



2018-19 SEASON  
*for*  
Young People

Performance Guidebook

*Tales of Hoffmann*  
Nashville Opera



*presented by*



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PERFORMING  
ARTS CENTER

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For 135 years Regions has been proud to be a part of the Middle Tennessee community, growing and thriving as our region has. From the opening of our doors on September 1, 1883, we have committed to this community and our customers.

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## Thank you, teachers,

for giving your students this wonderful experience. You are creating memories of a lifetime, and Regions is proud to be able to help make this opportunity possible.



**2018-19 SEASON  
for  
Young People**

## Dear Teachers~

We are so pleased to be able to partner with Nashville Opera to bring students to the invited dress rehearsal of *Tales of Hoffmann*.

We thank Nashville Opera for the use of their extensive study guide for adults. It will help you prepare your students for the performance with a synopsis, opera background, and musical information. Additional details and short explorations are included for you to share with students.

Please look particularly at the opera rehearsal description, which will help students understand the special factors present in an invited dress rehearsal.

Enjoy!

TPAC *Education*

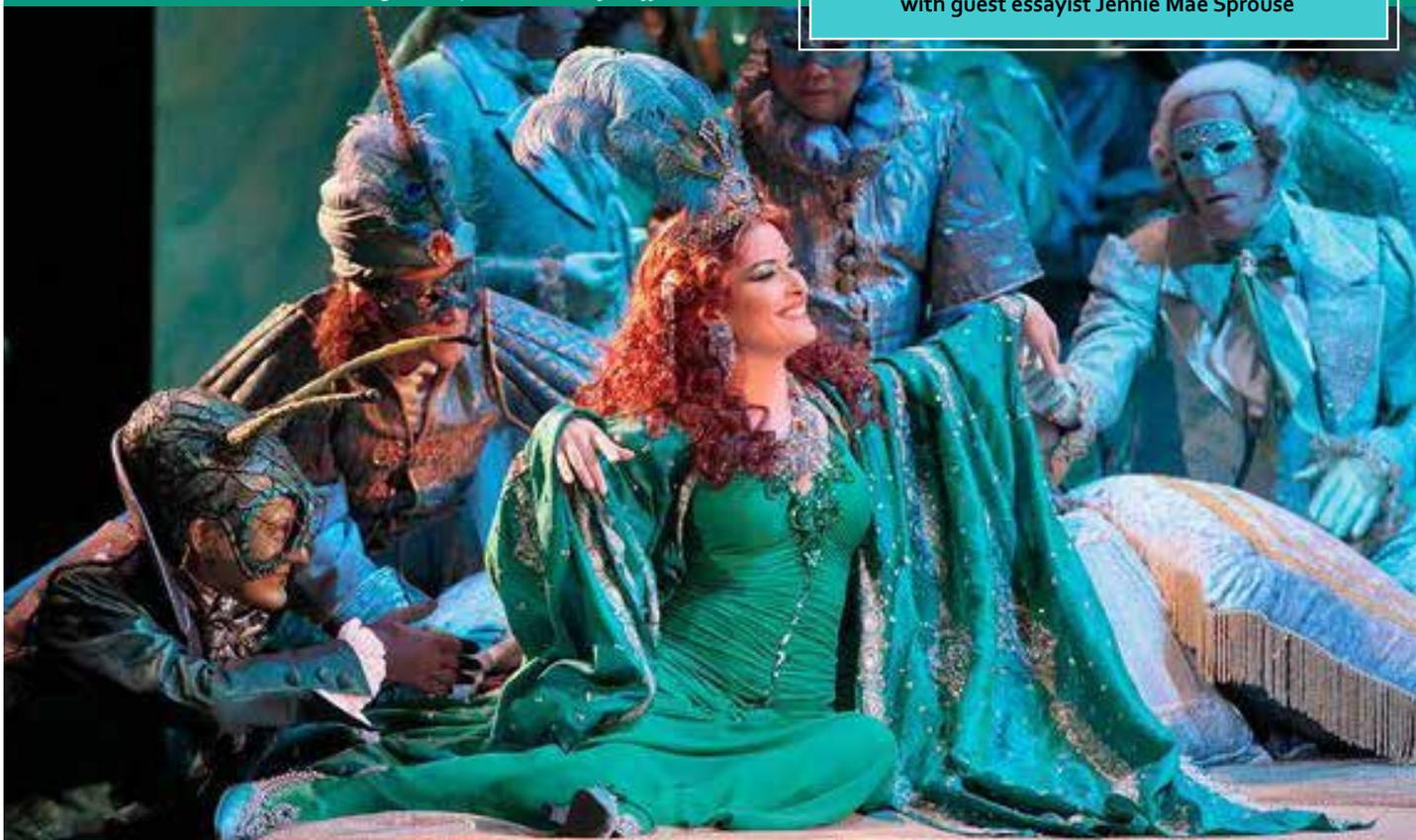
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**Nashville Opera Guidebook written by Anna Young and Cara Schneider**

**TPAC Guidebook compiled by Lattie Brown with guest essayist Jennie Mae Sprouse**

Kate Aldrich, as Giulietta in Los Angeles Opera's *Tales of Hoffmann*



# Opera Dress Rehearsal

Most final dress rehearsals are almost exactly like a performance. The director will stop the action if needed, but it is exceedingly rare and generally only for a technical malfunction on the stage. As in theatre, an opera's dress rehearsal is the final chance before the performance to make a complicated collaboration come together seamlessly.

## In the Studio

The Nashville Opera's rehearsal schedule begins with two weeks at the opera rehearsal space in the new Noah Liff Opera Center. Stage action is mapped out, the performers experiment with their characters, and the director's ideas for the flow of the opera are shared with the cast. The time period may seem short for such a large production.

