



SHOESTRING OPERA

presents

BOZO'S FORTUNE

Study Guide



Discussion Questions • Classroom Activities • Background

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PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

Option #1: The Story

To introduce the students to the story, the characters and the themes contained in the Opera.

The Plot

- Explain that the students will be seeing an Opera called **Bozo's Fortune**, in which a rich man's Relatives fight over his will, as each tries to get the best for themselves.
- Read the synopsis of the story without giving away the ending.
- Discuss the concept of the last will and testament and when and how a will is devised.
- Discuss the kinds of possessions that are left in wills. (Have you or your parents inherited anything from a relative or family friend?)

- Ask the students to suggest some ways that the Relatives might resolve the conflict. (Keep a chart of these suggestions for discussion after the performance.)
- What might happen if two people were hoping to inherit something from the same person? (Give examples from movies or television?)

The Characters;

- Use the family tree on page 4 to introduce the characters and their relationships.
- Introduce the bits of dialogue from each character* and ask the students to decide what they learn about the story and the characters from the dialogue.
- Imagine what these characters might look and sound like. Have the children draw or act out their ideas about these characters. Keep a record for post-performance discussion.

*see Student Activity Pages, pgs. 20–22 for characters

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

Option #2: The Opera

- Have students share their prior knowledge of Opera. (Have they listened to, attended, performed in Opera?)
- Do they know any famous Opera music or performers? (Carmen? The Magic Flute? The Three Tenors?)
- From this discussion decide on a definition of Opera and talk about how it is the same and different from other theatre.
- Introduce the various Opera voices, (see pg. 6) and play some examples.
- Introduce the story by reading the synopsis on pg. 18.
- Give the students the lines of dialogue (see pg. 20–22) and have them sing them aloud as they think the voices might sound.*
- Explain that the story will be told through music and lyrics, and that the music will be used to set the mood, introduce the characters and move the action along.
- Introduce the Opera terms (see Introduction to Opera, pg. 5)
- Listen to a CD of the original Opera, have the students move to it. Ask them to describe in their own words how the music changes from moment to moment. What do they think is happening?

*Note: Have fun with this exercise and let them exaggerate as much as they like; this is a great way to get all the biases about Opera out in the open and get all the silliness over with.



INTRODUCING THE STORY

BOZO'S FORTUNE is adapted from the opera **Gianni Schicchi**, written in 1918 by the famous Italian composer **Giacomo Puccini**. Puccini's opera is modeled on characters and plot from popular Italian street theatre, **Commedia dell'Arte**, but the story goes back to the fourteenth century.

The Relatives of rich old Uncle Bozo have gathered to mourn his death. They all hope to inherit his money and property. Young Ronny wishes to marry Lauretta, the daughter of Johnny Schicchi, but the Relatives will not hear of it. Schicchi is an outsider, an immigrant, "not one of us". A rumour begins to circulate, "They say in the café..." that Bozo may have left his fortune to a shelter for stray cats. The Relatives are horrified. Frantically they search for the will. Ronny finally finds it, and makes his Aunt Rita promise that if the will is favourable, he can marry his sweetheart Lauretta. Unfortunately, what they say in the café is all too true. Bozo has left his entire fortune to the cat shelter. What on earth can they do?



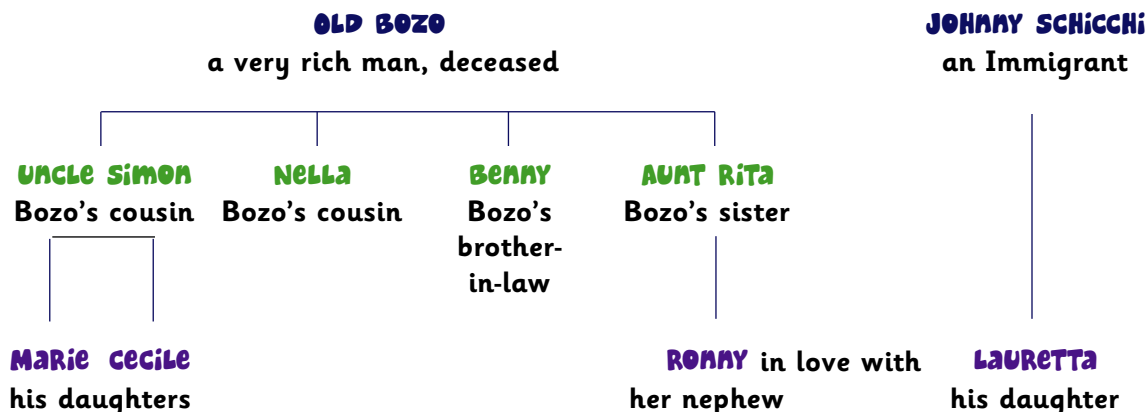
See Teacher Resource
pg. 18 for full synopsis.
See Teacher Resource
pg. 19 for
Commedia dell'Arte

THEMES EXPLORED IN THE OPERA

- Prejudice and Snobbery: attitude to Newcomers
- Cheating and Deception
- Greed and Bribery

INTRODUCING THE CHARACTERS

THE FAMILY TREE



ROMNY'S RELATIVES:

UNCLE SIMON, a Town Councillor, very full of himself

COUSIN NELLA, who never misses a family gathering

UNCLE BENNY, who never could hold down a job

AUNT RITA, the boss of the family

MARIE, the cellist

CECILE, the pianist

See Student Activity Pages, pgs. 20-22 for Pre-Show exercises on characters and dialogue.



