



Victorian  
Opera

10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY



RICHARD WAGNER  
**THE FLYING  
DUTCHMAN**

Education Resource  
Music

## THE FLYING DUTCHMAN (DER FLIEGENDE HOLLÄNDER) – MUSIC RESOURCE

### INTRODUCTION



*The Flying Dutchman* © Martin Philbey

A haunting love story, a doomed ghost ship. An epic opera in 3D. In St Kilda's iconic Palais Theatre, witness the famous tale of the legendary ghost ship come to life with the use of ground-breaking 3D technology.

Richard Wagner's first masterpiece is transformed by Victorian Opera with two internationally acclaimed Wagner singers bringing to life the roles of The Dutchman, forever cursed to sail the seas, and Senta, the village girl who dreams of saving the doomed captain.

Presented in partnership with the Australian Youth Orchestra, Deakin Motion.Lab supported by the Australian Research Council, and West Australian Opera.

### PERFORMANCE DETAILS

- Venue: Palais Theatre, St Kilda
- Dates: 14, 17, 19 February 2015, 7.30pm
- Sung in German with English surtitles.
- 2 hours and 50 minutes with one interval.

The opera is set on the coast of Norway during the 1700's. The Flying Dutchman is in German, with libretto (text) and music by Richard Wagner. Wagner conducted the premiere in Dresden in 1843. He wrote in his autobiography that he was inspired to compose the opera following a stormy sea crossing he made from Riga (the largest city in Latvia) to London in 1839.



## SYNOPSIS

### Cast:

- **The Flying Dutchman** (bass-baritone): Oskar Hillebrandt
- **Daland**, a Norwegian sea captain (bass): Warwick Fyfe
- **Senta**, Daland's daughter (soprano): Lori Phillips
- **Mary**, Senta's nurse (contralto): Liane Keegan
- **Erik**, a huntsman (tenor): Bradley Daley
- **Daland's** steersman (tenor): Carlos E. Bárcenas
- Chorus of 20 men, 16 women

### Act 1

On their way towards their hometown, captain Daland's ship is caught in a large sea storm. He sets anchor to wait for the storm to subside and permits the Steersman to keep watch while he retires to his quarters with the rest of his crew. Alone, the Steersman sings to himself however he begins to fall asleep. A ghostly ship appears and sets anchor beside Daland's. This is the ship of the Dutchman, a cursed captain who once swore to the devil that he would sail around the Cape of Good Hope if it took him all eternity. The Devil took him for his word and the Dutchman is now cursed to roam the sea until the day of judgement. Once every seven years he is permitted to leave his ship to search for a wife who will redeem him from his curse only if she is faithful to him until death. The Steersman wakes, and Daland rushes to see what has happened and meets the ghostly captain. The Dutchman discovers that Daland has a young daughter, Senta, and he asks for her hand in marriage. Seeing the Dutchman's vast riches, Daland agrees to the marriage and both ships set sail for Daland's home.

### Act 2

The village girls are spinning and singing at Daland's house. Daland's daughter Senta sits and stares dreamily at a portrait of the mysterious Dutchman while the girls jokingly tease her about her suitor Erik, a huntsman. It is Senta's desire to save the Dutchman

from his endless wandering. As she vows to be faithful to the Dutchman, Erik overhears and warns her of a dream he had in which he saw a strange man who had arrived with her father to take her away to sea. Senta reacts with excitement and Erik leaves in despair. Before too long, Daland and the Dutchman arrive. The Dutchman is introduced to Senta as her betrothed and she vows to him that she will remain faithful until her final day.

### Act 3

The village girls bring food and drink to Daland's crew to celebrate their return. The girls invite the Dutchman's crew to partake in the celebrations, however their invitation is met by no answer. As the village girls leave, ghostly apparitions appear on the Dutchman's ship, chanting about the story of their cursed captain, which frightens the villagers and Daland's crew. Senta hurries in, closely followed by Erik who insists that she vowed her love to him. The Dutchman overhears this, believes himself betrayed and immediately climbs aboard his ship, ready to set sail. As many horrified villagers crowd the shore the Dutchman reveals himself as the cursed captain. Senta, remembering her vow of faithfulness runs to the top of a nearby cliff, proclaims herself faithful to the legendary Dutchman and throws herself into the icy sea below. The skies open and Senta and the Dutchman are seen ascending to heaven.



