VICTORIAN OPERA

GIOACHINO ROSSINI

WILLIAM TELL

Education Resource

William Tell
Education Resource

CONTENTS

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource is designed for students in Years 7-12. All the activities can be used in the classroom alongside or separate to Victorian Opera's production of *William Tell*.

The activities for Years 7-10 suggested in this resource align with the following Australian Curriculum Learning Areas:

- The Arts – Music and Visual Art
- English
- Languages – French
- Humanities and Social Sciences

The table below outlines how the activities designed around each Learning Area align to the Australian Curriculum General Capabilities.

CAPABILITIES	Literacy	Numeracy	ICT	Critical and Creative Thinking	Personal and Social	Ethical Understanding	Intercultural Understanding
THE ARTS - MUSIC							
Activity 1	X		X				X
Activity 2		X					
Activity 3	X		X	X			X
ENGLISH							
Activity 1	X			X	X	X	
Activity 2	X		X	X		X	X
LANGUAGES - FRENCH							
Activity 1	X			X			X
Activity 2	X			X		X	X
THE ARTS - VISUAL ARTS							
Activity 1	X		X	X			X
HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES							
Activity 1	X		X	X	X	X	X
Activity 2	X		X	X	X	X	X

Activities devised for Years 11-12 have been done so in accordance with the Victorian Certificate of Education Study Design for:

- Music Performance
- Music Investigation
- Music Style and Composition
- English and English as an Additional Language
- Literature
- French
- Studio Arts
- Visual Communication Design
- Australian and Global Politics

GLOSSARY

Act – A component of the total work, consisting of its own partial dramatic arc.

Baritone – The male voice between the tenor and bass.

Bass – The lowest male voice.

Cantons – The subdivision of a country established for political or administrative purposes.

Castrato – Historically, a singer who was castrated as a boy to retain the boyish quality of the voice.

Chorus – In opera or music theatre this refers to a large body of singers.

Chorus Master – The person responsible for the rehearsal and preparation of the chorus prior to production.

Coloratura – A rapid passage, run, trill or other virtuoso-like feature used particularly in music of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Composer – The person who writes the music.

Concertmaster – The lead violinist of the orchestra.

Conductor - The person who interprets and leads the orchestra or musical performance, coordinating the performers and keeping the time through the technique of hand movements.

Contralto – The lowest female voice.

Countertenor – The highest male voice.

Designer – The person who designs the overall look of the production, including the sets.

Director – The person who is in charge of the artistic features of the production.

Ensemble - A group of performers performing together.

Finale – The last movement of a work that contains more than one movement.

Grand Opera – A large-scale serious opera without spoken dialogue.

Heimat – A German word meaning home or homeland.

Hero / Heroine – In its modern form, the hero/heroine is a protagonist character who fulfils a task and restores balance to the community. He/she is a born leader, whether they know it or not, as well as a real survivor who has faith in good. Others are willing to believe in this hero and will follow him/her.

Key – The tonal centre around which a composition is based, often indicated by a key signature.

Leitmotif – The representation of characters, typical situations and recurring ideas by musical motifs.

Libretto – The text of an opera or music theatre work.

Maquette – A sculptor's small preliminary model or sketch.

Mezzo-soprano – The second highest female voice.

Mise en scène – The arrangement of the scenery, props, etc., on the stage of a theatrical production.

Opera – A staged drama set to music, made up of vocal pieces with instrumental accompaniment and usually with orchestral overtures and interludes.

Opera Buffa – Also known as 'comic opera', an opera with a large mixture of music, on a light subject with a happy ending, including comic elements.

Opera Seria – Also known as 'serious opera', an opera with dramatic, serious content often with a tragic ending.

Orchestra – A large ensemble of instruments divided into four main sections: strings, woodwind, brass and percussion.

Orchestration – Utilisation of the instrumentation of an orchestra in the writing of a composition.

Overture – An instrumental composition intended as an introduction to an opera or other music theatre work.

Principal – A main part.

Recitative – A vocal (singing) style designed to imitate the natural inflections of speech, used in opera where dialogue might be used in other forms of music theatre.

Rehearsal – Where the performers and the creatives develop the production, shaping lines, songs, movements etc.

Rhythm – The regular and irregular pattern of notes of different length in the music.

Repetiteur – A pianist who works as an accompanist and vocal coach for opera.

Score – The notation showing all the parts of a work, both instrumental and vocal.

Soprano – The highest female voice.

Soubrette – A light operatic soprano.

Sound Designer – The person who designs the additional sound used in a production.

Stage Manager – The person who manages the running of rehearsals and performances, managing all the components of the production during performance.

Surtitles – A translation of the words being sung on stage projected onto a screen above the stage.

Tempo – The speed of a composition.

Tenor – A high male voice.

Terroir – Soil or land.

Tessitura – The general range of vocal parts.

Tutti – A marking in a score that indicates the use of the whole orchestra and/or all the vocal parts.

Vibrato – A very slight fluctuation of pitch in rapid succession to create warmth in the sound.

Villain - Often the antagonist. In literature, this is the evil character in the story, the character who has a negative effect on the other characters.

Vocal range - The human voice falls into a range from the lowest to highest notes they can reach. The normal range is around two octaves and is traditionally broken into seven voice types, (from highest to lowest) soprano, mezzo-soprano, contralto, tenor, baritone and bass.

Workshop – An exploration of a new work (production, text, music, design).

WILLIAM TELL – ABOUT THE OPERA

Composer   Gioachino Rossini
Librettists   V.J. Etienne de Jouy and H.L.F. Bis

Characters and Cast

William Tell	Armando Noguera
Arnold Melcthal	Carlos E. Bárcenas
Walter Furst	Jeremy Kleeman
Melcthal	Teddy Tahu Rhodes
Jemmy	Alexandra Flood
Gesler	Paolo Pecchioli
Rodolphe	Paul Biencourt
Ruodi	Timothy Reynolds
Leuthold	Jerzy Kozlowki
Mathilde	Gisela Stille
Hedwige	Liane Keegan

Creative Team

Conductor	Richard Mills
Director	Rodula Gaitanou
Set and Lighting Design	Simon Corder
Costume Design	Esther Marie Hayes

SYNOPSIS

Setting: Occupied Switzerland in a dystopian future.
The invaders are a technologically superior force intent on the destruction of a simple and wholesome community life in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

Act One

In a pastoral community on the shores of Lake Lucerne, villagers are celebrating a harvest festival centred around veneration of the earth and the blessing of couples and community members by Melcthal, the village elder. Melcthal chides his son Arnold for not having found a wife and notices his deliberate separation from the ceremonies. Later William Tell is concerned by Arnold's apparently divided soul and provokes his confession of his love for Mathilde, an Austrian Royal Princess, whom he had previously rescued from an avalanche. Tell exhorts him to fight for liberation, in a classic juxtaposition of love versus duty, but as the hunting horns announce the impending approach of Gesler, Arnold slips away to find Mathilde. The village festivities are interrupted by the appearance

of Leuthold, who has killed an invading soldier who attempted to abduct his daughter. The cowardly and mean-spirited Ruodi refuses to row Leuthold to safety, protesting the tempestuous waters of the lake. Tell readily volunteers and he and Leuthold depart. Almost immediately Gesler and his soldiers arrive and arrest Melcthal, who is summarily executed by Rodolphe, Gesler's henchman, in full view of the fearful community.

Act Two

Mathilde, alone in the solitude of nature, reflects on the difficulties of her love for Arnold. He joins her and they declare their love by exchanging rings despite the difficulties surrounding them. They plan for Arnold to achieve military glory. Tell and patriot Walter Furst interrupt this tryst and reveal the heroic and ignominious death of Arnold's father, Melcthal, at the hands of the enemy. Arnold now embraces his duty and joins the Swiss cause wholeheartedly. Tell summons the men of the Swiss Cantons -Unterwald, Schwitz and Uri- who make an oath to overthrow the tyranny or face death bravely in the attempt.