INTRODUCING OPERA

BOZO'S FORTUNE is an adaptation of an Italian comic opera

Gianni Schicchi, a through-composed **opera buffa** that features a number of beautiful **arias**. The original **Libretto** is written in Italian.

What is an Opera?

- It is a story that is sung. It differs from a play in that the music and singing carry us to a place of high emotion that words alone cannot reach. The art form is a larger-than-life experience, usually dealing with big human issues and emotions.
- For several centuries opera was composed of a series of arias linked by sung passages called recitative, a vehicle for dialogue that follows the natural rhythms and accentuation of speech, often delivered very rapidly.

What is an Aria?

- An **aria** (Italian for **air**) is a self-contained piece for one voice, usually with orchestral accompaniment. Arias are most often featured in Opera, although there are many arias that form movements of oratorios and cantatas.
- By the mid-19th recitative had almost disappeared and most operas were entirely through-composed, some with no section being readily identifiable as a self-contained aria.
- **Gianni Schicchi** premiered in 1918. It is a through-composed opera, but it does contain several wonderful arias. In **Bozo's Fortune** we have replaced some of the sung dialogue with spoken dialogue to make clear the information the audience must hear.

What is a Libretto?

- The Libretto is the text of the Opera, the words that are spoken or set to music by the Composer.

What is Opera buffa?

- Opera buffa originated in the 18th century and featured comic characters and situations, usually involving servants, everyday settings, local dialects, and simple vocal writing that stressed clear diction and facility with patter.
- Opera buffa was intended to appeal to the common people. Whereas **opera seria** (serious opera) was a lavish entertainment that was both made for and depicted kings and nobility, opera buffa was made for and depicted common people with more common problems.



INTRODUCING THE VOICES

The human voice is the oldest musical instrument in the world. In western classical music voices are first separated into male and female and then divided into high and low. Our two singers have trained their voices for many years so that they can sing loudly without the use of microphones, sing softly but still be heard in a large space, and do many special things with their voices that untrained singers can't do.

The Soprano

The Soprano is the high voice for females, and Alto is the low voice. Our Soprano sings the roles of Loretta and Aunt Rita.

The Baritone

The Tenor is the high voice for males and the Bass is the low voice. The Baritone is the male voice between a Tenor and a Bass. The role of Johnny Schicchi is written for Baritone; the role of Ronny was originally written for Tenor, but it has been transposed down a few notes so that it can also be sung by a Baritone.

INTRODUCING THE INSTRUMENTS

The Cello

The cello belongs to the String Family, some of whose relatives are the violin, the viola, the bass and the guitar. It has four strings and is played with a bow, sometimes plucked. Listen for the difference in sound when the cello player plucks her instrument with her fingers instead of using her bow. This is called Pizzicato.

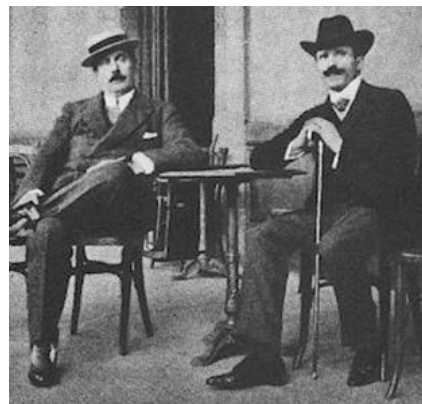
The Piano

Depending on what's available at your school, the pianist will either play your school piano (which will probably be an upright or a grand piano) or will bring an electric piano. A full piano keyboard has 88 keys. Electric pianos rarely have that many. The piano is a member of the Percussion Family even though it has strings (like the instruments in the string family). Why does it belong to the Percussion Family? If you have a piano at school or home, look inside. See the row of hammers? It is the hammers that strike the piano strings to make them sound that place it in the percussion family. Pianists study and practice for many years to be able to move all ten fingers both together and separately at slow and super fast speeds, quietly and very loudly.

INTRODUCING THE COMPOSER

Giacomo Puccini: 1858-1924

A famous Italian composer, his works include **La Bohème**, **Tosca**, **Madama Butterfly**, and **Turandot**. (See **Teacher Resource Section**)



Arturo Toscanini (conductor) and Giacomo Puccini

DURING PERFORMANCE

While waiting for the show to start, look at what is on stage.

- Who is in the bed?
- What are the puppets for?
- What musicians are going to take part?

During the show:

(Divide the class into groups and assign one or two points to each group so they can report to the class after the performance.)

- Which of the opera voices do you hear? From which character?
- How do the musicians become part of the action?
- How do the singers create many characters with just two singers?
- How does the music change to match the mood and action of the story?

All Students

Listen for the dialogue from the pre-show activities. Decide if the singer's meaning and emotion match your ideas about the character and the dialogue.

The Puppets

Three of Bozo's Relatives are represented by life-size puppets.

Our designers have used a lot of ordinary every-day objects to build the puppets.