## WAGNER AND THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

Excerpt from an essay by Peter Bassett



Richard Wagner © Ernst Benedikt Kietz

The Flying Dutchman is a young man's opera, with strong ideas and vigorous musical treatment. Wagner was just 27 when he drafted the prose scenario; the poem was written in ten days and the music composed in a couple of months (with orchestration completed later). Most of Wagner's later revisions were fairly minor.

*Although this was Wagner's first work of genius, it contains a number of ideas that were to reoccur in his later works. Dreams and illusions, nihilism and yearning for death, redemption through the love and constancy of a woman, perpetual wandering and the symbolism of water and the sea are all images and ideas that appear again in Wagner's mature works.*

In the music and text there are links too to Beethoven, who was a major source of inspiration throughout Wagner's life. In addressing the Dutchman in Act Two, Senta uses the words: 'Wer du auch seist' (Whoever you are) – the words used by Leonore in the dungeon scene in Fidelio. When Senta tells the Dutchman that she would ease his suffering, he, like Florestan seeing 'an angel Leonore' leading him to salvation, tells her that she is an angel:

'The sombre glow that I feel burning here,  
Should I, wretched one, call it love?  
Ah no! It is the longing for salvation,  
might it come to me through such an angel!'

The Dutchman is condemned by hubris to wander perpetually on the sea, mirroring the wanderings of Odysseus. There are also echoes of the story of Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew, with whom the struggling Wagner identified in Paris in the 1830s and '40s. The story was a popular one in the 19th century. Moore's Dead Man's Island (1804), Scott's Rokeby (1813), Marryat's The Phantom Ship (1839), and Heine's From the Memoirs of Herr von Schnabelewopski (1834), which Wagner used, are amongst literary works that drew on the legend





## THE LEITMOTIF

One of the most appealing aspects of Wagner's operatic music, particularly in his later works, is his use of a compositional device called the leitmotif. A leitmotif is a short, reoccurring, easily-identifiable musical phrase that is associated with a particular character, theme, idea, object, place, or psychological and emotional state. Although Wagner did not invent this compositional technique, it was the development of these motifs, in conjunction with the emotional development of the characters that demonstrates Wagner's musical genius. The development of a leitmotif can be in the form of a transposition, a change of tonality, using a different number of instruments, utilising different instruments, changing the tempo or changing the dynamics. This musical development reflects the drama that develops onstage. And there is no better example of how he employs these leitmotifs than throughout his famous Ring Cycle, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, which is a cycle of four operas. He masterfully develops a number of leitmotifs to provide a musical thread indicating the characters' thoughts, emotions and external actions as the story progresses across the four operas.

*The Flying Dutchman* (*Der fliegende Holländer*) doesn't yet show this refined level of leitmotivic development. However, some of the motifs can be associated with certain characters, objects or themes in the opera. For example, the French horn theme at the beginning of the overture can be associated with the Dutchman (see figure 1), as it can be heard most often when he is both on stage or when another character is referring to him. Interestingly, many musicologists debate whether the leitmotif associated with Senta is a leitmotif for her character or for the broader theme of redemption through love.

## LISTENING ACTIVITIES

The musical introduction that is heard at the beginning of *The Flying Dutchman* is called the overture. An overture is an orchestral composition that helps set the mood of the opera. Wagner effectively uses this overture to not only set the mood for the work, but also as a means of introducing the musical material and leitmotifs that he will later utilise and develop in order to create a coherent dramatic and musical whole.

### Introductory listening - A suggestion for teachers:

- As an introduction, play the overture of *The Flying Dutchman* to your class without discussing the composer, the style or the context of the music.
- Ask students to form small groups.
- Ask the students to create what they think the story is about.
- Discuss each group's story with the rest of the class, with reference to the elements of music to justify their conclusions.
- Compare the students' stories with that of the legend of *The Flying Dutchman*.



## Guided Listening:

Listen to the following excerpts from the overture:

**Excerpt 1:** Bars 2 – 6 of the Overture. This leitmotif can be seen in figure 1 below. This is the Flying Dutchman’s Leitmotif.

- Which instruments are playing this motif and which intervals are used?
- How would you describe the melody?
- Based on this leitmotif, what kind of character do you think the Dutchman is? Discuss. What could this suggest about what happens to this character?
- As an extension, try to aurally transcribe the leitmotif yourself. HINT: the time signature is 6/4.



