

LEONCAVALLO

# PAGLIACCI

INTERACTIVE  
RESOURCE  
GUIDE



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# WELCOME TO AUSTIN OPERA'S PRODUCTION *PAGLIACCI*

I am thrilled for you to experience *Pagliacci* by Ruggero Leoncavallo. Before you arrive at the Long Center, we want you to dive into this opera and get a taste of all the work that goes into making the magic happen on stage. In this TEKS aligned Interactive Resource Guide, you will find a wealth of topics to further explore this piece and discuss with your students. You'll learn about historical elements of this opera, hear from some cast and creative team members, create a new ending, and learn about how to prepare for your visit to the opera.

Whether this is your first time experiencing an opera or you're an avid fan, this guide is designed to teach you something new, and I know it will enhance your full Access Opera experience.

Enjoy, and we'll see you at the opera!



**Andréa Ochoa**

Director of Education & Community Impact  
Austin Opera



# TEKS: TEXAS ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS

## **Overall Expectations: Knowledge and Skills**

1117.315 Theatre, Level I, Adopted 2013

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RELEVANCE:** The student relates theatre to history, society, and culture. The student is expected to:

- (A) relate historical and cultural influences on theatre;
- (B) identify the impact of live theatre, film, television, and electronic media on contemporary society;
- (C) appreciate the cultural heritages of world drama and theatre and identify key figures, works, and trends in dramatic literature;
- (D) appreciate the multicultural heritage of United States drama and theatre and identify key figures, works, and trends in dramatic literature; and
- (E) identify and appreciate the innovations and contributions of the United States to the performing arts such as theatre, melodrama, musical theatre, radio, film, television, technology, or electronic media.

## **Overall Expectations: Knowledge and Skills**

120.9 Positive Character Traits and Personal Skills, Grades 9-12, Adopted 2020

**TRUSTWORTHINESS:** The student understands how trustworthiness is viewed in society, politics, and the local and global community. The student is expected to:

- (A) relate historical and cultural influences on theatre;
- (B) identify and evaluate strategies for practicing self-management skills in a variety of situations; and

**CARING:** The student understands how interpersonal skills and characteristics of caring influence society and impact the global community. The student is expected to:

- (A) evaluate one's personal attitudes and mindsets about self and others;
- (B) discuss how feelings, decision making, personal behaviors, and interpersonal skills can impact professional and social relationships; and
- (C) identify strategies for how a person can show empathy through one's actions.



# WHAT IS OPERA?

The term “opera” comes from the Italian word for “work” or “piece.” Opera is a form of storytelling which incorporates music, drama, and design.

Though its origins date back to ancient Greece, the form of opera we are familiar with today started in the late 16th century in Florence, Italy. Many individuals explored trends in the arts, focusing on music and drama in particular. They were unified in their belief that the arts had become over-embellished and that returning to the transparency of the music of the ancient Greeks, which incorporated speech, song, and a chorus to further the plot and provide commentary on the action, would present a more pure, natural, and powerful way to tell stories and express emotions.

Operas have been written on a wide variety of topics, serious and light-hearted, such as mythology, cultural clashes, comedic farce, the celebration of heroes, and children’s stories, just to name a few. Leoncavallo’s *Pagliacci* will take you on a musical journey of gorgeous, sweeping melodies and lyric expression; but also explores the bitter truth of a relationship fueled by jealousy and rage, and its deadly consequences.

By Makenzie Morgan, Canadian Opera Company



# MAIN CHARACTERS

Nedda.....	Hailey Clark
Canio.....	Jonathan Burton
Tonio.....	Anthony Clark Evans
Silvio.....	Benjamin Taylor
Beppe.....	Rodell Rosel

## SYNOPSIS

### Prologue

Tonio the clown announces that what the audience is about to see is a true story and that actors have the same joys and sorrows as other people.

