

**SYNOPSIS****Act One**

The Prince arrives at the seashore, searching for a mermaid (Rusalka) he has seen playing in the ocean. He becomes trapped by a huge blob of kelp and – as he's struggling to escape – the mermaid rescues him!

The good-hearted Creatures of the Coral Reef report this news to Rusalka's father, the Sea King. Rusalka admits that she's in love with a human and insists she will only be happy if she becomes human, too. The King warns her that she is making a bad decision and is in great danger. But, Rusalka asks Jezibaba, the Sea Witch, to turn her into a woman. Jezibaba makes a magic potion and gives it to the mermaid. The witch adds a curse to the magic spell: the Prince won't be able to hear anything Rusalka says up on land. Also, if the romance doesn't work out, Rusalka must come back to the ocean and become Jezibaba's kelp (seaweed) slave! Rusalka agrees and drinks the potion. The Prince returns to the seashore and finds the silent girl stepping out of the ocean. He takes her away to his castle. (This action takes place during the scene change.) Jezibaba changes into the costume of a Foreign Princess and goes up on shore so she can wreck Rusalka's chances with the Prince. The Sea King changes into the costume of a Foreign Minister and follows the evil witch so he can keep an eye on her!

**Act Two**

At the castle, the Foreign Dignitaries and Foreign Minister (Sea King in disguise) attend a party in honor of the Prince and his silent girl friend. The Foreign Princess (Jezibaba in disguise) causes all sorts of trouble for Rusalka who finally runs away, heartbroken. She knows she must now return to the sea and serve Jezibaba! The Prince follows her down to the shore, confused by his feelings. Rusalka appears covered in seaweed and the Prince is frightened and turns away.

Underwater once again, Rusalka begs Jezibaba for help. The Creatures of the Coral Reef convince the witch to give their friend one last chance. Jezibaba agrees but warns that the Prince must love Rusalka for her inner beauty (since she's an ugly seaweed slave) and then give up his life on land. The Prince appears and frees Rusalka from the seaweed and the two live happily ever after in the ocean!

# *An Opera is a Story!*

# RUSALKA: A MERMAID'S TALE

## THINGS TO KNOW

- 1) **LESSON PLANS.** Please read over these in advance of each visit. Take note of the follow-up activity ideas at the end of each lesson.
- 2) **NAME TAGS.** These are very helpful for our teaching artist in building relationships with your students. Please use whatever is easiest for you - masking tape works fine!
- 3) **DOCUMENTATION.** Throughout the residency, I encourage you to take pictures of the experience and collect artwork, writings or other materials that reflect the children's learning and experience. Inviting the children to explain this documentation to parents is a great way to assess their understanding.
- 4) **EVALUATION.** Following the residency, please complete the attached evaluation form. You may return this to your site director who will mail it to the Pittsburgh Festival Opera office. These evaluations are extremely important to improving our program and securing future funding.

## PAST OPERAS

2018 **Goldie B. Locks and the Three Singing Bears**

2017 **Hansel & Gretel by Engelbert Humperdinck**

2016 **Pirates of Penzance by Gilbert & Sullivan**

2015 **The Merry Widow by Franz Lehár**

2013 **Carmen by Georges Bizet**

# An Opera is a Story!

## RUSALKA: A MERMAID'S TALE

### Workshop #1:

#### Materials

Teachers, please provide name tags for each child.

Artist will bring: story box, portable speaker, and all necessary materials

#### Warm-Ups

- What is OPERA? "An opera is a story and all of the words are sung!"
- Vocal warm-up: Explore the high, middle and low sounds of our voices. Apply these pitches to learning each other's names.
- SPLASH!: Explore various levels of volume with this fun game.

