



GLYNDEBOURNE
EDUCATION

Opera Experience



La Cenerentola

Gioacchino Rossini

Opera in two acts

*Libretto by Jacopo Ferretti
after Charles-Guillaume
Étienne*

First performed in Rome,
25 January 1817

This programme is generously supported by
The Foyle Foundation and



La Cenerentola



Preparing for a workshop

This pack contains information about the basic storyline and characters of *La Cenerentola* - it would be useful for your students to know something of this before the workshop. The entire pack will not take long to read.

Breaks and refreshments

There will be a break of approximately 30 minutes during the workshop, and about one hour and 45 minutes between workshop and performance at the theatre.

Please ensure that the students bring drinks, snacks and a packed meal as food and refreshments will not be available.

Parking

Please allow adequate time for parking before a workshop as workshops must start promptly (please make sure you check the start time of your workshop)

Information

Students below year 10 should not attend the workshop.

If you would like further information, please contact Glyndebourne Education on 01273 815023 or at tessa.chisholm@glyndebourne.com

La Cenerentola

What will happen in a workshop

Many of the students who will attend our workshops have never been to see an opera before. The workshop will serve as an introduction to opera itself as well as the specific opera to be seen that evening.

The afternoon will consist of:

Warm up activities

Musical exercises

Dramatic exercises

Listening to singers from GOT Company

Discussing the opera

By the end of the workshop, the students will be ready to see and hear and enjoy the opera with genuine understanding.

Students should wear comfortable clothes suitable for physical activities (if you would like to please bring a change of clothes for the evening performance).



La Cenerentola

Who's who

Cenerentola

(a.k.a. Angelina)

Orphaned step-daughter to Don Magnifico, Cenerentola is essentially the house slave and dog's body. After her biological father died, her mother married Don Magnifico before also dying. However, although constantly mistreated, Cenerentola is spirited and doesn't easily roll over.

Mezzo Soprano

Don Magnifico di Monte Fiascone

(Baron the magnificent great fiasco)

His name says a lot about his character - he is a buffoon, and laughing stock. Once a wealthy man, he has squandered all his money (and Cenerentola's dowry) on drink and his lifestyle and the family are now very poor.

Bass

Tisbe & Clorinda

Daughters of Don Magnifico, preoccupied by their appearance, clothes and material things, they are vain and proud. They don't like Cenerentola and treat her as a servant - does she make them feel insecure?

Mezzo-Soprano & Soprano

Don Ramiro

After a time spent travelling he has returned to be told by his father, the king, that he must choose a suitable wife or forfeit becoming king. Though he reluctantly agrees to marry out of duty, he is a romantic and really hopes to find his true love. He disguises himself as Dandini before the ball to try to find someone who loves him for who he is and not what he has.

Tenor

Dandini

Valet to Ramiro, he looks after the prince, cuts his hair and dresses him etc. During the character exchange he enjoys being dressed as the prince and plays up to the role.

Baritone

Alidoro

A philosopher and Ramiro's tutor. He wants to find a pure and good woman for Don Ramiro and so disguises himself as a beggar to test the characters of Don Magnifico's daughters. He is like a practical Fairy Godmother, manipulating characters in order to bring the perfect couple together.

Bass

La Cenerentola

Overview

Rossini disliked the idea of the supernatural solving all problems and turned this fairy story into a social comedy where love triumphs over malice and horrible distortions of class: 'Goodness triumphant' is the subtitle of the piece. Gone are the fairy godmother, the pumpkins, mice and coaches and, instead of the glass slipper, a more realistic matching bracelet for the prince to identify the mysterious beauty for whom he has (already) fallen.

But Cenerentola still has a mean step-father (Don Magnifico) and two nasty, vain sisters. She is relegated to the position of disdained scullery maid while Don Magnifico fritters away her inheritance on finery for the vain sisters. Rossini and Ferretti turn it into satire, making Don Magnifico and the sisters into deliciously comic figures, while, at the same time retaining the romance and idealism suitable for a fable — the kind, forgiving Cenerentola triumphs with grace and charm, not to mention some seriously showy music...

