

The Metropolitan Opera

HD LIVE

Educator's Guide



Composite photo: Nick Heavican/Metropolitan Opera; Christine Schäfer image: Anne Deniau

Alice Coote and Christine Schäfer star as Hansel and Gretel

Hansel and Gretel
January 1, 2008

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THE WORK

HANSEL AND GRETEL

Composed by
Engelbert Humperdinck

Libretto by Adelheid Wette

Based on a folk tale collected by the
Brothers Grimm

First performed on December 23, 1893,
in Weimar, Germany

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THE MET PRODUCTION

Vladimir Jurowski, Conductor

Richard Jones, Production

English version by
David Pountney

Starring:
Alice Coote (Hansel)
Christine Schäfer (Gretel)
Philip Langridge (The Witch)
Rosalind Plowright (Gertrude)
Alan Held (Peter)

Hansel and Gretel at The Metropolitan Opera

Hansel and Gretel, the opera, takes a path somewhat different from the Grimm brothers' fairy tale. Created by the real-life brother and sister Engelbert Humperdinck and Adelheid Wette, the work infuses a familiar story with both spirituality and grim realism. (By the way, this Engelbert Humperdinck is not the easy-listening heartthrob of the late 1960s, but a late 19th-century composer, a disciple of the hugely influential composer, Richard Wagner.)

For all its dark magic and witchcraft, *Hansel and Gretel* is fundamentally about the pleasures of food and the terrors of hunger as experienced by the famous fairy-tale simblings. The Metropolitan Opera production, conceived and directed by Richard Jones, enlarges upon this theme. Set design, staging, costumes, and even the curtains that fall between acts express the centrality of food, hunger, and gluttony to the text and score.

It's not only Humperdinck's catchy tunes or the universal themes that makes this Met production of *Hansel and Gretel* particularly accessible to families and young people — native English speakers will understand every word, since this quintessentially German opera is performed in English translation. Familiarity with the plot, characters, and some of the music can enrich your community's *Live in HD* experience. This guide offers a variety of experiences that are designed for classroom use that will also help generate anticipation, heighten enjoyment, and promote understanding for all audiences.

The Story of *Hansel and Gretel*

Hansel and Gretel have been left at home alone by their parents. When Hansel complains to his sister that he is hungry,

Gretel shows him some milk that a neighbor has given them for the family’s supper. To entertain them, she begins to teach her brother how to dance. Suddenly their mother returns. She scolds the children for playing and wants to know why they have gotten so little work done. When she accidentally spills the milk, she angrily chases the children out into the woods to pick strawberries.

Hansel and Gretel’s father returns home drunk. He is pleased because he was able to make a considerable amount of money that day. He brings out the food he has bought and asks his wife where the children have gone. She explains that she has sent them into the woods. Horrified, he tells her that the children are in danger because of the Witch who lives there. They rush off into the woods to look for them.

Act II finds Gretel singing while Hansel picks strawberries. When they hear a cuckoo calling, they imitate the bird’s call, eating strawberries all the while, and soon there are none left. In the sudden silence of the woods, the children realize that they have lost their way and grow frightened. The Sandman comes to bring them sleep by sprinkling sand on their eyes. Hansel and Gretel say their evening prayer. In a dream, they see 14 angels protecting them.

As Act III begins, the Dew Fairy appears to awaken the children. Gretel wakes Hansel, and the two find themselves in front of a gingerbread house. They do not notice the Witch, who decides to fatten Hansel up so she can eat him. She immobilizes him with a spell. The oven is hot, and the Witch is overjoyed at the thought of her banquet. Gretel has overheard the Witch’s plan, and she breaks the spell on Hansel. When the Witch asks her to look in the oven, Gretel pretends she doesn’t know how: the Witch must show her. When she does, peering into the oven, the children shove her inside and shut the door. The oven explodes, and the many gingerbread children the Witch had enchanted come back to life. Hansel and Gretel’s parents appear and find their children. All express gratitude for their salvation.

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THE GUIDE INCLUDES FOUR TYPES OF ACTIVITIES

- Two full-length activities are designed to support your ongoing curriculum.
- Five “Coming Attractions”— opportunities to focus briefly on excerpts of music from *Hansel and Gretel* to cultivate familiarity with the work.
- Activities for students to enjoy during the Metropolitan Opera HD transmission, calling attention to special aspects of this production. Reproducible activity sheets can be found on the last two pages of this guide.
- A post-transmission activity, integrating the *Live in HD* experience into students’ wider views of the performing arts.



Set and costume designer John Macfarlane created extraordinary works of art as the basis for the look of the Met’s new production of *Hansel and Gretel*. His inventive sketches and designs are featured throughout this guide.



Hansel and Gretel: On the Stage and in the World

The activities in this guide look at several aspects of *Hansel and Gretel*:

- the stark social realism, which adds heft to this fairy tale
- the composer's use of leitmotifs, or distinct musical themes, to guide listening and enhance understanding
- the opera as a work of art, involving a wide range of creative decisions by the composer, the librettist, and the artists of the Metropolitan Opera

The guide seeks not only to acquaint students with *Hansel and Gretel*, but also to encourage them to think more broadly about opera, the performing arts, and creative decision-making. Little prior knowledge is required for the activities. If you'd like to present *Hansel and Gretel* in a more formal, traditional way, please take advantage of the introductory activity in the companion publication, *Opera: the Basics*.

Food for Thought

A CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

When adolescents hear about an opera called *Hansel and Gretel*, they may assume it's a story for preschoolers. Nothing could be further from the truth. In this activity, students will hear how key dramatic moments in Humperdinck's work turn on food, on hunger, and on gluttony. They will:

- create a "food graph," a visual representation of the food theme in the opera
- figure out how to express their views on a contemporary social issue in retelling a familiar tale
- acquaint themselves with the plot and some of the music in *Hansel and Gretel* in advance of the Met's HD transmission.

STEPS In this activity, students will create a graph relating the characters' concerns about food to the more straightforward plot of two children lost in the woods, captured by a witch, whom they overcome thanks to their own ingenuity. Each student will evaluate for him/herself the relative importance of various moments in the opera, so the graphs may be different from one another. The point of the exercise is not for students to come to agreement about meanings in the opera, but to hone their individual critical approaches and to recognize the rewards of reflecting more closely on a work of art or literature.

