



Pacific Opera Victoria  
September, 2011

## Study & Activity Guide

**Dear Educator,**

Pacific Opera Victoria is proud to present Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*. This Activity Guide was prepared to help your students get even more out of their opera experience.

Check out our website at <http://www.pov.bc.ca/dutchman.html> for inside information about *The Flying Dutchman*. Please suggest that your students take advantage of our website. The more your students know about the production, the more they will enjoy it!

See you at the opera!

Jackie Adamthwaite  
Manager of Artistic Programs

# How to enjoy the show and be a great Opera Audience Member!

## Before the show:

- Eat before you come to the theatre. There is no food allowed in the Auditorium.
- Arrive on Time! Quite often we do not seat latecomers and you may have to watch the first-half of the show on one on the lobby TVs.
- Check to see how long the opera is; plan your trip to the bathroom.
- Read the story; the program includes the Synopsis and the Director's Notes.
- Turn your cell phone off – along with anything else that beeps or makes noise.

## During the show:

- Don't talk to your friends. The theatre is designed to carry sound from the stage to the audience and back. Remember, this isn't a Movie, the singers can hear you!
- No eating, or drinking during the performance.
- No cameras or recording devices of any kind can be used in the theatre.
- Please, no feet on seats or railings.
- No shouting or yelling out.

## At the end of the show:

- Clap as much as you like and yell "Bravo" at your favourite singers!
- You can even give a Standing Ovation if you really enjoyed the show!

# Opera Singers

## **What? No microphones?!**

Opera singers make themselves heard through the whole house, over a full orchestra – without amplification. There are no microphones hidden in the set! Instead, opera singers use their training and the acoustics of the theatre to project their voices. In order to do this, opera singers train for longer than doctors. This is partly because they are trying to isolate and train their vocal cords: a mechanism about the size of your little finger nail. This is made doubly hard by the fact that unlike other musicians, singers can't see their instrument, so all of their learning has to be by sensation.

## **Amazing feats of memory!**

Opera singers have to memorize several hours of music for each opera. Operas are usually performed in the language in which they were written, which means that opera singers must perform in – and understand – Italian, German, French, Russian; even Czech!

## **Phew!**

Opera singers do all of these things while they are onstage under hot lights, performing blocking that can be awkward or difficult. Opera singers have to be able to sing lying down, running, jumping, dancing and performing all kinds of other tricky moves. Period costumes like hoop skirts, cloaks and corsets and wigs can also be hot and uncomfortable.

## **Who sings what?**

Here is a very rough guide to the different voice types, starting with the highest (soprano), going right down to the very deepest (bass).

**Soprano:** Sopranos have the highest voices. They usually play the heroines of an opera. This means they have lots of show-off arias to sing, and get to fall in love and / or die more often than other female voice types.

**Mezzo-soprano, or mezzo:** This is the middle female voice, and has a darker, warmer sound than the soprano. Mezzos spend a lot of their time playing mothers and villainesses, although sometimes they get to play seductive heroines. Mezzos also play young men on occasion – these are called trouser roles, for obvious reasons.

**Contralto, or alto:** The lowest female voice. Contralto is a rare voice type. Altos usually portray older females or character parts like witches and old gypsies.

**Counter tenor:** Also known as alto, this is the highest male voice, and another vocal rarity. Counter tenors sing with about the same range as a contralto. Counter tenor roles are most common in baroque opera, but some more modern composers write parts for counter tenors too.

**Tenor:** If there are no counter tenors on stage, then the highest male voice in opera is tenor. Tenors are usually the heroes who get the girl or die horribly in the attempt.

**Baritone:** The middle male voice. In comic opera, the baritone is often the ringleader of whatever naughtiness is going on, but in tragic opera, he's more likely to play the villain.

**Bass:** The lowest male voice. Low voices usually suggest age and wisdom in serious opera, and basses usually play Kings, fathers, and grandfathers. In comic opera basses often portray old characters that are foolish or laughable.

