

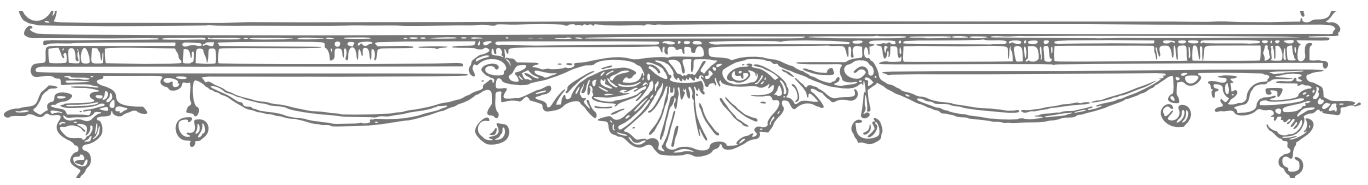
MAKING OF AN OPERA: BEHIND THE CURTAIN



Each year Opera Atelier presents two full-scale operatic productions, but this year they have decided to do things a little differently. They have enlisted the help of you and your classmates to come up with a brand new opera and help take it from the planning and rehearsal process to a fully-realized production at The Elgin Theatre.

Your job is to plan all elements of the production from inception to realization. You'll get to design the costumes and set, hire the performers and tech team, schedule the rehearsals, promote the opera to the public and deal with a few unexpected twists along the way!





Putting together a full-length production requires a lot of teamwork and a variety of skills and talents. Through our *Making of an Opera* program (both online and in-person), you'll get to meet some of the people behind the curtain who lend their expertise throughout the preparation of Opera Atelier's productions. This project puts you in their shoes, allowing you and your classmates to make decisions and learn about the various roles and responsibilities within an arts organization.

Activities include:

Opera Terms Brainstorm	Opera Budget
Why Opera? A Reflection on Music	Tickets
Musical Direction	Rehearsal Schedule
A New Opera	Costume Design
Scene building	Set Design
Story Board	Operagram
Thematic Sketch	Reflection
Location & Date	



Teamwork, creativity, organization and problem-solving are all skills that will be utilized throughout this experience. Students are encouraged to work on their own, in small groups or as a whole class. Many of the activities included can be completed using various steps of the Creative Process:

- ➡ Challenging and inspiring
- ➡ Imagining and generating
- ➡ Planning and focusing
- ➡ Exploring and experimenting
- ➡ Producing preliminary work
- ➡ Revising and refining
- ➡ Presenting and performing



OPERA BRAINSTORM



To get started, brainstorm keywords that come to mind when you think about the world of opera and live performance. Include everything from technical aspects, performers, instruments, costumes, staging, sets, etc. This list will help to streamline prior knowledge of this artform. Share your list with your classmates. It may be useful while completing other activities.

BONUS: Try this exercise again at the end of the experience
and see how much you've learned!



WHY OPERA?



Baroque opera originated in the 1600-1700s
and these works are still being performed today-
they truly have stood the test of time!

What kind of music do you enjoy listening to and why?

What uses do you have for music in your daily
life? When and why do you listen to music?

What are some other uses for music
that people may have?

Why is it important to preserve music from the past, such as Baroque opera?

What would the world be like without music?

A NEW OPERA

Baroque opera has its beginnings in the late Renaissance in Italy. It was originally conceived as an attempt to revive ancient Greek drama. Although no classical Greek music survived, Renaissance scholars were aware that Greek drama included declamation, and choral chanting. Consequently, early attempts at reviving this art form included these elements in addition to stories based on Classical themes and mythology.

As monarchs throughout Europe identified themselves more and more strongly with Greek heroes and myth-makers, they reimagined these stories and frequently used them as a means of personal promotion.

Research and select an existing figure from mythology, folklore or Indigenous stories that could act as the central character for a new and upcoming opera to be written in the Baroque style. Feel free to elaborate on the original stories to make them your own.



