna, and Praskowia in the first excerpt. Remind the class that Hanna is the "merry widow." You may wish to have students read the scene twice and pick new volunteers for the second reading so that everyone has a chance to be a listener. During the reading, students should feel free to mark any lines that seem to provide clues about Hanna's feelings.

After the reading, ask the students to reread the excerpt silently and add notes about what the characters are really thinking—the subtext—in the spaces provided on the handout.

STEP 3: Next, ask for volunteers to read the scene again, but this time choose two students for each character. Ask two of the students to read the characters' lines and have the other two read the subtext after each line. Depending on how much time you have, you may wish to have more than one group of volunteers so that several students will have the chance to share their ideas about the characters' subtexts.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND THE MERRY WIDOW

This activity directly supports the following ELA-Literacy Common Core Strands:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3

Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.10

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

STEP 4: Initiate a discussion about what students have learned about these two characters. How does Hanna feel about Danilo? What can students infer about their past relationship? (Hanna and Danilo have known each other well in the past, perhaps even romantically. Hanna is defensive about her connection with him.) Ask students to share their impressions.

STEP 5: Repeat these activities with the second excerpt on the reproducible handout. Here, the focus is on Danilo, who was referred to in the excerpt just discussed. Once again, have volunteers read the passage aloud twice and have students mark any lines that seem to provide clues to Danilo's feelings about Hanna. As before, have the excerpt performed with the subtext read out. Ask students to share their impressions of Danilo's feelings and motivations and indicate the lines that they think revealed this subtext. (Danilo wants to avoid Hanna. He may also be curious to see her in spite of himself.)

Little Opera First produced in 1905, *The Merry Widow* is one of the last great examples of an art form highly popular at that time: the Viennese operetta. Sometimes dismissed as "lesser" than opera, it is in fact a distinct genre with its own colorful history and artistic profile.

The name operetta means "little opera," a reference to the fact that these works tend to be shorter than operas, especially in their early days, when many of them were written to be performed in one act. But there's also a difference in tone. While operas may tackle grand and tragic themes, operettas are light and comedic. Typically, they focus on sentimental, romantic stories shot through with satire and humor, even silliness. Plots often involve lovers' spats, mistaken identities, and grand, glittering parties. Dance also plays a much more important role in operetta, and there is usually a fair amount of spoken dialogue interspersed with the musical numbers.

The overall impression is that of a piece of entertainment that doesn't take itself too seriously—though the music itself can be serious business. Operetta arias often require the same degree of vocal prowess and technique as their counterparts in opera, and performers typically have classical voice training. But the tunes are always hummable and often danceable, and written to be appreciated both by fans of opera and the wider public.

Renée Fleming and Nathan Gunn
as Hanna and Danilo

BRIGITTE LACOMBE/METROPOLITAN OPERA



STEP 6: Point students to the third excerpt on the reproducible handout, in which they will finally get to see Hanna and Danilo talking to each other. Explain that Danilo has fallen asleep in the antechamber to the ballroom and Hanna has found him there.

As before, have the excerpt read out loud without and with its subtext, then ask students to share their impressions of Danilo’s and Hanna’s feelings and motivations and indicate how these are revealed.

STEP 7: Ask students to reflect on everything they’ve learned about these two characters in the three passages. Have them write a short paragraph interpreting how each of these characters feels about the other, theorizing about their past, and predicting what will happen between them by the end of the operetta. Then ask for volunteers to share their notes and to point out lines in the text to justify their interpretations.

FOLLOW-UP: As homework, ask students to write a diary entry about the meeting in the ballroom in the voice of either Hanna or Danilo. They should describe the encounter, their feelings about the other person, and why they feel the need to keep their feelings hidden.

History and Social Studies

IN PREPARATION

For this activity, students will need the reproducible resources available at the back of this guide as well as the synopsis of the operetta. Students should read the synopsis either as homework or at the beginning of the lesson.

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Social Studies, History, Law, Ethics, and Political Science

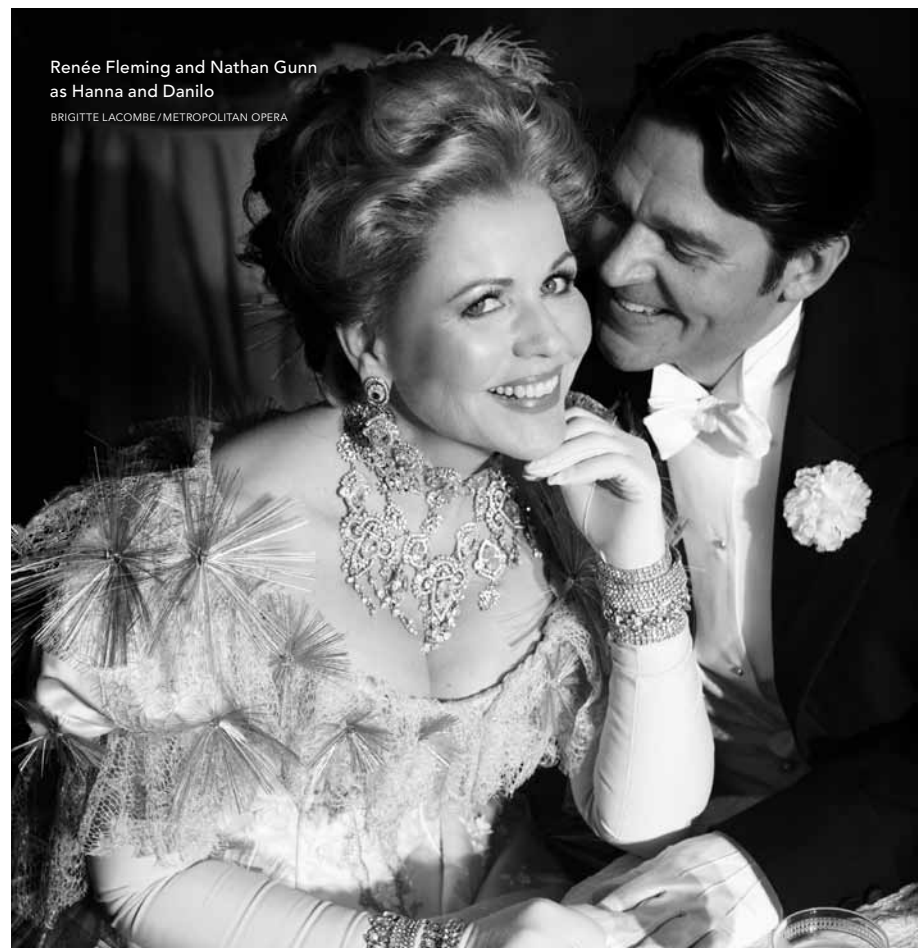
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To develop an understanding of marriage laws and customs in the past
- To compare historical and contemporary views of marriage
- To interpret facts about the past based on a reading of primary sources
- To prompt curiosity about the interpretation of *The Merry Widow* as seen in the *Live in HD* production