La Cenerentola

Synopsis

Act 1

Scene One

Don Magnifico's castle



Tisbe and Clorinda, the daughters of Don Magnifico, are adorning themselves extravagantly, and indulging in ecstasies of self-admiration. Cenerentola, their stepsister, sings resignedly to herself as she does the housework. There is a knock at the door and Alidoro appears. He is in fact a philosopher and the Prince's tutor, but at the moment he is

disguised as a beggar, the better to observe human behaviour and to ascertain if any young girl in the region is a suitable wife for the Prince. When he asks for charity, the sisters order him out, but Cenerentola secretly gives him coffee and bread. Then a number of the Prince's retinue announce that the Prince himself will shortly arrive and invite Don Magnifico and his daughters to a ball at which he will choose his future wife. While the stepsisters order Cenerentola to make preparations, Don Magnifico enters in a dressing gown and night cap and relates a dream he has just had of a donkey which sprouted wings and flew up to the top of a church tower. He at once interprets it: the donkey is himself, the wings are his two daughters, the church means a marriage and the flight to the top of the tower means a rise in the social scale.

Prince Ramiro appears disguised as his own valet, Dandini. He has come on Alidoro's advice, to spy out the land. The first person he sees is Cenerentola, and their attraction to each other is instantaneous. Ramiro asks who she is, but in her agitation she can give only a confused account of herself. Cenerentola is one more called away by the stepsisters and the Baron reappears in gala clothes and is warned by the supposed valet of his master's approach. Dandini, dressed as the Prince, now enters with the royal suite. He is received with extreme obsequiousness by Don Magnifico and his two daughters who he delights by his pretended attentions. He invites them to accompany him to his coach to the ball and they are on the point of starting when Cenerentola intervenes and begs to be allowed to go too. Her stepfather brutally refuses, explaining to the supposed Prince that she is a creature of the lowest birth. Just then Alidoro reappears, no longer as a beggar and declares that, according to the parish register, the Baron has three daughters. Where, he asks, is the third one? Don Magnifico, in some embarrassment, explains that she is dead and silences Cenerentola's protests with threats. Thereupon they all go out, leaving Cenerentola by herself. But a moment later Alidoro returns and tells her that she shall go to the ball after all; he has provided a coach and the richest clothes and jewels. With the reflection that all the world's a stage, he leads her off to the coach.

La Cenerentola

Synopsis

Scene 2

Prince Ramiro's palace

Ramiro and Dandini enter with the Baron and his two daughters. Dandini, still in his role of prince, appoints the Baron as Royal Butler and decorates him with the chain of office.

The Baron goes off to inspect the cellars. Ramiro instructs Dandini to test the characters of the two ladies and report to him later. Dandini, left alone with them, does his best to pay equal court to each, and then, overwhelmed by their attention, makes his escape.

Don Magnifico celebrates his appointment as Royal Butler by a ritual tasting of the Prince's wines. He dictates a proclamation to be posted all over the city, forbidding the addition of water to wine for the next 15 years, under pain of death. Overcome by the exercise of his duties, he is carried away by the attendants.

Dandini rejoins the Prince and describes the sisters' vanity and insolence. They presently return, and Dandini, explaining that he can marry only one of them, suggests that the other shall marry his valet. They both indignantly refuse to consider such a plebeian union. Alidoro now approaches and announces the arrival of an unknown and masked lady.

The stepsisters show signs of jealousy, which increases at the entrance of the newcomer. She is last persuaded to remove her mask and everyone is amazed by her beauty. The sisters are struck by her resemblance to Cenerentola. The whole company adjourns to supper.

Act II

Scene 1

Prince Ramiro's palace

Ramiro suspects that Dandini has also fallen in love with the mysterious lady and conceals himself as they approach. Dandini in fact begins to make love to her, but she rejects his advances and declares that she herself is in love with someone else — with his valet. Ramiro discloses himself, but the lady announces that before she can be betrothed Ramiro must discover who she really is. She gives him one of a pair of bracelets, tells him that she will always wear the other so that he can recognise her by it when he finds her, and departs.