Complete the following worksheet to guide the vision and development of this new piece:

Name of character or creature:

Character's allies:

Character's enemies:

Overarching plot conflict. In a couple sentences, give an overview of what will happen in your story:

Number of singers needed to portray all roles:

Number of dancers needed to portray all roles:

BONUS: Write a full synopsis of the opera. Include all elements of story-
Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action and Conclusion.

SCENE BUILDING

A scene in an opera breaks down the bigger arc of the story into smaller parts to make it easier to understand. A director plans carefully to highlight important details of the story so the audience can follow along easily.

Building a scene involves answering a number of questions that an audience will ask. Create a scene for an important moment from your new opera creation. Fill in the blanks to build out your scene:



SET:

- Where are they? Are they outdoors or indoors?
- What scenery, set pieces/props or furniture will help create that world?
- What is the colour scheme of this scene? How does it evoke the mood?

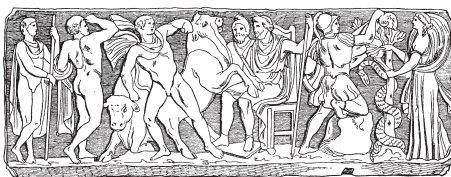
CHARACTERS:

- Who are the main characters in conversation? What are they wearing?
- What are they saying? Who is able to hear them?
- Which secondary characters or background characters to help fill out the stage?

Main character(s)

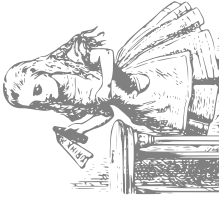


Secondary/Background Characters



ACTION:

- What is the main event?
- Is there a plan being hatched? Has something gone wrong?
- Is there a fight or reunion taking place?
- How are actions going to be depicted on stage?



STORY BOARD



The development of a scene takes lots of analysis and planning before the rehearsals even begin. Directors often use storyboards to visualize the movement on stage, by means of drawings or dioramas.

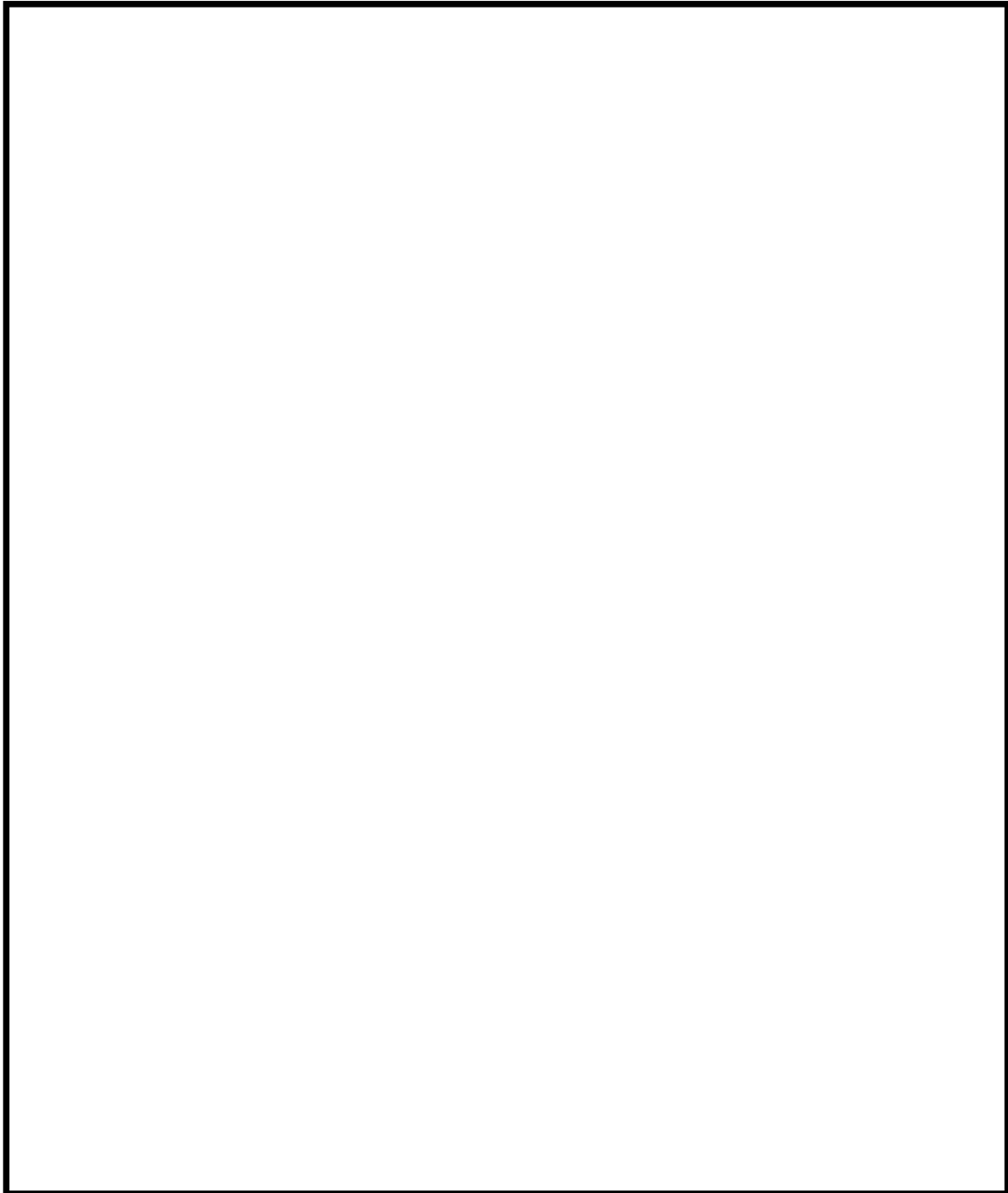
Using the details from the "Scene Building" page, create a storyboard for your scene using the following six frames. Capture the key moments that move the story forward with a clear beginning, middle and ending of the scene. Be sure to include any movements of set pieces, props and characters in your visuals!