Figure 1: The Dutchman leitmotif. Bars 2 – 6 of the Flying Dutchman Overture.

**Excerpt 2:** Bars 262 - 275 of Act 1, no.1. The presence of the Dutchman’s leitmotif signals the Dutchman’s ship appearing for the first time.

- What changes does Wagner make to the leitmotif to make it slightly different from that in excerpt 1?
- What does this suggest about the distance of the Dutchman’s ship from Daland’s ship? Why do you say this?

**Excerpt 3:** Bars 311 to 325 of Act 1, no. 4. Towards the end of this excerpt we can hear someone singing the Dutchman’s leitmotif.

- Who do you think would sing this leitmotif and for what reason?
- What does this suggest about this character’s feelings towards the Dutchman?

**Excerpt 4:** Bars 32 – 68 of the Overture. This leitmotif can be seen in figure 2 below. This is Senta’s leitmotif. Senta’s leitmotif can be heard at the end of the excerpt.

- What other motif can you hear?
- Senta’s leitmotif is a contrast to the music in the previous 40 bars. What does it suggest about her character?
- How old do you think she is? Justify your answers.



Figure 2: Senta’s leitmotif



**Excerpt 5:** bars 203 - 210 of the overture. This leitmotif can be seen in figure 3 below. This is the Norwegian Sailors' leitmotif.

- How does this leitmotif make you feel?
- Why do you think it makes you feel like this?
- Discuss this motif with reference to the elements of music. What could this suggest about the Norwegian sailors?



Figure 3: Norwegian Sailor leitmotif

**Excerpt 6:** bars 46 - 91 of Act 3, no. 7. In this excerpt we can hear the Norwegian sailors, singing to their own leitmotif. After a long and treacherous voyage, the Norwegians are finally on land and at home. They are calling for the Steersman (the person who steers their ship) to leave his watch to come and join the party by the shore.

**Excerpt 7:** Bars 538 – 576 of act 3, no.8.

- Which leitmotif can you hear?
- What could be happening in the drama at this point?
- How has the leitmotif changed?
- Is this leitmotif played by itself or is any other music being played as well?



Lori Phillips (Senta) and Bradley Daley (Erik) © Charlie Kinross



## CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

### Create your own leitmotif

Using computer-based notation software or a looping program such as GarageBand, create your own leitmotif! Alternatively students can compose using their own instrument, or compose for another instrument or instruments in the class and notate their leitmotif on manuscript paper.

1. Choose a type of character (e.g. an evil villain, a clown, a hero or heroine, etc.)
2. Research music associated with your character. Using the elements of music as a guide, analyse how the composers have used melody, harmony, texture, instrumentation, orchestration, meter, rhythm, dynamics, timbre, etc. to represent their character or emotion.

Here are a few points to help you get started:

- What tempo did the composer use?
  - Which intervals were utilised and why?
  - Which instruments were used and how did this choice affect the timbre of the leitmotif?
3. Discuss your findings with the whole class.
  4. Create a 4 – 8 bar leitmotif.
  5. Don't make it too complex! Remember, to create an effective leitmotif people must be able to remember it so they can quickly associate it to the character or theme it represents.

6. Keep a reflective journal of the decisions you have made that helped you create your leitmotif. E.g. for a leitmotif representing joy: I used a fast tempo to help create an energetic and positive momentum to the melody. I also used a major scale, as the presence of the major 3rd in the scale is associated with happy emotions.

Here are some questions to get you started on your composition:

- What tempo could I use?
- What instrument/s or loops should I use? How will the timbre/s of the instrument/s affect the sound of my leitmotif? If you are unsure of how an instrument sounds, do some research online or ask a friend in class to demonstrate the sound of their instrument for you.
- What texture should I use? Should I construct a simple monophonic melody, or a melody with an accompaniment (homophonic)? Could you use multiple textures in the one leitmotif? How many loops would be appropriate? Should it sound thick, sparse, etc.?
- Which intervals could I utilise?
- Should I use major or minor tonality?
- Will it be one continuous melody, or a melody interrupted by rests?
- What dynamics should I use? Will they change throughout the leitmotif?
- Will the melody be a legato line or will it contain some staccato moments?
- What is the contour of your leitmotif? Ascending, descending, undulating, mixture, etc.?