Act Three

Arnold and Mathilde meet and acknowledging the impossibility of their situation, they bid impassioned farewells. Gesler now presides over a celebration of years of imperial rule. Tell and his son Jemmy refuse to venerate his golden bust. Gesler, struck by Tell's love for his son and his fame as an archer, improvises a cruel punishment: Tell is to shoot an apple from Jemmy's head. Sustained by Jemmy's filial support, Tell succeeds. Gesler notices a second arrow, which Tell confesses was prepared for him. He orders immediate execution, but Mathilde, as a representative of the throne, orders clemency for the boy Jemmy. Gesler, as a hateful compromise, insists on accompanying Tell - across the stormy waters - to the prison on the other side of the lake. The populace, outraged beyond endurance by the cruelty they have witnessed, erupt in a violent denunciation of Gesler and his occupation in a hate-filled finale. The yoke of imperialism has become intolerable and the subjugated express their defiance heedless of the consequences. Tell assumes the mantle of spiritual leader of a potentially defeated people.

Act Four

Arnold visits his ancestral home and laments the death of his father. He arms his followers and prepares for battle. Mathilde returns Jemmy to his mother Hedwige and joins the Swiss cause. Leuthold announces the appearance of the boat carrying Tell and Gesler, which has been battered by the stormy waters, and which Tell, now freed from his chains by the cowardly Gesler, steers to safety. They land and Gesler is isolated among the rebels who attack on a pre-arranged signal. Tell kills Gesler. Arnold and his companions complete the liberation of Altdorf, the scene of Gesler's previous perverted celebration, and the soldiers flee in confusion. The community assembles, Arnold remembers his father, and the opera concludes with a canticle to liberty.

THE ARTS - MUSIC

What is opera?

Opera is a European art form that has been around since the 1600s and became especially popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Today there are many styles of opera performance, but they all have one thing in common – an opera is a play that is sung.

The four main languages of opera are Italian, French, German and English.

The main difference between opera and music theatre is the amplification. Music theatre is usually amplified while opera is not. In addition, music theatre usually includes spoken dialogue as well as music and dance. Opera, on the other hand, uses recitative; a singing style designed to imitate natural speech.

Where did opera come from?

The roots of opera can be traced back to the Ancient Greeks who were amazing people, living over 2,000 years ago. They invented and created all sorts of things like beautiful sculpture, remarkable architecture, science and maths discoveries, and philosophy where they argued about how to live the best life they could. They also loved the theatre and wrote wonderful plays, some of which are still performed today.

In the following thousand years, after the height of the Greek civilisation, many of the skills they had were lost, especially in Science and Art. While the art in what we call the middle ages was still very beautiful, it had lost some of the scientific application that made it so lifelike.

In Italy, from about the 1300s, scholars started to try and rediscover many of the things that had been lost. This period was called the Renaissance, which means "rebirth". All sorts of scientific discoveries were made and incredible new art works were created.

One thing these scholars were particularly interested in was Greek theatre. They had the texts but they did not know how they were performed. They knew from writings by philosophers like Aristotle and Plato that the plays were accompanied by music and this helped raise the emotional moral tone of the works. But how? What did the music do? How were the lines sung?

A group of thinkers and musicians from Florence called the Florentine Camerata met regularly to try and work this out. The invented a new art form in which the dialogue in a play would be sung. They decided to call the new art form "Opera", which simply means "a work". The first truly successful opera was called *L'Orfeo* by Claudio Monteverdi and is still performed today.

Following the great success of this work, opera exploded and became popular all over Europe and then the world. The style of opera and the way it was performed developed over the centuries to reflect the culture of the time. At its height in the 1800s, opera was huge with theatres in every big city.

Grand Opera

Grand Opera is a serious, epic opera usually based on a historical, mythic or legendary subject. This style of opera is much longer than the operas of early composers, with the story told over four or five acts. The development of Grand Opera saw the use of castrato singers became less common while the heroic dramatic singer emerged. The role of the chorus also became much more prominent, especially in the hands of Rossini, and it was not uncommon for a ballet to be included in such works as well. The subject matter often explored the conflict between private emotion and public, religious or political responsibility.

Grand Opera came about in France in the nineteenth century and was the main form of the Paris Opéra throughout this time. Its emergence coincided with the grand bourgeoisie devoted to spectacle and its importance was attached to the magnificence of effect created on stage. Rossini's *William Tell* is one of the most significant operas of the Grand Opera style, possessing a political subject within its storyline, optional ballet scenes and a considerable orchestral score. His contribution to the style had a massive influence on the way succeeding composers created and composed opera.

The Ballet Scene from Meyerbeer's Opera *Robert Le Diable* by Hilaire-Germain Edgar Degas, 1876. Source: http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O17815

Voice types and singing styles

There are seven voice types in opera, each of which is defined by the range of notes they can sing and their vocal quality.

There are three female operatic voice types, although most operas only have soprano and mezzo-soprano roles.

- Soprano – the highest sounding female voice with a vocal range from middle C up to the C two octaves above.
- Mezzo-Soprano – slightly lower than the soprano with a vocal range from the G below middle C to the A two octaves above.
- Contralto – the lowest sounding female voice and rarely used in opera today. The vocal range for this voice type is from the F below middle C to a high F one octave above.

There are four male voice types, although the countertenor voice is usually only used in operas from the Baroque period (1600-1750).

- Countertenor – the highest sounding male voice with almost the same vocal range as a mezzo-soprano; the G below middle C to a high F one octave above.
- Tenor – a high sounding male voice that usually takes the lead male role. The vocal range for this type is roughly from the C below middle C to the C above.
- Baritone – the middle sounding male voice with a vocal range from the second G below middle C up to the G above.
- Bass – the lowest sounding male voice which has a vocal range from the E above middle C to the E two octaves below, however some bass singers can sing even lower.

There are further categories of voice defining the kind of voice quality and the type of music they can sing. The composer will consider voice types to highlight the different characters – for example, to differentiate between a King and a Servant or a Princess and a Witch.

A few of these are:

- Coloratura – a very high range with the ability to sing complicated parts with agility.
- Dramatic – a heavy sounding, powerful voice.
- Lyric – an average sized voice with the ability to sing long, beautiful phrases.
- Heldentenor – The 'heroic tenor', a very big role that requires a powerful sound.

Follow the links below to hear examples of what these voices sound like:

Classical Female Voices – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIPFAww8X-U

Classical Male Voices – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gRL7shs23Wc

Voice types in *William Tell*

CHARACTER	VOICE TYPE
William Tell	Baritone
Hedwige	Mezzo-Soprano
Jemmy	Soprano
Arnold Melcthal	Tenor
Walter Furst	Bass
Melcthal	Bass
Leuthold	Bass
Gesler	Bass
Mathilde	Soprano
Rodolphe	Tenor
Ruodi	Tenor

Chorus members in rehearsal for *William Tell*. Photo: Charlie Kinross

About the composer

Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868) is considered one of the most popular, successful and influential opera composers of the first half of the nineteen century. During his career, he composed 40 operas and was central to the development of opera as an art form.

Rossini was born to a horn player and singer and by the age of 14, could play the violin, cello, harpsichord and horn. He had also composed a number of short songs by this age and was commissioned to compose his first opera when he was 15.