It only works because opera singers begin rehearsals knowing every bit of their music by heart and having rehearsed it themselves over a period of months, sometimes years. If they do not know the role on the first day, the director has the right to replace them immediately. The opera company will fly in a new singer to take over their part. Once opera singers learn a particular role, they keep it in their repertoire and play the role many more times at different opera companies around the world.

## In the Theater

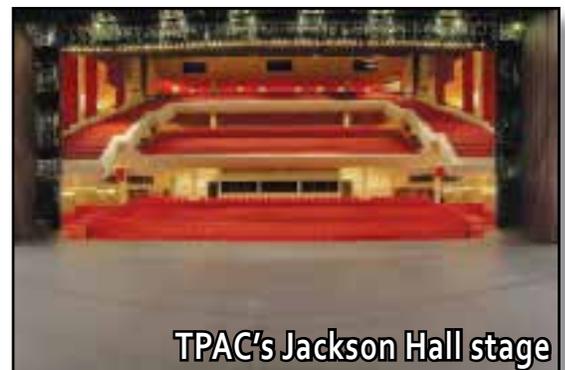
Four to five days before the first performance, the set is "loaded in" to the theater, and the lights are hung and focused. Students will notice a table in the middle of the orchestra level seats for the stage manager, the director, and the designers.

This serves as a central location for communicating with the singers and crew onstage, the conductor in the orchestra pit, and the technicians in the lighting booth. During the final dress rehearsal, students may notice lighting changes as the designer makes final adjustments.

## Technical Rehearsals and Dress Rehearsals

Opera rehearsals use a skilled piano accompanist, but once the company moves into the theater,

the performers will have a *Sitzprobe* rehearsal (a German word meaning to sit and try out.) The *Sitzprobe* is a "sing-thru" with the orchestra and conductor, concentrating on the nuances of the music only without staging. It is the first time that the orchestra and singers put together the work that they have been doing in separate orchestra rehearsals and staging rehearsals.



TPAC's Jackson Hall stage

A piano tech rehearsal is held without costumes to let the singers get used to the set and give the set crew their first chance to practice scene changes. The next rehearsal is a piano dress rehearsal that adds costumes. Finally, the orchestra dress rehearsal puts all the elements together: lighting, set changes, costumes, the orchestra, and the supertitles (the English translations of the lyrics, called the libretto.) The supertitles will be in operation at the final invited dress rehearsal.

## Final Dress

The final dress rehearsal allows the finishing polish before the performance, and invited dress rehearsals add the last important element to the opera, an audience. Because of the strenuous nature of the singing, singers may choose to "mark" on the final dress rehearsal in order to preserve their voices for all the performances. "Marking" does not have the same meaning in opera as it does in theatre. In theatre, it means just going through the blocking and the words of the lines. In opera, it specifically means that the singer may choose not to sing at full volume, not pushing their voice to the utmost. All of their acting and vocal expression will be at full power, however, with all the passion and conviction that opera requires. You will be their first audience; they are ready and excited to give you the story and the music.

# Opera 101

The death of Antonia, from the first production of *Les contes d'Hoffmann* at Opéra-Comique in Paris, 1881  
With thanks to the Gallica Digital Library

## Step 1~ Know the story!

In opera, it is important to know as much as possible beforehand about what is going on, including the ending. By all means, read the synopsis and libretto; listen to a recording. Once the music, the voices, the setting, the lights, and the dramatic staging come together at the performance, audience members will be better able to fit all the elements seamlessly together into the plot. The plot then becomes the springboard for the real power of opera, the music.



## Step 2~Experience the music!

Composers use many tools to communicate with music. They create melodies that evoke a variety of emotions. They use tempos (how slow or fast) and dynamics (how loud or soft) and rhythms (the frequency and pattern of beat). They choose particular instruments to add color to the music they have written. Think of instrument choice as a type of painting for your ears. The term "soundscape" is often used in describing the music of an opera, and it can set the atmosphere and give information about character and plot. What is it telling you?

## Step 3 ~Understand the singers!

Opera singers are vocal athletes. They practice every day to exercise their vocal chords and their extensive breath control. The combinations of notes that they have to sing are very difficult, and the things that they can do with their voices are extreme. You can easily compare a regular singing voice and an opera singing voice to a weekend jogger and a gold-medal-winning Olympic track champion. Over and above their technical ability, the reason that the voices of opera singers are so prized is the ability to express so much emotion on a grand scale.

## Step 4~Plunge in!

This is the most important step. Everything about opera is over-the-top, on the edge, enormous in every way. It's an art form that thrives on its intensity and passion. Opera stories portray people at their most extreme, and the singers and the music communicate in ways that words alone cannot. You have to let go, allow yourself to stop thinking and analyzing and simply FEEL THE EMOTION.

(with acknowledgements to *Opera 101* by Fred Plotkin for idea organization above)

# Short Explorations

## Can Romantic Be Real?

Three stories by E.T.A. Hoffmann, *The Sandman*, *The Cremona Violin* and *The Story of the Lost Reflection*, inspired a play that transformed Hoffmann into a character at a bar, recalling the women in the above stories as his three great loves. The play was adapted into the opera, *Tales of Hoffman*, by Jaques Offenbach and the playwrights, Jules Barbier and Michel Carré, as librettists.

Hoffman is pursuing the Romantic ideal of love, but the opera suggests he is blinded by the intensity of his passion and his search for a perfect woman. His first story recounts falling in love with a mechanical doll that he believes to be real. The portrayal of this “doll” is a creative delight for designers. Share the images below of Olympia, the doll, with students and ask them to imagine what Nashville Opera’s interpretation might be.