THEMATIC SKETCH

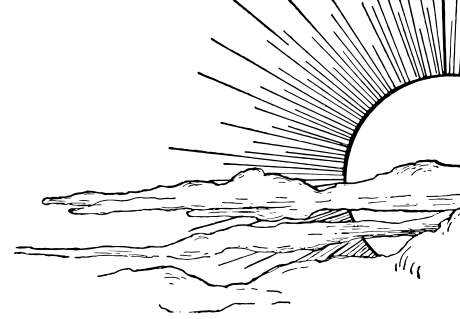
Drawings play an important role in Opera Atelier discussions. OA's Resident Set Designer & Art Director Gerard Gauci's journals are full of little pencil sketches, outlining OA's shared ideas. Try to distill the most important emotions and ideas of your story into a single inspiring image.

You can select a visual arts medium (sketching, painting, collage, digital, etc.)
that you are most comfortable with.

Focus on what key image would capture the essence of your story.



LOCATION & DATE



Opera Atelier's productions often inhabit the historic Elgin-Winter Garden theatre complex in downtown Toronto. This is the world's last operating double-decker theatre (one theatre built on top of another) and has a rich history spanning from vaudeville to international theatrical and filmed productions.

Your new opera is set to come to life in this incredible venue, however timing is an important consideration when promoting a production. Based on the subject matter and themes of your piece, certain times of the year may be more suitable for specific content.

For instance, the Fall may be an ideal time for an opera with eerie and mysterious themes, whereas Spring is often regarded as a time of regrowth, hope and rebirth.

Considering weather (for accessibility to the city and venue), cultural holidays and the general themes of your piece, select a date (either this year or next) for your performance.

SELECTED PERFORMANCE DATE(S):

REASONING BEHIND THIS SPECIFIC DATE:

—◆— BUDGET —◆—

You have been tasked with coordinating the budget for the first opera production of the season. The budget is set at \$500,000 and you cannot exceed this amount. \$200,000 of your budget is already in the company as profit from the last production. You must account for all fixed fees and make some decisions regarding number of performers and stage management members. You will then set your ticket fees for the show to cover the \$300,000 needed for this production and ideally, to leave some profit for the next production of the season.