He first achieved fame at the age of 20 while in Venice with his operas *L'inganno felice* (*The Happy Deception*, 1812) and *La pietra del paragone* (*The Touchstone,* 1812), written in the *opera-buffa* (comic opera) style. The graceful melodies, amusing characters and ingenious plots of these works appealed to the opera-going audiences of the day. Shortly after, his fame spread to Naples, where the impresario Domenico Barbaia, offered him a six-year contract as the music director of both the Teatro San Carlo and the Teatro del Fondo. During this time, he was to compose some of his most well-regarded operas, including, *Elisabetta, regina d'Inghilterra* (1815; *Elizabeth, Queen of England*), *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (1816; *The Barber of Seville*), *Otello* (1816), *La cenerentola* (1817; *Cinderella*) and *La donna del lago* (1819; *The Lady of the Lake).*

When he was 31, he took up a post as the director of the Théâtre Italien in Paris. During his time there, he started work on modifying his compositional style by replacing the use of coloratura with a more declamatory style of singing. He also reformed the role of the orchestra and gave the chorus a more important position within the context of the opera. He wrote a number of significant operas while in this role, some of which include, *Le Comte Ory* (1828; *Count Ory*), and *Guillaume Tell* (1830; *William Tell*). *William Tell* was received with a standing ovation by its premiering audience and also received praise from all critics at the time. It was the last opera that Rossini would compose.

Photo by Étienne Carjat, 1865. Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gioachino_Rossini

Rossini decided to retire early, at the age of 37. During his retirement he composed little, and that which he did compose consisted of more religious pieces, as well as a few songs and pieces for piano, which were mostly unpublished. He remained in Paris for the remainder of his life, where he passed time hosting extravagant gourmet dinners for the greats of the musical and literary world of the nineteenth century.

Victorian Opera's Artistic Director, Richard Mills writes about the music

The music of this opera represents the mature artistry of Rossini as a composer and man of the theatre. It was composed for Paris in 1829. Paris at that time had the most advanced and impressive opera industry in Europe. The opera house was the temple of spectacle for the city, the most fashionable meeting place and the locus of civic pride and identity. The Ballet played an important role in sustaining this profile. Consequently, the original opera saw the composer offering generous possibilities for elaborate scenography, dance, and choral pageant as well as the normal discourse of opera.

Our challenge has been not to recreate this world, a world without film and television, a society with ample leisure time and equally formal customs for social interaction, a world with a different concept of time, both in daily life and, consequently, in the theatre, which was (and is in some measure today) an image of the world at large. Rather we have sought to take the narrative essence of this work, and create a version which is fast moving, telling the story of cruel oppression and exploring the human relationships of the characters, fathers and sons, wife and husband, love in the context of war and struggle against seemingly implacable and overwhelming unjust domination of an agricultural community by a technologically superior force.

The music tells this story in its own terms, without the need for the elaborate ballet sequences and scenographic pantomimes which were necessary to satisfy the tastes of the Paris opera of the day, and which would be only of historical interest in our own time. Audiences do not go to the opera today to see elaborate mountain scenery recreated, we have film for that, rather we are interested in the drama of emotions and human predicament that are explored through music that is the essence of opera.

It is the power of the music to sustain a narrative, to create atmosphere and to reveal the inner drama of the story that remains fresh and vital in our own time and which communicates so directly to our public.

Rossini uses the orchestra in more elaborate textures than in any of his other work, a reflection of the superior skills of the Parisian orchestral culture of the day compared to the standards of orchestral playing in Italy at the same time. The work opens with a concerto for the cello section, and the overture has the famous solo for the Cor Anglais. Various horn signals - and other material, based on the "Ranz das Vaches", literally the "cow calls" of Swiss pastoral create the sense of a community deeply connected to nature. There is something consistently more immediately expressive in the sometimes elaborate vocal writing of the opera, there is the sense of the vocal fireworks being at the service of sensibility rather than mere display as an end in itself. So, in this sense, the opera represents the emerging romantic aesthetic of the earlier nineteenth century that finds its parallels in Weber and later in Wagner.

But, despite being set in French, this is an essentially Italian opera; the thrilling ensembles, chorus work, musical scene painting, and vocal virtuosity are Italian to the core and represent the highest development of Rossini's art. He retired after composing *William Tell*, living in Paris, keeping abreast of contemporary musical developments and generously assisting emerging talent — a great European

figure of his time, influencing many, including Franz Liszt and Camille Saint-Sëans. He also enjoyed cooking. It is this most fertile and generous muse which gave us *Guillaume Tell*, a story of struggle for freedom against oppression, told in music of lasting energy and vitality that can speak to us today with such a fresh immediacy.

About the orchestra

Rossini's *William Tell* was originally written to be 4 hours in duration, however, he wrote it in a way that allowed for different scenes to be removed, when required. For example, the original score includes dance segments to be performed by professional dancers. These segments are usually omitted from modern-day productions of the work.

The orchestra in *William Tell* requires 60 musicians and is made up of the following instrumentation:

Instrumental Family	Instrument
Woodwind	2 Flutes
	1 Piccolo
	2 Oboes
	1 Cor Anglais
	2 Clarinets
	2 Bassoons
Brass	4 French Horns
	2 Trumpets
	2 Trombones
	1 Bass Trombone
Strings	18 Violins
	6 Violas
	6 Cellos
	4 Double Basses
	1 Harp
Percussion	Timpani
	Bass Drum
	Cymbals
	Triangle
	Bell
	Tam-Tam

MUSIC – ACTIVITIES

For Years 7-8

Activity One: Learn the sounds of the musical instruments and what they look like.

Listen to the different instruments we have in our orchestra for *William Tell*:

Woodwind

Flute https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=axT8dvCaKBU

Piccolo https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pzzit58_mKM

Oboe https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S7FaQrETz_w

Cor Anglais https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9kYULmOwKg

Clarinet https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnO9EML6wAs

Bassoon https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HveLr_dEpp0

Brass

French Horn https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tb_yv8cM490

Trumpet https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGRmMbm2BxU

Trombone https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tprJNmpAD5U

Bass Trombone https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_19_8jzWNyw

Strings

Violin https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fS-8J5pa2AQ

Viola https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xtk_SPv7y0

Cello https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uUUBo-8_8Jo

Double Bass https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32bf5qtDeF8

Harp https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uO_fbJ86Xc8

Percussion

Timpani https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uUmEi_o28m0

Bass Drum https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oOl-dPJqnnM

Cymbals https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pd7YYoiAIyo

Triangle https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lw7q8kC-oCc

Bell https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOCdB9vkXiA

Tam-Tam https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qD_TpWfbag8

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Write the names of the instruments next to their picture below. If students are unfamiliar with musical instruments, they can either watch the videos above and write the names below after each viewing, or research what each instrument looks like from the list of instruments listed on page 14.

1. Circle the instruments used in *William Tell.*

2. Compare the sounds of the instruments within their families. Which are higher or lower in pitch? Does their size and shape change to match their pitch?

3. Do you know how to play any of these instruments? Have you played any of these instruments before?

For Years 7-10

Activity Two: Rhythmic and Aural Training

For this exercise, you will need the excerpt from Act 1 of *William Tell*: Ciel, qui du monde es la parure (May Heaven's light shine on this day), provided in Appendix 1 on page 42 of this resource.

Ask your students to first clap, then sing Jemmy's melodic line. To make this activity more difficult, divide your classroom into two groups, give Jemmy's line to one half and Arnold's to the other and repeat the activity. The melody can be sung on the syllable 'la'.

You can listen to this piece at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQtYmayfcW0. This particular excerpt begins from 1:36. In this recording, Jemmy sings the melodic line with the rest of the chorus.