### Act I

A Sicilian village, 1949. A small theatrical company has just arrived and Canio, the head of the troupe, advertises the night's performance to the gathered crowd. One of the villagers suggests that Tonio is secretly courting Canio's young wife, Nedda. Canio warns them all that he will not tolerate any flirting offstage—life and theater are not the same. As the crowd disperses, Nedda is left alone, disturbed by her husband's jealousy. She looks up to the sky, envying the birds their freedom. Tonio appears and tries to force himself on Nedda, but she beats him back, and he retreats, swearing revenge. In fact, Nedda does have a lover—Silvio, a young peasant, who suddenly appears. The two reaffirm their love, and Silvio persuades Nedda to run away with him that night. Tonio, who has returned and overheard the end of their conversation, alerts Canio, but Silvio manages to slip away unrecognized. Canio violently threatens Nedda, but she refuses to reveal her lover's name. Beppe, another member of the troupe, restrains Canio, and Tonio advises him to wait until the evening's performance to catch the culprit. Alone, Canio gives in to his despair—he must play the clown even though his heart is breaking.

### Act II

That evening, the villagers assemble to watch the performance, Silvio among them. Beppe plays Harlequin, who serenades Columbine, played by Nedda. He dismisses her buffoonish servant Taddeo, played by Tonio, and over dinner the two sweethearts plot to poison Columbine's husband Pagliaccio, played by Canio. When Pagliaccio unexpectedly appears, Harlequin slips away. Taddeo maliciously assures Pagliaccio of his wife's innocence, which ignites Canio's jealousy. Forgetting his role and the play, he demands that Nedda tell him the name of her lover. She tries to continue with the performance, the audience enthralled by its realism, until Canio snaps. In a fit of rage he stabs Nedda and then Silvio, who rushes to her aid. Turning to the horrified crowd, Tonio announces that the comedy is over.

# MEET SOME KEY PLAYERS

## Director's Cut with TARA FAIRCLOTH

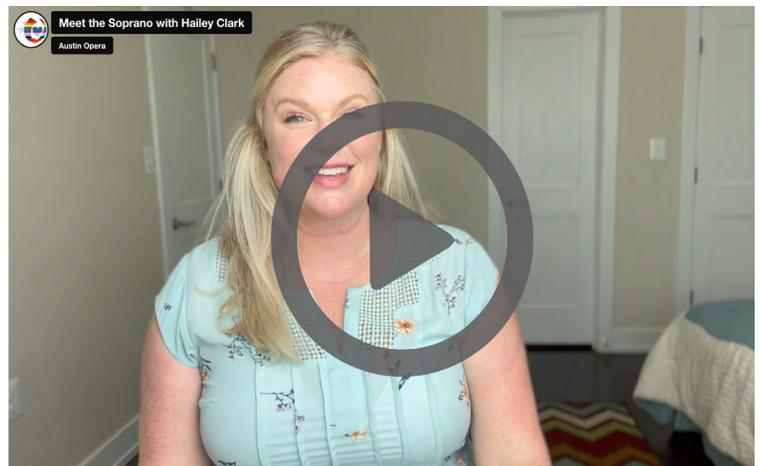


Enjoy this interview with *Pagliacci* director, Tara Faircloth!

### Questions:

1. Tell us about a Director's job. What exactly do you do?
2. What is your favorite scene in the opera?
3. What are the challenges of directing a play-within-a-play?
4. Tell us about your previous work with Austin Opera.
5. What is your favorite opera?

## Meet the Soprano, HAILEY CLARK



Enjoy this interview with soprano, Hailey Clark!

### Questions:

1. This is your first time singing the role of Nedda; what drew you to it?
2. What was your process for learning this role and becoming Nedda?
3. What is your favorite musical part/moment of the story?
4. What's your favorite opera?

# COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE, WHAT IS IT?

Commedia dell'arte is an Italian form of theater that originated during the Renaissance in the 16th century. It was characterized by improvised performances, masked actors, and a set of stock characters with distinct traits. The term "commedia dell'arte" translates to "comedy of the profession" or "comedy of art," reflecting the professional nature of the performances and the skill required to execute them.

**Characters:** One of the defining features of commedia dell'arte is its use of stock characters. These characters were instantly recognizable to the audience through their distinctive costumes and masks. Some famous examples include Pagliaccio, a sad clown; Harlequin, a mischievous servant; and Columbine, a clever and flirtatious young woman.