**Widow or Wife:
Women and Marriage in 19th-Century Europe**

The Merry Widow is a classic operetta—frothy, frivolous, and fun. But even a piece of entertainment can tell us something about the culture from which it originated. The relations between men and women, especially leading up to and within marriage, are a dominant theme in *The Merry Widow*. But how does its story reflect actual practices and debates about marriage in European society of the late 19th and early 20th century? In this activity, students will learn about married women’s rights in the 19th century and reflect on how these inform the operetta. They will:

- describe the theme of marriage in the plot of *The Merry Widow*
- read primary sources and historical accounts by women to learn about marriage in the 19th century
- compare 19th-century marriage laws and customs with modern-day practices
- write a letter from one of the historical figures under consideration to the main character of *The Merry Widow*



STEPS

By reviewing primary and secondary texts about marriage in the 19th century, students will shed light on the treatment of this theme in *The Merry Widow*. They will start by reviewing the synopsis of the operetta to ensure comprehension of the plot and the place of marriage within it. They will then break into groups to read and analyze texts about marriage and compare women's rights within marriage in the 19th century and today. Finally they will compose a letter from one of the historical figures they have read about to the character of Hanna Glawari in *The Merry Widow*, advising her on the question of whether to remarry.

STEP 1: Initiate the discussion by asking for a volunteer to summarize the action of *The Merry Widow* based on the reading of the synopsis. You may wish to list the major plot points on the board to ensure students understand the main thrust of the story.

STEP 2: Once the summary is complete, ask students to focus on the theme of marriage within the operetta. Who is the "merry widow"? (Hanna Glawari.) Why do so many men want to marry her? (Because she has inherited her husband's wealth.)

STEP 3: Explain that even though *The Merry Widow* is a light and fun piece of entertainment, it reflects the beliefs and practices of its day. Tell your students that during this lesson they'll have a chance to explore what marriage meant for women in the world of *The Merry Widow*.

STEP 4: Divide the class into groups and distribute the reproducible handout *Widow or Wife*. Each group will read and discuss one of the texts and fill out the chart provided. The three texts provide introductions to the following 19th-century figures and concepts:

- The Widow Clicquot, a successful entrepreneur in the field of champagne production

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND THE MERRY WIDOW

This activity directly supports the following Social Studies/Literacy Common Core Strands:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-12.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-12.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

The life and writings of Caroline Norton (right) shed light on the status of women in 19th-century Europe





Why Is the Widow Merry? From the Wife of Bath in Chaucer's 14th-century *Canterbury Tales* to Lehár's Hanna Glawari, the widow in European literature and art frequently appears as a carefree, powerful, and downright merry character. But why? The idea is anchored in the traditional rights and views of women, particularly in relation to marriage, throughout history.

In the 19th century and long before, the identity of European women was largely determined by their marital status. Unmarried women were typically viewed as subject to their fathers; they had no independent existence. Upon marriage, a woman became subject to her husband. In England, even into the 19th century, any property brought into a marriage by a woman became her husband's. If they separated (even if it wasn't her choice), she was typically left destitute, as under the law she had no rights to any of the marital property. European women could not buy or sell property, or engage in any financial transactions on their own behalf.

But if a woman became a widow, her story likely changed—at least if she was the widow of a well-off man. In many European societies, widows were fully independent. They often inherited their husband's riches and didn't return to their fathers' homes, so they became somewhat of an anomaly: a woman with money and the power of choice. Some took over their husbands' businesses and increased their wealth, which they continued to control. Of course this wasn't the case for all widows. Overwhelmingly, they suffered hardship when they lost their main source of support. But it's the figure of the "merry widow"—free, wealthy, powerful, and independent—that appears again and again in European arts and literature.

- Caroline Norton, an advocate for divorce and child custody reform
- The Napoleonic Code, a civil legal code with far-reaching influence both within Europe and beyond.

On the chart, the first column lists topics relating to women’s rights in marriage. In the second column, students will make notes drawing conclusions from their reading about these rights. Explain that they may or may not find information about these categories presented in their readings. In the final column, they will collect their observations about current laws and practices regarding the rights of women in marriage based on their general background knowledge.

STEP 5: Once the students have read and discussed their passages, have each group select a representative to introduce and summarize the work they read. Students will then present their findings, comparing the 19th century to the present day.

STEP 6: Conclude the activity by asking students to reflect on what they’ve discussed and to think about how these ideas may inform their viewing of *The Merry Widow*. Knowing what they know now, why do they think the widow of the operetta is referred to as “merry”? (To inform and guide this discussion, you may want to review the sidebar *Why Is the Widow Merry?*)

FOLLOW-UP As homework, have students pick one of the two historical figures that were presented in the readings—the Widow Clicquot or Caroline Norton—and ask them to imagine that one of these women has been asked to advise Hanna Glawari as to whether or not she should remarry. For their assignment, they will write a letter from the historical figure in which they make a persuasive argument for or against remarriage based on that figure’s experiences.

FUN FACT Film composer Dimitri Tiomkin prominently quotes Hanna and Danilo’s Act III waltz duet in his score for the 1943 Hitchcock thriller *Shadow of a Doubt*, which tells the story of a serial killer of widows.

*Music***IN PREPARATION**

For this activity, students will need the reproducible resources available at the back of this guide as well as the audio selections from *The Merry Widow* available online or on the accompanying CD.