#### Main Activities

- Our opera story is called: A Mermaid's Tale and the main character is Rusalka (roo-SAL-kuh). She is the Princess of the Coral Reef, daughter to the Sea King and in search of something new and exciting in her life. Even though she loves her friends and family in the underwater in the Coral Reef, she thinks she will be more happy living on land as a human. Maybe we can help Rusalka make her decision.
- Today's characters
  - Creatures of the Coral Reef,
  - Sea King, Rusalka's Father
  - Rusalka, Princess of the Coral Reef
- **SING: Ho, Ho, Ho!** The sea creatures tell the Sea King what Rusalka has been up to. Children can sing along too!
- Rusalka begs her father to help her find happiness. He warns her that there may be terrible consequences for mermaids who want to live on land. The Sea King reluctantly explains what she will need to do in order to explore life on land. The first step, they must find the witch of the dark sea, Jezibaba.
- The Sea King and Rusalka go deep into the dark sea to visit the witch, Jezibaba. She offers Rusalka a solution to her problem. *Have children stand and walk around in a circle swimming to see Jezibaba, play music in the background*
- **SING: Jezibaba, Jezibaba**

#### Closing

Review what we learned. Sing together "**An opera is a story and all of the words are sung.**"

#### Suggested extension activities

- Practice singing the *Opera Song* throughout the day: Morning, transitions, before or after lunch.
- Play songs from the Music List and recorded tracks.
- Create a Coral Reef in your classroom for children to imagine and reenact story elements.

# An Opera is a Story!

# RUSALKA: A MERMAID'S TALE

## Workshop #2: New Adventures & Choices

### Materials

Teachers, please provide name tags for each child.

Artist will bring: story box, portable speaker

### Warm-Ups

- What is OPERA? "An opera is a story and all of the words are sung!"
- Vocal warm-up: Explore the high, middle and low sounds of our voices. Apply these pitches to learning each other's names.
- SPLASH!: Explore various levels of volume with this fun game.

### Main Activities

- Review story elements from the last workshop.
  - Do you remember the characters we met last time?
  - **SING: Sea Urchins, Ho Ho Ho!**
  - What was happening in the story?
  - **SING: Jezibaba, Jezibaba!**
- Today's characters:
  - Jezibaba, witch of the dark sea
  - The Prince, Prince of the castle on land
- Jezibaba casts a spell on RUSALKA replacing her mermaid tale with legs and feet. And because there's always a catch, Rusalka will not be able to speak while she is on land and will have to find other ways to communicate. **SING: The Spell**
- Dancing is a great way to communicate without talking and Rusalka learns this at the party she attends at the castle.
  - A Party at the Castle: *Play music from the opera and lead the students in a dance with dancing scarves and choreography.*
  - After the party, Rusalka has to decide where she will live. She thinks about her home in the Coral Reef and all of her friends, she also thinks about the fun she had at the party, the prince and all the land there is to explore.
  - Present the *Under the Sea or Up on Land Decision Board*, discuss with the children the benefits of either choice. What are the best parts of living on land or underwater?
- At the next workshop, we will find out what she decides.

### Closing

Review what we learned. Sing together "**An opera is a story and all of the words are sung.**"

### Suggested extension activities

- Practice retelling parts of the story, by having the children act it out.

# An Opera is a Story!

# RUSALKA: A MERMAID'S TALE

## Workshop #3: Teamwork & Sacrifice

### Materials

**Teachers - please provide name tags for each child.**

Artist will bring - story box, portable speaker

### Warm-Ups

- What is OPERA? "An opera is a story and all of the words are sung!"
- Vocal warm-up: Explore the high, middle and low sounds of our voices. Apply these pitches to learning each other's names.
- SPLASH!: Explore various levels of volume with this fun game.
- **Parachute Game**

### Main Activities

- Review story elements from the last workshop.
  - Do you remember the spell that Jezibaba put on Rusalka?
  - **SING: The Spell**
  - What do you remember about the party? Was it fun?
  - How did Rusalka communicate if she couldn't talk?
- Finally Rusalka must decide if she wants to stay living on land or if she wants to go back to the Coral Reef. Will you help her decide?
- Pull out the Decision Board and discuss the benefits of both land and sea, then the group can vote.
- Rusalka and the Prince will live together underwater in the Coral Reef.