# The Flying Dutchman

## Music and Libretto by Richard Wagner

First Performance January 2, 1843, Hoftheater, Dresden

October 6, 8, 12, and 14, 2011, at 8 pm

Matinée Sunday, October 16 at 2:30 pm

Royal Theatre, Victoria, BC

In German with English Surtitles

The performance will be given in three acts with two intermissions,  
with a total running time of two hours and 50 minutes.

### CAST & CREATIVE TEAM

Cast in order of vocal appearance

Daland, a Norwegian sailor

The Steersman

The Dutchman

Mary, Senta's nurse

Senta, Daland's daughter

Erik, a huntsman, courting Senta

Norwegian sailors, the Dutchman's crew (ghost choir), young women

Gary Relyea

Michael Colvin

John Fanning

Rebecca Hass

Joni Henson

Robert Künzli

Conductor

Director

Set Designer

Associate Set Designer

Costume Designer

Lighting Designer

Assistant Lighting Designer

Projection Designer

Resident Stage Manager

Assistant Stage Managers

Apprentice Stage Manager

Principal Coach & Répétiteur

Chorus Master & Assistant to the Artistic Director

Assistant Accompanist

Timothy Vernon

Glynis Leyshon

Allan Stichbury

Nathan Brown

Nancy Bryant

Kevin Lamotte

Conor Moore

Keith Houghton

Sandy Halliday

Nicole Olszewski, Sara Robb

Lauren Handman

Robert Holliston

Giuseppe Pietraroia

Kim Cousineau

With the Victoria Symphony, the POV Chorus, and the Victoria Choral Society

## Synopsis

### Act 1

The opera opens in the bay of Sandwike where Daland's ship has taken refuge a few miles from his home. As a storm rages and Daland's crew sleeps, a second ship, with bloodred sails and black masts, drops anchor. Its Captain– the Dutchman – steps ashore. We learn that he has been condemned to sail the seas forever, but that every seven years he is cast ashore to search for a faithful wife whose love will save him. He craves either redemption or annihilation.

When the two Captains meet, the Dutchman offers Daland a chest of treasure in return for a night's lodging in his home. When he learns Daland has a daughter, the Dutchman offers to marry her before he so much as meets her. Her father, dazzled by the wealth of the stranger, agrees immediately to give him *my most precious possession, my comfort in sorrow, my joy in happiness*.

### Intermission

### Act 2

In a rough factory building near the harbour, a group of women are found working – turning huge wheels in order to make rope. Supervised by Mary, they all sing as they labour – save for Senta, Daland's daughter, who gazes intently at an illustration of the legendary Flying Dutchman. When Mary scolds her for her idleness, Senta recounts the legend of the Dutchman and shocks everyone by announcing that she longs to be the one whose love will save him.

Senta's suitor Erik, who overhears this declaration, announces that Daland's ship is approaching. He begs Senta to persuade her father to let them marry, despite his obvious poverty. But Senta's thoughts are still fixed on the Dutchman and he leaves in despair.

Daland enters with the stranger and tells Senta of the riches in store if she will agree to marry him. Senta recognizes the Dutchman from his portrait and agrees unreservedly to be faithful to him till death.

### Intermission

### Act 3

The traditional homecoming feast is set up in the harbour, where both ships lie at anchor. The Dutchman's ship is eerily silent while the Norwegian sailors dance and sing, surrounded by the village women, who set up food for the celebration. Their offer to share with the Dutchman's crew is met at first with silence. Then the sea around the Dutchman's ship becomes violent, though everything else remains calm, and the Dutchman's crew begin to sing, mocking their captain's efforts to find love and redemption. The Norwegians try to drown out the sound of the phantom crew with their own song, but finally flee.

Distraught that Senta has agreed to marry the Dutchman, Erik reminds her that she had pledged her love to him. The Dutchman overhears them and, convinced that Senta is unfaithful, orders his crew to set sail. As he sails away, Senta cries out that she is true to him till death, and throws herself into the sea. At that moment the Dutchman's ship sinks, and the Dutchman and Senta are seen embracing, ascending toward heaven.