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Music, Humanities, and Arts

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To learn basic conducting patterns and elements of meter
- To listen to musical examples critically and to recognize duple and triple meter
- To explore the notion of conducting as a non-verbal form of communication
- To explore aspects of dance in the genre of operetta

Conducting 101

The waltz has played an important role in Viennese culture and society since the early 19th century, and it is still danced in ballrooms across the world today. At the time of *The Merry Widow*, it had been the most popular dance form in Vienna for several decades, and audiences would have felt very familiar with the waltz tunes and rhythms in Lehár's score. Like all dances, a waltz is characterized by its rhythm and meter (or beat). This lesson will introduce students to basic concepts and elements of meter through an exploration of conducting that will bring a new level of understanding and inquiry to their operatic experience.

In the following activity, students will:

- explore the different characteristics of waltzes, marches, and other popular musical forms found in operettas
- practice the physical expression of duple and triple meter through an introduction to orchestral conducting
- learn about the vast variety of interpretive choices available to conductors and performers

STEPS:*Part 1 – Learning the Basics of Conducting*

STEP 1: Distribute copies of the *Ten Essential Musical Terms* sidebar. Have your students look it over as a pre-lesson assignment or at the beginning of the class. If your students already know most of these terms, feel free to jump right into the exercise after a quick review. It is important that students understand the terms referring to meter, especially the concept of duple meter vs. triple meter.

STEP 2: Divide the class into groups of two and distribute the *Conducting 101* handout. Have one partner hold up the diagram of the conducting pattern for the other to see, and have the other partner use a pen or pencil for a baton, holding it in their dominant hand (i.e., the hand they use to write).

STEP 2: While looking at the diagram, the “conductor” will move his or her baton in accordance with the pattern printed for each type of meter, while counting the beats of the bar out loud at the same time.

STEP 3: Once the conductor has tried each type of conducting pattern, partners should switch places.

STEP 4: Once everyone has had a chance to practice conducting along to the diagrams, have students put the charts down and quiz each other on the different patterns they have learned. Have one person conduct a pattern while the other person guesses which one it is.

Part 2 – Applying the Patterns to Music

STEP 5: Once students have a basic understanding of conducting patterns, the class is ready to try to conduct along while listening to musical excerpts from *The Merry Widow*. Using the chart on the following page to set up each excerpt, have the whole class conduct together along with the audio tracks. Review specific aspects of each excerpt noted in the chart and encourage students to pay attention to the different rhythmic gestures they encounter in the examples.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND THE MERRY WIDOW

This activity directly supports the following ELA-Literacy Common Core Strands:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.2

Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5

Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.



Teacher's Guide **APPLYING THE PATTERNS TO MUSIC**

EXCERPT	RHYTHM	ABOUT THE EXCERPT
Track 1 Excerpt from Act I, scene 10	Duple Meter (2 beats / bar)	In this duet between Valencienne and Camille, repeating groups of two beats can be heard in the bass, following the brief instrumental introduction.
Track 2 Excerpt from Hanna's Entrance	Triple Meter (3 beats / bar) Tempo (or speed) marking is "Valse," meaning waltz tempo	This brief excerpt demonstrates the lilting rhythms of the waltz. Within the groups of three beats, listen for the strong downbeat in the double bass.
Track 3 Vilja Song	Duple Meter (2 beats / bar) Tempo marking is "Allegretto," indicating a moderately fast and lively tempo; slower than "allegro."	This is the most popular musical number in <i>The Merry Widow</i> , often performed by sopranos in recitals and on recordings. The music is written in slow duple meter with two beats in every bar, but one could easily count this in groups of four as well. An additional complicating factor is that the singer often indulges in rubato at the high points of phrases, drawing out the top notes. Encourage student to listen for these moments and to try to conduct along with the rubato, just as a conductor would do in a real performance.
Track 4 Kolo Dance	Duple Meter (2 beats / bar) Tempo marking is "Vivace."	This instrumental dance number is in fast duple meter. Shortly after the excerpt begins, the strings emphasize the beat with accented chords.
Track 5 Act III Waltz Duet	Triple Meter (3 beats / bar) Tempo (or speed) marking is "Valse Moderato," meaning "moderate waltz."	Although there are several waltz excerpts in <i>The Merry Widow</i> , this is the most famous. It is not merely an orchestral dance number, but is sung by the two main characters, doubling as a duet (although in this excerpt we hear only the character of Danilo). Listen for the lilting "OOM-pa-pa" rhythmic pattern, with the second two beats played by the strings, and the triple meter will soon emerge. It may take a few measures of music for students to catch on and recognize the rhythmic groupings. As a further complication, the singer also employs rubato.

Ten Essential Musical Terms

The following list of terms provides basic vocabulary to help your students engage more deeply with the music of *The Merry Widow*.

Accent and **articulation** Accent refers to the prominence given to a note by a change in volume, duration, or attack. Articulation is a related term, meaning the amount of separation between notes, on a range from short and detached (“staccato”) to connected (“legato”). To indicate which note should receive an accent, a composer notates a symbol above the note. There are many different kinds of accents in music—for example, “marcato” indicates that a note should be “marked” or stressed; “martellato” indicates a “hammered style” both loud and short, and “tenuto” indicates that a note should be sustained for its full length.

Beat An even, recurring impulse in the flow of musical time. Listeners perceive the beat through music’s rhythmic organization. An important role of the conductor is to indicate the beats of a composition, as the correct performance of rhythm is impossible without a coordinated understanding of the beat on the part of the orchestra. When you feel compelled to tap your foot or respond physically when listening to music, you are expressing the beat.

Baton A thin, lightweight stick made of wood or synthetic material with a bulb-shaped base designed to rest comfortably in the hand, used by the conductor of an orchestra to beat time and convey his interpretation to the musicians. The design and usage of the baton as we know it today dates from the end of the 18th century.

Conductor A conductor is the person who directs the orchestra, setting the tempo, giving interpretive directions to the musicians, and generally holding all the musical elements of a performance together. In orchestral performance, the conductor typically stands on a podium in front of the players and uses a baton to communicate the meter and tempo, and his or her non-baton hand to indicate dynamics, phrasing, and articulation to the musicians. The gestures of a conductor can be likened to a non-verbal language that the musicians understand.