Step 1: Discuss the opera in general terms. Ask students what they think when they hear that the opera is called *Hansel and Gretel*. What possible story elements come to mind? What do they expect the tone of the opera to be? Who do they think might be the logical audience for such an opera? List their responses on your chalkboard.

Step 2: Distribute the synopsis on pages 23-24. After your students have read it, ask why Hansel and Gretel went off into the woods. Point out that Adelheid Wette (pronounced AH-del-hide VET-teh), who wrote the libretto, left no doubt that they'd

IN PREPARATION

For this activity, students will need

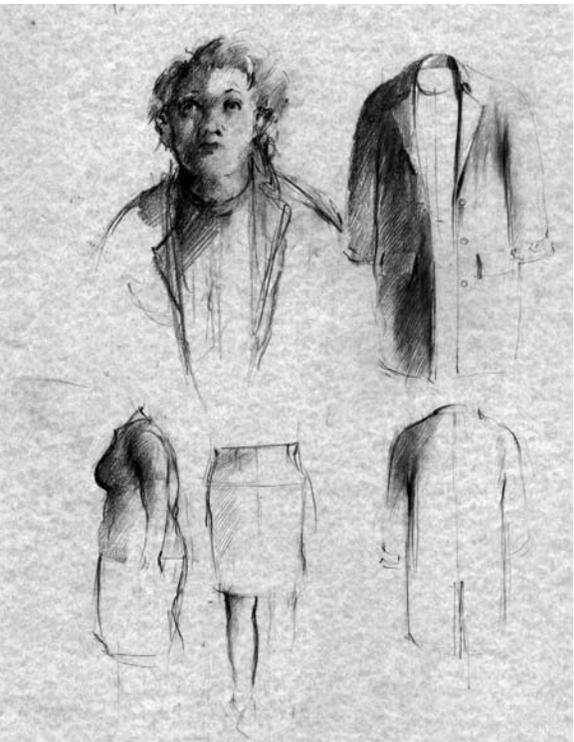
- copies of the resource on pages 23-24, a synopsis of *Hansel and Gretel* designed with special attention to the mentions of food in the libretto
- copies of the resource on page 26, the *Hansel and Gretel* Food Graph form
- rulers
- colored pencils, pens or thin-line markers
- You will also need the accompanying recording of *Hansel and Gretel*.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Language Arts, Social Studies, and Mathematics (graphic display of information)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To explore the way creators express social concerns through works of fiction
- To introduce the Humperdinck/Wette opera as a distinct interpretation of the Hansel and Gretel story
- To prompt curiosity about the Met's approach to this opera



been sent out to look for food. For each of the following cases, ask students what they hear in the music. Does the music express what's happening in the scene?

Play **Selection A** [Disc 1: Track 2:0:28-1:28]. This takes place at the beginning of the opera. What do students hear in Hansel's voice? Does the music support his complaint that he and Gretel are very hungry?

Play **Selection B** [Disc 1: Track 3:0:39-1:42]. Hansel learns that their mother has obtained some milk to make rice pudding. What do you hear in his voice?

Play **Selection C** [Disc 1: Track 6:0:00-1:03]. Their mother accidentally breaks the milk jug, spilling all the milk.

Step 3: By now students should have a sense of the thrust of the lesson. Ask students to make a list on a piece of paper, A through J. For A, B, and C, have them rate each of the three selections they've heard on the following five-point "food scale":

The singer(s) is/are:

- 2 Starving!
- 1 Hungry
- 0 Satisfied
- 1 Full
- 2 Totally stuffed!

Then play each of the following selections. Students will rate each as they hear it, jotting its score down on their A through J list.

Selection D [Disc 1: Track 7:4:14-4:50]. Hansel and Gretel's father announces that he's come home with a lot of food.

Selection E [Disc 1: Track 11:1:37-1:48]. Hansel and Gretel find berries in the woods.

Selection F [Disc 1: Track 12:1:37-2:37]. Hansel spills the berries.

Selection G [Disc 1: Track 16:0:00-1:55]. They dream of a banquet.

Selection H [Disc 2: Track 4: 0:34-2:26]. They come upon the Witch's house.

Selection I [Disc 2: Track 10: 0:00-0:46]. The Witch force-feeds Hansel.

Selection J [Disc 2: Track 13: 0:35-1:10]. The end: The Witch has been baked into gingerbread.

Step 4: Pass out copies of the *Hansel and Gretel* Food Graph form.

- A) For each of the 10 musical selections, A through J, find the point corresponding to both the event (according to the horizontal axis) and to the student's rating on the "food scale" (according to the vertical axis). Mark the point on the form.
- B) Connect the points to create a "*Hansel and Gretel* Food Graph."

Step 5: Now it's time to interpret the graph. How would students describe the "arc of hunger" in *Hansel and Gretel*? How do their graphs compare to one another? Why do they think this issue might have been important to the composer and librettist?

FOLLOW-UP: The "*Hansel and Gretel* Food Graph" indicates how important the issue of hunger, and by extension poverty, is in this opera. For homework, have students pick a societal concern of their own, then pick an appropriate fairy tale or other well-known story, then write a short version of that fairy tale expressing their feelings about the social-policy issue.



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IN PREPARATION

For this activity, you will need the accompanying recording of *Hansel and Gretel*.

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CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Music and Language Arts

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To introduce the operatic technique of leitmotifs
- To explore the technical construction of Humperdinck’s version of the Hansel and Gretel story
- To support focused listening during the Met *Live in HD* transmission

Making “Leit” of a Serious Concern A CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

In a common version of *Hansel and Gretel*, the two children leave a trail of bread crumbs as they walk through the woods, so that they will be able to find their way home—but they’re foiled when birds eat all the bread crumbs. There’s no such trail in the opera, but Humperdinck leaves “bread crumbs” of his own in the form of leitmotifs—recurring bits of music associated with particular characters or moods. In this activity, students will explore the use of leitmotifs in *Hansel and Gretel*. They will:

- identify leitmotifs within longer listening selections
- consider how such patterns bring added dimension to a work of art
- interpret combinations of leitmotifs from *Hansel and Gretel*
- become familiar with some of the musical elements of the opera in advance of the *Live in HD* transmission.