In the second and third stories, Hoffmann seems further blinkered by his emotions, in love with being in love, and not seeing actual women. By the time the opera returns to the present, there’s a question if the stories all refer to the same woman. The clever frame of the author as a character, recounting his stories allows for a surprise ending with hope for redemption.

### ASK STUDENTS:

- Can you think of a time you were obsessed like Hoffmann, perhaps with a celebrity or the cast of a TV show? Did this obsession ever distract you from something real in your life?
- What if Hoffmann’s three loves together represent aspects of one person? If you could divide your personality traits into three characters, what would their names be? What would they look like; how would they act? (from our TPAC intern, “I’d name my energetic side Lola, and she would wear yellow clothes.”)
- In the “Me, Too” era, does the character of Hoffman come across as less sympathetic?

Production by The Metropolitan Opera, 2017



Production by the Irish National Opera, 2018



Production by Skylight Music Theatre, 2018



## Breathe like Singers

The power of opera singer’s breath control is formidable. They must be able to sing very complicated musical passages, to sustain long notes, and to project their voices without microphones. They work all the time on their abdominal muscles, particularly the diaphragm muscle which runs along the bottom of the ribcage.

- ☞ Pay attention to your breathing. What part of your body is moving? Place your hands lightly on your stomach, just below your ribcage, and try to push them out slightly as you breathe in.
- ☞ Keep your hands more firmly in place, take a breath in, and say “ha!” You should feel your diaphragm jump.
- ☞ Try to fill your lungs with the biggest breath you can, and let it out as slowly as you can with a hissing sound.
- ☞ Try it again and while you are hissing, have a partner count how long you can make the hissing sound or (harder) how long you can make the sound “ahhh.” If you were to practice this every day, you would build the muscle and be able to make sound for longer periods of time, as opera singers can.

Every once in a while during the performance, try to pay attention to which passages seem to require the most breath control.

### A Teen's Perspective

by Jennie Mae Sprouse,  
St. Cecilia Academy

When the average teenager thinks of opera, they think of high, separated, screechy notes; overdone costumes; white, painted, Elizabethan makeup; and white wigs. However, if you open your mind and ears, there is more to opera than you think. The opera is an exciting experience full of drama, revenge, and love. If you really pay attention, you may even be on the edge of your seat just like when you're binge watching a TV show on Netflix.

I have been lucky enough to be exposed to all different types of music in my life, as both my parents are musicians and educators. My mom used to drag me to symphony and opera performances as a child, and I remember how I detested that. I would draw on the program and not pay attention at all, constantly telling myself that all classical music was boring. When I began to be more interested in music as my teenage years approached, I decided I would go into concerts with a better attitude and an open mind. I started to enjoy the performances and read the programs so I could understand the show, and I even began to understand some of the humor. When I opened my mind, I saw the beauty in the art of opera.

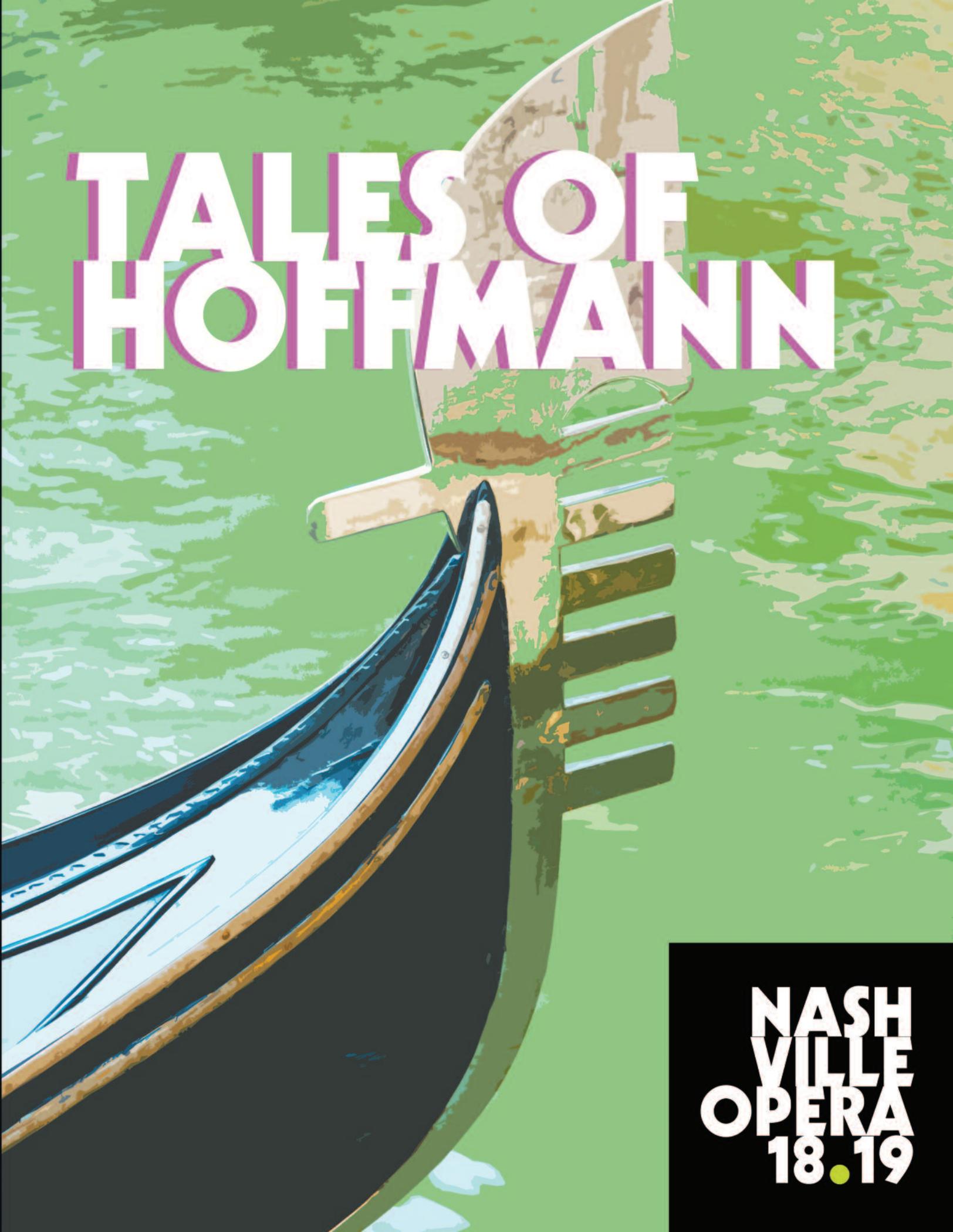
I loved watching *Tales of Hoffman* because in ways, I can see how the title character has assets of an obsessive fanboy. He idolizes all the women he meets, and in this day and age, almost all teenagers seem to have a celebrity obsession. We see celebrities almost as characters, not people, because we do not know them personally. Although we may feel close to them and seem to think we know many facts about them, we cannot grasp who they really are. This is very similar to Hoffman's situation when he sees the doll, Olympia, and instantly falls in love with her but does not know her in a deeper way.