- **Watch for** how the designers have used:

Mops	Metal pot scrubbers	Pillows
Spoons	Fancy gift ribbon	A Pizza-Pizza advertisement

POST PERFORMANCE

REVIEWING THE STORY

- What surprised you in the story?
- What character were you most interested in? why?
- Review the pre-show suggestions for resolving the Relatives' conflict.

EXPLORING THE ARTS



through Music



Drama



Language



and the Visual Arts

POST PERFORMANCE MUSIC ACTIVITIES

Music Activities for Intermediates



See if you can identify some of the musical terms found the musical score (pages 9-11) using the words and symbols in the box below.

1. **Grief of the Relatives** (pg. 9) over the death of poor old Uncle Bozo.
 - **Largo** (slow tempo), **minor key**, quiet dynamics, descending scales in cello and piano part
2. **Lauretta's Aria** (pg. 10) when she pleads with her father to solve her problem, O Daddy, if you love me...
 - Lyrical, emotional music, **sostenuto** (sustained singing, slow tempo), **crescendos** and **decrescendos** are used (getting louder and softer), singer uses **rubato** (takes time on certain notes) and other vocal techniques (sliding into choice notes) in order to express emotion.
3. The **Mayhem** (pg. 11) that ensues when Johnny tries to chase the Relatives out of the house.
 - The dynamic is **fortissimo** (very loud), notes are accented, the rhythm is intense with notes being pounded out, **tremolo** (rapid reiteration of notes) used to create the effect of excitement, **allegro vivo** (quick lively tempo). Instructions to the instruments: "**tutta force** (all of your force).

MUSICAL TERMS

- **Piano (p)** quiet
- **Pianissimo (pp)** very quiet
- **Forte (f)** loud
- **Fortissimo (ff)** very loud
- **Largo** slow
- **Allegro** fast
- **Crescendo** getting louder
- **Decrescendo** getting softer
- **Major key** tonality that reflects happy or positive feelings
- **Minor key** tonality that reflects sad

Music Activities for Juniors:



Listen to the music from Shoestring Opera's CD supplied with this Study Guide. Describe the music you hear using the musical terms from the box. How would you describe the music in your own words?

1. Oh! Poor dear Bozo
See how we mourn you
Look down on us from heaven
And bless us.
2. O Daddy if you love me
Don't leave me in despair
If I can't marry Ronny
It's more than I can bear.
3. Vile scoundrel, cheap crook, traitor, imposter
Nasty thief, evil swindler
Robber, robber

You miserable lot
Get out of here
This house and all within is now mine.

#1. "Grief of the Relatives"

Score

The musical score is for the piece "Grief of the Relatives" and is written for Soprano, Baritone, Cello, Piano, and Violoncello. The tempo is marked "Largo" with a metronome marking of 60. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes the vocal entries for Nella (Soprano) and Benny (Baritone), both with the lyrics "Oh poor dear bo-zo see how wemournyou look down on us from heav'n and blessus". The Cello part is marked "arco" and "p". The Piano part is marked "p". The second system continues the vocal parts with the lyrics "Oh look down see how I weep foyou" and the Cello and Piano accompaniment. The score includes various musical notations such as clefs, notes, rests, and dynamic markings.



Score

#2. "Lauretta's Aria"

The musical score is written for Soprano, Baritone, Cello, Piano, and Violoncello. The key signature is three flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor) and the time signature is 6/8. The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes the Soprano and Baritone parts with lyrics, the Cello part, and the Piano part. The second system includes the Soprano and Baritone parts with lyrics, the Violoncello part, and the Piano part. Dynamics include *pp*, *crescendo*, and *decrescendo*. Performance instructions include *rubato (colla voce)* and a note that the singer is to take time on certain notes.

Soprano
Oh! dad - dy if you love me don't leave me in des - pair - - - if

Baritone
pp
crescendo *decrescendo*

Cello
pp
pp rubato (colla voce) the singer is to take time on certain notes

Piano
pp

S
I can't mar - ry Ron - ny it's more than I can bear

B

Vc.

Pno.



Score

#3. "Mayhem"

[Composer]

Allegro vivo ♩ = 160

Soprano
vile scoun-drel cheap crook trai-tor im-pos-ter nas-ty thief e-vil swin- dler rob-ber rob-ber-

Baritone

Allegro vivo ♩ = 160
ff

Cello

Allegro vivo ♩ = 160
ff

Piano

5
S
vile scoundrel cheap crook - vil swin - dler

B
you mis-er-a-ble lot get out of here! this house and all with-in is now mine

Vc.

5
Pno.
Tremolo. Notes are played as rapidly as possible.

The musical score is written in common time (C) with a tempo of Allegro vivo at 160 beats per minute. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The Soprano part has lyrics: "vile scoun-drel cheap crook trai-tor im-pos-ter nas-ty thief e-vil swin- dler rob-ber rob-ber-". The Baritone part has lyrics: "you mis-er-a-ble lot get out of here! this house and all with-in is now mine". The Cello and Piano parts are marked *ff* (fortissimo). The Piano part includes a tremolo instruction: "Tremolo. Notes are played as rapidly as possible." The score is divided into systems, with a measure rest (5) at the beginning of the vocal lines.





