



Pagliacci by Ruggero Leoncavallo



Cavalleria Rusticana by Pietro Mascagni

LEARNING GUIDE

TOC

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Pre-Performance

INTRODUCING THE OPERA

Historical Context: What do these Italian words mean?



Cover of first piano/vocal score of *Pagliacci*, published in 1892

In the late 19th century Italian opera took a step away from fantastical stories to focus on real life creating a style called "verismo." Verismo, the Italian word for realism, began with the short story *Cavalleria rusticana* which was later developed into the first verismo opera - one you will see tonight on the stage! *Cavalleria rusticana* premiered on May 17, 1890 at the Teatro Costanzi in Rome. This opened the door to a whole new operatic genre which produced other works like *Pagliacci*.

Leoncavallo was a little-known composer when Pietro Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* premiered. After seeing Mascagni's success, Leoncavallo decided to write an opera in response: an opera about fatal jealousies in a traveling troupe of actors based on a real-life story. This case of true crime was translated for the mainstage opera!

Let's Talk About It

Consider these discussion questions:

Languages are all around us! Can you think of other examples of other languages used for stylistic names (like the Italian *Verismo* for the style *Verismo*)?

What other books or songs have been written because they drew inspiration from other works?

Pre-Performance

INTRODUCING THE OPERA

The Nitty Gritty of Verismo Style

The Verismo style highlighted the real nitty-gritty depictions of life as it was. These operas showcase the best and worst of humanity- humor, passion, jealousy, love, and deadly violence. These are all things that are relevant today and in any era, transcending time. Verismo, which in this context means “realism,” is the name for a movement that arose in opera near the end of the 19th century. Composers of verismo operas chose realising settings, often depicting the struggles and drama of common people. In this they were reacting against the grandiosity and mythological focus of Romanticism.

The genre peaked in the early 1900s, and lingered into the 1920s.

Prior to the Realism movement, Romanticism was the reigning style. Romanticism was defined by an



elevated sense of emotion and intensified drama. It typically displayed exotic and mythological figures and grand scenes of nature in a glorified light. Realist artists dismissed this within their artwork, as they believed that everyday life and the modern world existed as appropriate subjects for art.

In the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution, traditional forms of art, literature, and social organization were dismissed on the basis that they had become outdated. This anti-Romantic development paved the way for Realism in art, which sought to embrace the aims of modernism through reexamining and overthrowing traditional values and beliefs within society. Within the mid-19th century, Realism focused on how life was socially, economically, politically, and culturally arranged. This led to unwavering and often horrible portrayals of life and its unpleasant but raw moments.

Taken together, Cavalleria and Pagliacci are a masterclass in verismo. In opera, verismo works focus on bleak, emotionally intense and violent stories, often emphasizing the lives of common people, in order to be more realistic. As you watch the opera, keep a look out for aspects of this style.

Let's Talk About It

What books, movies, artwork, or songs have you listened to recently that remind you of this nitty gritty Verismo style?

Verismo grew out of a rebellion of ideals from Romanticism and Industrial Revolution that proceeded it. How have other periods in time grown as adverse reactions to previous decades' ideals in art and literature?

Pre-Performance

SYNOPSIS

Note: The listening pieces have been integrated into the synopsis to allow students to listen to the pieces in context of what is happening in the opera.

Make sure you have the “Who’s Who in Pagliacci with Cavalleria Rusticana” handout (on pg. 7 and 8) handy so you can explore it while you read the synopsis!

The Stories in Short

Taken from newspaper headlines, Pagliacci with Cavalleria Rusticana are two tragic tales of love, infidelity, and betrayal juxtaposing in the lives of ordinary people - emotionally intense, passionate, and dramatic.

Pagliacci

Vesti La Giubba



The big hit you hear everywhere and didn't know was this one. Canio laments having to clown around while his heart is breaking.

This number is an aria (solo song that is often full of emotion) performed by a tenor (highest male voice).

Before the curtain opens, Tonio joins us on stage. He begs us to think of the actors and how they are real men and women - flesh and blood, not just fictional characters - with real feelings and passions. And he advises that this opera will paint a scene from life...