STEPS This activity consists of several exercises in careful listening. First, students will be introduced to a set of leitmotifs, hearing how each is used in two or three different settings. (Note that some of these selections are very, very brief—as short as 5 or 6 seconds.) Next, they will listen to a selection in which several motifs come together, and discuss Humperdinck’s intention. Then, on their own, they will unravel a second selection incorporating a number of the same leitmotifs, with attention to similarities, differences, and the effect it might have on an opera audience.

Step 1: Identifying leitmotifs

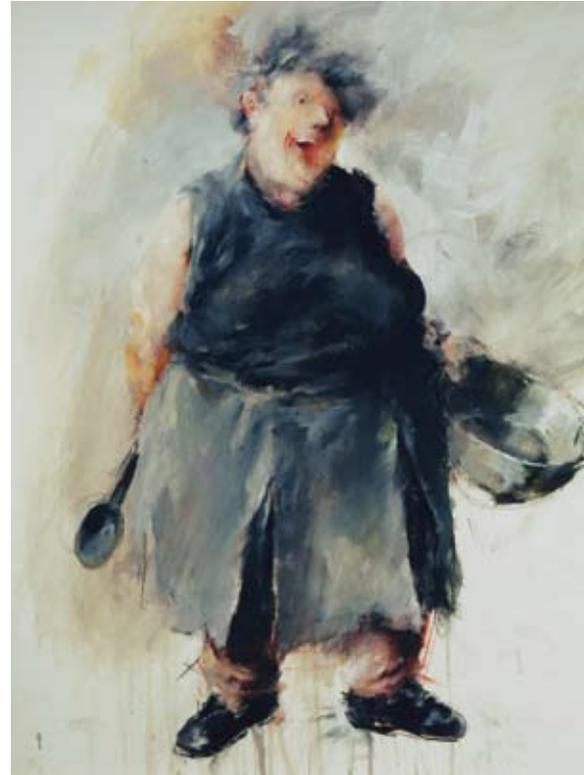
- A)** A motif evoking the Witch’s broomstick is introduced by Humperdinck long before the Witch herself takes the stage. Toward the end of Act I, after hearing how Hansel and Gretel have set out for the woods, their father lays out the basic facts about the Witch and her attacks on stray children. His melody is as creepy as the story he tells, underscored by ominous percussion.

The first hint comes in **Selection K** [Disc 1: Track 8:1:25–3:01], at the very beginning of the piece: three innocuous woodwind notes, bum-BUMMMM-bump, at 1:25. At 1:32, timpani pound out the same three tones, over and over now, fading back to shocked silence. The father, until now a raucous, convivial drunk, produces a mournful, sympathetic recitative. Then at 2:22, from deep in the string section, those same three notes creep forward. These comprise the first part of the broomstick motif. They recur again and again throughout *Hansel and Gretel*.

At 2:29, as the mother asks “But what’s that to do with a broomstick,” the second half of the motif slides up, as sinuous as it is dark, until, with the announcement that witches ride on broomsticks at 2:48, it explodes.

- B)** Strangely, Humperdinck’s audience would already have heard a melody similar to the second half of the broomstick motif. Earlier in Act I, while Hansel and Gretel are alone in their house, Gretel teaches Hansel a dance. Listen to **Selection K** at 2:29-2:35 once more, then play **Selection L** [Disc 1: Track 4:0:03-0:14], “Little brother, dance with me.” This disturbingly similar tune begins a dance that builds and builds until the moment their mother arrives home, angry to find them ignoring their chores. The key differs from that of the broomstick theme. The tone is merry, not spooky. But the resemblance is unmistakable. Ask your students what they imagine Humperdinck might have intended in connecting the theme of a carefree, work-shirking dance with the whoosh of a witch’s broom.

By the middle of Act III, Hansel and Gretel are in the clutches of the Witch. As she prepares to cook them, she sings a boisterous tune about the pleasures of riding her broomstick. The melody here is new. But have students pay close attention to a brief bit of music—three spare notes—that the orchestra plays between verses, then in counter-





melody, from the middle of **Selection M** [Disc 2: Track 9]. It's the first half of that broomstick motif again.

The broomstick motif is heard at Track 9: 0:17-0:21 and again, over and over in subtle countermelody, at Track 9, between 0:27 and 1:32. These provide an excellent example of the use of a leitmotif. With only three notes, Humperdinck reminds us that the Witch is no jovial hostess, nor are her broomstick trips joy rides. Three notes, slipped into this entirely new context, pack plenty of emotional information.

Step 2: By now, your students have

- been introduced to several leitmotifs, noticed how two motifs can be connected, creating a new level of meaning, and
- heard how the brief recurrence of a leitmotif can affect the emotional tenor of a different song.

It's time to listen as Humperdinck deploys his leitmotifs, changes their speed, power, and orchestration, and so weaves a fabric of meaning without a single word from the libretto. Play **Selection N** [Disc 1: Track 9: 0:00–4:15], the orchestral prelude to Act II, which Humperdinck called "The Witch's Ride."

This piece leads Hansel and Gretel from their bleak but familiar home into the mysterious Haunted Wood. It starts cold with the bone-rattling first three notes of the broomstick motif, followed by the second part, that odd reminder of Gretel's care-free dance. About 16 seconds in, woodwinds take over. They transform the motif into a sweet, seductive minuet, foreshadowing the Witch's wiles. We're lulled for half a minute, until a tambourine figuratively crashes the illusion. Violins, castanets, oboes and brass bring the theme through a flashing series of changes. A sense of urgency grows. A false calm descends. At last, at 3:14, the horns sound a clarion with those three familiar tones: Could a search party be near? Might the children be saved? But the call, still those same three witchy notes, fades into distant echoes as Act II begins, with Hansel and Gretel deep in the Haunted Wood, utterly lost.