The Aria

One of Puccini's most famous arias, "**O mio babbino caro**" (Oh my beloved Daddy) is from **Gianni Schicchi**. In **Bozo's Fortune**, the lyrics are rewritten as "Oh Daddy, if you love me".



Note: We give a sample of this aria on page 10, titled "Lauretta's Aria"

- **How would you complete this aria** if you were begging your father for something you really wanted?
- **Write your own lyrics** on any subject to accompany this beautiful melody.



Adapting an Opera



See Student Activity Pages, pgs. 23, 24



Writing an Opera

Choose a favorite folk tale and turn it into an opera, using traditional music with new lyrics. First write the **libretto** in the form of a play, then decide which actions, thoughts or emotions expressed by a character will be written as **arias**.



Acting Out the Story

In **Bozo's Fortune**, two singers play all the parts either as doubles or as puppets. The original Opera has a cast of 15; in **Bozo's Fortune** we have reduced the cast to 10, including dead Uncle Bozo.

In groups of five, improvise some of the ensemble scenes:

- the scene where Benny tells the Relatives what "they say in the café".
- the scene where the Relatives try to bribe Johnny
- How will you cast the extra characters?



The Puppets

Make your own puppets out of found objects, old clothes and old junk. You can make the heads out of papier-mâché or stuff a paper bag.



The Set

Shoestring Opera travels light, so we don't have a stage set. We ask you to use your imagination. But suppose that **Bozo's Fortune** had a big budget and was to be produced at a big downtown theatre. Suppose you were asked to design the set. Bozo was a very rich man, and lived in a grand mansion.

- **Draw or make a model of the stage set** for Bozo's Fortune.



EXPLORING THE THEMES



Through Drama



Language Art



Social Studies



Character Education



and Visual Art

Making a Will



- Write down the three things you own that you could will to someone.
- Write down the three people you might leave them to and why.
- With a partner, compare and contrast what you have written. Make a note of any ideas that you have in common.
- Share your list with the group and decide which are the most common items and who are the most common beneficiaries. (family, friends, charities etc.)

Prejudice



“Johnny Schicchi, that upstart!”

“What kind of a name is Schicchi? Is he Italian? Indian? Whoever he is, he’s not one of us!”

The Relatives are well-to-do snobs. They are all prejudiced against Johnny Schicchi and refuse to allow their nephew Ronny to marry Johnny’s daughter Lauretta, because

- Why do the Relatives dislike and disapprove of Johnny Schicchi? List all their reasons.
- Discuss **prejudice** and how it appears in daily life in Canada.
- Discuss **snobbery** and if you have encountered it in your daily life.
- Have you personally experienced or observed prejudice in your daily life?
- Divide into groups of five. You are Ronny; the other 4 are the Relatives. How would you deal with their prejudice and answer their objections to Johnny Schicchi?



Family Disagreements



Hold a Family Meeting

A family dilemma: Should she or shouldn't she?

Your sister wishes to marry someone from another country, race or religion. Your aunts and uncles disapprove. Your cousins support the lovers.

- Divide into 2 groups and **hold a family meeting**:
- Group 1 argues for the Aunts and Uncles
- Group 2 argues for the Cousins

Take into account issues like family traditions, family values, independence, mixed marriage, children of mixed marriages, ethnic diversity.

Immigrants and Newcomers



Conduct Class Interviews:

Take a partner and interview each other. Present the family history of your partner to the class. Some of your questions could be:

- Where were you born?
- Where were your parents born?
- If your family has been in Canada for several generations, what are you most proud of about your heritage?
- If you or your parents are newcomers to Canada, what are you most proud of about your heritage?
- What contributions have people from your country made to Canadian life that make you most proud?

Greed, Bribery and Deception



The Relatives are greedy, they try to bribe Johnny to make sure they inherit the most valuable possessions, and they willingly enter into an illegal act of deception by pretending the old man is still alive and wants to dictate a new will.

- **Discuss or write a composition** about greed, bribery and deception, and how they occur in daily life here in Canada.

Cheating



Subject: Johnny Schicchi is a cheat.

Johnny Schicchi deceives the Relatives and cleverly cheats them out of what they hoped to inherit. When does the end justify the means?

- **Hold a debate**, and argue:
- **Be it resolved that Johnny was right to trick the Relatives.**

At the end Johnny asks forgiveness for the trick he played on the Relatives.

- Would you forgive him? Why?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Selected Curriculum Expectation relevant to the performance and the activities in this Guide

LANGUAGE ARTS

Junior

Oral Communication

- 1.6 extend understanding of oral texts by connecting, comparing, and contrasting the ideas and information in them to their own knowledge, experience,
- 1.9 identify a variety of presentation strategies used in oral texts and analyze their effect on the audience
- 2.5 identify a range of vocal effects, including tone, pace, pitch, volume, and a variety of sound effects,

Text

- 1.7 analyze oral texts in order to evaluate how well they communicate ideas, opinions, themes,
- 2.4 identify various elements of style - including voice, word choice, and the use of hyperbole, strong verbs, dialogue, and complex sentences