La Cenerentola

Synopsis



Ramiro decides to end his masquerade and resume the attributes of royalty. He decides, too, to follow the unknown lady to the ends of the earth, and goes in pursuit of her. Alidoro, who has been secretly watching events, determines to arrange that the Prince's coach shall be upset when he is in the neighbourhood of the Baron's castle.

Dandini is now joined by the Baron and, under an oath of secrecy, admits that he is not really the Prince. The Baron's indignation knows no bounds.

Scene 2

Don Magnifico's castle

Cenerentola is once more singing to herself by the fire. Her stepsisters back from the ball, are again struck by her resemblance to the unknown lady. The Baron is raging against the valet, when Dandini rushes in, followed quickly by Ramiro, who is now revealed to everyone as the true Prince. He recognises the bracelet on Cenerentola's arm, and to the surprise and anger of the Baron and his daughters, pronounces her his chosen bride.

Scene 3

The grand salon in Prince Ramiro's palace

Cenerentola, now Ramiro's bride, proclaims from the throne to the Baron and his daughters that her revenge for their cruelty is to be forgiveness.

La Cenerentola

Gioachino Rossini

b. 1792
d. 1868

Rossini was a prolific operatic composer, creating 39 operas in the 20 years he spent composing. He was recognised as the greatest Italian composer of his time and set new standards against which other composers were to be judged. He was also a well known bon viveur - a lover of food, wine and socialising, retiring from composition aged only 37.

Musical Youth

Rossini's mother Anna was a seamstress and a singer. His father Giuseppe served as the town crier and inspector of the local slaughterhouses, but he also played the trumpet and horn in the local theatre band. As professional musicians, Rossini's parents recognized their son's talent at an early age - by the time he was six, Gioacchino was playing the triangle in the same band as his father. By 1806 he had begun a formal musical training in Bologna, studying composition, cello and piano.

Operatic Openings

In 1808 Rossini began his first operatic project for an opera troupe with whom he worked as a player and occasional singer. In the ensuing years, he worked at a hectic pace - by his twenty-first birthday he had composed ten complete operas and his fame and success were assured.

Creative Frenzy

1813-1817 saw Rossini continuing to bounce from one operatic project to another. He worked incredibly fast — his best known opera, *The Barber of Seville* (1816) was written in just three weeks. Very little is known about his life during this period — what we do know is that his star was rising and his music was played admired across Europe.

Fairly Tale Beginning

One year after the premiere of *The Barber of Seville*, Rossini received an opera commission by the Teatro Valle in Rome. However, just three days before the deadline on 26th December 1816, there was still no libretto. On that cold winter evening, Rossini met with librettist Jacopo Ferretti. As Rossini and Ferretti drank tea, the librettist proposed over twenty subjects, but Rossini rejected each claiming they were too serious, complicated, expensive, or not suitable for the cast which had already been hired.

It was late in the evening when Ferretti mentioned "Cinderella." Rossini stirred at the mention and asked, "Would you have the courage to write me a Cinderella?" Ferretti responded, "Would you have the courage to set it to music?" Rossini asked how quickly he could have an outline, and Ferretti told him by the next morning if he went without sleep. Rossini leapt at the chance - Ferretti went home and, as promised, had an outline by the following morning. Twenty-two days later he completed the libretto, and Rossini composed the music in only twenty-four days. *La Cenerentola* premiered on January 25, 1817, one month following its initial conception.

La Cenerentola

Gioachino Rossini

First impressions

After such a short preparation period, everyone was nervous on opening night. The singers were exhausted and in poor voice, and consequently the performance was not received well. In spite of the criticism, Rossini was optimistic saying, "Fools! Before Carnival ends, everyone will be enamoured of it. Within two years it will please France and be considered a marvel in England." Rossini's predictions proved to be correct by mid-February, *La Cenerentola* had been performed twenty times. Three years later Rossini's work reached London, and by 1825 it was first performed in New York. *La Cenerentola* was Rossini's twentieth opera and his last Italian comic opera.

Serious comedy

La Cenerentola is a semiseria or drama giocoso - Ferretti's libretto provided a fitting mixture of tragic potential and comic elements. Stock comic elements of mistaken identity and moments of extreme confusion are mixed with affecting personal moments and serious social commentary.