Step 3: That close listen to “The Witch’s Ride” introduced your students to the language of leitmotifs. Now invite them to “translate” some music on their own. In **Selection O** [Disc 2: Track 13: 0:00-0:35], Hansel and Gretel have defeated the Witch. Their parents have arrived in her gingerbread house. As your students listen to the joyful song of reunion, have them listen for leitmotifs—transformed here yet again. How many can they find? Why do they think Humperdinck includes them here? What might he mean by these motifs this time?

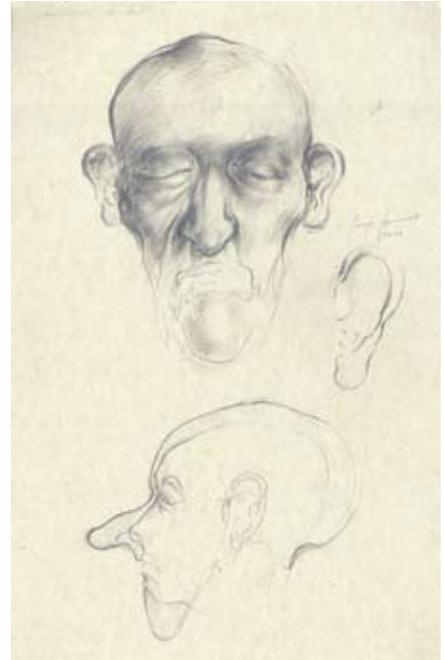
[To help guide your own listening, the three-note broomstick theme comes in at 0:22; the second half of the theme/Gretel’s dance can be discerned on close listening as a countermelody, at 0:28.]

FOLLOW-UP: Engelbert Humperdinck was neither the first nor last composer to enhance the storytelling in his music by using leitmotifs. Your students probably know several of the instantly recognized motifs created by the contemporary American composer John Williams.

Have them go to www.johnwilliamscomposer.com. On the right side of the web page, click on the picture of the CD called “John Williams – Greatest Hits 1969-1999.” There, among a long list of sound bites, they can listen to:

- Track 1 The *Star Wars* theme
- Track 10 The theme signaling the approach of Darth Vader
- Track 2 The theme that plays when *E.T., the Extraterrestrial*, flies a bicycle into the sky
- Track 3 The grand theme of *Superman*, in his big screen incarnations
- Track 6 The scary theme that signals the approach of the shark in *Jaws*.

After listening to these and/or other well-known themes, each student should identify one more familiar theme and bring it to class. Students might choose to bring a recording, to play the theme on an instrument, or to sing it. Then have your students identify each others’ themes—providing further evidence of the power of musical leitmotifs.



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COMING ATTRACTIONS

Coming Attractions are brief opportunities to

- help students make sense of opera
- whet their interest in upcoming Metropolitan Opera HD transmissions.

Each focuses on music from the accompanying CD. They direct students' attention toward highlights and details that can organize and illuminate their viewing of the transmission.

The descriptions to the right offer detailed listening pointers, but these "mini-lessons" will in practice take up no more than a few minutes of class time. They're designed to help you bring opera into your classroom while minimizing interruption of your ongoing curricular sequence. Feel free to use as many as you like.

Trousers & Skirts

COMING ATTRACTION

The role of Hansel in Humperdinck's opera falls in a peculiar category. It's what the opera world calls a trouser role, or "pants role"—a male character traditionally sung by a woman. In this production, the role of the Witch is sung by a man. For fun, we call it a "skirt role." (Note: The Witch happens to be sung by a woman on the accompanying CD.)

Obviously, young people will be surprised, at the very least, when they learn of this casting. So it's worth taking a few minutes to explore the reasons for casting choices.

First, play **Selection P** [Disc 2: Track 6: 0:22-2:15]. Your students will hear two voices. One begins the selection with a laugh, then sings most of what follows. The other interrupts with comments and reactions. This is the first appearance of the Witch, in dialogue with Hansel.

Ask students to describe the two voices. If they can tell right off that both are women, write those two observations on the board, indicating that you'll come back to them.

Now introduce the class to the six main categories of operatic voices:

- sopranos**—women's voices in the highest register
- mezzo-sopranos** (pronounced "METZ-oh")—midrange women's voices
- contraltos**—women's voices in the lowest register
- tenors**—the highest of men's voices
- baritones**—midrange men's voices
- basses**—the deepest men's voices

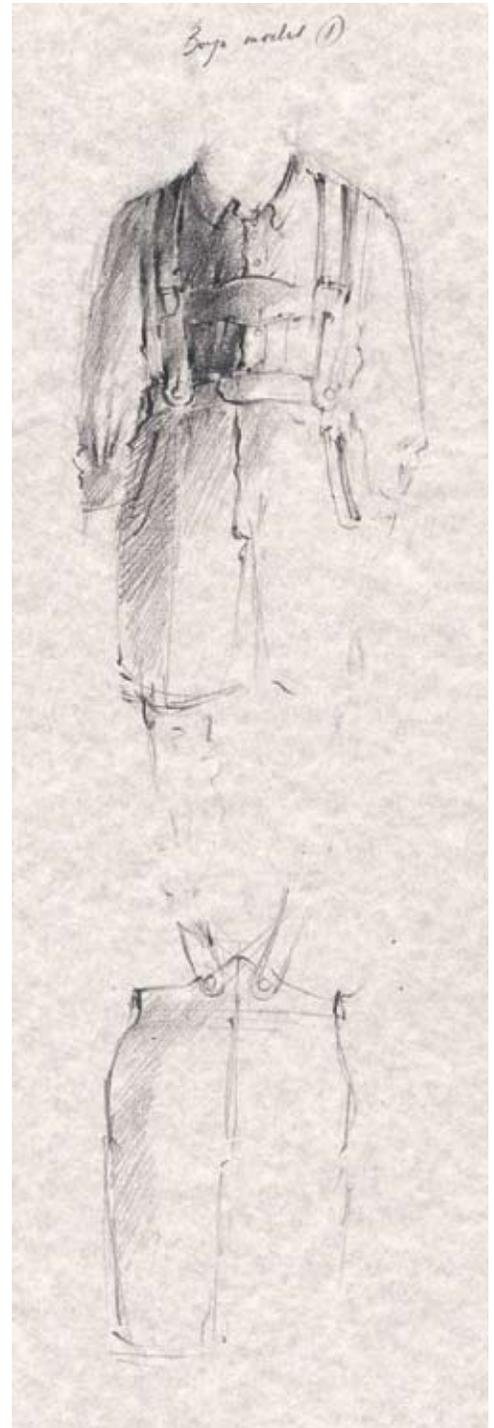
In which category would they place each of the voices in **Selection P**? Hansel's part goes fairly high; the Witch goes moderately low. In fact, in this, as in many productions, both are mezzo-sopranos.