Fixed Fees	Includes	Quantity	Cost
Creative Team	Director, Choreographer & Conductor Fees	1	\$50,000.00
Stage Manager	1 Week of Prep, 1 Week of Rehearsals and Performance Run	1	\$6000.00
Theatre Rental	4 Performances	1	\$70,000.00
Rehearsal Space	10 days of rehearsal	1	\$6000.00
Marketing	Print ads, digital ads, postcards, articles, radio ads, etc.	1	\$25,000.00
Costumes	Materials, building, maintenance fees	1	\$45,000.00
Hair & Makeup	Materials, design, application	1	\$15,000.00
Sets & Props	Materials, building, maintenance fees	1	\$40,000.00
Lighting, Sound & FX	Equipment, programming, running	1	\$30,000.00
Cargo/Transporation	Getting all equipment and materials loaded in & out of the theatre	1	\$6000.00
Surtitles	Translations or text that's projected above the stage	1	\$8000.00



Fixed Fees Total:

—◆— BUDGET CONT. —◆—

Now that you have your fixed budget set, you can decide how many performers and production team members you would like to have. You MUST hire two performers that are out-of-town (perhaps these are big international names that will draw audience members to your production!)

Taking into consideration the needs of the characters within your opera plot, desired orchestral contributions and amount of special effects, figure out how many professionals you can include within your production, while staying within the budget.

Flexible Fees	Cost Per	Quantity	Total
Local Singer Costs	\$8000.00		
Local Dancer Costs	\$5000.00		
Additional Accommodation/Travel Fees for Out-of-town Performers	+\$5000.00 to the above fees	Must hire at least 2	
Assist. Stage Managers, Crew	\$3000.00		
Instrumentalists	\$2500.00		
Fight Director	\$4000.00		
Diction Coach	\$3000.00		
Chorus/Choir (10 Singers)	\$10,000.00		



**Production & Artists
Fees Total:**

Fixed Fees + Production & Artists Total= _____
(Total Cost)

Budget (\$500,000.00) - Total Cost = _____

TICKETS

Now that you have had an opportunity to budget for the cost of your production, it is time to set ticket prices. Many professional theatres have a range of ticket prices, depending on the location of the seats. Following the Elgin Theatre Seating Plan, we will have four ticket prices with a specific number of seats available.

Those prices include General Balcony (two floors up from the stage level), General Mezzanine (one floor up from the stage level), General Orchestra (stage level) and a VIP package (front few rows at stage level).



General Balcony= **263 seats**

General Mezzanine= **330 seats**

General Orchestra= 859 seats - 100 "Comps" per show= **759 seats**

VIP= **42 seats**

1394 seats per show

4 performances= **5,576 tickets** for sale total, 400 "Comps" total

"Comps" refer to complimentary (free) tickets that are usually given to individuals who may help spread the word to the public. This may include reporters, celebrities, sponsors and close friends and family.

You must decide on ticket pricing that covers the additional \$300,000 needed for production costs. Reminder that you already have a base fund of \$200,000 leftover from a previous production. Ideally, you will surpass the \$300,000 mark and have some leftover to pass along to the next production.

BONUS: Design the extra perks of purchasing a VIP ticket. Backstage tour? Meet and greet with a performer? Complimentary drink? Remember that there is a cost to these perks so ensure you are charging enough to cover those additional costs.