A traveling troupe of actors rolls into town, and their leader, Canio, invites the villagers to attend the show that evening. While everyone makes nice and heads for a drink, the actor Tonio stays behind for a few moments only to be teased about his feelings for Nedda, Canio's wife, which mirror his role on the stage. At all this teasing, Canio reminds them that real life and the acting on the stage are not the same – the outcomes would be very different if, in fact, Nedda did have a lover. They all leave for their drinks and Nedda is left to herself to consider Canio's words, which were as if he was in her head. While she's left to fret, Tonio suddenly appears and confesses his desire for her. Nedda is not impressed.

While the aspiring lover exits, the real lover, Silvio, enters. He begs Nedda to run away with him since the troupe will soon be gone. She's head over heels and agrees to his plan.

Pre-Performance

SYNOPSIS

Little does she know Tonio brought Canio back to spoil her secret. Blood boils but Beppe cools it down – it's time to begin the show.

The show begins and the four players proceed in acting out an eerily similar scene. Zanni (Tonio) assures Columbine (Nedda) that her husband Pagliaccio (Canio) is away when he pours his heart out to her. Columbine brushes him off and awaits her lover, Harlequin. Harlequin arrives, Zanni is sent off, and the two lovers plot to get rid of Pagliaccio so they can be together. Making an unexpected return, Pagliaccio arrives just in time to discover half-eaten meals and a guilty looking Columbine. He demands she confesses her lover's name and we're not sure whether he's acting still or if this is real life. Nedda denies and each time, Canio gets angrier – so angry he stabs her in cold blood. She cries out for Silvio as she's hurt and Canio takes after him with his knife.

Much like we began, Canio addresses us that the comedy has ended.

No, pagliaccio non son

The blurred lines between the drama on the stage and in real life become crystal clear. Enough said.



Cavalleria Rusticana

Set in a village of Sicily around 1900, it is dawn on Easter Sunday. Turridu sings in the distance of his love for Lola, wife of the carter Alfio. She and Turridu had been a couple before he joined the army. When he returned and found her married to Alfio, he seduced Santuzza but now has abandoned her and rekindled his relationship with Lola. A distraught Santuzza later approaches the tavern of Mamma Lucia, Turridu's mother, who tells her that her son is away buying wine. Santuzza knows Turridu was seen at night in the village. Just then, Alfio arrives with a group of men, boasting of his horses and of Lola. He asks Mamma Lucia for some wine. When she says that Turridu has gone to get more, Alfio replies that he saw him near his house that same morning. Lucia is surprised, but Santuzza tells her to keep quiet.

Pre-Performance SYNOPSIS

The Easter Hymn

Traditional Easter Hymns are not part of the classical opera repertoire. However, *Cavalleria Rusticana* does include one, which is one from among favourite Easter Hymns. You will hear the hymn first in the classical church Latin and, then followed by the vernacular Italian.



As the villagers follow the procession to church, Santuzza stays behind and pours out her grief about Turridu to Mamma Lucia. Mamma Lucia expresses her pity then leaves for Mass. Turridu arrives and when confronted by Santuzza about his affair with Lola he denies the accusations. Just then Lola passes by on her way to church. She mocks Santuzza, and Turridu turns to follow her. Santuzza begs him to stay and implores him not to abandon her. Alfio appears, late for mass. Santuzza reveals to him that Lola has been cheating on him. Alfio is furious. He rushes off and swears to get even.

Returning from the church the villagers gather at Mamma Lucia's tavern. Turridu leads them in a drinking song. The atmosphere however becomes tense as Alfio enters. He refuses Turridu's offer of wine and instead challenges him to a knife fight. Turridu admits his guilt.

Mamma quel vino è generoso

In this tenor aria you will hear Turiddu sing his heart out as he expresses his final goodbyes to Mother. This powerful burst of emotion leads the opera to its climatic conclusion.



Turridu admits his guilt. He wants to go through with the fight for Santuzza's sake as well as for his honor. The two men agree to meet outside the village. Along with his mother, Turridu begs her to take care of Santuzza if he doesn't come back. As Mamma Lucia waits anxiously shots are heard. Turridu has been killed.

Pre-Performance

WHO'S WHO IN PAGLIACCI

Directions: As you read the Synopsis, draw and label lines between characters to illustrate the relationships between them.