March A piece of music in duple meter with strong, repetitive rhythms. The march developed as an accompaniment to military movements and ceremonies. Because of its original purpose, marches contain a strong 1–2–1–2 metrical structure, corresponding to the steps of the feet, and the tempo is a walking pace. The feeling of a march is always crisp, with precise accents, and often features the snare drum. Outside of its functional use, composers have also written stylized versions of marches in art music. In this way, marches are often used in orchestral and operatic works as a way of alluding to military themes or gestures, even when soldiers are not literally marching across the stage.

Measure or **bar** A measure or bar is a group of beats organized into a regular and continually repeated unit. One measure contains the number of beats prescribed by the meter.

Rhythm Rhythm refers to the way music unfolds over time; it is a series of durations in a range from long to short. Along with pitch, it is a basic and indispensable parameter of music. Rhythm is perceived in relation to an underlying beat and within the context of a meter. Western musical notation indicates to the performer the exact duration of each note or rest.

Rubato Described as the “push and pull” in musical tempo, the term rubato refers to a type of rhythmic freedom taken by a performer. Rubato is created by speeding up and slowing down the tempo of a musical moment for expressive effect. The use of rubato may create the feeling of a singer indulging in a note for a moment or suspending time briefly before moving on. While it can be expressively beautiful, it can make it difficult to keep a steady conducting pattern, as the general flow of the beat is temporarily suspended.

Meter (DUPLÉ METER vs. TRIPLE METER) Intricately tied to rhythm, meter refers to the organization of regularly repeating beats into groups and the hierarchy of those groups of strong and weak impulses. In this gathering of beats into groups, the first beat of the series—called the “downbeat” because of its indication by a downward motion of the conductor’s hand—receives the strongest stress.

When the downbeat is followed by a single weak beat (ONE two ONE two, etc.), this pattern of two repeating beats is known as duple meter. Duple meter also encompasses groupings of four beats, in which case the first beat receives the strongest emphasis and the third beat receives a smaller stress (ONE two THREE four).

When the strong beat is followed by two weak beats (ONE two three ONE two three, etc.), the pattern is known as triple meter. Composers have used triple meter for many historical dance forms, such as the waltz.

Waltz An elegant social dance in triple meter, with a strong accent on the first beat. The dance grew out of earlier German folk dances such as the Ländler, which also featured turns and rotations. The etymology of the word “waltz” itself indicates this turning motion, which is an essential part of the waltz dance step; most European languages have a similar word describing a rotating motion. The waltz was very popular in 19th and early 20th-century Vienna and often appears in Viennese operettas.

Part 3 - Adding Another Layer of Communication

While conductors use their baton hand to communicate the beats in each bar, their non-baton hands, along with facial and bodily movements, may convey dynamics, phrasing, articulation, gesture, and other elements of musical interpretation. Each conductor develops his or her own style, and conductors' movements are by no means universal or standard.

STEP 6: In addition to communicating the wealth of information that composers provide in a musical score, conductors bear the responsibility for the overall artistic interpretation of a piece of music and for unifying the orchestra under that vision. Building on what has been achieved in rehearsals, all of this is then communicated to the musicians at the actual performance through the conductor's body.

As a class, discuss possible motions and movements that can be used by a conductor's non-baton hand to communicate different musical elements to the performers. For example, if a composer notates a crescendo in the score, how might the conductor communicate that? How might a conductor demonstrate that a musical passage should be performed legato, or with marcato accents?

On the *Conducting 101* handout, the "Expressive Conducting Chart" will help students to organize their thoughts.

If you have students who are willing to sing or play an instrument in front of the class, have them play the role of the orchestra. Choose a piece that is simple and familiar (such as "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" or "Mary Had A Little Lamb") and have the "orchestra" perform it while students are given the opportunity to conduct it. Encourage the player or players to be as literal as possible in following the conductor's directions. This activity may also be done in pairs or small groups. For your reference, the beats for "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" are notated below.

1 2 3 4 | 1 2 3 4 | 1 2 3 4 | 1 2 3 4

Twin - kle Twin - kle lit - tle star, how I won - der what you are!

STEP 7: Encourage your conducting students to think about what they are going to do with their non-baton hand. It can be surprisingly difficult to make our hands do two different things at once, each of which communicates an important aspect of the music. It may take a few attempts for students to begin to feel coordinated.

MAXIM'S

FUN FACT: Maxim's, which features prominently in *The Merry Widow*, is a famed restaurant on the Rue Royale in Paris that is still in operation. Established in the 1890s, it has been a favorite haunt of writers, artists, and celebrities throughout its history. It also appears as a setting in a number of plays and films including the musical *Gigi*, Quentin Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds*, and Woody Allen's *Midnight in Paris*. Today Maxim's is owned by the fashion design house of Pierre Cardin.

STEP 8: Once students feel more comfortable with the idea of being expressive with their conducting while maintaining a steady beat pattern, return to the waltz excerpt from Step 5. Play **Track 5** once more and have students conduct along with the recording. Knowing that the waltz is an elegant dance with smooth, flowing body movements, encourage students to incorporate elements of expressive movements that convey the gestures of the waltz.

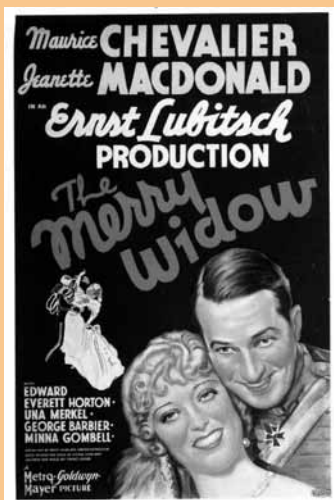
FOLLOW-UP: OBSERVING GREAT CONDUCTORS As a take-home assignment, have students look up videos on the Internet of great conductors throughout history. Have them pick one video in which they can clearly see the conductor and write a paragraph describing the conductor's movements and communication with the orchestra. Can they discern any conducting patterns? If so, can they figure out how many beats to a bar there are in the excerpt they chose? What kind of movements does the conductor use to interpret the music? What do the conductor's gestures, body movements, and facial expressions tell them about the character of the music? Remind students that great conductors often develop an idiosyncratic conducting style, so they are bound to discover a variety of different approaches in their research.