Intermediate

Oral Communication

- 1.4 demonstrate an understanding of the information and ideas in increasingly complex and difficult oral texts in a variety of ways
- 2.3 communicate in a clear, coherent manner, using a structure and style appropriate to the purpose, the subject matter, and the intended audience
- 2.5 identify a range of vocal effects, including tone, pace, pitch, volume, and a variety of sound effects,

Text

- 2.4 identify a range of elements of style - including symbolism, irony, analogy, metaphor, and other rhetorical devices - and explain how they help communicate meaning and enhance the effectiveness of texts
- 3.3 read appropriate texts with expression and confidence, adjusting reading strategies and reading rate to match the form and purpose

VISUAL ARTS

Junior

Oral Communication

- produce two- and three-dimensional works of art that communicate a variety of ideas (thoughts, feelings, experiences) for specific purposes (e.g. puppet making)
- explain how the effective use of the elements and principles of design contributes to an art work's ability to communicate feelings, convey ideas,

Intermediate

- produce two- and three-dimensional works of art that communicate a variety of ideas (thoughts, feelings, experiences) for specific purposes (e.g. puppet making)
- explain how the effective use of the elements and principles of design contributes to an art work's ability to communicate feelings, convey ideas,



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

MUSIC

Junior

- Use correctly the musical terminology associated with the specific expectations for this grade.
- Write new words to familiar melodies, using their knowledge of rhythm to ensure that the new text fits the melody
- Sing or play expressively, giving particular attention to using suitable dynamics and tempi
- Describe how various elements of music are combined to create different moods.

Intermediate

- Demonstrate understanding of the markings and Italian terms for dynamics, tempo, articulation, and phrasing
- Read music appropriate for this grade, showing their understanding of the necessary aspects of notation
- Create musical compositions that make use of elements of music studied in this grade,
- Communicate their thoughts and feelings about the music they hear, using language and a variety of art forms

DRAMA

Junior

- Represent and interpret characters by speaking, moving and writing in role.
- Demonstrate an understanding of voice and audience by speaking and writing in role as characters in a story
- Describe and interpret their own and other's work, using appropriate drama vocabulary
- Identify and explain the use of significance of symbols or objects in dramatic presentations.

Intermediate

- Demonstrate an understanding of the principles involved in the structuring of works in drama
- Demonstrate understanding of the appropriate use of the voice, gestures, and the level of language in different dramatic situations;
- Review drama performances, orally or in writing, critiquing the use of elements and techniques



TEACHER RESOURCE PAGES

Glossary of Musical Terms

Opera: a dramatic work in which text is sung with instrumental accompaniment

Aria: a song for one or more voices which is written to exploit the capability of the singer and provide emotional moments within the story

Recitative: dialogue which is sung

Soprano: the high female voice

Baritone: the medium male voice, between bass (low) and tenor (high)

Orchestra: a group of musical instruments. **Gianni Schicchi** called for an orchestra of about 70 instruments

Cello: a bowed string instrument from the violin family, played sitting down

Piano: a keyboard instrument with 88 keys (7 octaves)

Libretto: the text, or written words, of an opera

BIBLIOGRAPHY, DISCOGRAPHY

Resources for Educators

Internet Resources for Teachers

Artsalive.ca : The National Arts Centre resources for students and teachers. (Canada)

EduNETconnect.com: Arts education lesson plans and arts resources. (Canada)

PBS.org : Music lesson plans from PBS. (U.S.)

Lessonplanspage.com : Music lesson plans, including opera-specific ones. (U.S.)

BBC.co.uk : Resources for students and teachers. (U.K.)

Various Websites that Introduce the Instruments of the Orchestra

Playmusic.org : Elementary (U.S.)

BBC.co.uk : Elementary (U.K.)

Linktolearning.com : Links to web sites supporting the Ontario K–8 curriculum. (Canada)

General Resources

Rosenberg, Jane **Sing Me a Story** . (the Metropolitan Opera's book of Opera stories for Children). Thames and Hudson, New York 1989. **Beautiful illustrations, well-told stories.**

Geras, Adele **The Random House Book of Opera Stories** (Random House Story Collections).

The stories of eight operas, each with artwork created by a different illustrator.

Discography

Puccini: Gianni Schicchi with Tito Gobbi. AMI classics. Great Artists of the Century



THE STORY: FULL SYNOPSIS: TEACHER RESOURCE

BOZO'S FORTUNE is adapted from the opera **Gianni Schicchi**, written in 1918 by the famous Italian composer **Giacomo Puccini**. Puccini's opera is modeled on characters and plot from popular Italian street theatre, **Commedia dell'Arte**, but the story goes back to the fourteenth century.

The Relatives of rich old Uncle Bozo have gathered to mourn his death: Aunt Rita (the boss of the family), Uncle Simon (a town councillor), Uncle Benny (who never could hold down a job), Cousin Nella (who never misses a family gathering), Uncle Simon's two daughters, Cecile and Marie (the cellist and the pianist), and young Ronny. The Relatives all hope to inherit money and property from their rich Uncle. Ronny wishes to marry Lauretta, the daughter of Johnny Schicchi, but the Relatives will not hear of it. Schicchi is an outsider, an immigrant, "not one of us". A rumour begins to circulate, "they say in the café..." that Bozo may have left his fortune to a shelter for stray cats. The Relatives are horrified.



