



Victorian
Opera



LAUGHTER AND TEARS

Education Resource



LAUGHTER & TEARS EDUCATION RESOURCE

Introduction

Laughter is a Pastiche opera that features music by various Baroque composers, including Vecchi and Banchieri with orchestration by Richard Mills. Tears features Pagliacci by Ruggero Leoncavallo.



Music and Drama Education notes for secondary teachers and students

This opera performance features the artists from Victorian Opera and Dislocate – a group in their own right who perform with Circus Oz

- Background to Laughter and Tears
- The characters / cast
- The synopsis and song list for Laughter and Tears
- Background to Pagliacci
- Commedia characters in Laughter and Tears
- Circus in Laughter in Tears
- In conversation with Emil Wolk
- Pre-show and post-show activities

Costume designs by Harriet Oxley

What to expect before, during and after your opera experience

To gain the most from your visit to Laughter and Tears it is recommended that you have some knowledge of the work. The following resources provide background information, an idea what you might expect during your experience and offers pre-show activities and post-opera reflection.

Background to Laughter and Tears

The vision for creating Laughter and Tears came from a discussion between Emil Wolk and Richard Mills. Emil Wolk has not only been responsible for directing the show but the overarching storyline idea and for keeping the story logic across the first Laughter (Commedia style half) and into the Tears (Pagliacci second half). The music for Laughter was chosen and orchestrated by Richard Mills to compliment the content of the story and the Commedia context. It is music from the era when Commedia was at its greatest in Europe – the Renaissance and Baroque.



Circus Oz and Victorian Opera cast in rehearsal © Charlie Kinross

Laughter characters

Role	Performer Type	Cast
Nedda, the captain's wife	Soprano	Elvira Fatykhova
The Captain, Nedda's Guardian/Husband	Performer	Tim Coldwell
Harlequin, A Minstrel, Nedda's Lover	Tenor	Michael Petruccelli
Stagehand Kate	Performer	Kate Fryer
Stagehand Geoffrey	Performer	Geoffrey Dunstan
Stagehand DJ	Performer	DJ Dunstan
Minstrel	Mezzo Soprano	Shakira Tsindos
Minstrel	Bass Baritone	Daniel Carison
Minstrel	Soprano	Kate Amos
Minstrel	Soprano	Michelle McCarthy

Pagliacci Characters

Role	Performer Type	Cast
Canio (Pagliaccio), Leader of the players	Tenor	Rosario La Spina
Nedda (Colombina), his wife	Soprano	Elvira Fatykhova
Tonio (Taddeo), a clown	Baritone	James Clayton
Beppe (Arlecchino)	Tenor	Michael Petruccelli
Silvio, a villager	Baritone	Fabio Capitanucci

Synopsis for Laughter and Tears

Laughter

We invite you into a final dress rehearsal in a provincial Italian theatre near Montalto in Calabria, 45 minutes before WWII is declared in 1938. The theatre is mounting a traditional Commedia dell'arte pantomime of their own devising with a chorus of minstrels whose music comes from the very first madrigal comedies of Vecchi (1577) and Banchieri (1598). An intrada sets the scene, with stage hands not quite ready (they are the traditional zanni figures of the Commedia tradition) – eventually the show begins despite the interruptions of a wilful clown – the Pantolone/Capitano/Pulchinello figure who becomes the jealous and finally outwitted buffone, who resonates with Canio from *Pagliacci*.

The minstrels who are a “play within a play” in the pantomime (being given its final rehearsal), enter and invite the audience into the world of the commedia. The text speaks of the “grand theatre of the world” and encourages the public to listen as well as look at the spectacle to follow.

The traditional Commedia dilemma of the trapped and beautiful young ward in an old man's house is now established – the minstrels sing of the penalties which await any young blade having the temerity to breach the domestic sanctuary of an old man and his young captive. Meanwhile we see Nedda, playing the traditional Innamorata, appear on the balcony obsessively “supervised” by her guardian or old husband. She sings of the new day and the joy that sunshine brings – *Già il sole dal Gange* by Alessandro Scarlatti – optimism despite her imprisonment. The minstrels are enchanted and one of their number, an Arlecchino, is totally smitten by her beauty. This Arlecchino is played by Beppe from *Pagliacci*.