Activity Three: Research Project

Write a short 300 word essay that investigates one or more of the following questions:

1. Who was Gioachino Rossini?

2. What contribution or development did Rossini make to the opera tradition?

3. Why is Rossini's *William Tell* considered a masterpiece? Consider its stylistic and thematic characteristics, as well as how the social context of the day and place in which the work was composed could have influenced his compositional choices.

4. What were some of Rossini's other popular works? Is their style different to that of *William Tell*?

For Years 11-12 – VCE

The following activities can be used to aide students in their preparation for the various Outcomes across VCE subjects in Music Performance, Music Investigation, or Music Style and Composition.

Activity Four: Compare the different interpretations of works

Choose one of the excerpts listed below. As you listen to the different recordings provided, make note of some of the stylistic differences that occur. Think about the following:

• Do the singers sing their parts differently?

• Does the orchestra play its part differently?

• Is there a difference in tempo, colour, voice type, rhythm, etc.?

• Do you think the differences in interpretation change the expression of the same piece?

• Which is your favourite interpretation and why?

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For a copy of the score, please visit http://imslp.org/wiki/Guillaume_Tell_(Rossini,_Gioacchino).

Excerpt 1: Où vas-tu? Quel transport t'agite? (Where are you going? What seems to be causing you such agitation?)

This duo between William Tell and Arnold Melcthal takes place in Act 1 of the opera. Tell tries to persuade Arnold to choose his country and the fight for its liberation over his love for Mathilde.

Version 1:

William Tell – Gabriel Bacquier
Arnold Melcthal – Nicolai Gedda
Orchestra – Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
Conductor – Lamberto Gardelli
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9OsI9zL82V4 until 5:14

Version 2:

William Tell – Jean Borthayre
Arnold Melcthal – Tony Poncet
Orchestra – Grand Orchestre Symphonique – Karlsruhe Opera
Conductor – Marcel Couraud
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SzWviSrGxKQ until 5:08

Version 3:

William Tell – Michele Pertusi
Arnold Melcthal – Gregory Kunde
Orchestra – Radio-Sinfonieorchester Stuttgart
Conductor – Gianluigi Gelmetti
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXKTyM5ZXgs listen from 0:41 to 5:46

Excerpt 2: Overture

The Overture to *William Tell* is made up of four movements, each of which feature musical themes that return in different parts throughout the entire opera. The four movements are:

1. Prelude: Dawn

2. Storm

3. Ranz des vaches

4. Finale: March of the Swiss soldiers

Version 1:

Orchestra – London Philharmonic
Conductor – Alfred Scholz
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoBE69wdSkQ

Version 2:

Orchestra – Berlin Philharmoniker
Conductor – Herbert von Karajan
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOofwWT3Edc

Version 3:

Orchestra – Artosphere Festival Orchestra
Conductor – Corrado Rovaris
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3DO4Fn1j0IM

Activity Five: Transposition

Identify which key the excerpt provided is in and transpose it into its relative key.

Please note: For this exercise, you will need the excerpt from Act 1 of *William Tell*: Ciel, qui du monde es la parure (May Heaven's light shine on this day), provided in Appendix 1 on page 42 of this resource.

To listen to this excerpt, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQtYmayfcW0. This particular excerpt begins from 1:36.

Activity Six: Composition

Compose a four-part harmony based on Jemmy's melody in a key of your choice.

Please note: For this exercise, you will need the excerpt from Act 1 of *William Tell*: Ciel, qui du monde es la parure (May Heaven's light shine on this day), provided in Appendix 1 on page 42 of this resource.

To listen to this excerpt, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQtYmayfcW0. This particular excerpt begins from 1:36.

ENGLISH

The story of William Tell

William Tell is considered the Swiss National Hero of Liberty. Popular legend places him as a peasant from Bürglen in the Canton of Uri in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.

In the original story, an Austrian bailiff, Hermann Gesler, perched his hat atop a raised pole in the central square of Altdorf and commanded all those who passed it to bow in respect. William Tell, a well-known marksman, defies Austrian authority by ignoring Gesler's command. As punishment, Gesler orders Tell to shoot an arrow off his son's head with his crossbow from seventy paces away; if he is successful, they will be released, but if he fails or refuses to comply, both he and his son will be killed. Tell places one arrow in his quiver (or hides one arrow in his jacket, depending on the version) and another in his crossbow, takes aim, fires, and shoots the arrow clear off his son's head. Impressed, Gesler asked what the second arrow was for, to which Tell responds that it would have been for Gesler had he struck his son. Angered by Tell's intention, Gesler orders that he be arrested and sentences him to prison for life. During the boat journey to the dungeons of Gesler's castle, a violent storm erupts causing the oarsmen to beg him to release Tell so he can steer them to safety. Gesler concedes and Tell skilfully manoeuvres the boat to shore, jumps off and escapes, and uses the second arrow to kill the tyrant.

While the original story of *William Tell* plays a strong role in the history of Switzerland, there is no documentation from that time proving that he existed and that the actions that unfold in the story took place. The first text to report the alleged events is a chronicle called *The White Book of Sarnen* published in 1470, well over a century after the action in the story occurs. The classic legend also appears in the *Chronicon Helveticul* (1734-36) by Gilg Tschudi. Nonetheless, the legend of *William Tell* has had an enormous influence on the history of the country and the character of William Tell has symbolised the struggle for political and individual freedom since the thirteenth century.

Tell is arrested for not saluting Gesler's hat. Mosaic at the Swiss
National Museum, Hans Sandreuter, 1901.
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Tell

The play by Friedrich Schiller

Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) was a German poet, playwright, historian, dramatist and literary theorist. At the will of his parents, he originally trained for the church, but was later encouraged to go into law, before finally transferring to medicine. He worked as an assistant medical officer to a Stuttgart regiment and during this time, wrote his first play *Die Räuber* (*The Robbers*; 1781). The play was an immediate success and Schiller got into trouble after he attended the premiere in Mannheim without his superior's permission.

He eventually ran away from Stuttgart and tried to seek refuge from the director of the theatre who launched *Die Räuber*, using a new play he had written as leverage. Unfortunately, the director rejected his play and he was forced to seek sanctuary from some friends who he trained with. He kept working on new plays and was eventually offered an appointment as a resident playwright with the Mannheim Theatre. This appointment only lasted one year and unable to support himself, he moved to Leipzig where he befriended Christian Gottfried Körner who supported him for the next two years, during which time he wrote *Don Carlos*. In 1787 Schiller moved to Weimar, then considered the literary capital of Germany. During his time in Weimar, he struck up a friendship with Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, one of German's greatest literary figures of the modern era. Schiller later went on to explore the philosophical works of

Portrait of Schiller by Ludovike Simanowitz, 1794. Source: https://www.dla-marbach.de/en/archive/friedrich-schiller/

Immanuel Kant, which inspired him to write essays around the character of aesthetic activity, how it functioned in society and its relation to moral experience. During this period, Schiller composed a number of reflective poems such as, *Das Ideal und das Leben* (*Life and the Ideal*) and *Der Spaziergang* (*The Walk*). These works not only illustrate the essence of his philosophical and critical thinking, but also demonstrate how "art can help man to attain his inner harmony and how, through the aesthetic education of the individual citizen, a happier, more humane social order may develop".

Schiller wrote his play *Wilhelm Tell* in 1804, one year before his death. This play was one of four that he wrote in the space of four years. His take on the legend of William Tell depicts the revolt of the Swiss forest cantons against the Habsburg rule and the assassination of a tyrannous Austrian governor by the hero. Its underlying question is the justifiability of violence in political action.

ENGLISH – ACTIVITIES

For Years 7-10

Activity One: Character Analysis

Choose from one of the characters listed below and analyse their role within the overall opera. Consider which side they are on politically, how they aide or hinder William Tell in his mission to liberate Switzerland from the Austrian occupiers, as well as the type of relationship they have with other characters, if any.