Frantically they search for the will. Ronny finally finds it, and makes his Aunt Rita promise that if the will is favourable, he can marry his sweetheart Lauretta. Unfortunately, what they say in the café is all too true. Bozo has left his entire fortune to the cat shelter. What on earth can they do?

Ronny claims that if anyone can help them, it's Lauretta's father Johnny Schicchi. When Johnny arrives, Lauretta begs him for her sake to help (in her famous aria, "o mio babbino caro"). Johnny examines the will, says nothing can be done, but then he has an idea. If no one else knows that the old man has died, they will move the body to another room, make up the bed with fresh sheets, and send for the lawyer. He, Johnny Schicchi, will impersonate the old man and dictate a new will.

The Relatives are enthusiastic. They agree on the division of the property, except for three prized possessions: Bozo's great mansion in town, the gold mine in the far north, and his vintage Porsche. They agree to let Schicchi decide who will inherit these items, but then each in turn tries to

bribe him to leave these prized possessions to them. Schicchi agrees to each bribe—but then reminds them of the penalty if they are caught in this deception—a hand will be chopped off, and they will be exiled from the city forever.

Schicchi dictates the new will, leaving a small sum to the cat hospital, and the agreed-upon division of the other property.

The relatives enthusiastically approve. But then, waving a handless arm in warning, one by one Schicchi grants the Porsche, the gold mine and the great city mansion to...himself! He then throws everyone out, and the Relatives are helpless to do anything except grab what they can on the way out the door. Johnny asks the audience to forgive him for the trick he has played on the Relatives, but did they deserve the fortune more than he? He will put the fortune to good use. Lauretta and Ronny will help him manage the gold mine (after they have returned from their honeymoon in the Porsche), and they will all live happily together in Bozo's great town house.

Bozo has left his entire fortune to the cat shelter. What on earth can they do?

COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE: TEACHER RESOURCE

The plot of **Gianni Schicchi** (and of **Bozo's Fortune**) is based on an old form of drama called **Commedia dell'arte** that features:

plots involving love intrigues, clever tricks to get money or to outwit some simpleton
well-rehearsed jokes, stock physical gags, acrobatic feats and juggling
masks for all the characters except the lovers.

Commedia stock characters:

Arlecchino - also known as Harlequin, a clown, acrobatic and mischievous. He is a servant, poor, desperate, but he outsmarts everyone else in the end.

The Innamorati - the lovers. They are young, virtuous, and helplessly in love with one another.

Pantalone - wealthy, but very greedy. He is the archetypal "old miser."

The classic Commedia plot:

The innamorati are in love and wish to be married, but are prevented by their elders. They ask a servant (**Arlecchino**) for help. Typically the story ends happily, with the marriage of the **innamorati** and forgiveness all around for any wrongdoings.



Look up Commedia dell'arte on the web, you'll find lots of information about the plots, characters, the costumes and masks.



STUDENT PRE-SHOW ACTIVITY PAGE 1A

The Characters Option #1

Bozo's Relatives and Johnny and his Daughter, with some of their lines from the Opera.

- What do you learn about the story and the characters from these bits of dialogue?
- What do these characters look like?
- **Draw a picture** or **act out** your ideas about the characters
- **Sing** the bits of dialogue in the way you think their voices would sound.

“ Take your daughter and
leave here
For I won't let my nephew
get married to a pauper. ”

AUNT RITA
the boss of the family

“ As a town councillor, a highly
respected man in the
community, the house, the
Porsche and the gold mine
should all come to me. ”

UNCLE SIMON
a town councillor

“ If that man comes here, I'll
kick him down the stairs. ”

COUSIN NELLA
who never misses a family gathering

“ But people say when
Bozo's here no more
The shelter for stray cats will
have cash galore.
And others say his gold mine in
the far north
Will belong to the cats from
this day henceforth ”

UNCLE BENNY
who never could hold down a job



STUDENT PRE-SHOW ACTIVITY PAGE 1B

“ I have it –
I have it –
The final will of my
dear Uncle Bozo.
On this sad day mixed with joy,
I beseech ye
O Aunt, give me permission
to get married
To Lauretta, the daughter of
Johnny Schicchi!”

RONNY

Aunt Rita's young nephew, in love
with Lauretta

“ O friends – this wonderful
imaginative plan
Which I have spun out of my
clever brain
Will never have an equal
Ever again!”

JOHNNY SCHICCHI
An Immigrant

“ O Daddy, if you love me
Don't leave me in despair;
If I can't marry Ronny
It's more than I can bear.”

LAURETTA
Johnny's daughter




STUDENT PRE-SHOW ACTIVITY PAGE 2

The Characters:

The Relatives and Johnny and his Daughter.

Clip the following lines and hand them out to the students.

- Who do the lines belong to? Use the family tree (pg. 8) and the brief synopsis of the story.
- Sing the lines aloud as you think they should sound

1. *But people say when Bozo's here no more* 
The shelter for stray cats will have cash galore.
And others say his gold mine in the far north
Will belong to the cats from this day henceforth.
2. *If that man comes here, I'll kick him down the stairs.*
3. *O friends - this wonderful imaginative plan*
Which I have spun out of my clever brain
Will never have an equal
Ever again!
4. *I have it -*
I have it -
The final will of my dear Uncle Bozo.
On this sad day mixed with joy, I beseech ye
O Aunt give me permission to get married
To Lauretta, the daughter of Johnny Schicchi!
5. *Take your daughter and leave here*
For I won't let my nephew get married to a pauper.
6. *O Daddy, if you love me*
Don't leave me in despair;
If I can't marry Ronny
It's more than I can bear.
7. *As a town councillor, a highly respected man in the community,*
the house, the Porsche and the gold mine should all come to me.