General Balcony Ticket Cost = _____ x 263 = _____ x 4 shows= _____

General Mezzanine Ticket Cost = _____ x 330 = _____ x 4 shows= _____

General Orchestra Ticket Cost = _____ x 759 = _____ x 4 shows= _____

VIP Ticket Cost = _____ x 42 = _____ x 4 shows= _____

Total Ticket Revenue (Sold Out)=

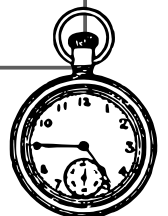
REHEARSAL SCHEDULE



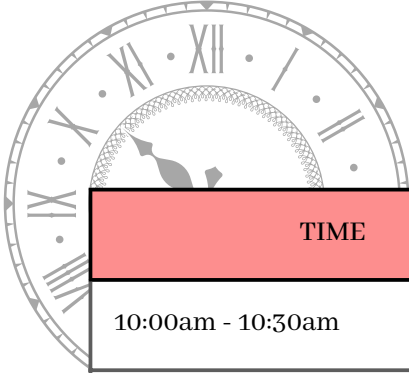
You will now step into the mind of a stage manager to help organize the rehearsal needs of the creative team and artists. Taking into consideration all of the needs outlined in the problem below, design a rehearsal schedule that accounts for the material needing to be covered. Reminder: there must always be a creative team member on sight with the performers and breaks must be allotted.

There are two studios available for rehearsals within the theatre and they are both available from 10:00am-4:30pm. Performers cannot exceed 6 hours of rehearsal and must receive a 5 minute break for every hour of rehearsal. This has been accommodated with a 30 minute company-wide break. You must schedule out all of the numbers in a logical way, being sure that performers and creative team members are available.

Number	Casting	Time
Opening Number	Full Cast required, Full Creative Team required	2 hours
Aria 1	Singer 1, Musical Director	30 minutes
Ballet Sequence 1	All Dancers, Singer 1, Choreographer	1.5 hours
Duet 1	Singer 1, Singer 2, Musical Director, Director	1 hour
Aria 2	Singer 2, Musical Director, Small Dancer Ensemble	1 hour Dancers must join for at least 30mins
Aria 3	Singer 2, Musical Director	30 minutes
Ballet Sequence 2	All Dancers, Choreographer	1.5 hours



REHEARSAL SCHEDULE CONT.



TIME	STUDIO 1	STUDIO 2
10:00am - 10:30am		
10:30am - 11:00am		
10:00am - 11:30am		
11:30am - 12:00pm		
12:00pm -12:30pm	BREAK	BREAK
12:30pm - 1:00pm		
1:00pm - 1:30pm		
1:30pm - 2:00pm		
2:00pm - 2:30 pm		
2:30pm -3:00pm		
3:00pm - 3:30pm		
3:30pm - 4:00pm		
4:00pm - 4:30pm		