List of characters:

- William Tell
- Arnold Melcthal
- Walter Furst
- Melcthal
- Jemmy
- Gesler
- Rodolphe
- Ruodi
- Leuthold
- Mathilde
- Hedwige

Activity Two: Essay

Write a 500-1000 word essay on one of the topics below. Students are required to use at least three to five different resources depending on the length of the essay set by the teacher.

- What are some of the themes that present themselves within the opera?
- The story of William Tell is based on a legend. Explain what a legend is and describe some of its features then look at how *William Tell* aligns with these characteristics.
- Consider the character of William Tell. What is his role within the story and how does he become the hero? How does he set an example for his son and those within his community who look up to him?

For Years 11-12 VCE

The below activities are designed to develop different writing styles of students preparing for their VCE English and Literature exams.

Activity Three: News Article

Write a news article on the liberation of Switzerland from the Austrian occupiers by William Tell. Use facts from the action that takes place in the opera but include imaginative elements as well.

Activity Four: Monologue

Write a monologue from Gesler's point of view. Consider some of his thoughts on William Tell and Austria's occupation of Switzerland.

Activity Five: Creative Writing

Explore the conflict Arnold feels between his love for Mathilde and his duty to liberate his country from the oppressors. Write a series of letters between Arnold and Mathilde as they work through their conflicts and decide on a resolution to their problems.

Activity Six: Comparative Analysis

Compare Friedrich Shiller's play, *Wilhelm Tell* with Gioachino Rossini's opera, *William Tell* and identity the major differences in the plot, characters and underlying themes.

To read the play, go to https://www.gutenberg.org/files/6788/6788-h/6788-h.htm.

LANGUAGE – FRENCH

The Libretto

William Tell is an opera in French based on the libretto by Victor Joseph Etienne de Jouy and Hippolyte Louis Florent Bis.

Jouy was originally a military man but soon changed careers to become a French dramatist. He worked on a number of opera librettos including works by Gaspare Luigi Pacifico Spontini, Luigi Cherubini and Gioachino Rossini.

Bis was an early nineteenth century French playwright and librettist. He is mostly known for his libretto of *William Tell* by Rossini.

Author unknown. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Etienne_de_Jouy.jpg

Portrait d'Hippolyte Bis, by Serrur (1829). Source: http://collection.musenor.com/application/moteur_recherche/ConsultationOeuvre.aspx?idOeuvre=400687

FRENCH – ACTIVITIES

For Years 7-8

Activity One: Vocabulary Builder

Provide your students with the French text below from Act 3, Scene 1.

1. For entry level students, ask them to first look up the words and their meanings in English. Then spend some time going through their pronunciation.

2. For students who have previously studied French, ask them to translate the text into English, then provide them with the English translation below for them to compare with their own.

MATHILDE

Ils s'éloignent enfin; j'ai cru le reconnaître;

Mon cœur n'a point trompé mes yeux.

Il a suivi mes pas, il est près de ces lieux.

Je tremble!... s'il allait paraître!

Quel est ce sentiment profond, mystérieux

Dont je nourris l'ardeur, que je chéris peut-être?

Arnold! Arnold! est-ce bien toi,

Simple habitant de ces campagnes,

L'espoir, l'orgueil de ces montagnes,

Qui charmes ma pensée et causes mon effroi?

Ah! que je puisse au moins l'avouer à moi-même!

Melchthal, c'est toi que j'aime;

Tu m'as sauvée le jour

Et ma reconnaissance excuse mon amour.

Sombre forêt, désert triste et sauvage,

Je vous préfère aux splendeurs des palais;

C'est sur les monts, au séjour de l'orage,

Que mon cœur, que mon cœur peut renaître à la paix;

Mais l'écho seulement apprendra mes secrets,

Toi, du berger astre doux et timide,

Qui, sur mes pas, viens semant tes reflets,

Ah! sois aussi mon étoile et mon guide!

MATHILDE

They're going away at last; I thought I recognised him;

my heart did not deceive my eyes.

He has followed me here, he is nearby.

I tremble - if he were to appear!

What is this deep, mysterious feeling

whose warmth I nurture, that maybe I cherish?

Arnold, Arnold, is it really you,

a simple inhabitant of these fields,

the hope, the pride of these mountains,

who captivate my thoughts and cause my terror?

Ah, that I might at least admit it to myself?

Melchthal, it is you whom I love;

you saved my life

and my gratitude excuses my love.

Gloomy forest, sad and wild wilderness,

I prefer you to the splendours of palaces;

It is on the hills, in the dwelling-place of the storm,

that my heart can be restored to peace;

But the echo alone shall learn my secrets, etc.

You, soft and shy shepherd star,

who come shedding your reflections in my footsteps,

ah, be also my star and my guide!

For Years 9-10

Activity Two: Reading Task

Provide students with an excerpt of the French text of the libretto and devise 3-4 analysis questions they need to answer in French. The choice of text will depend on the French level of the student.

The full libretto in French and English can be found at http://www.murashev.com/opera/Guillaume_Tell_libretto_French_English.

For Years 11-12 – VCE

The below activities are designed to help students practice their writing skills ahead of the Outcomes across Units 1-4 of VCE French.

Activity Three: Prepare a News Article

In French, write a news article around the opera of *William Tell*. Students should include information around the composer, opera as an art form, as well as the story of *William Tell* and its history.

Activity Four: Write a review

In French, prepare a 250-300 word review on the following video of this scene from the opera:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXKTyM5ZXgs

Students with an understanding of music and opera should include musical elements in their review. Those without can write the review from the perspective of a newcomer to opera.

THE ARTS - VISUAL ARTS

William Tell is not often staged due its remarkable length and score. In fact, Victorian Opera's performance of the work will be the first in Australia for 140 years. To bring this epic work to life, the company teamed up with Simon Corder, a London-based set and lighting designer, and Esther Marie Hayes, an Australian costume and set designer. Find out more about their ideas and designs around the set, lighting and costumes for *William Tell* and view the images on pages 28-29 and 32-34 to see how their designs came to life.

Set and Lighting Designer, Simon Corder on the *William Tell* design process.

The design process starts by listening to the piece, reading the text, and conversation with the director about what matters. A thoughtful production will usually 'take a view' on some elements of the dramaturgy.

William Tell is located in the Swiss Alps, near Lake Lucerne, and landscape has a key symbolic role in the opera - it is not simply a backdrop. Attachment to the land is central. Schiller's idea of Heimat, the French notion of terroir, the close communities of Swiss cantons, and the weather plays a significant role as in many Rossini operas.

Our significant visual references are Joseph Mallord William Turner's paintings of the Swiss Alps in the early nineteenth century, and more recently films of *The Hunger Games* series. Turner was famous for his turbulent and violent seas and skies.

And then we have the challenge of how to stage a piece which is a foundational example of French Grand Opera - massive historical spectaculars that were exported all over the world, with images from the original *mise en scène* even making their way into Parisian popular culture of the time.

The solution we have elected is to present a mountainous landscape in the form of alpine grass roofs, set against a dominating mountain of shingles. So, we create an impression of landscape without imitation. A terrain which is at once immense and simultaneously domestic. On a practical level, our roof-mountains provide levels and interest for a big chorus show.