## The Genesis of *The Flying Dutchman*

Richard Wagner's turbulent romance about a sea-captain doomed to sail the ocean forever and the lovestruck girl who yearns to save him was, in large part, the result of a bad trip.

In July 1839, the 26-year-old composer, recently fired from his job as Music Director of the Riga opera and so deeply in debt that his passport had been confiscated, decided to flee to Paris, the centre of Grand Opera in Europe. He planned to take the city by storm with his new opera, *Rienzi*.

Wagner, with his wife Minna and their giant Newfoundland dog Robber in tow, set off on a mad journey, crossing the Russo-Prussian frontier on foot, evading armed Cossack sentries, and finally embarking for London on a small merchant vessel, the *Thetis*.

Violent storms turned an eight-day sea voyage into three weeks of terror, during which the *Thetis* had to seek refuge in the Norwegian harbour of Sandviken.

In his book *Mein Leben (My Life)*, Wagner wrote that on reaching the safety of the fjord, *a feeling of indescribable content came over me as the enormous granite walls of the cliff echoed the chantings of the crew as they cast anchor ... The sharp rhythm of their call ... soon resolved itself into the theme of the sailors' chorus in my Der fliegende Holländer. The idea of this opera ... took on a definite poetic and musical colour under the influence of the impressions I had just gained.*

But after the ship left Norway, they were caught in another violent storm: *We thought death would be upon us at any moment. It was not the terrible force pitching the ship uncontrollably about, entirely at the mercy of a sea showing itself now as a darkest abyss and now as a steep mountain peak, that awakened in me the fear of death; rather my premonition of our approaching end was based on the despondency of the crew, from whom I caught despairing and malevolent looks, as if we were to be blamed in some superstitious way for the threatening disaster...*

*Minna expressed the heartfelt desire to die with me, if need be, by a bolt of lightning rather than by sinking while yet alive into the vasty deep.*

They survived and made it safely to Paris, only to find that the Opéra was not interested in Wagner's new opera. It was only thanks to the support of that guru of Grand Opera, Giacomo Meyerbeer, that *Rienzi* was finally produced – in Dresden, in 1842.

*Rienzi* was a hit. It made Wagner's reputation, for it was totally in fashion – a five-hour extravaganza of grandiose choruses, lavish orchestration, dramatic spectacle, and sumptuous stage effects – all culminating in a building collapsing on stage and burying the principal characters alive!

The opera was based on the novel *Rienzi, the last of the Roman Tribunes* by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, who today is best known as the inspiration for the annual Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest which offers a prize for the most floridly overwrought opening sentence to a bad novel. (It was Bulwer-Lytton's novel *Paul Clifford* that began with the words: *It was a dark and stormy night.*)

Meanwhile, other dark and stormy nights were percolating in Wagner's brain as he laboured over *The Flying Dutchman*. He wrote a prose sketch and, hoping for an audition that never happened, composed three of the opera's songs: Senta's Ballad recounting the Dutchman legend, the Sailors' song of Act 3, and the phantom song of the Dutchman's crew.

In July 1841, desperate for cash, Wagner reluctantly sold the prose sketch for *Dutchman* to the director of the Paris Opéra, who handed it over to Pierre-Louis Dietsch to compose an opera called *Le vaisseau fantôme* – which premiered in November 1842 and sank without a trace after 11 performances.

Meanwhile, Wagner completed his own *Dutchman* and shipped it round to Munich, Berlin, and finally Dresden, which held the premiere on January 2, 1843, with Wagner conducting.

Although *Dutchman* was moderately successful, the audience, primed to expect another conventional Grand Opera in the vein of *Rienzi*, wasn't quite ready for what is now seen as the first great work of a colossal genius.

## The Legend of The Flying Dutchman

While his experience as an accidental tourist in Norway inspired the flavour of *Dutchman's* music, Wagner was certainly already familiar with the legend of a ghost ship doomed to sail the seas forever.