STUDENT POST-SHOW ACTIVITY PAGE 3

Adapting an Opera

From Gianni Schicchi to Bozo's Fortune

Puccini's opera **Gianni Schicchi** was written in 1918 and is set in Florence, Italy. Our writer has brought the details of the story up to date and has suggested that the story may take place here in Canada.

Juniors:

HERE ARE SOME OF THE DETAILS OF THE ORIGINAL STORY.

- It's rumored in Signa...what's rumored in Signa?
- The monks
- The Medicis, Giotto who come to Florence and add glory to the city
- The farmlands of Figline, Prato, Empoli and Quintole
- Buoso's prize mule
- The mansion in town
- The saw mills of Signa

HERE ARE THE UP-TO-DATE EQUIVALENTS. MATCH THEM UP.

- The vintage Porsche
- They say in the café..
- The gold mine in the far north
- The Persian carpets, the candelabra, the wine cellar, the old man's watch
- Doctors from India, a nurse from Sudan
- The shelter for stray cats
- Bridge builders, dentists, teachers, all from Iran....
- The mansion in town



STUDENT POST-SHOW ACTIVITY PAGE 4

Intermediates:

Write an adaptation. Choose a folk tale or familiar story that happened long ago and write a new up-to-date version, revising the details, the characters and their situation so that the story might happen in 21st century Canada.

ORiGiNAL	ADAPTATION
Characters:	
Occupations:	
Places:	
Vehicles:	
Clothing:	
Objects:	



ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

#1 Giacomo Puccini: 1858-1924



- **Research** Puccini's life and works
- **Write a biography** of Puccini
- **Write** brief descriptions of three of his most famous operas

#2 Commedia dell'Arte



The plot and characters of **Bozo's Fortune** and **Gianni Schicchi** are based on old Italian street theatre, called Commedia dell'Arte.

- **Find the Commedia links:** How does **Bozo's Fortune** follow the classic Commedia plot and which Commedia characters appear in the Opera?
- **Write a play** featuring Commedia characters or a typical Commedia plot in a modern-day setting.
- **Make Commedia masks**
On the Commedia dell'arte website, it describes the appearance of the masks for the different characters. Make your own Commedia masks, then use them to act out a play of your own.

See Teacher Resource pg. 19 for information about Commedia dell'Arte.

Slapstick

Arlecchino carried a short wooden club that could be used in different ways, as a knife or a spoon (for stirring the pasta)

- a sword or a bat for hitting other characters
- a club or a dagger

It was made of two strips of wood held together by a handle and used as a slap stick, a special effects prop that could convey the sound of blows in a fight scene.

Slapstick now means **broad comedy** characterized by **boisterous physical action**.

- **Make a slap stick.**
- **Stage a scene** using the slap stick in more than one of the ways described above.

There is a direct link in the tradition of Commedia dell'arte to the plays of **Molière** in France, **Punch and Judy** in England, right up to the great **clowns of American vaudeville** such as the Marx Brothers.

- **Watch a Marx Brothers movie**, and identify which Commedia character each of the Brothers impersonates. What Commedia themes or plotlines can you find in the film?



Arlecchino with his Slap Stick

BOZO'S FORTUNE

Libretto by Shirley Barrie
Music by Giacomo Puccini
Musical Arrangements by Justin Hiscox
Directed by Molly Thom
Designed by Gillian Gallow and Bianca Laudadio
Graphic Design by Krista Donnelly (www.neatoh.ca)

Sopranos: Daniella Buonaiuto, Marion Samuel-Stevens
Baritone: David Landon English
Piano: Jiayin Liu
Cello: Anne Rankin
BOZO'S FORTUNE was developed with the assistance of the Toronto Arts Council and the Ontario Arts Council.

SHOESTRING OPERA

Shoestring Opera was established in January 2004 by cellist Anne Rankin with the mandate to bring opera to children in the schools. Its first project, **The Shoestring Magic Flute**, is based on Mozart's opera and was written for two singer-actors (baritone and soprano) and two instrumentalists (cello and piano). Canadian playwright Greg Robic wrote the script and arranged the music, and it was dramaturged and directed by Molly Thom.

The Shoestring Magic Flute has delighted audiences in schools and theatres all over Ontario, has been performed at Harbourfront's Carnivalisma Festival and the Music Garden in Toronto, the Montreal Baroque Festival, the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, and twice at the Solar Stage Children's Theatre, Toronto. Prologue to the Performing Arts is touring *The Shoestring Magic Flute* in 2008-09 in two versions: a bi-lingual version and an all-English version.

In 2008 Shoestring Opera developed a second opera for children, an adaptation of Puccini's comic opera **Gianni Schicchi** entitled **Bozo's Fortune**, also touring in 2008-09 throughout Ontario with Prologue to the Performing Arts.