I don't make a traditional maquette with cardboard and blue and paints, my working method is all digital. Primarily I use Sketchup Pro for 3D modelling, and WYSIWYG by Cast Lighting for planning the lighting and pre-visualisation. Other software includes AutoCAD, CorelDRAW, Acrobat DC, Lightroom and Photoshop.
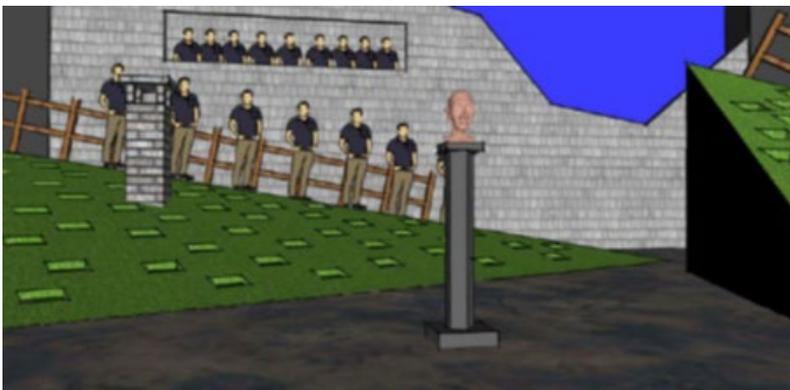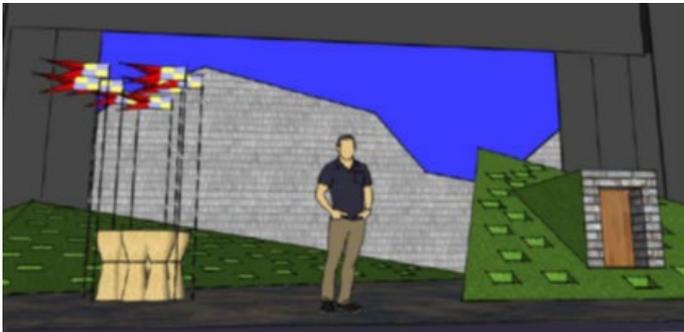
Reference Photos – Set and Lighting Design
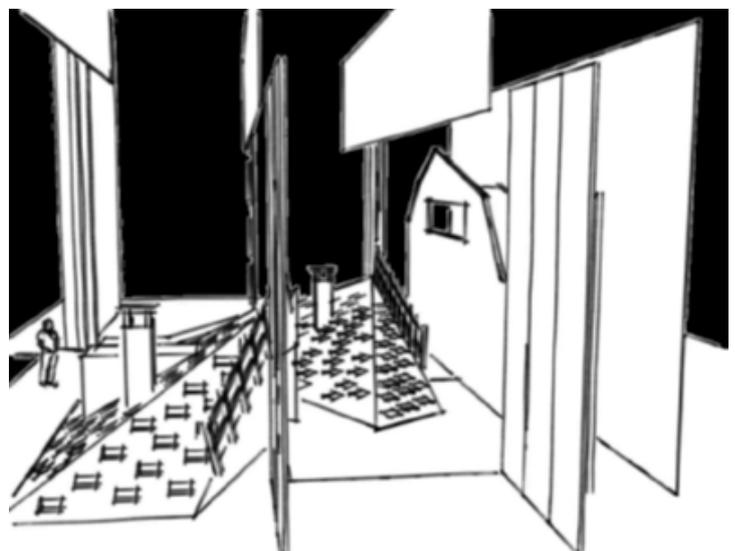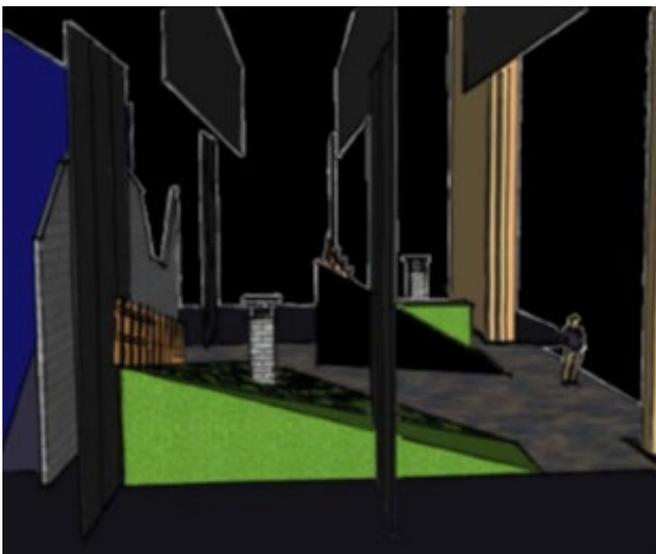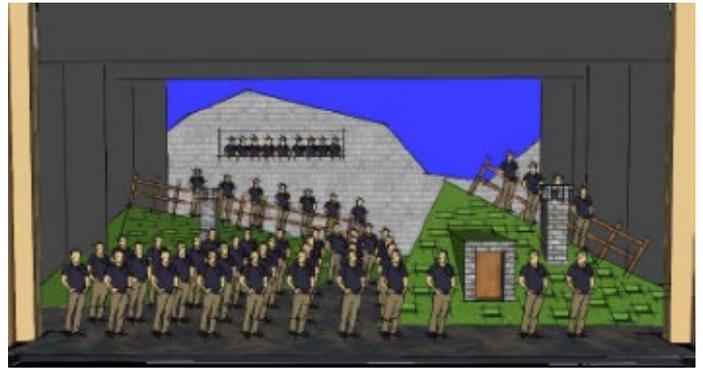
Act One - Ritual

Act Three, Scene Two – Altdorf: A bust of Gesler to be kissed by all of the people, on a plinth in the town square.

Act One: Empire – Gesler's soldiers arrive, poison the land, trash the alter and burn the flags in an 'incinerator bin'.

Ideas for the crossbow Tell uses to shoot the apple from Jemmy's head in Act Three.

An interview with Costumer Designer Esther Marie Hayes, on the *William Tell* costumes.

How long have you been a costume designer for and what path did you take to get there?

I have been a Costume Designer for the past ten years working across theatre, opera, film/TV. I went directly from high school to university, graduating in 2006 with a Bachelor of Dramatic Art: Production Design. I worked in independent theatre and small projects with friends for a few years before moving into designing for main stage productions.

Where did you draw inspiration from for your designs for *William Tell*? Did you watch older productions by other companies to understand what you did and did not want to do with your designs for this production?

I drew inspiration from many sources when working on the designs for *William Tell*. In my first conversations with the director Rodula Gaitanou, she sent some references that she had which were a mix of different time periods. She was quite keen on a modern feel with a period twist, so I followed that direction looking at folk costumes, mid-century, contemporary and futuristic looks to create a recognisable world that incorporated looks from the past, now and future. I collected images from a range of sources such as paintings, fashion catwalks and images of military forces from around the world. Dystopian films and TV series such as *The Hunger Games* and *The Handmaid's Tale* were also references, in looking at the gelling of different time periods and ways of indicating different social groups/classes. I did listen to past productions from other companies to understand the mood and feel of the piece, and to understand the characters more, but not so much for reference of the design.

Did you have to work closely with the set designer on the production? How does this process look like?

When I started working on this production, the set had already been designed by Simon Corder. This was great in terms of understanding the world and playing space for the performers. The stylised design allowed me to play with colour and pattern within the costumes, resulting in an eclectic mix for the Swiss people which contrasts with the sleekness and austerity of the Austrian force, emphasising their role as cruel and inhumane oppressors. Simon and I worked closely on the props to make sure the items held and used by the cast would work well with the costumes and fit into the world we created.

Once the designs are sketched and finalised, what comes next?

The sketches are just the beginning of the design stage, following the research period. Once the sketches are finalised I work with the costume manager to source fabric, trims, buttons, clothing, shoes and any undergarments. I talk with the makers and milliners to discuss the sketches and work out the best way to construct the garment. We discuss how the garment is worn, what's required by the performer and how they will get into the garment. At this stage, I would also be talking to the Wig maker and also the Art finisher who would be dying fabric and trims and breaking down costumes

to make sure that the items that are new look like they have been well worn and lived in by the character.