Nedda



Barbara Frittoli, soprano

Canio



Carl Tanner, tenor

Beppe



Johnathan White, tenor

Tonio



Leo An, baritone

Silvio



Nmon Ford, baritone

Pre-Performance

WHO'S WHO IN CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA

Directions: As you read the Synopsis, draw and label lines between characters to illustrate the relationships between them.

Santuzza



Barbara Frittoli, soprano

Turiddu



Jonathan Kaufman, tenor

Mamma Lucia



Kate Jackson, contralto

Alfio



Leo An, baritone

Lola



Julia Woodward, Mezzo

ABOUT THE OPERA

Relay or review the following information:

Opera is a drama (play), that is sung!
Opera uses many different art forms to tell stories.

What to listen for/look for in *Pagliacci with Cavalleria Rusticana*

How could each of these art forms help to tell the story in an opera?

Music lyrics Dialogues Costumes Sets

Look out for each of the above elements in the performance.

Opera vocabulary to know for *Pagliacci with Cavalleria Rusticana*

Aria - opera song for one singer that has melody and usually gives insight on the character's feelings

Baritone - the middle male voice

Bass - the lowest male voice

Chorus - a large group of singers who typically portray townspeople, servants, military, etc.

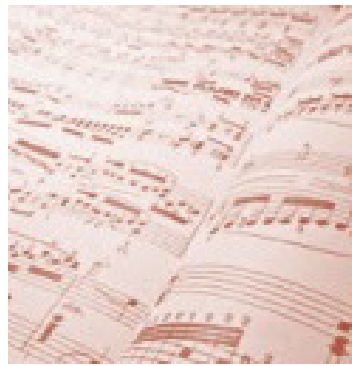
Duet- a song written for two voices

Ensemble - a group of singers (smaller than a chorus)

Soprano - the highest female voice

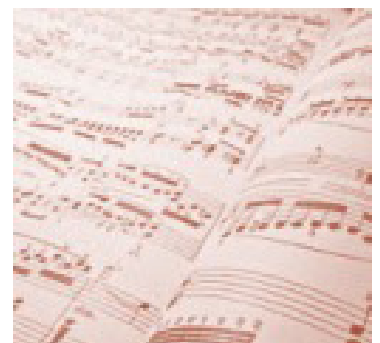
Tenor - the highest male voice

Don't forget to check out the composers, Leoncavallo and Mascagni, on the next pages!



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operas written

Leoncavallo was the librettist for most of his own operas and was widely considered him the greatest Italian librettist of his time.



Ruggero Leoncavallo (1857 – 1919)

Rugged Ruggero

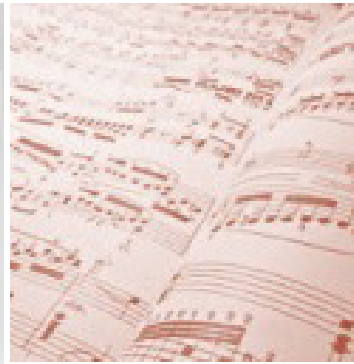
Although Ruggero Leoncavallo of Naples wasn't technically a one-hit wonder, he is primarily remembered for the big hit on our double bill. Our man of the music had a dual interest in music and literature so he studied both, at Naples Conservatory and Bologna University, respectively. These two passions led him to seek the ultimate marriage between music and poetry, much like the great Wagner.

Leoncavallo's first go at opera, *Chatterton*, wasn't a huge success so he whisked himself to Egypt and then Paris, working as an accompanist and café pianist to support himself. He was eventually introduced to the publisher Giulio Ricordi, who was more impressed with his writing of words than music. After a few trials by fire –an opera written and not awe-inspiring to Ricordi, a failed partnership with Puccini– Leoncavallo was desperate. He

quickly scribed *Pagliacci*, jumping onto the current Italian opera trend of verismo -gritty tales of life as it really is- and modeled it after Pietro Mascagni's big hit *Cavalleria Rusticana*. At last, Leoncavallo had written the one. He was finally launched into fame and wealth.