You might need to repeat the point quite plainly: Hansel is generally played by a woman. It's called a "trouser role." And

it's not all that unusual in opera. (Be sure students understand why it's called a trouser role!)

Ask why composers might write trouser roles. Most real boys' voices are too weak to be heard on an opera stage. To achieve the right contrasting sound, boy roles are written for contraltos or—as here—for mezzo-sopranos.

In the upcoming Metropolitan Opera: *Live in HD* production, the Witch will be sung by tenor Philip Langridge! Though this may be a more unusual casting choice than the reverse, it's possible because the range of a tenor can match that of a mezzo-soprano (or in some cases a soprano!). You may want to ask students to pay attention to the quality of the Witch's singing voice and to see if they can determine if the role is being sung by a woman or a man.





Reasons for Prayer COMING ATTRACTION

One of the best-known leitmotifs in *Hansel and Gretel* is not associated with a particular character. Nor is it used to advance the plot. Its purpose is different: This theme casts a spiritual glow on a story that's alternately fantastic and grim.

Selection Q [Disc 1: Track 15:0:00–2:27] offers an excellent opportunity to hear the theme in full. Here, this rising melody serves as Hansel and Gretel's bedtime prayer—a calm, serious, and hopeful moment at the end of a harrowing day.

A few minutes later, the children are fast asleep, guarded by angels and, in the Met production, dreaming of a great feast. With **Selection R** [Disc 1: Track 16:1:54–4:54] the prayer motif comes back in triumphant brass, then passes through a series of variations right to the end of Act II. What do your students make of the theme in this new, instrumental version? What might be going through the minds of the sleeping children?

To understand just how important prayer is to Humperdinck's conception of *Hansel and Gretel*, play **Selection S** [Disc 1: Track 1:0:08-0:40]. These are the very first notes of the opera: a stately rendition of the prayer leitmotif. Its very dignity belies the excitement to come. Ask your students why they think the composer might have made these choices: to begin with prayer and to offer the prayer with this particular, rich orchestration.

Humperdinck not only starts but just about ends his opera in prayer. Play **Selection T** [Disc 1:Track 13: 1;13-1:58]. Here the singer is the father, shortly after finding his children safe and the Witch dead. He's supported by a swell of strings, and before long he's joined by his wife, his children and the gingerbread children they've saved. What do your students hear in this variation? Gratitude? Relief? How does this piece retrospectively affect the tone of the opera as a whole?

Finally, play **Selection U**, the continuation of the finale [Disc 2: Track 13: 1:58]. If your students listen very carefully, they will hear a familiar sound in a background counter melody: It's the

Witch's broomstick motif! What might Humperdinck be saying by weaving this devilish “tailpiece” into his prayerful finale?

Rise and Fall, Sleepyheads COMING ATTRACTION

Humperdinck and Wette introduce two characters in the middle of the opera—one toward the end of Act II and the other at the start of Act III: the Sandman and the Dew Fairy. Their roles are, respectively, to put Hansel and Gretel to sleep and to wake them up. Have your students listen to **Selections V** [Disc 1: Track 14:1:23–2:25], the Sandman’s song, and **W**, the Dew Fairy’s song, introduced at Disc 2: Track 2: 0:20-0:51. Even without words, could they tell which is which? How?

The songs of the Sandman and Dew Fairy provide a fine example of a connection between pitch and purpose in operatic melody. The falling tones of the Sandman lull the children gently to sleep. The lilting rise of the Dew Fairy’s tune nudge them awake on a bright new day. Both parts are performed by sopranos, but Humperdinck’s music takes them in very different directions.





Tales of the Mouse COMING ATTRACTION

As the third act of *Hansel and Gretel* begins, a single horn, then a flute, then instruments throughout the orchestra repeat a taunting line of music, seven notes reminiscent of a schoolyard jeer. Hear it at **Selection X** [Disc 2: Track 1: 0:00-2:00]. Ask your students what they make of this piece. It comes in the overture to the act: what do they think it might foreshadow?

We next hear this line as the children take their first bite of the Witch's gingerbread house. It's now sung by an invisible character. Hansel and Gretel are surprised. Ask students whether **Selection Y** [Disc 2: Track 5: 0:00-0:10] changes their thoughts on the tune.

The same voice sings the line again in **Selection Z** [Disc 2: Track 5: 1:41-1:49]. But now, if your students were watching the opera, they'd see that it's sung by the Witch. She sings it several more times during the next ten minutes or so: in **Selection AA** [Disc 2: Track 6: 2:15-2:32], as she offers sweets to Hansel, then in **Selection BA** [Disc 2: Track 6: 3:40-3:54] reminding the children how welcome they are in her home. As she gets down to business preparing Hansel for the oven, the Witch sings a rollicking broomstick-ride song (**Selection M**, in the activity *Humperdinck's Bread Crumbs*). But immediately afterward, as in the overture, first one horn, then one flute, respond with the mouse theme, **Selection CA** (Disc 2: Track 10: 0:00-0:16—then in variations between 0:46 and 1:46). Are these warnings? Are they reminders that the Witch—though amusing—is dangerous?

The full mouse theme recurs once more. Play **Selection DA** [Disc 2: Track 11: 1:13-1:42]. In this orchestral waltz, the melody has a light, fanciful air. What do your students hear? What might just have happened? On stage, it's the children's victory waltz. They've just stuffed the Witch in her oven. *Humperdinck* has transformed his leitmotif for the occasion. Once a threat, it's now a celebration. But how? Did he change the melody? The rhythm? The instrumentation? Would an audience have the same response to this bit of music if they hadn't heard its darker incarnation earlier in the opera? Your students may enjoy discussing the changes which give these seven notes whole new meaning in **Selection DA**.