The Wicked Waltz Today, the waltz seems like a formal, dignified dance. But when it first swept Europe in the late 18th century, it was considered shocking and risqué. In the court dances that preceded it—the minuet, the polonaise, and the quadrille—dance partners kept a healthy distance from one another and moved at a stately pace. Not so with the waltz, in which man and woman dance in an embrace and whirl about the floor at a dizzying speed.

The waltz developed out of earlier raucous peasant dances that many a straitlaced aristocrat might have disapproved of. In fact, some dance historians see its rise as part of a larger movement away from class-conscious societies to a more egalitarian view. This idea fit the growing interest in Romanticism in the 19th century, which focused on the experience of the individual and of all people, not just the wealthy and privileged few. The waltz was also easy to learn and master, unlike more intricate court dances, and so was perfectly suited to a changing kind of society.

Despite or perhaps because of this, the waltz became a sensation. Its lilting triple meter was both hypnotic and sensual, creating a sense that the dancers were being whisked away by the music. The name of the dance itself reflects this mood: it is derived from the German word “walzen,” which means to revolve, turn, roll, or wander. Even as late as 1919, journalist H. L. Mencken described the waltz as “magnificently improper” and noted that “there is something about a waltz that is irresistible.”



FUN FACT *The Merry Widow* has been translated into at least 25 languages. It was also adapted as a ballet (using several of Lehár's numbers in orchestral arrangements) and has been filmed multiple times, including a 1924 silent movie; a black-and-white version from 1934, directed by Ernst Lubitsch and starring Maurice Chevalier and Jeannette MacDonald; and a 1952 version with Lana Turner in the title role.

It may be helpful to point out to students that videos of orchestral performances tend to cut back and forth between the orchestra and the conductor, as the camera zooms in on specific instruments during solos. But the most animated musical moments usually feature the conductor, and there will be many shots of the conductor for your students to analyze. Encourage students to be as specific in their musical vocabulary as they are able. To guide their research, a sampling of conductors and compositions is provided below.

James Levine: The overture to Bizet's *Carmen*

Carlos Kleiber: The overture to Johann Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*

Valery Gergiev: Stravinsky, *The Firebird*

Gustavo Dudamel: Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, first movement

Lorin Maazel: Dvořák's Symphony No. 9, first movement

Yannick Nézet-Séguin: Tchaikovsky, *Romeo and Juliet*, Fantasy Overture

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

Watching and listening to a performance is a unique experience which 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.

For *The Merry Widow*, the first activity sheet, *Personal Possessions*, prompts students to consider the meaning and importance of various characters' personal props and costume pieces. The goal of this activity is to encourage students to notice personal props and to think of them as a purposeful aspect of design and as one more way to discern character.

The second basic activity sheet is called *My Highs and 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 critique: 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. Either activity can provide the basis for class discussion after transmission. On the next page, you'll find an activity created specifically for follow-up after the *Live in HD* transmission.

IN PREPARATION

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

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND THE MERRY WIDOW

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3

Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.3

Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

Hanna and Danilo: Happily Ever After?

IN PREPARATION

This activity requires that students have undertaken the history/social studies classroom activity and attended the HD transmission of *The Merry Widow*.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To review and synthesize students' understanding of *The Merry Widow*
- To discuss students' overall experience of watching *The Merry Widow*
- To examine the operetta's relationship to ideas about marriage in the 19th century and today
- To think critically about the plot of *The Merry Widow*

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND THE MERRY WIDOW

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.

Students will enjoy starting the class with an open discussion of the Met performance. What did they like? What didn't they? 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 *The Merry Widow* experts.

As discussed in the history/social studies classroom activity, ideas about marriage were very different at the time *The Merry Widow* was first produced than they are today. Your students have already had the opportunity to explore some women's real lives and their experiences of marriage and widowhood. They've also had a chance to review some of the rulings of the Napoleonic Code, which limited or prohibited women's rights to own real estate, retain their own earnings, bring legal proceedings, write their own wills, and retain custody of their children.

Now that they've seen the operetta in its entirety, ask them to recall what they've learned and how the operetta reflects the societal norms of its age. Some of the questions you might want them to consider are:

- How does Hanna Glawari's situation reflect European norms and laws about marriage?
- Why did Hanna marry her first husband? Why didn't she marry Danilo instead?
- Why do you think Valencienne is married to Zeta?
- Why is Valencienne so concerned about being a "respectable" wife?
- Could Zeta really divorce Valencienne because he suspects her of infidelity?

Finally, point out that *The Merry Widow* is a light comedy and that throughout the action, we know that Hanna and Danilo are meant to be together. Ask students whether they think that the operetta has a happy ending. While discussing their answer, they should consider the following:

- What does Hanna bring to her marriage?
- What does Danilo bring to the marriage?
- What kind of husband will Danilo likely be?
- Do you think it will be a happy marriage?
- What might happen if it is unhappy?

Finally, ask students to think about the elements of the production and how they contribute to the sense of a happy ending. How does the music affect their perception of this match? What about dance?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: MUSIC

Conducting 101

- 1 ACT I: Valencienne and Camille. Excerpt from Act I, scene 10.
- 2 ACT I: Hanna. Excerpt from Hanna's entrance at the ball.
- 3 ACT II: Hanna. Vilja Song
- 4 ACT II: Orchestral Interlude. Kolo Dance.
- 5 ACT III: Danilo and Hanna. Excerpt from Act III Waltz Duet.

Excerpts taken from the
Metropolitan Opera
broadcast of
March 4, 2000

HANNA

Frederica von Stade

VALENCIENNE

Emily Pulley

DANILO

Plácido Domingo

CAMILLE DE ROSILLON

Paul Groves

BARON MIRKO ZETA

John Del Carlo

Conducted by
Asher Fisch

Metropolitan Opera
Orchestra and Chorus

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

He Said/She Said: Introducing Hanna and Danilo

EXCERPT ONE: From Act 1, Scene 5 of *The Merry Widow*

The scene takes place at a grand ball being held in Paris by the embassy of a small Eastern European country, Pontevedro. The guest of honor, the beautiful and rich young widow Hanna Glawari, has just arrived. Baron Mirko Zeta, the ambassador of Pontevedro, is eager to match Hanna with one of his countrymen, Count Danilovitch, who will be arriving shortly.