The story emerged from accounts of a Dutch ship attempting to round the Cape of Good Hope in a storm. Refusing to turn back, the captain cursed the weather and swore he'd be eternally damned before giving up. In punishment for his blasphemy, he was condemned to sail forever in a phantom ship with a phantom crew.

The story became wildly popular in the 19th century. As myths go, it is rather modern. According to Metropolitan Opera broadcast commentator M. Owen Lee, *it certainly sounds like an old sailor's yarn, but in fact in Wagner's day it was relatively new ... the Flying Dutchman himself appeared in print only a few years before Wagner took that perilous sea voyage. The Dutchman seems suddenly to have emerged, along with Dracula and the Frankenstein monster, in the nineteenth century, as if to prove that new myths could still surface in an industrial age.*

Wagner based his opera on Heinrich Heine's delicious retelling of the myth in a satirical 1834 novel *Aus den Memoiren des Herren von Schnabelewopski (The Memoirs of Mr. von Schnabelewopski)*, in which Mr. von Schnabelewopski recounts the experience of attending a play in Amsterdam about the Dutchman legend.

In this version of the story, the cursed sea-captain is allowed ashore every seven years to find a woman who will save him. But as Herr von Schnabelewopski cynically observes, *Poor Dutchman! He is often only too glad to be saved from his marriage and his wife-savior, and get again on board.*

Mr. von Schnabelewopski is less interested in the play than in hooking up with a blonde who's been dropping orange peels on his head from the balcony; he leaves the theatre for a romantic interlude, returning in time for the last scene as Mrs. Flying Dutchman, like Senta, throws herself off a cliff to save her man. But Schnabelewopski points out a moral – *that Women should never marry a Flying Dutchmen, while we men may learn that at best, women are the ruin of us all!*

Wagner kept most of Heine's plot elements – the seven-year cycle; the acquisitive father eager to marry off his daughter; the girl's fixation on the picture of the Dutchman on her wall, and the notion of redemption through the absolute love of a selfless woman. But Wagner ignored the satirical edge of Heine's novel.

At first Wagner also followed Heine in placing the action in Scotland. But during rehearsals he moved it to Norway and gave the name Sandwike to the bay in which Daland's ship takes refuge. He may have made these changes to distance his opera from *Le vaisseau fantôme*, which had its premiere just two months before *Dutchman* – or to finally pay tribute to the tumultuous Norwegian sea and the cliff-lined fjord that so inspired the most gripping music in the opera.



## The Music

During rehearsals of *The Flying Dutchman* in Munich in 1864, conductor Franz Lachner grumbled about *the wind that blows out at you wherever you open the score*.

Indeed, much of the opera's music is bracing – tempestuous – in your face. Full of variety, it evokes multiple worlds – mystical and real, devilish and divine.

The music calls up the storm-tossed world of sailors and the raging sea; it conjures up the eerie, supernatural haunts of the Dutchman and his crew of zombie sailors.

And it invites us into the ordinary world of working folk. Behind the charming Spinning Song and the rambunctious Sailors' Chorus we can find down-to-earth men and women carving a living out of a harsh environment – something we don't necessarily expect amid the *Sturm und Drang* of Wagner.

In *Dutchman*, Wagner began feeling his way toward the techniques that would dominate his later operas: increasing the dramatic role of the orchestra, making it an equal partner with the singers; moving away from traditional numbers opera into a through-composed music drama; working to fuse music, song, orchestration, drama, text, visual arts, and stagecraft into a total work of art – what Wagner called *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

Even with this early opera, Wagner was beginning to sense the possibilities ahead. Of his *Flying Dutchman* he wrote:

*The vast wild ocean ... does not willingly and obediently permit itself to be polished down to fit a modern opera ... The modern division into Arias, Duets, Finales, and so on, I had at once to give up; and in their stead narrate the Saga in one breath, just as should be done in a good poem ... never a Frenchman nor Italian would have dreamt of conceiving it.*

Wagner's new approach to music drama began with *Dutchman* and would develop much further in the string of operas to follow over the next forty years: *Tannhäuser* (1845); *Lohengrin* (1850); *Tristan und Isolde* (1865); *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (1868); the great tetralogy *Der Ring des Nibelungen* comprising *Das Rheingold* (1869), *Die Walküre* (1870), *Siegfried* (1876), and *Götterdämmerung* (1876); and finally *Parsifal* (1882).