Father's Tricky Little Tune COMING ATTRACTION

Hansel and Gretel's father is a minor character in the opera. His name is never even spoken. Yet the music with which he's associated is used several times to set the emotional level of critical scenes. It's another example of a leitmotif.

We first hear the father's carefree "ra-la-la-la" late in Act I. At first, it's unaccompanied and far off, then the orchestra offers its own dignified setting, **Selection EA** (Disc 1: Track 7:0:10-1:10). There's irony here. On stage, Hansel and Gretel's mother, having sent the children away, has just sung a lament about her rotten kids and her inability to feed the family. The words of the father's song, too, are words of complaint: "Curse the poor, how much we suffer—work all day and get no supper—in your pocket a burning hole, in your stomach a gnawing mole—hunger eats away your soul!" But what do your students hear in the melody? Despair? Contentment? Resolve?

The first part of **Selection FA** [Disc 1: Track 7:1:58-2:36] continues the same song. Have your students listen to the words here: "Who cares if he's a chef or not? You can't cook much with an empty pot! ... That's why I'm a drunken sot." Is that what they hear? Is all this just a drunkard's folly? How would his wife feel, hearing this, after all she's just been through? Listen to her response at 2:22 "Oh, hell!" she sings. "What is that bawling? For goodness sake, that caterwauling that's made me awake!"

This back-and-forth continues for several minutes, studded by the father's "Ra-la-la-la!" When he asks what's for dinner, she responds, "This menu is a simple matter, it's masterpiece an empty platter." Listen to the beginning of **Selection GA** [Disc 1: Track 7:3:52-4:14] as she continues, 3:52-4:00, "empty cup, empty plate, and my purse in the selfsame state." Do your students hear anything familiar here? What do they learn about the wife's attitude toward her husband from her use—her parody—of his "ra-la-la" melody?

In the latter part of the selection, using that same melody, the father's tone changes. So do his words: "Cheer up, mother, salvation's here, and you've every cause to cheer." We can imagine the wife's sardonic laughter.





Now listen to the theme's recurrence at **Selection HA** [Disc 1: Track 7:4:50-5:12]. What can explain this joyful duet? The lyric offers only this: "Funny how the thought of food puts you in a better mood." But his wife has been thinking about food for some time! What further information do your students hear in the music? Is there more than the *thought* of food here? Just moments before, the mother learned that the father has come home with sausages, butter, vegetables, and more! Is this still a drunkard's song, or a song of legitimate joy?

Jump to the first several seconds of **Selection IA** [Disc 2: Track 12: 3:48-4:00]. The opera is almost over. Hansel and Gretel have killed the Witch and freed the gingerbread children. Now, as their parents arrive, this is their father's song. Do your students hear joy? Why not? Do the parents know yet that their children are safe? What does the father's song, just a snippet but the same song, convey now? Continue the selection (at Track 13: 0:00-0:35)—a rising tide of celebration. Certainly, that celebration can be heard in the second part of the selection. But what do your students make of Humperdinck's contrast? Does the grief conveyed in the first part of the selection affect our emotions in the second part? Would the grief in the first part have been as powerful if we weren't familiar with the same melody as a happy air? What use might composers make of such contrasts in communicating with an audience through music?

Supporting Students during the Metropolitan Opera: *Live in HD* Transmission

Thanks to print and audio recording, much about opera can be enjoyed long before a performance. But performance itself remains an incomparable embarrassment of riches—sound and color, pageantry and technology, drama, skill, and craft. *At the Met* activities (See page 27) are designed to help students tease apart different aspects of the experience, consider creative choices that have been made, and sharpen their own critical faculties.

Each activity incorporates a reproducible activity sheet. Students bring the activity sheet to the transmission for filling out during intermission and/or after the final curtain. The activities direct attention to characteristics of the production that might otherwise go unnoticed. Ratings matrices invite students to express their critique, a time-tested prompt for careful thinking.

The basic activity sheet is called “My Highs & Lows.” Meant to be collected, opera by opera, over the course of the season, this sheet points students toward a consistent set of objects of observation. Its purposes are not only to help students articulate and express their opinions, but to support comparison and contrast, enriching understanding of the art form as a whole.

For *Hansel and Gretel*, the second activity sheet is a kind of in-your-seat scavenger hunt for food references in the *Met Live in HD* transmission. The activity *Food for Thought* explored food references in the opera’s music and libretto. This Metropolitan Opera production carries the theme into sets, costumes, even staging. Students can use the activity sheet to guide their *Hansel and Gretel* Food Hunt. Keep track of as many food references as possible.

The activity reproducibles can be found on the last two pages of this guide. Either activity can provide the basis for class discussion after the transmission. On the next page, you’ll find an additional activity created specifically for post-transmission follow-up.



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IN PREPARATION:

Your students will need paper and pencils plus a variety of art materials to do this activity.

If it's appropriate to your curriculum, students might be interested in researching the social and economic conditions of Germany in the late-19th century as part of their preparation for this activity.

If your class did the activity *Food For Thought*, it might help for them to have their *Hansel and Gretel* food graphs at hand.

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CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Social Studies, Language Arts, Visual Art.

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To review and consolidate students' experiences with *Hansel and Gretel*
- To explore the relationship between art and awareness of social concerns
- To investigate differences between contemporary tools of communications and those in use in Hump-erdinck's day
- To consider the roles advertising can play in contemporary society, as well as characteristics of effective communication through advertising

Home from the Opera *Hansel & "Health Food"*

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 integration of food imagery into the Met production—in short, to see themselves as *Hansel and Gretel* experts.

[If your students did the activity *Food for Thought*, you may want to introduce a brief review at this point. Students may want to look at their "*Hansel and Gretel* Food Graphs" as well as their *At the Met* activity sheets.]

There can be no doubt by now that hunger, gluttony, waste—a range of issues involving food—are important to *Hansel and Gretel* and, evidently, to its composer and librettist. Why might that have been? (This, again, may be a review for students who did the prior food-themed activity.) What might life have been like in late 19th-century Germany to suggest that audiences would find this theme relevant? Why could opera have been a good way to make a statement about these concerns? Where would an artist go today if he or she wanted to raise consciousness about an important social issue?