ZETA: There is only one of our colony who's retained the wild free spirit of our homeland, exactly as you have.

Zeta's subtext:

HANNA: And who would that be?

Hanna's subtext:

ZETA: Well, Count Danilovitch. Danilo.

Zeta's subtext:

HANNA: Is Danilo here?

Hanna's subtext:

ZETA: He's absolutely... He's just...

Zeta's subtext:

HANNA: (*Seriously*) And you're associating the Count with me?

Hanna's subtext:

ZETA: Well... no... obviously... not exactly...

Zeta's subtext:

HANNA: Well, it's true the Count and I were maybe two of a kind... once...but nothing came of it, and that's that.

Hanna's subtext:

ZETA: Nothing came of what?

Zeta's subtext:

HANNA: Nothing.

Hanna's subtext:

PRASKOWIA: (*aside*) Doesn't sound like nothing to me....!

Praskowia's subtext:

What do you suspect from this scene?

THE MET: LIVE IN HD
THE MERRY WIDOW

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

He Said/She Said: Introducing Hanna and Danilo (CONTINUED)

EXCERPT TWO: From Act 1, Scene 9 of *The Merry Widow*

This scene occurs a little bit later, just after the arrival of Danilo, Count Danilovitch, at the ball. He is greeted by Baron Zeta's assistant Njegus, who is the only one in the room when he arrives.

DANILO: Njegus, old bean, here I am! No welcoming committee?

Danilo's subtext:

NJEGUS: I haven't yet been able to inform His Excellency. He was deep in conversation with Madame Glawari.

Njegus's subtext:

DANILO: Oh. Oh. You don't mean Hanna Glawari?

Danilo's subtext:

NJEGUS: Yes.

Njegus's subtext:

DANILO: She's here?

Danilo's subtext:

NJEGUS: Yes.

Njegus's subtext:

DANILO: Well, in that case I'm going back to chez Maxim. *(upbraiding himself)* Oh, come on Danilo, grow up! None of that matters anymore. It's all blood under the bridge. Very well, Njegus. Tell me, what perilous mission does the Fatherland have for me?

Danilo's subtext:

NJEGUS: The Baron said something about earning money.

Njegus's subtext:

DANILO: Really? Spending is more my thing.

Danilo's subtext:

NJEGUS: For the fatherland...

Njegus's subtext:

DANILO: Ah, well, in that case....

Danilo's subtext:

NJEGUS: Very good. Shall I announce you? *(He makes to leave)*

Njegus's subtext:

DANILO: Absolutely. *(He staggers suddenly)* Actually Njegus, maybe not quite yet. I don't know what it is, but there's still something whirling round inside my head... *(sitting)*...

Danilo's subtext:

NJEGUS: That'd be the champagne.

Njegus's subtext:

What do you suspect from this scene?

THE MET: LIVE IN HD
THE MERRY WIDOW

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

He Said/She Said: Introducing Hanna and Danilo (CONTINUED)

EXCERPT THREE: From Act 1, Scene 9 of *The Merry Widow*

After his conversation with Njegus, Danilo lies down to take short nap in the antechamber to the ballroom. Hanna later enters and discovers him there.

HANNA: Thought so. Danilo. I never forget a snore.

Hanna's subtext:

DANILO: Hursshh! For God's sake. Hanna? Good morning, darling. Sleep well? (*Collects himself*) I mean well, well! Good evening Madame. It is Madame Glawari now isn't it?

Danilo's subtext:

HANNA: It is, yes.

Hanna's subtext:

DANILO: But you can still call me Danilo if you want.

Danilo's subtext:

HANNA: Why would I want to call you anything at all? Sorry to disturb you. Have a good snore.

Hanna's subtext:

DANILO: No, I'm wide awake now.

Danilo's subtext:

HANNA: So you are.

Hanna's subtext:

DANILO: So... anyway...

Danilo's subtext:

HANNA: Anyway...

Hanna's subtext:

DANILO: Here we are.

Danilo's subtext:

HANNA: So it would seem. (*Silence*)

Hanna's subtext:

DANILO: So, you're in Paris for what?

Danilo's subtext:

HANNA: Oh, I don't know. Fun? I thought I might even move here. Settle down.

Hanna's subtext:

DANILO: You mean, get married again? I would have thought once was enough for you.

Danilo's subtext:

HANNA: And too much for you. You wouldn't even do it once.

Hanna's subtext:

DANILO: That wasn't my fault.

Danilo's subtext:

HANNA: Of course not. How could anything be your fault?

Hanna's subtext:

DANILO: You know it was my uncle.

Danilo's subtext:

HANNA: Yes. Who thought I was too common for the up-and-coming young officer.

Hanna's subtext:

DANILO: But now you're not so common any more.

Danilo's subtext:

HANNA: And you're not so much up-and-coming as been-and-gone.

Hanna's subtext:

DANILO: But you must tell me all about your marriage. What first attracted you to that millionaire septuagenarian?

Danilo's subtext:

THE MET: LIVE IN HD
THE MERRY WIDOW

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

He Said/She Said: Introducing Hanna and Danilo (CONTINUED)

HANNA: Well for one thing, he wanted me.

Hanna's subtext:

DANILO: Touché. (*Silence*)

Danilo's subtext:

DANILO: I'm sorry. I know your father had debts. God knows I can sympathize.

Danilo's subtext:

HANNA: Why I married is no one's business. Least of all yours. And now that I'm a rich widow, now that the farm girl owns the farm, even your uncle might consider me a catch.

Hanna's subtext:

DANILO: Are you implying that your millions would in any way... How little you know me.

Danilo's subtext:

HANNA: I thought I knew all sorts of things. I'm wiser now. I've learned that when men say "I love you" they mean "I love your money."

Hanna's subtext:

DANILO: That's why you'll never hear me saying...That thing.

Danilo's subtext:

HANNA: What thing?

Hanna's subtext:

DANILO: You know... "I love you."

Danilo's subtext:

HANNA: Do you?

Hanna's subtext:

DANILO: No, that's what I'll never say.

Danilo's subtext:

HANNA: Never?

Hanna's subtext:

DANILO: Never ever!