Peter Hall, director of this Glyndebourne production said about the opera: "I believe that Rossini's operas are funny only if they're done very seriously - they have political undertones. In *La Cenerentola* he took a fairy story and turned it on its head to make a social document about reason and rationality and about human balance, much more than about any kind of coincidental miracle. *La Cenerentola*'s a social comedy. It's about a girl seeing her chance and taking it and a young prince growing up so that he is capable of marriage."

Fairly fairy tale ending

Rossini's popularity became so great that in 1824 Charles X of France offered him a ten-year contract to write and produce a new opera every other year. *Guillaume Tell* ("William Tell," the overture of which is well-known as the theme for *The Lone Ranger*) premiered at the Paris Opera on August 3, 1829. In French opera, the musical variety and scale of *Guillaume Tell* were unprecedented, and while some found Rossini's new work to be overblown, many received it with great enthusiasm. Unfortunately, this was the only opera composed under the contract with Charles X, and a prolonged legal battle between the composer and Charles X ensued.

Rossini had composed an amazing thirty-nine operas by the age of thirty-seven. He retired from the world of opera challenged by his legal battles, poor health, and a changing musical climate. Although he did produce some sacred music and a few cantatas in the last forty years of his life, Rossini never composed another opera. Instead, with a passion for gourmet cooking, Rossini spent his retirement holding extravagant and prized salon gatherings in his Parisian home.

A good innings

The prolific composer died from a heart attack on Friday the 13th of November, 1868. Although Rossini was buried with great honour in Paris, the Italian government pleaded to have his remains returned to his homeland. Today he rests in the church of Santa Croce in Florence, Italy.

La Cenerentola

Opera Glossary

aria A song for solo voice reflecting how the character feels (usually miserable) about what has just or is about to happen.

auditorium Space within the theatre occupied by the audience.

baritone Middle-range man's voice, lurking somewhere between bass and tenor.

bass Lowest male voice. Often plays characters with dubious moral fibre.

chorus A body of singers who (mostly) sing and act as a group to make the crowd scenes a bit more plausible. Also the term used for any musical number sung by this group.

conductor Hand-waving-head-honcho, positioned to obscure the view of the lady sitting in the centre of the front row. Makes sure everyone is performing the same piece.

contralto (or alto) Low-pitched woman's voice. Not to be confused with... counter tenor High-pitched man's voice. Nearest we have nowadays to a castrato (from the verb to castrate...ouch...)

ensemble From the French word for "together". When two or more soloists try to have their say at the same time (can get rather messy...). Ensemble for two is a duet, three is a trio, four a quartet and so on.

finale The final number of an act - sung by an ensemble (see above).

intermezzo A piece of music played between the acts of an opera (usually just long enough for the prima donna to put on her sixth frock of the show).

interval A (welcome) break between the acts of an opera. The lights go on and the audience is free to move around, catch up on what's been happening, join the chorus at the bar...

libretto The text of an opera. Written by a librettist.

mezzo-soprano Female singer who can't quite reach those top notes. Not much glass-shattering action here.

orchestra Group of musicians found in the pit.

overture Music at the start of the show. Sets the scene, warms up the orchestra and reminds the audience that the performance is about to begin.

prima donna The leading woman singer in an operatic cast. Not to be confused with Guy Ritchie's wife...

props Mobile pieces of the set which help to make it all a bit more believable.

proscenium arch Wall in front of the curtain, dividing the stage from the auditorium.

recitative The bits which aren't the songs. Closer to the rhythm of speech and often accompanied by just a harpsichord or piano. Used to further the action of the story (we'd never get home if the plot was told through the arias...).

repetiteur from the French for to repeat. This tortured soul sits in on rehearsals and pretends to be an orchestra at the piano.

score The full score contains all the sung and orchestral parts in the opera. The vocal score has the voice parts and a piano reduction of the orchestra (for rehearsals - see repetiteur).

soprano High female voice. Watch out for those delicate window panes...

synopsis Outline of the plot. Especially useful during the interval when it is once more light enough to find out what on earth is happening.

tenor A high male voice. The good guy, pure of heart and all that.