Though his operas are complex, often forbidding, and certainly renowned for interminable length (*Dutchman* is refreshingly short, just two or three hours, compared to the usual 4-to-6 hour commitment required by most of his other operas), Wagner's music has nevertheless entered popular culture.

The famous opera caricature of a large woman with blonde braids and horns on her head actually comes from Wagner's *Ring Cycle*. And excerpts from his operas have often been used for motion picture soundtracks: one source says his music has been quoted in around 215 films. *The Ride of the Valkyrie* from *Die Walküre* is probably the most notorious and unforgettable scene in the movie *Apocalypse Now*; it also pops up in the Bugs Bunny film *What's Opera, Doc?*

The *Ring Cycle* has been lampooned in Disney's *Fantasia* and by numerous comedians (see the video of Anna Russell telling the story of this monumental four-opera cycle at <http://www.pov.bc.ca/dutchman-music.html>).

Among other very familiar selections from Wagner's operas are the Liebestod from *Tristan und Isolde*, and of course the Bridal Chorus from *Lohengrin* (*Here comes the Bride*), which celebrates a singularly ill-fated marriage.

For more links, go to <http://www.pov.bc.ca/dutchman.html>

For videos go to <http://www.pov.bc.ca/dutchman-music.html>

# Review the Opera!

## *The Flying Dutchman* - My Thoughts

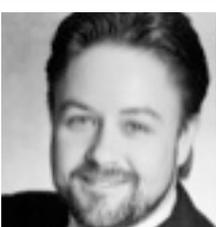
Pacific Opera Victoria

October 4, 2011



Conducted by  
Maestro Timothy Vernon

Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_

The Artists	Description of Character	Description of Voice
John Fanning  <b>Dutchman</b>		
Gary Relyea  <b>Daland</b>		
Joni Henson  <b>Senta</b>		
Robert Künzli  <b>Erik</b>		
Michael Colvin  <b>Steersman</b>		
Rebecca Hass  <b>Mary</b>		

After the Opera...

Re-draw your favourite moment from the Opera!



What is happening in this Scene?

Which Characters are depicted?

What would you change about this Scene?

## Glossary of commonly used Opera Terms

**ACT:** A portion of an opera designated by the composer, which has a dramatic structure of its own.

**ARIA:** A solo piece written for a main character, which focuses on the character's emotion.

**BACKSTAGE** - any area of the theatre behind the proscenium; can refer to the wings as well as the dressing rooms.

**BATON:** A short stick that the conductor uses to lead the orchestra.

**BEL CANTO:** An Italian phrase literally meaning "beautiful singing." A traditional Italian style of singing that emphasizes tone, phrasing, coloratura passages and technique. Also refers to opera written in this style.

**BUFFO:** From the Italian for "buffoon." A singer of comic roles (basso-buffo) or a comic opera (opera-buffa).

**BLOCKING:** Directions given to actors for on-stage movements and actions.

**BRAVO (BRAH-voh):** Literally, a form of applause when shouted by members of the audience at the end of an especially pleasing performance. "Bravo" is for a single man, "brava" for a woman, and "bravi" for a group of performers.

**COLORATURA:** Elaborate ornamentation of vocal music using many fast notes and trills.

**CORD, VOCAL:** The wishbone-shaped edges of muscles in the lower part of the throat whose movements create variations in pitch as air passes between them.

**DIAPHRAGM:** A muscle beneath the lungs and above the stomach which acts as a trampoline does, pushing the air from the lungs at a desired rate.