A scientist convinces Hoffmann to wear these strange glasses to see the doll as a real person, and I feel as if this could have definitely inspired the old song "La vie en rose". Recorded by Edith Piaf (a French singer and actress 1915-1963), the lyrics explain the concept of seeing life through a lens of happiness, or what literally translates to "life in pink". With social media, we see this facade of people having perfect lives which may not be what they seem, just like how Hoffmann's doll might seem like a real person, but is just a doll.

It is interesting moments like these where I can see that works like this opera are more relatable to people my age than expected. Students who pay attention will find things that will resonate with them as individuals.



Giulietta singing her *barcarolle* in a Venetian gondola in the Powell and Pressburger film, *The Tales of Hoffmann*  
Credit: Rialto Pictures/Studiocanal

The background is a vibrant green with a textured, painterly appearance. In the lower-left foreground, the dark blue, curved prow of a boat is visible, with a wooden handle or part of the boat's structure extending upwards. To the right of the boat, a silver fork is positioned vertically, its tines pointing downwards. The title 'TALES OF HOFFMANN' is superimposed over the upper portion of the image, with the words stacked vertically.

# TALES OF HOFFMANN

**NASH  
VILLE  
OPERA  
18.19**

# TALES OF HOFFMANN

Opera in three acts by Jacques Offenbach  
Text by Barbier and Carré  
Premiere Opéra-Comique, Paris, February 10, 1881

**APRIL 4 + 6, 2019**

Andrew Jackson Hall, TPAC  
The Ann and Frank Bumstead Production

Directed by John Hoomes  
Conducted by William Boggs  
Featuring the Nashville Opera Orchestra

## CAST & CHARACTERS

### PROLOGUE

The Muse of Poetry, <i>Hoffmann's artistic inspiration</i>	Megan Murphy Chambers*
Andrès, <i>Stella's disloyal servant</i>	John Easterlin*
Councilor Lindorf, <i>Hoffmann's arch-nemesis</i>	Zachary James*
Nathanael, <i>a cohort of Hoffmann</i>	Darius Thomas*†
Hermann, <i>a cohort of Hoffmann</i>	Brent Hetherington*†
Luther, <i>a tavern-keeper</i>	Rafael Porto
Hoffmann, <i>a poet filled with romantic longing</i>	Noah Stewart
Nicklausse, <i>Hoffmann's reasonable friend</i>	Sarah Crigger*†
Kleinzack, <i>a wee character in a Hoffmann tale</i>	Zazou Gray

### ACT I

Spalanzani, <i>an inventor and scientist</i>	John Easterlin*
Cochenille, <i>Spalazani's faithful servant</i>	Darius Thomas*†
Hoffmann, <i>a poet filled with romantic longing</i>	Noah Stewart
Nicklausse, <i>Hoffmann's reasonable friend</i>	Sarah Crigger*†
Coppelius, <i>a maker and seller of eyes</i>	Zachary James*
Olympia, <i>Spalanzani's "daughter," a wind-up doll</i>	Chelsea Friedlander*†

\* Nashville Opera debut  
† 2019 Mary Ragland Emerging Artist

*Continued on next page*

## ACT II

Antonia, <i>Crespel's ailing daughter</i>	Inna Dukach*
Crespel, <i>a violinmaker, Antonia's father</i>	Rafael Porto
Frantz, <i>Crespel's elderly servant</i>	John Easterlin*
Hoffmann, <i>a poet filled with romantic longing</i>	Noah Stewart
Nicklausse, <i>Hoffmann's reasonable friend</i>	Sarah Crigger*†
Dr. Miracle, <i>a disreputable physician</i>	Zachary James*
The Voice of Antonia's Mother, <i>a spirit</i>	Sarah Crigger*†
Antonia's Spirit, <i>the reconciliation</i>	Zazou Gray