Danilo's subtext:

HANNA: So, a declaration of war?

Hanna's subtext:

DANILO: If you wish.

Danilo's subtext:

(Hanna laughs in his face coquettishly, and deliberately drops a glove.)

DANILO: Aha, the gauntlet?

Danilo's subtext:

HANNA: That's right. See you on the battlefield.

Hanna's subtext:

(Danilo bows, exits. Hanna nods, exits.)

What do you suspect from this scene?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Widow or Wife: Women and Marriage in 19th-Century Europe

	19TH CENTURY	TODAY
Property ownership		
Rights to earnings		
Divorce		
Right to conduct business		
Legal rights		
Custody of children		

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Widow or Wife: Women and Marriage in 19th-Century Europe (CONTINUED)

The Widow Clicquot

Barbe-Nicole Ponsardin was a Frenchwoman born in 1777 who married wine-and-textile merchant François Clicquot at the age of 21. Her husband died just six years later, leaving Barbe-Nicole a widow—or “veuve” in French.

A single mother, the Widow Clicquot might have sought a second marriage to support herself and her daughter. But instead, she looked to other models. She knew of other successful widows in the wine industry. There was Dame Geoffrey, the widow of a local tax collector, who supplied wine to the famous Moët family. And she probably learned about Widow Germon, a successful wine broker in the late 18th century who bottled her own sparkling wines. Other widow-wine suppliers included Widow Robert and Widow Blanc.

Using these models and others like them, the Widow Clicquot committed herself to her husband’s failing company. She was in a unique situation. In French culture of her time, widows had the social freedoms of married women and the financial freedom enjoyed by men. While under the Napoleonic Code, a married woman did not have a legal identity and could not enter into contracts, a widow could make her own decisions.

Thanks to these rights, as well as connections through her upper-class family and her father-in-law’s financial support, she had the freedom, influence, and funding she needed. As a new business owner, she gave her business a new name, Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin and Company, and always signed her name as Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin, uniting her husband’s name with her own.

The task ahead of her was not easy. The Napoleonic Wars were raging across Europe, making it difficult to ship her premiere product, champagne. But she persisted, and managed to get through a blockade to Russia. Her wine would dominate the Russian market in champagne for the next 50 years.

She also innovated a new method for clarifying champagne—removing unpleasant sediments that were a byproduct of the production process—so that her wine, unlike that of her competitors, was crystal clear.

By the time she was 40 years old, the Widow Clicquot was one of the wealthiest and most successful entrepreneurs—male or female—in Europe. She also has the distinction of being one of the first businesswomen to lead an international company. She remained a major figure in the wine industry until her death in 1866 at age 88 and served as a model for another famous “Widow of Champagne,” Louise Pommery.



CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Widow or Wife: Women and Marriage in 19th-Century Europe (CONTINUED)

Caroline Norton

In 1836, English socialite and writer Caroline Norton left home to visit her sister. When she returned, she found her husband, George Chapple Norton, had sent her children to stay with his cousin. He had also ordered his servants not to let her back in the house.

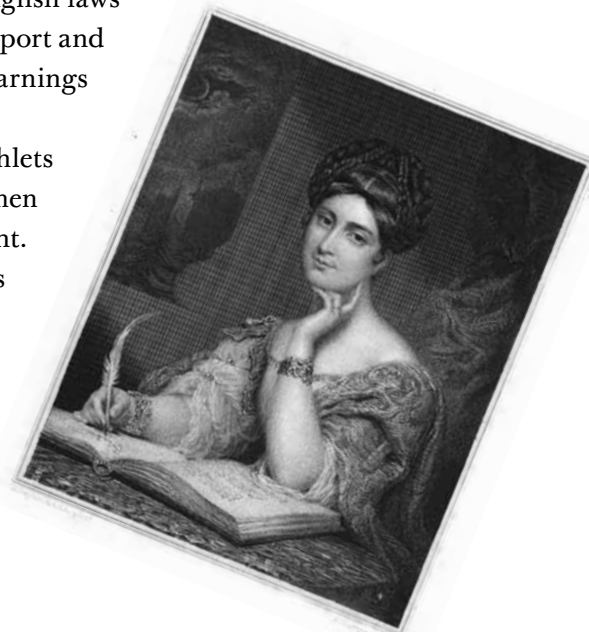
According to English Common Law, he was well within his rights. As her husband, he was empowered to keep her from her children, as well as to lay claim to everything she left behind, including her personal correspondence, clothing, and jewelry.

Soon after, he sued her for divorce, claiming she had been unfaithful, which was the only legal grounds for divorce in England at that time. Under the law, Caroline was not permitted to testify or even to attend the trial; women had no legal identity apart from their husbands. Regardless, there was no evidence of her guilt, and her husband lost his suit.

Caroline Norton had no desire to remain married and so consulted with lawyers about initiating her own divorce proceedings. She learned that under English law, only a husband could initiate divorce proceedings. Since Norton had lost his case, there was no way for them to divorce. She also learned that her husband had the right to demand sole custody of their children and bar her access to them.

In response, Caroline Norton lobbied for legal reform. She wrote political pamphlets advocating changes in the custody law. Eventually, a new law was passed that allowed mothers to appeal for custody of children under seven and access to children under 16. But despite her victory, she still wasn't able to see her children. Her husband took them to Scotland, where English laws didn't apply. He also refused to provide any financial support and remained entitled to much of her income, including her earnings from her writing.

Caroline Norton continued to write political pamphlets publicizing the inequities of the law and arguing that women should be considered legal entities in their own right. Her case ultimately contributed to changes in the laws governing women's rights in marriage in England.



CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Widow or Wife: Women and Marriage in 19th-Century Europe (CONTINUED)

Napoleonic Code, France – 1800–1820

The Napoleonic Code, also known as the French Civil Code, was a set of laws instituted in post-revolutionary France. As Napoleon expanded his control across Europe, he also spread the influence of this set of laws. The laws and practices regarding women's rights in marriage in countries from Italy to Poland reflected the Napoleonic Code for more than 150 years.

CHAPTER VI. Of the respective Rights and Duties of Married Persons.