**DIVA:** Literally "goddess," it refers to an important female opera star. The masculine form is divo.

**DROP (n.)** - a flat piece of cloth that is flown – ie. It "drops" from the flies. Often it is elaborately painted. Some stage sets are made up entirely of painted "drops"

**ENCORE:** Literally means "again." It used to be the custom for a singer to repeat a popular aria if the audience called "encore" loudly enough. This is still done in the middle of an opera in countries such as Italy, but it is rare elsewhere. Soloists frequently give encores at the end of a concert but not an opera.

**ENSEMBLE:** Two or more people singing at the same time, or the music written for such a group.

**FALSETTO:** A method of singing above the natural range of the male voice. Often used in opera for comic effects such as a man imitating a woman.

**FLAT** - a piece of hard stage scenery that is flat. A wall can be made from a series of flats. Flats used to be made always of canvas stretched on a wooden frame. This made a good surface for painting and kept the flats very lightweight. Flats are now often made from very thin plywood instead of canvas.

**FLIES (n.)** - the area above the stage where scenery, lights, etc. are hung. Anything that goes up and down to/from the flies is said to fly or be flown.

**GREENROOM** - The lounge in the lower level where performers and crew can relax.

**HOUSE** - strictly speaking, the theatre. However, it is often used to refer to the audience seating area, the auditorium. Example: "The house is open" means the audience is or has been admitted.

**LEGS** - Draperies or flats that hang vertically, usually at the sides of the stage as masking.

**LIBRETTO** - the words or text. This is like the script of a play. Very often (almost always) the words will be in a foreign language.

**MAESTRO (mah-EHS-troh):** Literally "master;" used as a courtesy title for the conductor. The masculine ending is used for both men and women.

**PROSCENIUM** (pronounced pro-see'-nee-um) - the wall that separates the stage from the audience. The "proscenium opening" acts as a picture frame for the stage action.

**RAKE** - a slanted stage floor.

**RECITATIVE:** Words sung in a conversational style, usually to advance the plot. Not to be confused with aria.

**RÉPÉTITEUR (reh-peh-ti-TEUR):** A member of the music staff who plays the piano for rehearsals and, if necessary, the piano or harpsichord during performances. They frequently coach singers in their roles and assist with orchestra rehearsals.

**SITZPROBE (ZITS-proh-bah):** Literally, "seated rehearsal," it is the first rehearsal of the singers with the orchestra and no acting.

**STAGE MANAGER:** The person in charge of the technical aspects of the entire opera, including light changes, sound effects, entrances (even of the conductor) and everything else that happens.

**SUPER** - short for supernumerary; just a fancy operatic word meaning "extra".

**SYNOPSIS** - a short description of the plot or story-line of the opera.

**TROUSER ROLE:** A role depicting a young man or boy but sung by a woman.

**UPSTAGE (adv)** - the back of the stage.

**UPSTAGE (vb)** - to attract attention or distract the audience away from the proper focus.

**WINGS** - areas at either side of the stage where people wait to make entrances and scenery is stored.

## Teacher's Comments

Your comments and suggestions are greatly appreciated. Please take a few minutes to fill out this questionnaire and return it to the address below. Thank you for your comments and suggestions.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade(s) you teach: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Subjects: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you attended other arts events with your students in the past year? Yes No

If yes, what were they? \_\_\_\_\_

Were you able to use the Teacher's Study Guide and Activity Guide in your classroom activities before attending the opera? Yes No

If not, please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_

If so, which sections of the Study Guide and Activity Guide did you find most useful? \_\_\_\_\_

How appropriate was the information provided in the Guides? \_\_\_\_\_

What would you add/delete: \_\_\_\_\_

Did you spend classroom time discussing the performance after your students attended the opera?  
Yes No

Do you have any comments about the performance itself? \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to receive information on our future Student Dress Rehearsals? Yes No

How would you like to receive information? Fax Email Letters Other \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form to:

Jackie Adamthwaite, Manager of Artistic Programs  
1815 Blanshard Street, Suite 500, Victoria, BC, V8T 5A4 or by fax: 250-382-4944