He continued composing and writing but never again could he repeat the success of *Pagliacci*. He tried to create his own rival version of Puccini's *La Bohème*, but he missed the mark. He reset earlier works and missed the marks (again). Not until the advent of recording technology would he once again be fortunate; his *Pagliacci* was the first Italian opera to be recorded in full-length.

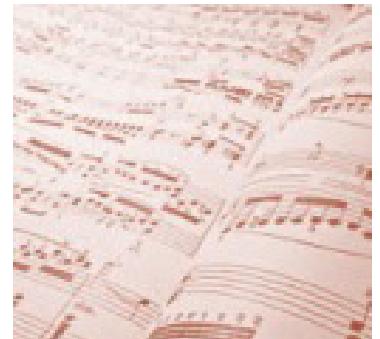
He would spend the rest of his life trying to outshine his masterpiece, *Pagliacci*, even leaving behind an unfinished effort at the time of his death. They say art reflects life and Leoncavallo's certainly fits the bill.



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operas written

Mascagni was the brightest of four children and given a better education by his father, who hoped that he would become a lawyer.



Pietro Mascagni (1863-1945)

Not the one-hit-wonder

While Leoncavallo liked to claim he was the start of the Verismo style with his opera *Pagliacci*, it was in fact Mascagni that was the veritable start of the Italian Verismo opera style. Mascagni enjoyed great success in his life time as a composer and conductor. While he is best known for his opera *Cavalleria Rusticana* (the second half of tonight's double-bill), his operas *L'amico Fritz* and *Iris* have also remained in the European operatic repertoire.

Mascagni was born into a moderately large family with four siblings. As a bright and studious child his father wanted him to become a lawyer, but Mascagni had other paths in mind. By the age of 13, Mascagni began musical studies with Alfredo Soffrendini. Soffrendini led Mascagni's musical development, pushing his artistic growth leading to the premiere of his first cantata which

won first prize.

Mascagni studied at the conservatory at Milan, but, unable to submit to the discipline of his master, Amilcare Ponchielli, he left to join a traveling opera company. In 1889 he won the first prize in a competition with his one-act opera *Cavalleria rusticana*, based on a Sicilian melodrama by Giovanni Verga. It was produced at the Teatro Costanzi, Rome, on May 17, 1890, and was an instant success; it subsequently maintained its popularity, usually being given with Ruggero Leoncavallo's one-act *Pagliacci*. *Le maschere* (1901), reviving the *commedia dell'arte*, is musically superior, though it had little success. Mascagni succeeded Arturo Toscanini as musical director of La Scala, Milan, in 1929. Among Mascagni's other operas are *L'amico Fritz* (1891), *Iris* (1898), and *Nerone* (1935), the last glorifying Benito Mussolini.

CLASSROOM EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

The following standards-linked exercises have been designed as a classroom supplement for teachers of upper grades classrooms and/or homeschool groups.

Pre-Performance

HISTORICAL SETTING + CONTEXT

Students may read the information on pages 2-3 and either discuss the questions that follow in groups or answer the questions in written form individually, depending on the needs of the class. (CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.1)

Pre-Performance

ACTIVATE WITH ARTS: ACT IT OUT!

Teachers are encouraged to use this activity in place of reading the synopsis and filling out the "Who's Who" worksheet. Activate with the Arts activities enhance student engagement and learning through arts-based skills, giving teachers more "bang for their buck" for their instruction time. (CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.7; CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.6)

Pagliacci with Cavalleria Rusticana in Three Minutes

Student volunteers silently act out an abbreviated plot.

1. Students should be placed in small groups of 7.
2. Students read the provided synopsis and distill it into an 8 sentence or less "speed-synopsis."
3. Each group's narrator reads their script while the rest of the group silently acts it out for the rest of the class.
4. Remind student actors to think about the following as they act out the scene:
 - their body position in relation to the other actors
 - their facial expressions

Post-Performance

REFLECTING ON THE OPERA EXPERIENCE

The following questions may be used for classroom discussion or written reflection after the performance. (CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.3; CCSA.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.1)

1. What is one thing you learned about opera or this time period in history that you didn't know before?
2. What do you think were the main themes from Pagliacci with Cavalleria Rusticana? Use examples from the opera to support your answer.
3. Can you think of ways the opera expressed Verismo ideals and thoughts? What evidence from the story or background on the opera can you use to support your thoughts?
4. The following questions from the Pre-performance section could be revisited or answered for the first time after the performance:
 - What other books or songs have been written because they drew inspiration from other works?
 - Verismo grew out of a rebellion of ideals from Romanticism and Industrial Revolution that proceeded it. How have other periods in time grown as adverse reactions to previous decades' ideals in art and literature?
 - What books, movies, artwork, or songs have you listened to recently that remind you of this nitty gritty Verismo style?