BIOS

Danielle Buonaiuto, Soprano

Danielle is 23 years old and received her Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Western Ontario. She began her artistic career as a gymnast, then a dancer, before joining the choir at her performing arts high school and beginning private vocal lessons. She also learned to play piano and majored in drama. Danielle performed in many musicals in her high school years, but it wasn't until her voice teacher in university began to share recordings of famous singers that she developed a taste for opera. In the summer of 2008 she was the vocal director for a production of *Grease* with Markham Youth Theatre, the company with which she performed her very first role.

Marion Samuel-Stevens, Soprano

Marion studied voice performance at the University of Toronto. She grew up in Toronto in a very musical family, and as well as studying music, she also trained as a dancer. As a music teacher, Marion strives to make learning music fun for everyone. Marion has performed across Canada as well as in England and Austria and the United States.

David Landon English, Baritone

David began performing in choirs at his elementary school in grade 5 and was later involved in many school musicals including **Cats, Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat, Anything Goes, and Oklahoma!** He decided to pursue a musical education following high school and went on to earn both a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in opera performance from the University of British Columbia. David is currently studying at the Glenn Gould School where he performed Figaro in the spring production of Mozart's **Le Nozze di Figaro**.

Anne Rankin, Cellist

Anne started playing the cello in high school and loved it from the first minute she started. She went on to study music at the Cleveland Institute of Music and McGill University. For many years she freelanced with orchestras including the Vancouver CBC Radio Orchestra and the Boston Lyric Opera. Anne decided to form Shoestring Opera because she loves the combination of great music, storytelling and fun costumes. With her cousins and sister she used to put on plays and musicals at her summer cottage. Their repertoire included *Hansel and Gretel*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *Stone Soup* and *The Wizard of Oz*; one show per summer.

Jiayin Liu, Pianist

Jiayin was born and raised in Beijing, China in a musical family. She first studied piano at age six, gave her first public performance at eight, and at ten was admitted to the prestigious Central Conservatory of Music, China, where she studied for ten years. She left China to study at Wesleyan College in the United States, where she obtained her Bachelor of Music (**Magna cum laude**), and at the University of Toronto, where she received her Master of Music degree. Jiayin has performed as a concert soloist as well as a chamber pianist in China, the U.S. and Canada. She currently resides in Mississauga with her family, performing and teaching in her studio.

Gillian Gallow, Designer

Gillian has enjoyed being in theatre since grade one but it was not until high school that she discovered her love for design. Since graduating from York University's theatre program, she has worked as a set and costume designer in theatres all over Ontario. Recently she completed her fourth season as a design assistant at The Stratford Festival. Gillian loves to travel and discover theatre in different countries; some of the places she has adventured to are Sarajevo Bosnia, Akureyri Iceland, Tbilisi Georgia and Beijing China.



Bianca Laudadio, Designer

Bianca has always enjoyed creative pursuits. She has a background in fine art and design, and is a graduate of Ryerson University's Theatre program. Costume construction and design are of particular interest, as well as printmaking, and textile design. She also enjoys sewing, and works at Seamless Costumes. Bianca has just finished her first season as an assistant designer at the Stratford Festival.

Shirley Barrie, Writer

Shirley has been writing plays for young, family and adult audiences for many years. She has often worked with Molly Thom, most recently on **Beautiful Lady, Tell Me...**, a musical, vaudevillian murder mystery produced at 4th Line Theatre in 2007. Her interest in opera was sparked when she participated as a librettist in the Lib/Lab at Tapestry New Opera Works in 2003 and she loves the challenges of the art form. Her plays **Carrying the Calf** and **Hansel and Gretel** are available from www.theatrefolk.com and she co-edited **Prepare to Embark: Six Theatrical Voyages for Young Audiences** available from www.playwrightscanada.com. For more on Shirley (www.shirleybarrie.ca)

Justin Hiscox

Justin is a composer, arranger and multi-instrumentalist who finds never-ending joy in his work. He is Music Director at 4th Line Theatre in Millbrook, where he is usually seen playing keyboards, accordion, guitar, tuba, trombone, or any other brass instrument he can get his hands on. He particularly enjoyed the challenge of reducing Puccini's orchestra of 70-odd to just two instruments and occasionally added his own Broadway stamp to Shoestring Opera's production of **Bozo's Fortune**. Justin is currently working on a PhD in Composition at York University.

Molly Thom, Director

Molly began her theatrical career with the Toronto Children Players at age 8, playing a succession of fairies, Indian princesses, homeless waifs, and naughty angels. Before long she was writing and directing plays for her Girl Guide troupe. University rekindled her love of theatre and she began directing soon after graduating. Molly has dramaturged and directed both Shoestring operas, **The Magic Flute** and **Bozo's Fortune**. She wrote, directed and produced the much-loved play about Canadian pioneer writers, **The Bush-Ladies**, which toured Ontario for five years. Her most recent projects were Shirley Barrie's **Beautiful Lady, Tell Me...** for 4th Line Theatre and Ronald Weihs's **The Gambler** for Beggarly Theatre/Artword Theatre. She is currently dramaturging a new play for 4th Line Theatre, **The Port Hope Play**.