The End

### • Preparation for the Mini-Show:

- Learn what it means to be a great audience member
- What to expect from the singer on stage
- How to enjoy the show and give thanks to singers, Bravo!

### Closing

Review what we learned. Sing together "**An opera is a story and all of the words are sung.**"

### Suggested extension activities

- Practice retelling parts of the story, by having the children act it out.
- Practice the vocabulary words learned in this session: COURAGE, SACRIFICE
- Have your students vote on the best place to live.

# *An Opera is a Story!*

# RUSALKA: A MERMAID'S TALE

## **Workshop #4: Rusalka - Mini Show**

Children will review warm-ups and audience participation etiquette and enjoy a mini-performance of the opera story. Children will also be able to demonstrate appropriate audience behaviors and practice getting ready for the show.

### **Warm-Up**

- “An opera is a story and all of the words are sung!”

### **Main Activities**

- Teaching Artist explains that an opera is usually performed on a stage. Using tape to create a “stage” in the room, explaining that a stage is the place where the storytellers sing and dance to tell the story. Those who are watching the opera story are called the audience. The audience listens to the story, then claps and says Bravo! to thank the storytellers.
- The performers will pretend by wearing costumes like the characters in the story.

### **PERFORMANCE**

### **Closing**

All will sing “An Opera is a Story...” one last time! Teaching Artist will distribute take home flyers and CDs for each child

### **Extension for teachers**

- Read other famous fairytales and compare to The Enchanted Forest. What parts of the story are real and which are imaginary? How do the characters work together? How might you make an opera out of another fairytale?
- Create operas out of favorite storybooks by singing repeated refrains, adding instrumental accompaniment or acting it out on the class “stage.”

### **IMPORTANT:**

**TEACHERS, PLEASE COMPLETE THE () EVALUATION FORM AND RETURN TO  
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

- **COLLECT FROM OTHER TEACHERS AND MAIL TOGETHER IN THE PROVIDED STAMPED & ADDRESSED ENVELOPE**
- **SCAN AND EMAIL TO [education@pittsburghfestivalopera.org](mailto:education@pittsburghfestivalopera.org)**

**Vocabulary List****Amphibious**

Able to live on land and in water.

**Aria**

A solo song in an opera.

**Audience**

a group of people who gather together to listen to a concert or watch something like an opera; the people who attend a performance

**Beat**

The underlying pulse of a song.

**Bravo (brah-voh)**

Audience members shout this Italian word after an exciting aria, scene, act, or performance.  
It means "well done."

**Choice**

the opportunity or power to make a decision between two or more possibilities

**Composer**

The person who writes the music for the opera.

**Coral reef**

Stony-looking formations of coral rising near or to the surface of warm seas.

**Rhythm**

The pattern of beats created by the notes in a musical line.

**Opera**

"An opera is a story, and all of the words are sung!"

**Sea kelp**

Large, sturdy seaweed.

**Stage**

a raised platform in a theater or auditorium, where the performers stand

**Urchins**

Urchins ball-shaped sea animal covered with long, movable spines.

## Extension Activities

### ★ **Keep Singing!**

The children are learning fun new songs during our workshops about the story. Encourage the children to remember these songs and story elements by making time to sing the songs during your class time or transitions.

### ★ **Underwater Classroom**

Help your students imagine and create their own underwater Coral Reef right in your classroom. They can learn colors, animals, nature and counting by building a coral reef on a small part of the wall in your classroom. The children can help to cut out the different items and place them on the wall.

★ Create a **stage area** in the classroom and invite children to retell their favorite parts of the story, sing songs, dance or show and tell. Encourage audience members to clap and say bravo!

★ **Play music** in your classroom during special activities, transitions or nap time. Use the music list and provided mp3 tracks to remind children of events from the story.

★ Do you have other ideas?

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