## ACT III

Giulietta, <i>an alluring courtesan</i>	Inna Dukach*
Nicklausse, <i>Hoffmann's reasonable friend</i>	Sarah Crigger*†
Pitichinaccio, <i>a malicious, misshapen creature</i>	John Easterlin*
Hoffmann, <i>a poet filled with romantic longing</i>	Noah Stewart
Schlemil, <i>Giulietta's current possessive lover</i>	Brent Hetherington*†
Dapertutto, <i>a malevolent sorcerer</i>	Zachary James*

## EPILOGUE

The Muse of Poetry, <i>Hoffmann's artistic inspiration</i>	Megan Murphy Chambers*
Councilor Lindorf, <i>Hoffmann's arch-nemesis</i>	Zachary James*
Nathanael, <i>a cohort of Hoffmann</i>	Darius Thomas*†
Hermann, <i>a cohort of Hoffmann</i>	Brent Hetherington*†
Luther, <i>a tavern-keeper</i>	Rafael Porto
Hoffmann, <i>a poet filled with romantic longing</i>	Noah Stewart
Nicklausse, <i>Hoffmann's reasonable friend</i>	Sarah Crigger*†
Kleinzack, <i>a wee character in a Hoffmann tale</i>	Zazou Gray
Stella, <i>a famous opera diva</i>	Inna Dukach*

\* Nashville Opera debut

† 2019 Mary Ragland Emerging Artist

## TICKETS &amp; INFORMATION

Contact Nashville Opera at 615.832.5242 or visit [nashvilleopera.org](http://nashvilleopera.org).*Study Guide Contributors*

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# THE STORY

## PROLOGUE

The poet Hoffmann and his young friend Nicklausse, are drinking in Luther's tavern. A performance of *Don Giovanni* is taking place next door. Intermission has begun, and Hoffmann is waiting for the end of the opera to meet Stella, his beautiful lover and star of the opera. Also in the tavern is a man named Lindorf, Hoffmann's nemesis and rival for Stella's affections.

The crowd in the tavern know of Hoffmann's skill at storytelling, and he entertains them with his new tale of Kleinzach, a freakish dancing dwarf. But Hoffmann is pre-occupied by romance, and his mind keeps wandering from his tale into thoughts of the beautiful women he has loved. The crowd asks to hear the stories of the women in his life. Hoffmann agrees, and everyone settles in to drink and listen to his three tales of love.

## ACT I

Hoffmann has fallen in love from afar with Olympia, the daughter of an inventor named Spalanzani. This daughter is actually one of Spalanzani's inventions: a life-like, mechanical doll. Spalanzani is expecting a houseful of guests and plans to introduce his new invention to the public. He's concerned about one particular guest, an inventor named Coppelius who provided the eyes for the robot. Spalanzani is afraid Coppelius will want a percentage of the action. He decides to buy him out of the deal and writes Cornelius a check. Cornelius happily leaves to collect his money.

When all the guests have arrived, Spalanzani brings out Olympia and she performs for the crowd. The living doll sings a beautiful aria, but she slows down every now and then as her battery runs low. Hoffmann has been given a pair of magic glasses that make him see Olympia as a real living girl, not an automaton.

Cornelius returns. He is furious that Spalanzani's check bounced. He takes revenge for being cheated by destroying Olympia. At first, Hoffmann is horrified, watching as the woman he loves is torn limb from limb. Then he realizes she never really existed at all. The party guests all mock Hoffmann for falling in love with a robot.

## ACT II

Hoffmann is in love with Antonia, a beautiful young woman suffering from a potentially fatal illness. She lives with her father Crespel, a maker of violins. Both she and her father are mourning the death of Antonia's mother, who

recently passed away.

As Antonia sits at the piano, singing a sad song, her father rushes in to stop her. Though Antonia loves singing, the exertion of singing is dangerous for her, and threatens her life.

Crespel leaves, and against his wishes, Hoffmann and Nicklausse sneak in to pay Antonia a visit. She and Hoffmann sing together, declaring their love. When Crespel returns, Antonia runs to her room and Hoffmann hides. He overhears a heated conversation between Crespel and Dr. Miracle, who has come to treat Antonia. The doctor also treated Antonia's mother. Crespel believes Miracle was responsible for his wife's death.

The two men leave. Hoffman, now realizing the severity of Antonia's illness, persuades the girl to never sing again. As soon as Hoffmann leaves, Dr. Miracle returns in secret. He sings to Antonia and then conjures the voice of her mother. Knowing singing could be fatal to the girl, Dr. Miracle urges Antonia to sing along with her mother. Antonia joyously sings, but the stress is too much for her heart, and she collapses and dies. Hoffmann and Nicklausse rush back into the room just as Dr. Miracle pronounces Antonia dead.

## ACT III

Hoffmann is in a palace on Venice's Grand Canal. Nicklausse and the glamorous courtesan Giulietta are floating in a gondola. Hoffmann listens as the two sing a sensual barcarolle, the opera's most famous melody.

There's a lively party going on, and Hoffmann meets Giulietta. He's been falling in love with her from afar, despite warnings from Nicklausse. Giulietta already has a lover, a very jealous man named Schlemil, but that seems to make her even more attractive to Hoffmann.

Before long, we meet Dapertutto, an evil magician. Dapertutto promises Giulietta a priceless diamond if she'll steal Hoffmann's reflection from the mirror. Giulietta agrees and sets about seducing Hoffmann.

Hoffmann finds her irresistible, and the two sing a rapturous love duet. Giulietta begs Hoffmann to give her his reflection as a keepsake. He agrees, and immediately discovers that he can no longer see himself in the mirror. Giulietta tells Hoffmann that Schlemil controls her by a magic key, and if he can steal the key, she will be his forever. Schlemil bursts in, surprising the lovers. Schlemil challenges Hoffmann to a duel. Schlemil is killed. The magic key to Giulietta's heart is found on a chain around Schlemil's neck. Hoffmann searches for Giulietta in vain. He then sees her

sailing away in a gondola with the grotesque dwarf, Pitichinaccio. Hoffmann sinks to his knees in despair.