COSTUME DESIGN



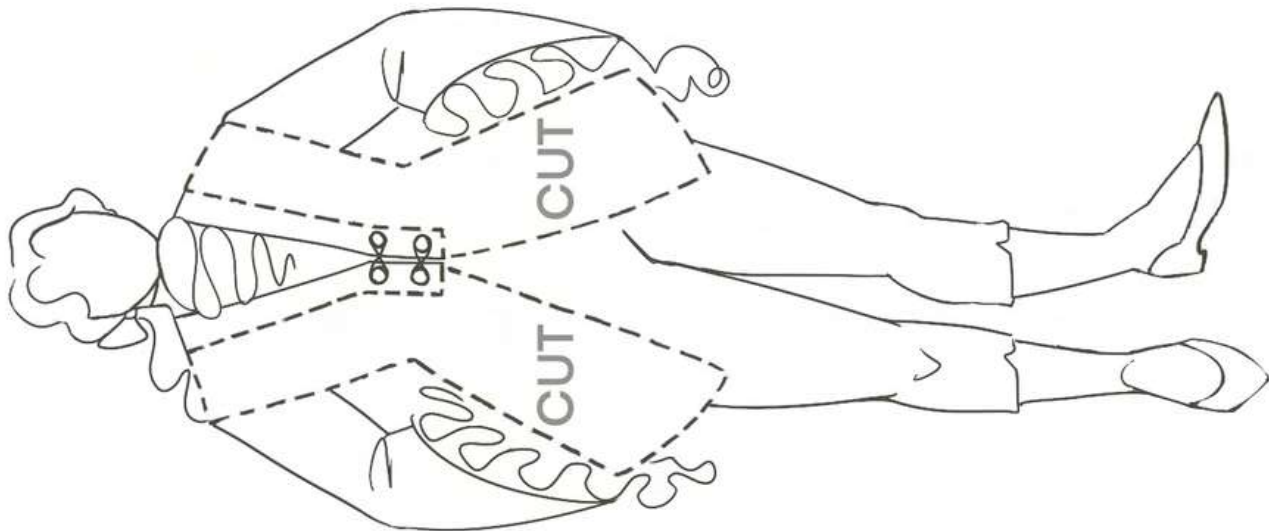
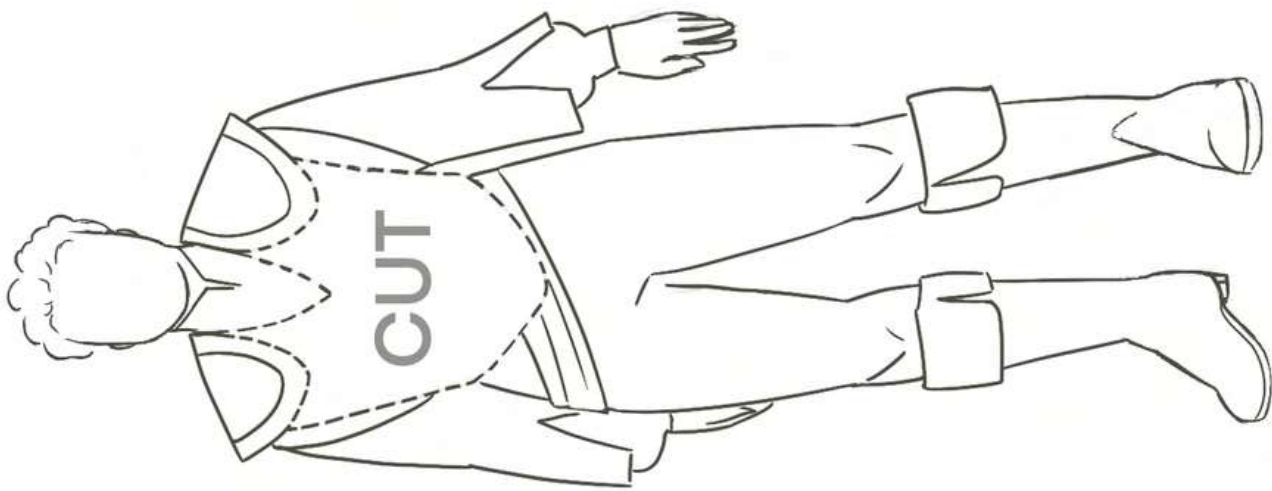
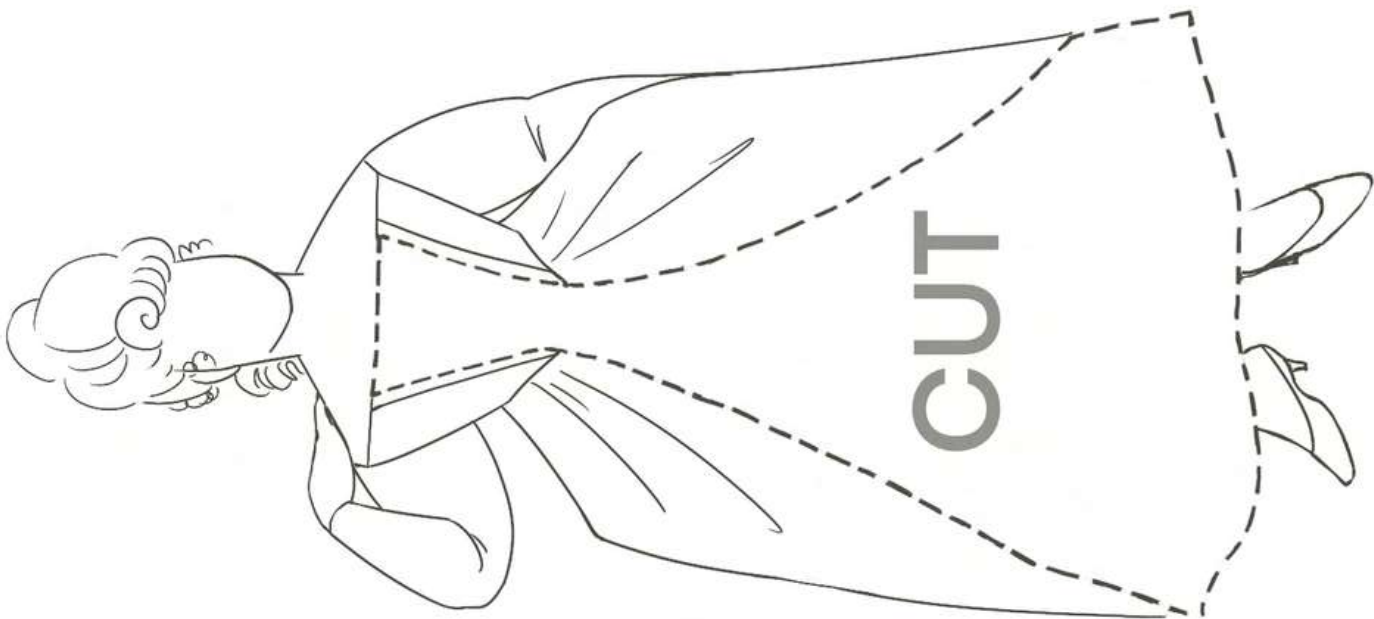
Designers have many decisions to make while developing, creating and fitting costumes for a production. One of the most difficult decisions is settling on fabrics, colours and textures. Step into the role of a costume designer using the designs below.