So Arlecchino/Beppe seeks the help of the zanni troupe to get into Capitano's house and rescue Innamorata/Nedda. Capitano is seduced by zanni Kate, disguised as Colombina who entertains him with an aerial routine – “Danza, danza, fanciulla gentile” and by trickery gains entrance to his house because he is so impressed by her abilities as a cleaner. Meanwhile Arlecchino/Beppe and Innamorata/Nedda declare their love and Arlecchino/Beppe, with assistance from the zanni troupe and zanni Kate as Colombina, attempts to bring Innamorata/Nedda down from the balcony prison. This is foiled by the sudden appearance of Capitano and a chase ensues.

This escape plot has been sabotaged and Innamorata/Nedda sings a lament. The minstrels return with another madrigal, which rhetorically asks ‘Pulchinell, che vustu far’ – Pulchinell, what are you going to do? **It is important to remember that this first half is a play being rehearsed like the play within the play in *Pagliacci*, where Arlecchino/Beppe and Colombina/Nedda are similarly lovers.** Confused? Good, this is the essence of Commedia.

The zanni troupe attempting to hide from Capitano have meanwhile changed into female minstrel costumes and attempt an unsuccessful take-over of the minstrels' show. They have bitten off more than they can chew, and fearful of discovery by Capitano, then scurry for cover as Innamorata/Nedda appears on the balcony. She dreams of being free like the birds, initiating an intermezzo which expresses the joy of freedom through an aerial routine by the zannis Kate and DJ.

Now Arlecchino/Beppe, still desperate to rescue Innamorata/Nedda, sings about how easy it is to change places, but not so easy to change desire. A second attempt is made to extract Innamorata/Nedda from her house, assisted by zanni Kate who helps disguise her as Colombina. This team effort is successful and a grand chase ensues, with Kate in disguise as Nedda much to the confusion and despair of Capitano.

A minstrel comforts Capitano who weeps for his lost love. Meanwhile Innamorata/Nedda in disguise as Colombina has joined the minstrels with Arlecchino/Beppe and both are now ready to run away. The clock strikes seven and the other minstrels remind Arlecchino and his new conquest that theatre and life are not the same thing. Just as the play is about to progress to a happy ending, the rehearsal run is interrupted by Canio, the director of the theatre with the news that World War II has been declared. All pretence of a rehearsal vanishes as the cast disperse and leave Canio and Nedda to contemplate an uncertain future, 'la commedia è finita'. **Indeed art and life are not the same thing and the cruel realities of life and time have overtaken the careless joy and freedom of comedy.**



The stagehands rehearsing © Charlie Kinross

Song List for Laughter

Song	Composer
Intrada	Anon, 16 th Century
Minstrels Entry - Italian keyboard Album	Anon, 16 th Century
Minstrels Prologue – Prologue to <i>L'Amfiparnusso</i> (1597)	Orazio Vecchi, 1550 – 1605
'Udite tutti quanti' from <i>La Pazzia Senile</i> (1598)	Adriano Banchieri, 1568 - 1634
Già il sole dal Gange	Alessandro Scarlatti, 1660 – 1725
Giga from Violin Sonata in G minor	Antonio Vivaldi, 1628 – 1741
Corrente from Violin Sonata in D minor	Antonio Vivaldi
Danza, danza, fanciulla gentile	Francesco Durante, 1684 – 1755
Quella fiamma che m'accende	Benedetto Marcello, 1686 – 1739
Teco sì	Leonardo Vinci, 1690 – 1730
Canon	Antonio Vivaldi
Sonata in D major, K. 96	Domenico Scarlatti, 1685 – 1757
'Lasciatemi morire' from <i>Arianna</i> (1608)	Claudio Monteverdi 1567 – 1643
'Pulchinell che vostu far' from <i>La Pazzia Senile</i> (1598)	Adriano Banchieri
'Balletto di Villanelle' from <i>La Pazzia Senile</i> (1598)	Adriano Banchieri
'Fuor di periglio' from <i>Floridante</i>	G.F. Handel, 1685 – 1759
Vado ben spesso cangiando loco	Salvator Rosa, 1615 – 1673
Sarabanda from Violin Sonata in G minor	Antonio Vivaldi
Sebben, crudele	Antonio Caldara, 1670 – 1736
'Pur ti miro' from <i>L'incoronazione di Poppea</i>	Claudio Monteverdi
Il teatro e la vita	Sigimondo Ulolino, 1628 – 1701
Ecco morirò dunque!	Carlo Gesualdo, 1566 – 1613
Moro lasso	Carlo Gesualdo