The next stage is fittings. This is a time to work with the performer, trying on any clothing that has been made or bought. Clothing can be altered to fit the performer and trims and decoration can be added. Depending on the outfit you can have 1-4 fittings before a costume is finalised. Once the costume is finished each item is labelled, recorded and photographed for the costume bible.

It is then ready for the stage where the director and the design team can see the costumes with the set, props and under lighting. This is the time to make any adjustments and to make sure everything works and serves the production.

What character did you enjoy designing the costume for the most and why?

The characters I enjoyed designing the most were the Swiss Chorus. As we were creating a world that allowed for a mixture of time periods and references from different sources, I had a lot of fun putting together a mixture of patterns, colours and textures to create a series of eclectic looks which were unique to each member of the chorus.

Reference Photos – Costume Design

William Tell

Gesler

Mathilde – Act 2
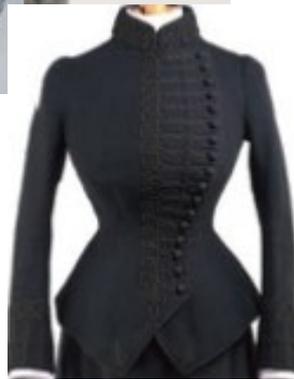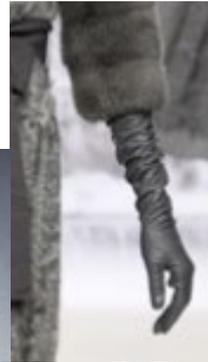

Mathilde – Act 3

Costume Designs

Gesler and his soldiers

William Tell

Melchtal, Arnold,
Ruodi, Leuthold

Mathilde

Jemmy

The Chorus

VISUAL ARTS – ACTIVITIES

For Years 7-10

Activity One: Costume Design

Design a costume for two characters from the opera.

In 200 words, ask students to explain some of the reasons behind their designs. Did a particular period, designer, film or play influence their designs? Are their designs influenced by the story or libretto? Does the costume include any accessories that add to the character?

For Years 11-12 – VCE

The below activity is designed to help VCE students undertaking Studio Arts and Visual Communication Design prepare for the various Outcomes across Units 1-4 of both subjects.

Activity Two: Group Assignment

Divide the classroom into groups of three and complete the following:

1. Decide who will take on the roles of director, set designer and costume designer.

2. Read through the libretto to become familiar with the story. Create a list of any descriptions of scenery, people, actions and themes that you will include in your designs.

3. Discuss these ideas as a group and create an idea or brief of the world that you hope to convey on the stage.

4. Depending on your role in the group, come up with a design brief of:

    a) the director – how you want the singers to convey the story on stage (pick two or three important scenes).

    b) the set designer – the landscape, stage entries and exits, and props.

    c) the costume designer – the costumes for the members of the principle cast and how they reflect the characters they're playing.

5. Come together as a group and go through each member's designs to see if the decided brief was met.

6. Present your ideas to the rest of the class. Students should be encouraged to prepare a collection of reference photos that inspired the ideas behind their designs.

Visit http://www.murashev.com/opera/Guillaume_Tell_libretto_French_English to find an English version of the libretto of Rossini's *William Tell*.

HUMANTIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

The story of *William Tell* features two layers of themes that align with the study of Humanities and Social Sciences. These include the empire against small communities, the father and son relationship, nature against an advancing pollution, and two lovers where their situation holds them apart.

Director, Rodula Gaitanou discusses these themes in depth in the interview below, how they are reflected in modern day society, and why opera is a worthy platform through which to depict them. She also comments on her role as director and how she directs the cast involved to bring the themes to life.

An Interview with Director, Rodula Gaitanou

What is an opera director?

My job is, first of all, to come up with the concept or the idea for the world - where I will be setting it and when. I work closely with the creative teams who design the set, costume and lighting and we try to make this world consistent and believable. Then comes the work that I do with the conductor. We decide on cuts, we decide on tempi, of course it's always their call, but it's something that we sort of collaborate on. And then, we start working on the practicalities of the design, how big it is, how many scene changes, what it is exactly, and we present a first draft, which is called the white-card model, to the company. The production manager will then take these ideas and cost it to see if it fits within the budget. If it does, we then move onto the final design presentation, where we have all the finishes and colours as they should look on stage. When I start rehearsals with the cast, all the ideas about the set and the costumes and, from my point of view, what is going to be happening in each and every scene, are there. In rehearsals, my work is not only to place the action physically, but also to inspire people and give layers in the drama, find the motivation and the right intention for everything that happens on stage, find different ways of interpretation - you can sing a line in three, four, five different ways - and discover when the music supports the feeling or if the music is suggesting something completely different. My main goal always is to tell the story very clearly. For me, opera is a story said in musical terms by singers, so my work is to guide the attention and the focus of the audience.

During the rehearsals, I'm not on my own; there's a big team, the assistant director and stage management team that are responsible for providing all the props, doing the scene changes, making sure no one falls off the stage. By the time we move into the theatre, the show has already been rehearsed in its entirety in the rehearsal room. In the theatre, we start incorporating the lighting, and in addition, we have the first rehearsals with costumes. Usually the principals have already done fittings, but the first time we see them in costumes is when we get into the theatre. Lighting is very, very important because you don't have a show until you have lit it. It's very interesting. Everyone works very intensely, but the theatrical illusion really, truly comes from lighting. The last stage, the most important stage for me is when the orchestra comes in, which is the moment of truth in a way. Everything really comes together in the first orchestral rehearsal.

When we design for instance or when I'm thinking of a piece, I really need to think of the bigger

picture always. The way I direct singers, it's not for an audience that sits within a distance of two meters, so it's always creating something for the bigger picture and trying to make the feeling and the emotion project. We're trying to create something which is believable but supernatural at the same time. These people and the characters they portray are real people, but the way they express themselves is almost superhuman. They make this extraordinary sound and you can relate to the emotion because of the music.

What are some of the themes in *William Tell*?

There are quite a lot of themes that interweave. The central theme is rural communities uniting to rise up against the occupier, the occupier being an empire. So, we've got the conflict in between something that, if you want, takes away any sense of local colour or local traditions or local culture and unifies everything. This is what the empire is in my mind. We have the struggle of these people to take back ownership of their land, to take back ownership of their traditions and their culture, but most of all, of their freedom. It's a revolution that will lead to the freedom of these people, but they are not an army, they're peasants. They fight with everything they have and they are ready to sacrifice their lives for the ultimate good, for what, for them, makes sense. That is one theme. The other theme, which for me is relevant for an audience of today is this sense of nature and the natural world. The pleasure and honour that you take from the soil and from the surroundings, from the serenity of this landscape - which is an Alpine landscape - the clean air; these things are being endangered by industrialisation, by pollution, by the empire who is this almost violent modernisation of everything. We set the action in a sort of dystopic future and the empire is a technological empire, it's a violent one. They have guns and use violence and aggression and they try to humiliate these people and their traditions. This is at the heart of the piece.

There are also secondary themes around the core themes mentioned above. Firstly, how one becomes a leader. How one who has the potential, like the young Tell. He's not the leader when the action starts at the beginning of the story, he's someone who has the potential to become a leader but he doesn't know it himself. It's the people that empower him and it's the value he attributes to freedom that empowers him to become someone who, with his bravery and courage, is going to become an example to everyone else and is going to empower everyone else to become an army.

Also, a very, very important theme is the father and son relationship. We've got two sets: Arnold and Melcthal, and Jemmy and William. Particularly in Jemmy and William's relationship, we see how a young boy becomes a man and how fondly and strongly Jemmy sees his father as a role model. In a way, it's also Jemmy that makes William the hero.