## Extension one: Developing a leitmotif

Leitmotifs are played many times throughout an opera, and as previously mentioned they are generally associated with a particular character or theme. Wagner's genius was in being able to slightly alter these leitmotifs to reflect changes in the drama that impact these particular characters or themes. A good example can be found in the guided listening activity comparing excerpt 5 and excerpt 6.

Having completed your leitmotif, create 3 different variations. This activity can work for those using GarageBand, music notation software or handwritten notation.

Here are a few tips for you to consider:

- If you have a character, for example a clown, with a happy-sounding leitmotif, what would his/her leitmotif sound like if he/she were going through a sad situation? How would the leitmotif change to reflect this?
- Is the main contour of the leitmotif still present, that is, can the listener understand that this variation is still the leitmotif?
- If the leitmotif is a legato line, could you break it down into smaller interrupted segments?
- Could you change the instrumentation, which affects the timbre?
- Could you change the tonality (major to minor or minor to major?)?
- Have you thought of changing the tempo?
- Could you alter the rhythm slightly?
- Could you increase or decrease the number of instruments playing the motif?

## Extension two: Arranging your leitmotif

Having completed your leitmotif, create an arrangement for 3 or 4 instruments in your class.



*The Flying Dutchman 3D Render © Deakin Motion.Lab*

1. Form groups of three or four (preferably the students in your group will play different instruments although this is not essential).
2. Choose one of your group member's leitmotifs to be arranged.
3. As a group, think about the best way of combining the instruments you have to best represent the sound of the leitmotif. The leitmotif doesn't have to be sounded just once; it can be played multiple times.
4. Notate the arrangement.
5. Perform the arrangement to the class.



## THE TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES IN RELATION TO AUSVELS

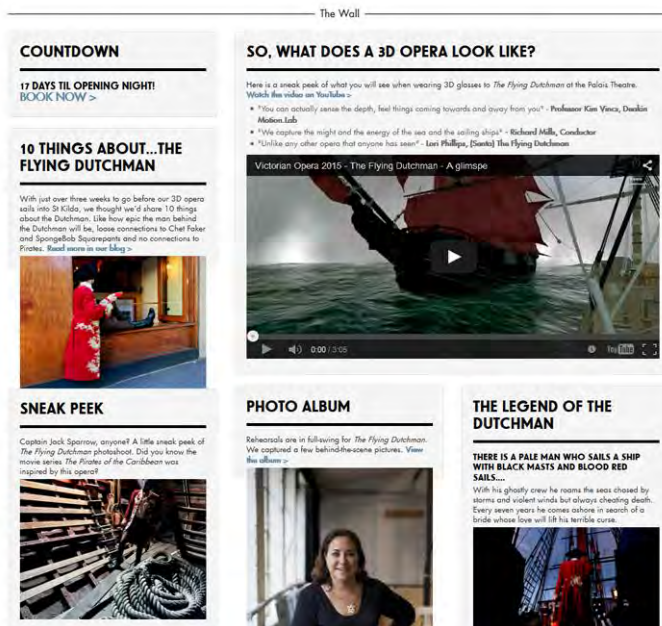
The teaching and learning activities suggested in this resource are aimed at year 10 – 12 music classrooms. The activities have been designed in accordance with the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (AusVELS) - The Arts (Music) levels 9 and 10. These activities can also be adapted to fit the VCE curriculum for the Music Performance, Music Investigation and Music Style and Composition subjects.

Domain	Dimension	Activities
The arts:	Exploring and responding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductory listening activity</li> <li>• Guided listening activity</li> </ul>
	Creating and making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create your own leitmotif</li> <li>• Developing a leitmotif</li> <li>• Arranging your leitmotif</li> </ul>
Information and Communications Technology	ICT for creating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create your own leitmotif</li> <li>• Developing a leitmotif</li> <li>• Arranging your leitmotif</li> </ul>
	ICT for communicating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create your own leitmotif</li> </ul>
Interpersonal Development	Building social relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arranging your leitmotif</li> </ul>
	Working in teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arranging your leitmotif</li> </ul>
Thinking processes	Reasoning, processing and inquiry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductory listening activity</li> <li>• Guided listening activity</li> </ul>
	Creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create your own leitmotif</li> <li>• Developing a leitmotif</li> <li>• Arranging your leitmotif</li> </ul>
	Reflection evaluation and metacognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create your own leitmotif</li> </ul>



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