Cut away the areas labeled and then explore the environment around you. Hold up the open area and find a colour or texture found in the classroom that you think suits the design. Take a photo of each of your new creations. Then compare and contrast each of the designs to pick on that best suits your new opera production.



Original costume designs by Gerard Gauci.





SET DESIGN

VANISHING POINT

Set designs often use a technique that was developed in the Renaissance called perspective drawing. This concept was invented to help artists create the illusion of three dimensional space on a flat, two dimensional surface. This creates a more "realistic" and interactive environment against the live performers. Perspective drawing can be complicated but the simplest form is called "one point perspective". One point perspective drawing mimics human vision by establishing a "horizon line" (eye level of the viewer) and a "vanishing point" (the point on the horizon line where vision is focused.) Both the horizon line or vanishing point can move according to the effect the artist wants to create. See an example below that clearly shows the horizon line and vanishing point



Using the following designs by Opera Atelier's Resident Set Designer and Art Director, Gerard Gauci. See if you can find the horizon line and vanishing point in each piece.



OPERA ATTELIER



OPERA ATTELIER - RAVENHOLM DEPT

OPERA ATTELIER

OPERA ATTELIER

OPERA ATTELIER



OPERA ATTELIER - RAVENHOLM DEPT

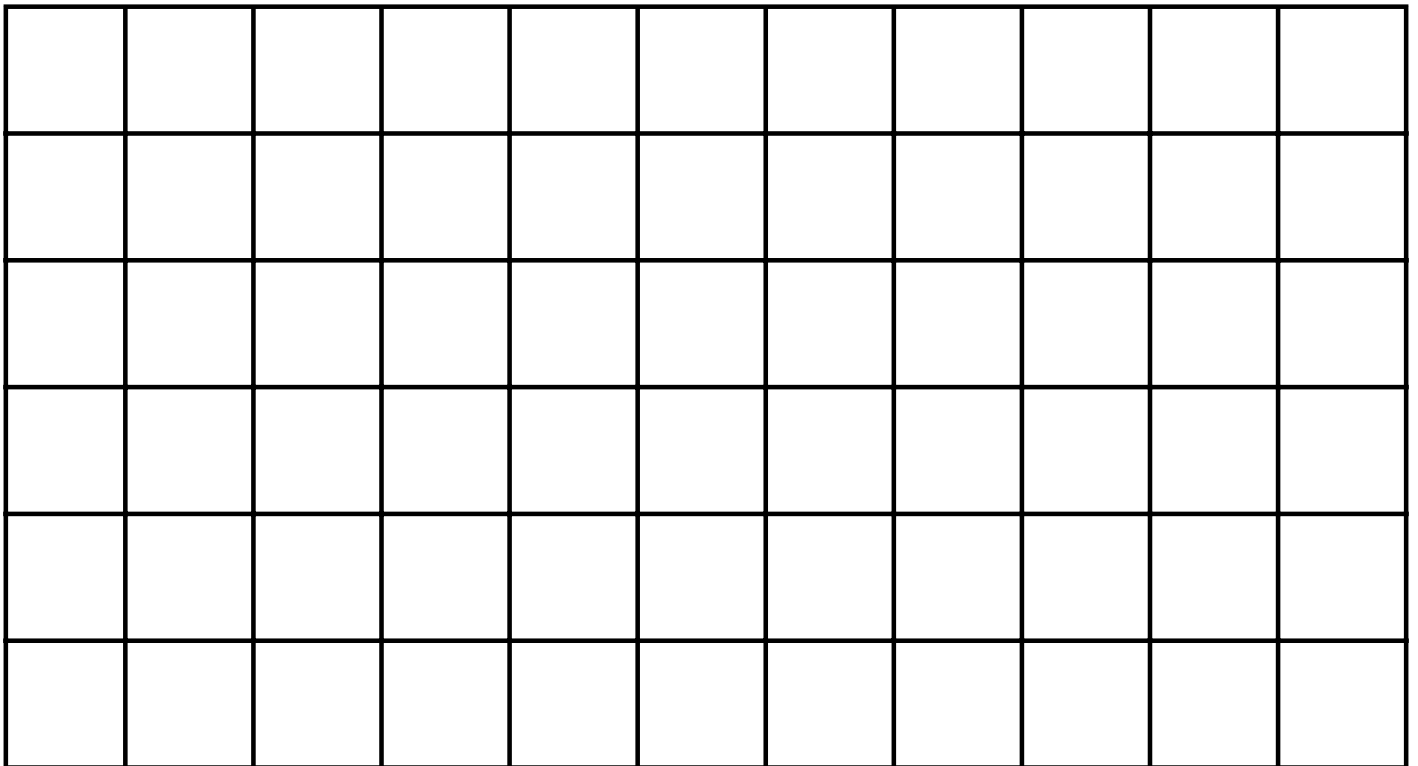
OPERA ATTELIER

OPERA ATTELIER



SET DESIGN CONT.

Gerard uses a specific process that takes his concept art to fully realized backdrops using a grid. Below you will find the concept art from a production of Medee with a grid layover. Using the blank grid directly below, try to sketch out the same design.



BONUS: Try doing a larger recreation of this piece on a different sized piece of paper.

You can start with the attached grid or make your own.

Now imagine doing it on a canvas large enough to hang at the Elgin Theatre!



OPERAGRAM



Social media has become an essential part of promoting all types of productions. It allows viewers to have an inside view of the performance, showcases the aesthetic and brand of the company and allows for direct communication with patrons.

Pulling inspiration from your Thematic Sketch, create a social media post to introduce your new opera to the public. Keep in mind that this is the first impression people will have. Don't forget to include a description and hashtags!

Profile picture placeholder

Post content area

Interaction icons: Heart, Comment, Share, Bookmark

Caption lines

BONUS: Using a graphic design platform, like Canva, recreate your above design in a digital format.

REFLECTION



We hope that you have enjoyed the process of producing a new operatic work through our "Behind the Curtain" exercises. Please reflect on your experience with some guiding questions below.

1. What activity/job did you enjoy the most?

2. What activity/job did you find the hardest?

3. If you had to select a job for yourself what would it be? Why?

4. What is something new that you learned during this process?

5. List 5 questions that you have for the creative and administrative teams based on your experience throughout this process.