Synopsis and Song List for *Laughter and Tears Continued...*

Tears – Pagliacci

Prologue

Welcome to reality. As the prologue, Tonio bids farewell to the old customs of Commedia, still in vogue pre-war. He tells us that what we are about to see is not artifice, but real flesh and blood, real passions, real dilemmas and a slice of life as it is really lived, as distinct from the world of fantastic comedy we have been dealing with so far. He introduces Pagliacci and invites us into the reality of a theatre company and the human relationships of its members. Their aspirations, hopes, desires and foibles will be the focus of new exploration. He gives us this concept and invites us to see how it will unfold. The commedia masks are removed and real people enact their destinies.

Act I

Seven years later, on the 15th August, 1945, post WWII, the theatre reopens with a reunion of its former employees. Canio as former manager is welcomed back and invites all to a rehearsal of their new spectacle that will take place that evening. The crew invite Canio and others for a drink, Tonio says he'll join them later. A joke is made about him staying to court Nedda. Canio replies that such matters should not be joked about and says that if this happened in real life the consequences would not be funny. All exit leaving Nedda alone. She muses on the life giving warmth of summer. She sees the freedom of the birds as two company acrobats rehearse an aerial routine. Tonio intrudes on this happy contemplation with an unwelcome advance and swears revenge for Nedda's rejection.

Silvio, Nedda's lover appears and they talk about the reality of Nedda's loveless marriage to Canio and her dislike of the nomadic life of theatre. They resolve to run away together after the performance that evening. Tonio meanwhile, hoping to surprise and compromise Nedda and win Canio's favour. Tonio and Canio enter to surprise Nedda and Silvio, who manages to escape without his identity being discovered. Canio is furious and heartbroken in betrayal, but the performance must proceed.

Scene I	
Chorus	Son Qua!
Cantabile	Un tal gioco (CANIO)
Scena and Chorus of the Bells	I zampognari

Scene II	
Andante con moto	Qual fiamma avea nel guardo (NEDDA)
Ballatella	Hui! Hui! ...Stridono lassù (NEDDA)
Scena and Duet	Sei là? (NEDDA AND TONIO)

Scene III	
Duet	Silvio! A quest'ora (NEDDA, SILVIO)

Scene IV

Scena and Finale

Cammina adagio (TONIO, CANIO)

Ariosa

Vesti la giubba (CANIO)



Costume designs by Harriet Oxley

Act II

All the theatre crew return from vespers and drinks to see the new show, a Commedia play politicised by the war years, funny in the Commedia tradition but satirising the fascist movement. Canio is unable to contain his passion, and his emotion fractures the traditional persona of his character as he upbraids Nedda for her duplicity and demands the name of her innamorato. As he kills her, she calls for help from Silvio. Canio also kills him, dropping the knife as Tanio observes 'La commedia è finita'. Art and life are not the same, but then again, sometimes they are.

Scene I	
Chorus	Che! Presto affrettiamoci (NEDDA [Colombina])

Scene II	
Commedia (The Play)	Pagliaccio, mio marito (PEPPE [Arlecchino])
Serenata	O Colombina (NEDDA, [Colombina], TONIO [Taddeo])

Scena	
Comica	Dèi, com' è bella! (NEDDA [Colombina}, PEPPE {Arlecchino})
Duet	Arlecchin! (NEDDA [Colombina], PEPPE [Arlecchino])
Final Scena and Duet	Versa il filtro (NEDDA, CANIO)



Costume designs by Harriet Oxley

Background to Pagliacci

Pagliacci was written by Italian composer Ruggero Leoncavallo in 1892. It is described as a verismo opera, a style of Italian opera writing that flourished in the last decade of the 19th century. Operatic [verismo](#) was marked by melodramatic, often violent plots with characters drawn from everyday life. [Musical devices included passionate singing by solo voices and emotionally charged harmonies and melodies.](#)

It is said that Leoncavallo based his realistic opera, *Pagliacci* on a murder that happened in the Calabrian village of Montalto during his youth. It was his father who was the magistrate at the trial following the incident. *Pagliacci* is most commonly performed as part of a double bill with Pietro Mascagni's verismo opera *Cavalleria Rusticana* (Rustic Chivalry, 1890), another story of love and jealousy. They represented a reaction against Richard Wagner and against Romantic Italian opera. The plots of both these works are sensational stories from everyday life rather than the usual quasi-historical plots common at the time.