The final theme is the clandestine love affair between Arnold and Mathilde. We have a classic Romeo and Juliet story here. She's the daughter of the Austrian King, so she's one of the enemies. In the story, Arnold saved her life in an avalanche and they fell in love, but Arnold being the son of Melcthal, the elder in the community, feels the pressure to follow the steps of his father. But his mind and his heart are not in the same place; his heart is with the enemy, if you want. Eventually, Mathilde acknowledges the injustice that has been done for many years and joins the fight for the freedom of the people. She becomes one of them.

Do you think any of these themes are relevant to or reflected in modern-day societies?

Oh yes, totally. I think we all live this. I mean, globalisation is fantastic on the one hand, but on the other hand, the world does become one unified place wherever you go. In a way, this now might be taking the ideas a bit too far, but habits make us feel safe and secure. And in the world where we travel a lot and have the opportunity to explore much more than in any other time in the history of humanity, finding something that is already known and familiar is important and comforting and we can acknowledge that. But this sometimes comes at the expense of the local traditions, the local cultures, the local culinary traditions, the local dialect and idiomatic expressions. That's one big thing that's quite relevant for the audiences of today.

The other thing, which is very, very sadly still the case, is the fight for freedom and the fight for independence. I'm thinking West Papua or Palestine or every community that still today has to fight for their independence. Independence is not just that, it's freedom: freedom of expression, freedom of minds, of performing rituals and believing in the religion one wants to believe in. Still we have religious wars or religious conflict so this is very relevant.

Most and foremost, and what is very interesting about this piece is that it depicts the passions and turmoil of the human condition. We are the same as people, as humans, as we were two hundred years ago and this won't change. The audience can relate to this story, they can relate to the father and son story, the can relate to losing someone very dear to them, like Arnold. His father Melcthal is tortured and killed at the end of Act 1. All this is very relevant from a social, even an economical background, to the human condition.

What role, if any, do you think opera as an art form, can teach young people about different societies and cultures and any conflict they might face?

Opera is by definition a very international form. I'm Greek and I'm working with an Australian conductor and an Argentinian lead, in French. We all come together and work very intensely for six weeks so we create very, very strong bonds. For me to be able to work at this sort of level, we need to build confidence and trust very, very quickly. I come from a very different background, everyone comes from a very different background, and we work in a language that most of the time is not our mother tongue. We create something for an audience that is different every time, with different experiences, different histories, different tastes, different situations. It's an international form by definition and why it makes it relevant to other people is, if we can so quickly come together and collaborate and work and put on something so big in such a short time, imagine if this was to be done in another level, in another context, like politics for example. Wouldn't it be nice if we were to strike agreements like that?! That's one thing.

The other thing that really unites us is the music and the music is beyond culture, beyond nationality, beyond cultural background - it's a very universal language. Symphonic music can be very, very abstract, but operatic music is very specific because of the text, so that is something that is also very relevant for the audience of today. The stories themselves and the way music portrays these stories is always about the human condition. I personally always try to make my shows speak and to make the stories speak even if its seems completely irrelevant. You have to take the stories and create

something believable, create believable characters who live through passions, who live in situations where the stakes are very high. This is the power of theatre as well. When we have to deal with humanity, it hasn't changed that much and is the same for everyone. It's very liberating on the one hand, but makes the responsibility much greater.

Where have you got your ideas from when it comes to way the you want the operas you direct to look? Do you get ideas from different productions?

The inspiration for me always comes from the material. It comes from the piece itself but it's all sorts of stuff. It's movies, it's pictures - mainly pictures. I use quite a lot of reference pictures. It's interesting because it's not very specific. Something abstract can create an unconscious link to something else. Sometimes inspiration or ideas have come from smelling something. Every time it's different. But for this production particularly, a great source of inspiration has been *The Hunger Games* and *The Handmaid's Tale*. These sorts of depictions of a not so far away dystopian, which is a result of how the world is today, which is very interesting. Mainly, the ideas for the world come from the piece itself. My work is to bring the ideas to the table all the time, this is part of the job. Some of them will survive and make it to the stage, some of them won't. Some ideas will be lost in their realisation or their realisation will be unsuccessful, so I have to be very, very quick to come up with something else. When I hear something for the first time or when I study something for the first time, I try to remember what instinctively comes to my mind because experience has taught me that this is really, really good material and I will come back to it despite having done a full circle. The other thing to keep in mind is that you don't always trust the first impression or the first idea or first kind of feeling because you think, 'I haven't come to grips with the piece'. You go deeper and still the instinct was correct and you come back to it later.

What pieces of advice do you have for any young person keen to get into opera production?

Work hard. Work hard. Work hard. It's a very fascinating job but one has to be very, very passionate about what they're doing. I think passion is the keyword because it's a lot of energy, it's a lot of effort, it's a lot of work. It's a very itinerant way of life. I spend about four months of the year at home. You live out of a suitcase, you have to be very, very flexible. You have to be generous. You have to have a motor of generosity inside of you and be able to give, give, give, give, give. You have to be a people person and you have to like people. A great part of my job is to observe people and then play with what they can do, so you have to be a good psychologist and be able to very quickly scan them. As I said, it's about them and bringing out their best. If you want to go into opera, you really need to know your music. You can't direct out of the libretto. You need to really penetrate the musical material and find all the layers. Everything is in the music. The music will always give you the keys and will provide you with ideas and will make you think of things that you didn't think of by just reading the text. I think no one should be doing opera if they're not profoundly musical. Be prepared to live a life where you don't have office hours, you possibly don't spend much time with your loved ones. It's quite an unusual lifestyle but very rewarding.

HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES – ACTIVITIES

For Years 7-10

Activity One: Class Presentation

Divide your classroom into small groups. Each group is to prepare a presentation on one of the following topics.

1. What are some of the cultures and traditions celebrated by William Tell and his community that are featured in the opera and/or play?

2. Identify and explore some of the major themes in the opera of *William Tell*. How do you think they are reflected around the world in modern day society?

3. Look at the role of opera in presenting world views. Identity an opera other than *William Tell* that reflected or reflects the state of the world in relation to when it was composed. This could be an opera from the eighteenth, nineteenth or twentieth centuries. Be sure to address the following questions:

    a) What is the opera's synopsis?

    b) Did the composer have motivations behind their choice for the opera presented? Were they politically or personally driven?

    c) How does the opera reflect the society and culture of the time it was written in?

    d) How does the opera illustrate or convey human emotion in response to the state of the day? (You might need to look at the libretto)

    e) How was the opera received by its audiences when it first premiered?

For Years 7-12

Activity Two: Class Debate

Divide the classroom into groups of three and assign them one of the below topics as well as their stance for or against. Students will be required to do their own research around the topic to support their arguments and may use any audio-visual content to do so. Topics include:

1. Opera often reflects humanity, culture and the human condition.

2. The story of *William Tell* illustrates that outside of technological advancement and globilisation, human beings as a race have not come very far.

3. *William Tell* is a representation of the neglect of human rights in the modern world.

For Years 11-12 – VCE

The below activity has been designed alongside the VCE subject, Australian and Global Politics, specifically, Unit 2: Global Connections.

Activity Three: Research Report

Students are to research a modern-day example of a society under oppression and report on the following:

1. The specifics of the conflict; this includes the cause of the conflict and the major parties involved.

2. The impact on the society and its local customs and traditions.

3. The impact on neighbouring countries and the rest of the world.

4. How other countries or global actors are involved.

APPENDIX ONE

William Tell, Act 1 No. 3: Choeur (Jemmy and Arnold lines)

Gioachino Rossini

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