## EPILOGUE

Back at Luther's tavern, Hoffmann, now very drunk, has just finished his trio of tales. Hoffmann orders more wine to soothe his pain of betrayal. The chorus dances off, leaving Hoffmann alone in the bar. The Muse of Poetry professes her love for Hoffmann and urges him to channel his

pain and sorrow into his art. Hoffman sings of his love to his Muse, the only one in his life who has never betrayed him. Hoffmann passes out just as Stella appears, fresh from a triumphant night at the opera. Stella approaches Hoffmann but discovers he is dead drunk. Hoffmann's rival, Lindorf, offers to see Stella home. Stella takes Lindorf's arm. They exit the bar.

Alone once again with his Muse, Hoffman revives, finds pen and paper, and begins to write. The man is no more; the poet is reborn.

Tenor Noah Stewart returns to Nashville Opera for his debut in the title role of Hoffmann.



# RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS

Orchestre de la Theatre Royal (1976)  
EMI Classics

Hoffmann: Neil Shicoff  
Four Villains: José Van Dam  
Nicklausse: Ann Murray  
Giulietta: Jessye Norman  
Conducted by Sylvain Cambreling

London Symphony Orchestra (1972)  
Westminster/Deutsche Grammophon

Hoffmann: Stuart Burrows  
Antonia/Giulietta/Olympia/Stella: Beverly Sills  
Four Villains: Norman Triegle

# ABOUT THE COMPOSER

JACQUES OFFENBACH | 1819–1880

Called the "Mozart of the Champs-Élysées" by Rossini, Jacques Offenbach was a conductor, composer, businessman, and socialite. Born in Cologne, Germany, in 1819 to a musical family, Offenbach began his career playing the cello as a child. In 1833, he enrolled to study cello at the Paris Conservatoire, but left after a year to perform in the orchestra of the Opéra-Comique.

Offenbach was infamous for his practical jokes in this orchestra. His tricks ranged from simply playing alternate notes in the score to elaborate plans ensuring the music stands of his colleagues would collapse in the middle of a performance. In 1844, Offenbach embarked on a musical tour of Germany and England and debuted some of his own compositions before he returned to Paris in 1849, as the conductor of the orchestra at the Théâtre Française. In 1855, he leased a small theatre he named the Bouffes-Parisiens where he began to present his light, witty musical dramas, eventually named *operettas*. This new art form was so popular among Parisian society that Offenbach wrote and debuted over one hundred operettas at his theater.

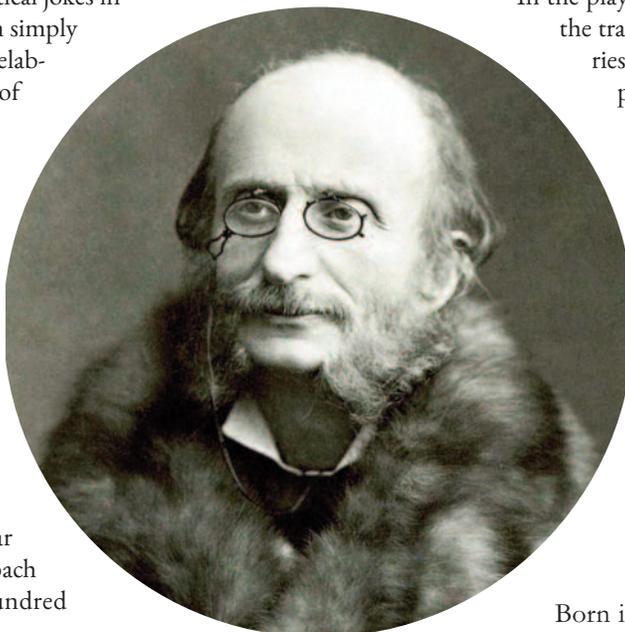
His works were original and unique, amusing and highly satirical. This new art form had the dialogue of a play, the music of an opera, but a story line devoid of sentiment and melodrama. Instead, Offenbach's stories were lighthearted, grotesque, and farcical, with intricate commentary on Parisian society. One of his most popular operettas, *Orpheus in the Underworld*, is a retelling of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice in which they are unhappily married and desperate to get away from each other. In fact, the "Infernal Gallop" played by the orchestra in Act II of this operetta is the tune of the famous French cancan!

After the outbreak of the Franco Prussian War in 1870, tastes changed dramatically. Suddenly, Offenbach was considered a "mockingbird of the Second Empire," his works representative of

everything that was immoral and frivolous under the rule of Napoleon III. Offenbach began to lose money and departed on a successful musical tour in America to pay off his debts. Returning to Paris in 1871, Offenbach devoted the remaining years of his life to writing a "serious" opera he would be remembered by. He found

inspiration in a play by Jules Barbier and Michel Carré.

In the play, the poet E.T.A Hoffmann is cast as the tragic hero in three of his own short stories. Offenbach worked on adapting the play into an opera until 1880, dying four months before the premiere. The music was finished by French composer Ernest Guirard, and the opera premiered to much success in Paris.



## ABOUT THE LIBRETTIST

JULES BARBIER  
1825–1901

Born in 1825 in Paris, Jules Barbier was a celebrated French librettist, writer, and poet.