Pagliacci was first performed in Milan in 1893 and remains one of the best known operas in the repertory. Tonio's Prologue serves at times as a dramatic concert piece, outdone in popularity only by Canio's moving and dramatic *Vesti la giubba* (On with the motley). Harlequin's serenade *O Columbina* offers an element of irony, while Canio's *No, Pagliaccio non son* (No, I am not Pagliaccio) brings the drama to its climax.

Ruggero Leoncavallo was born in 1857 and died in 1919. He wrote around ten operas most of which were not particularly popular; in fact some were a complete failure. *Pagliacci* however was an instant success and continues to be produced regularly today.

Leoncavallo studied at the Naples Conservatory and subsequently supported himself by giving café concerts and piano and singing lessons. He wrote the libretti for all his own operas and for many others during his time. He is considered to be a great Italian librettist.

In 1907, "Vesti la giubba" (Victrola 88061) was the very first recording in the world to sell one million copies.

Commedia characters in Laughter and Tears

Commedia dell'arte translates as 'comedy of skills' although some translate it as 'theatre of the professional'. It is a colourful, extremely dramatic, humorous, theatrical and improvised popular form of comedy that was developed in Italy in the 16th century and the audiences came from all social strata of society.

The form spread through Europe and flourished for over 200 years. It has had significant influence on storylines and themes, theatre and comedy in the European theatrical forms to this day. The tradition of performing Commedia is not over yet, with it still being popular to this day.

It was performed with a series of stereotypical characters with which the audience were familiar. **The art form is characterised by the use of masks, recognisable characters, improvisation, and the use of physical comedy.** It requires highly disciplined performers with strong performance skills and ensemble playing techniques. Due to the wearing of masks the characterisation and emotions were expressed through the physicality of the performers.

It has been found that Commedia existed in Italy during the middle Ages. Professional companies soon began recruiting disorganised characters, acrobats, street entertainers and a few better educated adventurers. The producers experimented with forms for Commedia to entice the audience with a new type of play that people had not yet seen before.

The stock characters of Commedia can be broken into four main groups;



The Zanni, or Servants which include Arlechinno (Harlequin), Colombina, and Pulcinella (Punch).

The Vecchi or the old men which include il Dottore (Doctor) and Pantalone.

The Innamorati or the Young Lovers which commonly have names like, Isabella, Ortensia or Flavio or Leandro

The Capitano or Captain, a boastful and fraudulent soldier. Eventually female versions were also created.

Each character has a status in society, a costume that is distinct to them, signature props, poses, how they speak, characteristics and many more features relating specifically to the character. There was a lot of comic action involved in

the first stages of Commedia, and is still used today. Characters were soon recognised from the exaggeration or parody of regional or stock fictional types. Commedia characters were dressed in a manner to draw attention to their exaggerated comic features to ensure that it complemented their physical and acrobatic skills.

It was the performers themselves who pushed Commedia dell'arte into being the art form it became because of their love of acting and character development. The director relied on each actor's intelligence, skill and capacity to convey character to the audience with little scenery or costume.



Costume designs by Harriet Oxley

The plot was always simple in Commedia. The storyline in Commedia is sometimes about death and resurrection and it is often told in a festive context. Pantalone (the main character) sometimes dies by the end of the show and the young Innamorati (young lovers) must find each other. The Innamorati do not only represent young love, but also represent regeneration. Also, Pantalone is not the only person that has to use his power. He also represents death and old age. He is the character who stands in the way of regeneration, keeping time still. Therefore Pantalone must die to make room for the Innamorati (young lovers). The characters in Commedia always talk directly to their audiences, throughout the whole play, the characters do not break contact with the audience.