Here's a thought: What if Hansel and Gretel were hired to be "celebrity spokespeople" for a public-service advertising campaign about a food issue today? What issue might it be? The persistence of hunger is one possibility. Another is the need to have a balanced diet. Perhaps they could promote healthy eating—they certainly had experience with the perils of too many sweets!

Your students' task in this activity is to identify a social issue involving food, to develop an advertising campaign aimed at addressing that issue—and to feature Hansel and Gretel. They

can develop slogans, print ads, posters, radio or TV scripts. They might even decide to shoot video commercials.

Students should decide what audience they are addressing with their campaigns—what ages, what backgrounds? What will get this audience’s attention? How can they best reach the audience? Where would the elements of their campaigns appear? On TV? Online? In magazines? At cinemas?

The objective is for students to use all their creativity and skills to take Humperdinck’s version of *Hansel and Gretel* to the next level—a level that might not have existed in the 1890s, but is central to our world today.

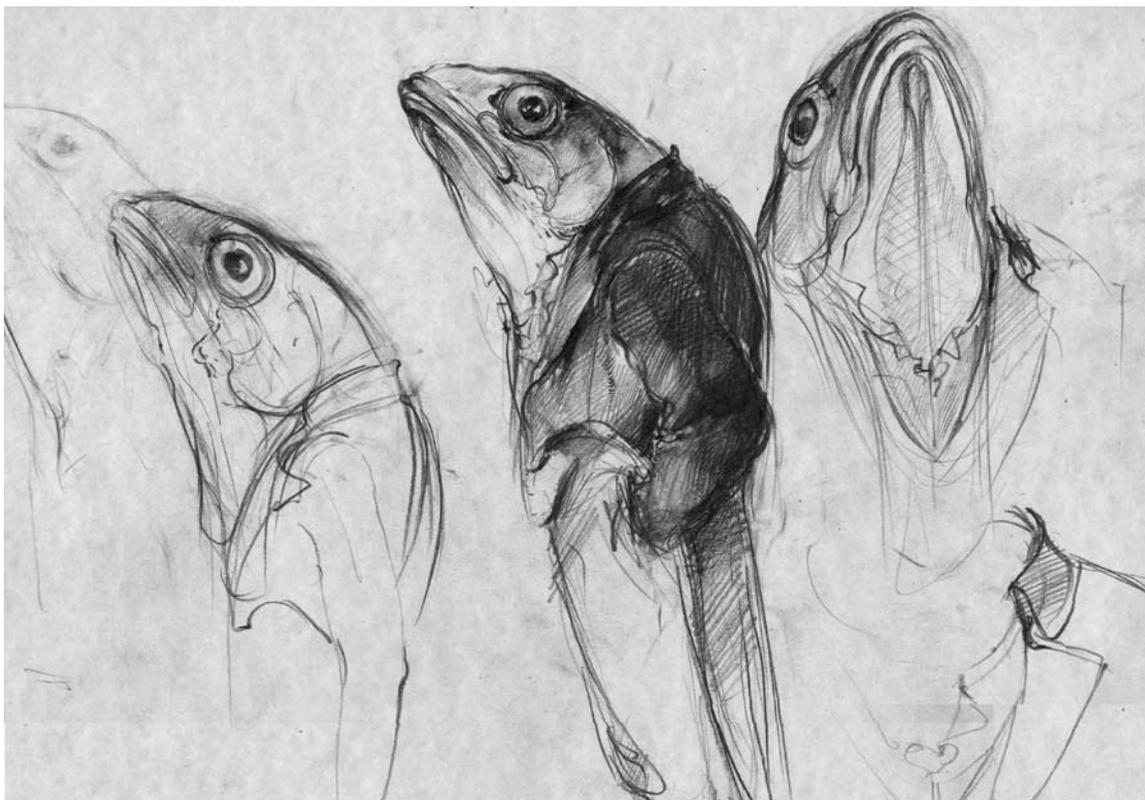


Student Resources

On the next four pages, you'll find reproducibles of activity sheets for *Hansel and Gretel*. Feel free to photocopy these and distribute them in your classroom or to the community audience at your *Live in HD* venue.

The first two pages offer resources for the full-length activity *Food For Thought*.

Pages 27 and 28 are activity sheets to be used at the *Live in HD* transmission. Page 27 is designed to support your classroom work. Page 28, "My Highs & Lows," is a collectible prompting closer attention to specific aspects of the opera. You may want to provide copies of "My Highs & Lows" not only to students, but to friends, family, and other members of the community attending the transmission.



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THE METROPOLITAN OPERA: *LIVE IN HD*
HANSEL AND GRETEL

Synopsis for Activity
Food for Thought

Hansel and Gretel in Brief

Act I:

Hansel and Gretel have been left at home alone by their parents. When Hansel complains to his sister that he is hungry, Gretel shows him some milk that a neighbor has given them for the family's supper. To entertain them, she begins to teach her brother how to dance. Suddenly their mother returns. She scolds the children for playing and wants to know why they have gotten so little work done. When she accidentally spills the milk, she angrily chases the children out into the woods to pick strawberries.

Hansel and Gretel's father returns home drunk. He is pleased because he was able to make a considerable amount of money that day. He brings out the food he has bought and asks his wife where the children have gone. She explains that she has sent them into the woods. Horrified, he tells her that the children are in danger because of the witch who lives there. They rush off into the woods to look for them.

Act II:

Gretel is singing while Hansel picks strawberries. When they hear a cuckoo calling, they imitate the bird's call, eating strawberries all the while, and soon there are none left. In the sudden silence of the woods, the children realize that they have lost their way and grow frightened. The Sandman comes to bring them sleep by sprinkling sand on their eyes. Hansel and Gretel say their evening prayer. In a dream, they see fourteen angels protecting them.

Act III:

As the third act begins, the Dew Fairy appears to awaken the children. Gretel wakes Hansel, and the two find themselves in front of a gingerbread house. They do not notice the Witch, who decides to fatten Hansel up so she can eat him. She immobilizes him with a spell. The oven is hot, and the Witch is overjoyed at the thought of her banquet. Gretel has overheard the Witch's plan, and she breaks the spell on Hansel. When the Witch asks her to look in the oven, Gretel pretends she doesn't know how: the Witch must show her. When she does, peering into the oven, the children shove her inside and shut the door. The oven explodes, and the many gingerbread children the Witch had enchanted come back to life. Hansel and Gretel's parents appear and find their children. All express gratitude for their salvation.