As a teenager, he began his career writing comedic plays. Critics found some of Barbier's writing style over simplified and that he seemed to be "writing for the masses" rather than keeping true to the original story. For example, he gave Shakespeare's play *Hamlet* a happy ending for its 1868 treatment by Ambroise Thomas. Barbier wrote libretti for works of many celebrated French composers: *Faust* and *Roméo et Juliette* for Charles Gounod, *Dinorah* for Giacomo Meyerbeer, and *Le timbre d'argent* for Camille Saint-Saëns. He frequently collaborated with writer Michel Carré, with whom he wrote the play that inspired Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffmann*.

# CULTURAL INFLUENCE

*Tales of Hoffmann* is one of the only operas that extensively uses irony in telling its story. Today we are surrounded by irony in our news, comedy, and television. But in Offenbach's time, irony was exceptionally rare and not always encouraged. The irony and nuanced social satire are delivered through a world walking the line between fantasy and reality. *Tales of Hoffmann* is the story of a loser whose ultimate failures in love and life lead him into the hands of his Muse. He is then able to use his woeful, bizarre adventures as the basis for his writing. Furthermore, this is one of the rare stories in opera where a character overcomes their personal vices and follies to their benefit. It is suggested at the end of the opera that Hoffmann overcomes his bad luck with a renewed focus and energy dedicated to his poetry and writing.

Regarding the music of Offenbach's opera, "Les oiseaux dans la charmille" (also known as "The Doll Song") is sung by the character of Olympia and considered to be one of the most difficult arias for coloratura soprano. In the aria, Olympia soars to an astonishingly high E flat while singing of how beautiful the sky and birds may move a young girl's heart. "Belle nuit, ô nuit d'amour," a duet for mezzo and soprano, is a barcarolle sung at the beginning of Act III. A barcarolle is a Venetian melody traditionally sung by the gondoliers. Offenbach's enchanting duet describing a beautiful night of love is one of the most recognizable melodies of all time.

Because Offenbach never finished *Tales of Hoffman*, musicologists debate whether the finished product reflects Offenbach's intentions. Some historians believe the order of the Antonia and Giulietta acts (Act II and Act III) should be switched. Furthermore, Nicklausse and the Muse may have originally been one character.

Fitting in with Hoffmann's affinity for the supernatural, there are rumors that *Tales of Hoffmann* may be cursed. The opera was performed during one of the worst recorded theater fires in history, the Ringtheatre Fire in Vienna in 1881. The theater was completely burned to the ground. Only a few years later in 1887, the Opera Comique in Paris experienced a terrible fire as well. Some of the original orchestration of the opera was destroyed as a result. The opera was not performed again in Europe until 1893.

A little-known fact about Offenbach is that he loved to stage elaborate musical parodies of other composers at the Bouffes Parisiens. Offenbach would place famous arias and musical moments in other parts of the plot to satirical effect, in addition to mimicking each composer's unique style. Giacomo Meyerbeer was an immense fan of these parodies, attending every performance in Offenbach's private theater box. On the other hand, Berlioz and Wagner notably hated these comedic events. Berlioz regarded the comedy as "the product of the mad German mind" while Wagner called the musical events "filth." Offenbach's continuation of these musical occasions may have led to genuine bad blood between him and Wagner.

Elvis Presley's "Tonight Is So Right for Love," adapts the languorous song into a jazz and guitar fueled profession of love!

# CELEBRATED WORKS BY OFFENBACH

*Orphée aux enfers* (*Orpheus in the Underworld*), 1858

*La Belle Hélène*, 1864

*Die Rheinmixon*, 1864

*La Vie Parisienne*, 1866

*La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein*, 1867

*La Périchole*, 1868

*Les contes d'Hoffmann* (*The Tales of Hoffmann*), 1881

# OPERA ETIQUETTE

## ALWAYS BE EARLY!

Please arrive early to ensure you are able to find your seat before the performance begins and before the orchestra tunes. If you are late, you may miss the overture or even the first act!

## OPERA IS FOR ALL AGES TO ENJOY!

Opera is full of emotion, passion, human conflict, and discovery. Nashville Opera usually presents operas in their original language and projects supertitles above the stage so the audience can understand every word.

## WHAT TO WEAR

Many people think of a night at the opera as a glamorous event and an excuse to bring out the fancy attire. But, it is also acceptable to dress comfortably. For dress rehearsals, the casual attire that students wear to school is perfectly acceptable. A light sweater, jacket, or wrap is suggested because the theater is air-conditioned.

## USE THE RESTROOM

Once in the theater it is courteous to remain seated and involved in the production until intermission. Please do not leave the theater unless there is an emergency.

## PLEASE BE COURTEOUS...

to everyone in the audience and on stage. Opera is a live performance, so any talking, cell-phone use (including texting) or other noise/light disruption takes away from everyone's experience at the opera. Remember that unlike many staged performances, opera singers do not use microphones. This makes it essential to wait until intermission to unwrap gum/candy, talk to your neighbor or use electronic devices that may distract others. Be sure to turn off cell phone and pagers.

## APPLAUSE WELCOME!

There are several times during a performance when it is appropriate to applaud the performers. The first opportunity to applaud takes place when the conductor takes the podium at the very beginning of the performance and when he/she returns to the podium following intermission(s). It is also acceptable to applaud after an overture or aria in the middle of a performance. Applaud when the performance moves you. You may show your appreciation to the performers by shouting "Bravo!" for a male performer, "Brava!" for a female performer, or "Bravi!" for an ensemble. At the conclusion of the performance, singers who performed principal roles in the opera will take their "curtain call." It is appropriate to continue applauding until all singers have stepped forward to accept their applause. Sometimes, audience members are so impressed with the overall performance of the opera, they will stand and applaud the entire ensemble. This is called a "standing ovation."