The characters in *Laughter* and in *Tears (Pagliacci)* are taken from the Commedia dell'arte tradition. The plot of *Pagliacci* suitably mimics the traditional commedia plots.

Circus in Laughter and Tears

Circus Oz is an animal free circus company founded in Melbourne in 1978. *Dislocate* (comprising Kate Fryer, Geoffrey Dunstan, DJ Garner and Luke Taylor in this incarnation) work with Circus Oz but are their own company. They, together with expert guidance from Emil Wolk, Libby Hill and Tim Coldwell, have workshopped the storyline of *Laughter*. They rehearsed with the music that was assembled and composed by Richard Mills and incorporated a number of circus based routines into the scenes that make up this half. They used their unique skills and extensive years of experience as an ensemble to create these routines.

Emil Wolk with his extensive knowledge and experience of physical theatre has worked to bring these skills into the 'almost Commedia' that is the Laughter half of *Laughter and Tears*.



The routines incorporate a number of circus type skills/tricks including:

- A cloud swing
- Counterweight flying
- Tumbling
- Juggling – clubs, hats and plates
- A trap routine
- Group bike, with two high and three high
- Comedy acrobatics
- Straps
- Acrobatic balances

Circus Oz and Victorian Opera cast in rehearsal © Charlie Kinross

In conversation with Emil Wolk

There have been two distinctly different processes taking place in the rehearsal room for *Laughter and Tears*, one the ensemble work, the experimentation, the play, and then the process with the singers which is much more structured and pre-organised.

What is your role on *Laughter and Tears*?

I'm the director, so basically I've come up with the concept of the show and also I guide the storyline.

What does that involve on this production?

I make it come alive by the approach of the performers with each other and how we tell the story of the two parts. I've created this as an underlying idea of a theatre before and after the Second World War. In a sense the first half is the flourishing theatre, we do the fun and laughter part and it's a commedia. It's a crazy story about an avaricious old man who has an arranged marriage and is keeping his young ward/wife under lock and key, and the stage hands decide it's

time to rescue her. They are the equivalent of what they call the Zannis in Commedia. They are the stooges, the lower brow comedy. Then there are the minstrels who sing the beautiful baroque music. So it almost has a soundtrack of baroque against the wackiness of the physical comedy and storyline.

The second part is after WWII and the theatre has been decimated to a degree and unused and they come into that time when the arts are hardly in existence in Europe. The performers come into the theatre to make it come alive again. They discover the nostalgia of the past through the costumes they discover in the theatre, that were used in the first half. The whole approach to the show *Pagliacci* is done with limited means, like op shop costuming and enamel plates when it all should be at a higher class dinner table, but we do it all in an op shop style so we show that art can be done on a very minimal amount of money, as it had to after the Second World War.



Circus Oz and Victorian Opera cast in rehearsal © Charlie Kinross

What are the most challenging aspects of being in this role for this particular production?

The most challenging is the two different ways of working. On one hand we have the Circus Oz team, who are a group in their own right, called Dislocate. They have spent years together already and they have a series of very sophisticated physical interactions that you can call upon and because they know each other so well are quite fast at finding inventive ways to approach the situations or parts of the storyline. Because of the time they've been together, their expertise... different from just skill level, is also that they enjoy working with character and interacting in a joyous and humorous way which can be quite different from other circus performers who can become quite fixated on the skills because they are so difficult. So the circus way of approaching performance is more of a freewheeling way because you can't push it too hard when you are working so physically, you have to do it in bouts.

But with singers the demand is not to do with character but is to do with the difficulty of the parts and the vocal roles which dictates that they really need to know the whole thing beforehand. The principal singers sometimes don't come until well into the rehearsal process. You've been imagining them the whole time and you then just fit them in. Hence you can get very lavish productions where the principal only comes in a week before with everything ready for them.



Emil Wolk during rehearsal with the singers © Charlie Kinross

What is the background you bring to this role?

My father was in opera, and was a principal baritone, and so I grew up in the ambience of opera. From the age of seven I was dragged along to rehearsals at Covent Garden and the performers were all my heroes. So from a strict Victorian education at boarding school, including canings, I was then brought into this world of art and extravagance, with characters coming off stage dressed as bird catchers, Egyptian soldiers and so forth. And then the ballet and Margot Fonteyn would come and have a cup of tea in a tutu. That was my world growing up.