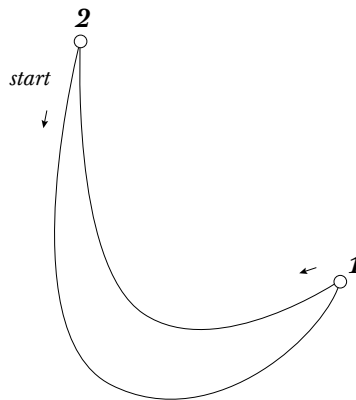
- Married persons owe to each other fidelity, succor, assistance.
- The husband owes protection to his wife, the wife obedience to her husband.
- The wife is obliged to live with her husband, and to follow him to every place where he may judge it convenient to reside: the husband is obliged to receive her, and to furnish her with everything necessary for the wants of life, according to his means and station.
- The wife cannot plead in her own name, without the authority of her husband, even though she should be a public trader, or non-communicant, or separate in property.
- The authority of the husband is not necessary when the wife is prosecuted in a criminal matter, or relating to police.
- A wife, although non-communicant or separate in property, cannot give, alienate, pledge, or acquire by free or chargeable title, without the concurrence of her husband in the act, or his consent in writing.
- If the husband refuses to authorize his wife to plead in her own name, the judge may give her authority.
- If the husband refuses to authorize his wife to pass an act, the wife may cause her husband to be cited directly before the court of first instance, of the circle of their common domicile, which may give or refuse its authority, after the husband shall have been heard, or duly summoned before the chamber of council.
- The wife, if she is a public trader, may, without the authority of her husband, bind herself for that which concerns her trade; and in the said case she binds also her husband, if there is a community between them. She is not reputed a public trader, if she merely retails goods in her husband's trade, but only when she carries on a separate business.
- When the husband is subjected to a condemnation, carrying with it an afflictive or infamous punishment, although it may have been pronounced merely for contumacy, the wife, though of age, cannot, during the continuance of such punishment, plead in her own name or contract, until after authority given by the judge, who may in such case give his authority, without hearing or summoning the husband.
- If the husband is interdicted or absent, the judge, on cognizance of the cause, may authorize his wife either to plead in her own name or to contract.
- Every general authority, though stipulated by the contract of marriage, is invalid, except as respects the administration of the property of the wife.
- If the husband is a minor, the authority of the judge is necessary for his wife, either to appear in court, or to contract.
- A nullity, founded on defect of authority, can only be opposed by the wife, by the husband, or by their heirs.
- The wife may make a will without the authority of her husband.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

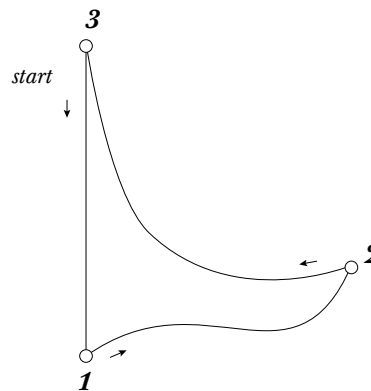
Conducting 101

There is a series of standard conducting patterns all conductors learn and use in order to communicate rhythmic structure and tempo to the musicians. In this way, all of the musicians are able to stay together and come in at the right time without any verbal cues. The conducting pattern changes according to how many beats are in a bar of music. The diagrams below show you the conducting patterns for music with 2, 3, and 4 beats in a bar.

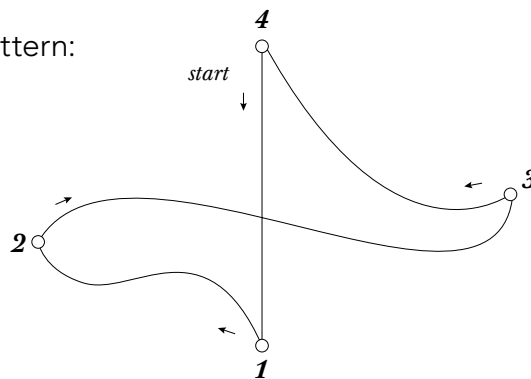
Two-Beat Conducting Pattern:



Three-Beat Conducting Pattern:



Four-Beat Conducting Pattern:



CLASSROOM ACTIVITY
Conducting 101

Expressive Conducting Chart (CONTINUED)

In the first column of the chart below, write down different elements of musical articulation or expression that composers may embed in their music. In the second column, brainstorm different bodily motions that conductors can use to communicate the musical idea to the ensemble. For example, if a composer notates a crescendo in the score, how might the conductor communicate that? How might a conductor demonstrate that a musical passage should be performed legato, or with marcato accents?

ELEMENT OF MUSICAL EXPRESSION:	DESCRIPTION OF YOUR CONDUCTING MOTION:

At the Met: *Personal Possessions*

Personal props—objects carried by singers or worn as part of their costumes—can tell the audience a lot about a character’s personality and status. Can you spot a personal prop of one of the leading singers (for example, a saber worn by a gentleman at the embassy ball, or the fan carried by Valencienne)? Draw a picture of your favorite personal prop in the space below and then write a sentence or two describing what you think the object reveals about the character who carries it.

The Merry Widow: My Highs & Lows

JANUARY 17, 2015

CONDUCTED BY ANDREW DAVIS

REVIEWED BY _____

THE STARS	STAR POWER	MY COMMENTS
THOMAS ALLEN AS BARON MIRKO ZETA	*****	
KELLI O'HARA AS VALENCIENNE	*****	
ALEK SHRADER AS CAMILLE DE ROSILLON	*****	
RENÉE FLEMING AS HANNA GLAWARI	*****	
NATHAN GUNN AS DANILO	*****	

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN/STAGING
A PARTY AT THE PONTEVEDRIAN EMBASSY MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
VALENCIENNE AND CAMILLE HAVE A RENDEZ-VOUS MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
HANNA GLAWARI MAKES AN IMPRESSION MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
HANNA AND DANILO MEET MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
THE "LADIES' CHOICE" DANCE MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
PONTEVEDRIAN FOLK DANCES AND SONGS MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
VALENCIENNE AND CAMILLE RETREAT TO THE PAVILION MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
HANNA SAVES THE DAY MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
THE GRISETTES AT CHEZ MAXIM MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
HANNA AND DANILO WALTZ MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
THE HAPPY COUPLES REUNITE MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5