GET THERE

Visiting Center City doesn't have to be a tough trip.

Blumenthal Performing Arts Center
130 N. Tryon St
Charlotte, NC 28202

Ride. Hop on the Lynx Lightrail. Check out the options [here](#).

Drive. Directions from door to door [here](#).

Park. Participating garages are just \$10. Find details [here](#).

THE BELK THEATER

MAKE ANY SEAT IN THE HOUSE THE BEST ONE

Attending an opera in the Belk Theater is an experience not to be forgotten. The performance you are attending is the final dress rehearsal in which the cast performs one last full run through of the opera before opening night. Just like a regular performance, there will be an intermission(s) between acts.

Upon entering the theater, notice the production crew's station in the orchestra level seating (the lowest level of seating). The crew is set up with computers and headsets to allow them to communicate with people backstage to ensure that the performance runs smoothly. During this final rehearsal they will be making sure all cues and technical features of the performance are in place. Also notice the supertitles

(English translations of the lyrics being sung) that are projected onto a screen above the stage.

Please remember that this is a working performance and the performers on stage are very aware of their audience, especially a distracting audience. The polite audience member should always refrain from talking and stay seated during a performance. Nothing shows more respect and appreciation for the performers on stage than giving them your full attention.

Shout Out

Give a shout out to the cast after a beautiful aria or at the end of the evening – literally! Shout "Bravi!" for a job well done to the whole cast, "Brava!" to the diva who aced it, or "Bravo!" to the guy who left it all on the stage.

Opera Carolina

INVESTED IN OUR COMMUNITY AND ITS LIFE



Then, now, & years from now

Let's take a journey back to 1948: the Charlotte Music Club is formed by a handful of arts enthusiasts who realize that Charlotte's artistic landscape –but more importantly, cultural community– would be enhanced by opera performances. Fast forward to today: Opera Carolina is a 73 year-old company that's still blossoming, hitting new highs with each season of glorious music, drama, and all that encompasses the operatic art form. Your resident Opera continues to bring high-quality standards of the operatic repertoire to stages near you, but is also continually striving to perform lesser-known gems.

What does our future hold? A rich commitment to our community –which we take seriously– to continue enriching the lives of citizens from all walks of life; a continual quest to produce excellent opera from all eras on our stage; and, most importantly, to connect our community.

The people

In the early days of Opera Carolina, volunteers designed the sets, built costumes, sang in the chorus, filled leading roles and, of course, sold tickets and held fundraisers to support the company.

Now a fully professional company that not only produces Opera performances on a big scale but also travels programs into local schools and community venues, we never forget the legacy of the original volunteers who made this company the what it is today. Opera Carolina is rooted

in the Carolinas; 90% of our company live and work right here in our region, complementing the international artists who join the resident company to perform on our mainstage. We guess you can say we've got Carolina on our mind.

The House

If the paragraphs before didn't sell you on our commitment to our community, maybe information on the Opera Center will. Opera Carolina now resides in the historic Biberstein house, in the Elizabeth neighborhood. The last remaining historic home in the Uptown radius, Opera Carolina's digs are as much a part of the community as is the company.

Built in 1906, the Biberstein House was designed and lived in by R. C. Biberstein, one of the noted mill architects of the Southeast. Mr. Biberstein is credited with building many of the mills in the Charlotte region, including the Highland Park #3 mill. Mr. Biberstein eventually moved his business into this house, his talents and self-designed home playing a role in the New South Industrial movement. Today, the home is registered as a Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmark.

The house has since been adapted into offices and is now the proud home of Opera Carolina. The Opera Center hosts the company's administrative offices but also serves as space for auditions, recitals, and more. **Our doors are always open.**