I thought, 'I'd like to be in this business' and so I went to do voice lessons. Eventually I was told that I wasn't my father's material but I was good physically so I thought I would do acting. Eventually I joined a children's theatre company and did some touring. From there I was advised to train to be more physical and I went to work for a year with Etienne Decroux who had a school of mime in Paris. He was a genius. And while I was there I went to the Gymnastique de Cirque and learnt some skills. With the combination of my studies in London with Shakespeare and so forth, I found I loved them all, and so I became this hybrid.

I ended up in these very alternative theatre groups. One of them was called the Pip Simmons Theatre Group. There we didn't rely on language because it was very physical and music based, rock music in fact. We were kind of the Stones of theatre. We were very visceral, very 60's. I did a lot of very confronting work and that ended up with a very remarkable piece with Pip Simmons. We were invited to Rotterdam to commemorate the war, the 30th anniversary of the start of the war. We did this thing about a Jewish orchestra, *An Die Musik*, which was very confronting. We were a smash hit in Rotterdam and we toured the show to international festivals.

That experience kind of gave me a feel of how you can combine music to very dynamic and wonderful physical work that didn't have to be circus or dance, it could be something unto itself; a different sort of form that experimented with different elements.

After that I was in a tragic accident with my girlfriend. She'd been part of a different group and they kind of took me under their wing because she had been killed in that accident. So I joined this group; they were my heroes.

They were called People Show. They had a remarkable approach to work, for example they had while I was there, a Mexican sculptor and a jazz musician. We didn't need a director, we all collaborated in a way that we created something very individual to ourselves to the people involved in the group. It wasn't commercial work, it was for people who wanted to see something new being created and we were that and we had our own following and we are celebrating our 50th anniversary. I still work with them, they have such an impact on your attitude and approach to theatre. And eventually through Robert Carson, I became involved in the world of opera, working with singers and their physicality and character. I performed at La Scala and at the Met, and it just happened. So I have made a full circle in a way from behind to in front, from that little awestruck kid to a big awestruck man from the front.

Pre-show and post show activities and discussions

1. Get to know the opera *Pagliacci*

Watch this full length version of *Pagliacci* (not in English) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpaBj7CSpuE>

a. Themes

The themes of Laughter and Tears are common to the Commedia tradition of death, love and subterfuge. Were there any other themes that you identified?

b. Costumes/Set/acting style

How would you describe the style of performance, costume and set for this production?

c. Commedia elements?

What are the elements of Commedia that you saw?

d. Compare this Victorian Opera version to the version you saw on You Tube.

2. Music, Imagery and Mood

Below are the lyrics for *Vesti la giubba* from *Pagliacci*. The language used is dramatic, over the top even, but succinctly illustrates the challenging position Canio is in when he sings this aria at the end of Act 1. Here Canio discovers that his wife has been unfaithful and is heartbroken but must still go on stage as the clown.

Recitar! Mentre preso dal delirio,
non so più quel che dico,
e quel che faccio!
Eppur è d'uopo, sforzati!
Bah! Sei tu forse un uom?
Tu se' Pagliaccio!

Act! While in delirium,
I no longer know what I say,
or what I do!
And yet it's necessary... make an effort!
Bah! Are you not a man?
You are a clown!

Vesti la giubba e la faccia infarina.
La gente paga, e rider vuole qua.
E se Arlecchin t'invola Colombina,
ridi, Pagliaccio, e ognuno applaudirà!
Tramuta in lazzi lo spasmo ed il pianto
in una smorfia il singhiozzo e 'l dolor, Ah!

Put on your costume, powder your face.
The people pay to be here, and they want to laugh.
And if [Harlequin](#) shall steal your [Colombina](#),
laugh, clown, so the crowd will cheer!
Turn your distress and tears into jest,
your pain and sobbing into a funny face – Ah!

Ridi, Pagliaccio,
sul tuo amore infranto!
Ridi del duol, che t'avvelena il cor!

Laugh, clown,
at your broken love!
Laugh at the grief that poisons your heart!