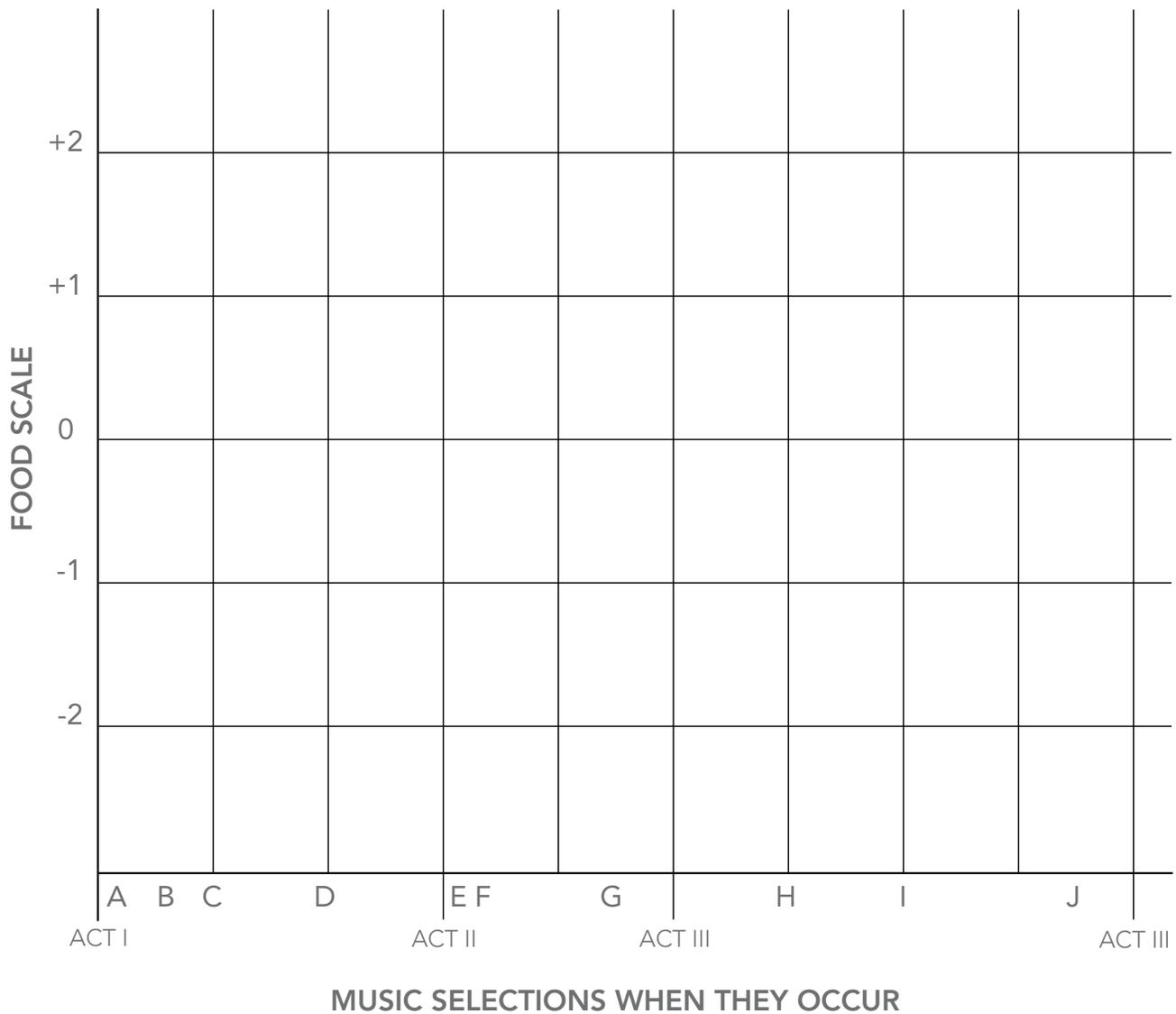




THE METROPOLITAN OPERA: LIVE IN HD
HANSEL AND GRETEL

Resource Page for Activity
Food for Thought

The *Hansel and Gretel* Food Graph



At the Met: Hunting for Food

THE METROPOLITAN OPERA: *LIVE IN HD*
HANSEL AND GRETEL, JANUARY 1, 2008

NAME _____

CLASS _____

TEACHER _____

Humperdinck and Wette sprinkled food references throughout *Hansel and Gretel*. Now it's your turn to sniff out the food imagery in this Met *Live in HD* transmission. Happy hunting!

FOOD IN THE SET DESIGN

ACT I _____

ACT II _____

ACT III _____

Between-Act "Show Curtains"

FOOD IN (OR ON!) COSTUMES

ACT I _____

ACT II _____

ACT II DREAM SEQUENCE _____

ACT III _____

FOOD IN THE ACTION (EATING, OR...)

ACT I _____

ACT II _____

ACT III _____

Hansel and Gretel: My Highs & Lows

THE METROPOLITAN OPERA: LIVE IN HD

JANUARY 1, 2008

REVIEWED BY _____

THE STARS	STAR POWER	MY COMMENTS
ALICE COOTE AS HANSEL	*****	
CHRISTINE SCHÄFER AS GRETEL	*****	
PHILIP LANGRIDGE AS THE WITCH	*****	
ROSALIND PLOWRIGHT AS GERTRUDE	*****	
ALAN HELD AS PETER	*****	

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	SINGING	SET DESIGN/STAGING
HANSEL AND GRETEL'S SONGS	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
MOTHER BREAKS THE MILK JUG	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
FATHER'S SONG OF THE WITCH	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
HANSEL AND GRETEL HUNT BERRIES	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
THE SANDMAN	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
THE DREAM SEQUENCE	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
THE DEW FAIRY'S SONG	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
FINDING THE WITCH'S HOUSE	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
FORCE-FEEDING HANSEL	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
GRETEL SAVES THE DAY	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
THE CELEBRATION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
FINALE	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			