## NO PHOTOS OR RECORDINGS PERMITTED



# A SOUND ANATOMY OF OPERA

There are many different kinds of songs in opera. Performers may sing alone, in couples (duets), trios, or larger groups, and there are also moments when no one sings at all—and each composer develops his or her own preferred combinations of these options.

## THE OVERTURE

An opera usually begins with an orchestral piece of music called the overture, which functions as an introduction to the opera. Lasting anywhere from five to twenty-five minutes, these opera overtures usually contain important themes from the rest of the production. Before 1800, house lights were not dimmed while the overture played, and audience members continued to talk, drink, and even play cards! This ceased in the 1900's as the overture became a more integral part of an operatic performance. At the end of the overture, the curtain rises and the story of the opera unfolds through a series of scenes. These scenes are organized into acts.

## ARIAS

An aria is a solo moment for an opera singer and is usually accompanied by the orchestra. Italian for “air” or song, an aria stops the plot momentarily, giving each character the opportunity to express their innermost thoughts and feelings. These pieces also provide an opportunity for the singer to demonstrate their vocal and artistic skill. Mozart, Verdi and Puccini were able to achieve a remarkable balance between memorable melodies that perfectly suit the human voice while still reflecting the drama of the text.

## RECITATIVES

Recitatives, a type of singing unique to opera, help propel the action forward. They can be accompanied either by a full orchestra, or, as is often the case with opera written before 1800, by harpsichord or keyboard instrument. Often introducing an aria, the text is delivered quickly and encompasses a very limited melodic range. It has no recognizable melody and the rhythms follow those of the spoken word.

## ENSEMBLE (“TOGETHER”)

Ensemble singing deals with two or more voices of different range performing together. These include duets, trios, quartets, quintets, and sometimes sextets. The composer blends the voices depending on the dramatic requirements of the plot. For instance, a love duet may begin with each performer singing different music at different times, then gradually unifying into harmony. Conversely, the music of a duet may depict conflict. Georges Bizet used this technique in *Carmen*: if you listen to the duets sung by Carmen and Don José, you might notice that their musical lines are never completely blended, and this foreshadows their tragic ends.

## CHORUS

Most operas include music sung by a large group of singers (sometimes more than 40) called a chorus. The chorus often appears in a crowd scene and can provide a stunning contrast to solo or ensemble singing. In one opera by Benjamin Britten, the chorus is played by a single male and a single female, as in the tradition of ancient Greek theatre.

## ORCHESTRAL MUSIC

The orchestra accompanies the singing and introduces the opera with the overture. Musical and emotional themes often appear in orchestral introductions and conclusions to arias, recitatives, and choruses. In many cases, the orchestra plays such an important role, the gravity of its existence is that of a leading character.

# ON OPERATIC VOICES

Every voice is unique and no singer gets to choose the category in which they sing but must work with the vocal attributes with which they were born. Composers usually assign a voice type to a character based on his/her personality or age. Read these descriptions for examples.

## WOMEN

### SOPRANO

This is the highest female voice and has a range similar to a violin. In opera, the soprano most often plays the young girl or the heroine (sometimes called the prima donna), since a high bright voice traditionally suggests femininity, virtue, and innocence. The normal range of a soprano is from middle C through two octaves above middle C, sometimes with extra top notes. Most women are sopranos. In *Tales of Hoffmann*, the roles of Olympia, Antonia, and Giulietta are sung by sopranos.

### MEZZO-SOPRANO

Also called a mezzo, this is the middle female voice with a range similar to an oboe. A mezzo's sound is often darker and warmer than a soprano's. In opera, composers generally use a mezzo to portray older women, villainesses, seductive heroines, and sometimes even young boys. Mezzo-sopranos also often serve as the friend or sidekick to the soprano. The mezzo-soprano's normal range is from the A below middle C to the A two octaves above it. In *Tales of Hoffmann*, the roles of Nicklausse and Antonia's mother are sung by mezzo-sopranos.

### CONTRALTO

This is the lowest female voice and has a voice similar in range to a clarinet. Contraltos usually sing the roles of older females or special character parts such as witches and old gypsies. The range is two octaves from F below middle C to the top line of the treble clef. A true contralto is very rare—some believe they don't exist at all! There is no featured contralto in *Hoffmann*.

## MEN

### COUNTER-TENOR

This is the highest male voice, which was mainly used in very early opera and oratorio. The voice of a countertenor sounds very much like a mezzo-soprano's voice and they often sing the same repertoire. Like the contralto, true countertenors are very rare. There are no counter-tenors in *Hoffmann*.

### TENOR

This is usually the highest male voice in an opera. It is similar to a trumpet in range, tone, color, and acoustical ring. The tenor typically plays the hero or the love interest. His voice ranges from the C below middle C to the above. In *Tales of Hoffmann*, the roles of Hoffmann, Spalanzani, Andrés, Cochenille, and Frantz are for tenors.

### BARITONE

This is the middle male voice and is close to a French horn in range and tone color. The baritone usually plays villainous roles or father-figures. In *Hoffmann*, the role of Peter Schlemil is sung by a baritone. The range is from the G an octave and a half below middle C to the G above.

### BASS-BARITONE/BASS

This is the lowest male voice and is similar to a trombone or bassoon in range and color. Low voices usually suggest age and wisdom in serious opera. In *Hoffmann*, the roles of Lindorf, Coppelius, and Miracle are sung by bass-baritones. The range spans from roughly the F above middle C to the F an octave and a fourth below.



**Mary Ragland Emerging Artist Chelsea Friedlander takes the role of Olympia in our TALES OF HOFFMANN. She is seen here as Blonde in ABDUCTION FROM THE SERAGLIO at Dayton Opera.**

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