Watch the following examples of the aria *Vesti la giubba* on YouTube.

[Version 1](#)

[Version 2](#)

a. Which of these versions moves you the most?

What is it about the music and the singer's interpretation that affect you?

b. Describe the mood of the Aria?

c. What Musical devices are used to create the desires emotions and mood?

These could be elements such as intervals, pace, key and so forth.

d. In both of these versions, the images used to stir the difficulty of Canio's situation are similar. What are they?

3. Music Comparison

In this video, a comparison is made between *Leoncavallo's Vesti la giubba* and Queen's *It's a Hard Life*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xB5HCUOHsCY>

What are the similarities? Musically and dramatically?

4. Contextualisation of theatre/music

Both the excerpts referred to in activity 2 are taken from contemporary culture. *Laughter and Tears* takes *Pagliacci* and creates a new context for the opera. The story is set in the mid 20th Century and uses current circus performers to expand on the ideas in the *Laughter* half.

- a. **Discuss the idea** 'contemporary contextualisation of old work allows younger audiences to feel more connected to the content, emotion and drama of that work'.
- b. **What other examples do you know of in contemporary culture where an old story has been recontextualised to connect to a younger audience or a modern context?**
For example the Romeo and Juliet story in the musical *Westside Story*.

5. Language

The language used in *Laughter* is working with the comedy of the traditional Commedia slapstick and subterfuge. As you watch and listen to the music and spoken dialogue, listen for the use of wit.

- a. **Discuss how the comedy of the circus elements is appropriately accommodated by the music.**
- b. **What is the effect of these two elements working together?**

6. Critics' responses

- a. **What are the critical responses you can find to *Pagliacci* on the internet?**
- b. **How are these similar or different to the reviews you find about the Victorian Opera production after the production opens?**
Do you agree with them, why/why not?

7. Go on the VO website

Look at the additional resources, look for our media, blogs, videos and podcasts. <http://www.victorianopera.com.au>

How do the images and videos assist you in your understanding and interpretation of the work?

Further Resources for teachers and sources include;

The New Kobbe's Opera Book, Edited by The Earle of Harewood and Anthony Peattie, Ebury Press, 1976

The Penguin History of Music 2, Ed by Alec Robertson and Denis Stevens, Penguin Books, 1978

The Oxford Handbook of Opera, Ed by Helen M Greenwald, Oxford University Press, 2014

The Victorian Opera Website www.victorianopera.com.au

The Human Race Theatre Company, Education, 6/7/2016,
<http://www.humanracetheatre.org/commedia_dell'arte_aug_7_screen.pdf

Encyclopaedia Britannica, Commedia dell'arte, 21/06/2016 <<http://www.britannica.com/art/commedia-dellarte>

Faction of Fools, History of Commedia, 6/7/2016 <<http://www.factionoffools.org/history>

Wikipedia, Stock character, 21/06/2016, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stock_character

The Commedia dell'arte homepage, 21/06/2016, <<http://shane-arts.com/commedia-history.htm>,

Stock characters, 21/06/2016, <<http://shane-arts.com/commedia-stock-characters.htm>

Commedia dell'arte and Vulgar Comedy, 21/06/2016, <<http://commedia.klingvall.com/the-story-in-commedia-dell%E2%80%99arte-the-royal-dramatic-theatre-speech-part-2/>

Encyclopaedia Britannica, Leoncallo, 6/7/2016, <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ruggiero-Leoncavallo>

52 Composers, Ruggiero Leoncavallo, 6/7/2016 <<http://www.52composers.com/leoncavallo.html>

The Telegraph, My most memorable night at the theatre, viewed 6/7/2016
<<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-features/8369405/My-most-memorable-night-at-the-theatre.html>

Wikipedia, People Show, viewed 6/7/2016 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People_Show

Wikipedia, Emil Wolk, viewed 27/6/2016 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emil_Wolk

The Metropolitan Opera, synopses, 17/6/2016, <<http://www.metopera.org/Discover/Synopses/Cav-Pag/#sthash.oULKOasV.dpuf>

Special thanks to Richard Mills, Emil Wolk, work experience student – Emilie Washington, Corryn Rattray, and all VO staff involved for their contributions to this resource.