**Improvisation:** While commedia dell'arte had a basic plot, the dialogue and actions were mostly improvised by the actors. They had a general outline of the story, but the specific details were created on the spot. This required actors to be highly skilled and quick-witted.

**Masks:** Masks were an integral part of the performance, helping actors embody their characters more effectively. These masks were made from leather and exaggerated the character's features, making it easier for the audience to identify and understand them.

**Physical Comedy:** Commedia dell'arte heavily relied on physical comedy, acrobatics, and slapstick humor. Actors used exaggerated movements and gestures to add humor and entertainment to the performance.

## Modern-Day

The influence of commedia dell'arte can still be seen in modern-day entertainment, as it laid the groundwork for various theatrical styles. Can you write examples of these elements in your favorite TV shows and movies?

### Character Archetypes:

### Improvisation:

### Masks and Pantomime:

### Physical Comedy and Clowning:



# PAGLIACCI AND COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE

*Pagliacci* is a poignant example of how commedia dell'arte themes and elements have influenced the world of opera, both in its character portrayals and the overall structure of the work.

**Play within a Play:** *Pagliacci* is unique in that it incorporates the concept of an “opera within an opera,” or “play within a play.” In the second act of the opera, the troupe of traveling actors puts on their own commedia dell'arte performance, bringing us to a deeper level of fiction.

**Character Archetypes:** In *Pagliacci's* opera within an opera, or play within a play, we encounter the iconic stock characters in commedia dell'arte plays. Read below to see who plays who, and how they're connected in the story.

CHARACTER	INNER PLAY CHARACTER	WHAT ARE THEY TYPICALLY LIKE	THEIR RELATIONSHIPS
Canio	Pagliaccio	the sad clown servant	Colombina's husband
Nedda	Colombina	a perky maid servant	Pagliaccio's wife, in love with Harlequin
Tonio	Taddeo	<i>Taddeo is not a standard commedia dell'arte character</i>	Colombina's servant, in love with her
Beppe	Harlequin	comedic high energy servant	Colombina's lover

The idea of a play within a play helps us understand the first layer story better. In the inner story, Colombina is in love with Harlequin, just like how Nedda is in love with Silvio. Canio, who becomes Pagliaccio in the inner play, is feeling the same sadness and heartbreak of betrayal in both stories. The mix of these stories becomes too much for Canio, and in the end, he tries to solve his problems with violence.

# ACTIVITY: VERISMO OPERA

Verismo opera is a genre of opera that emerged in the late 19th century in Italy. The term “verismo” comes from the Italian word for “realism,” and verismo operas are known for their focus on portraying ordinary, everyday life and emotions with a sense of realism and naturalism. These operas often highlight themes of love, jealousy, poverty, and societal issues, showcasing the raw and sometimes harsh realities of life. The music aims to capture the emotional intensity and authenticity of the characters and situations being portrayed.

**Follow this link to the “Vesti la giuba” listening map!**

**Pagliacci: Vesti la giubba**  
by Ruggero Leoncavallo (1857-1919)

Map by Christina Tannert  
Animation by Dan Rohrer  
Mighty Music Publishing

Canio Nedda Beppe

recitative stringendo

Tenor adagio

2/4 3/4 sostenuto

AUSTIN OPERA

**After listening, have a discussion about the emotions evoked by the music.** How did the music made you feel? What emotions do you think Canio is experiencing?

# ACTIVITY: REWRITE THE ENDING

**Use this space to rewrite the ending; how could Canio have handled his difficult emotions better? What would you have done in this situation?**



# WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE OPERA

Whether it's your first time at the opera, or you've been more times than you can count, these tips and tricks for your visit will help you feel comfortable and help Access Opera run smoothly.

## **Final Dress Rehearsal**

Because this is a final dress rehearsal, there will still be elements of the production that are in process. There may be stopping to fix mistakes, or singers "marking," which means singing lightly to save their voices. There will also be a tech table in the middle of the audience where the production team, including the director, costume, lighting, and set designers, are working hard to make sure all of the finishing details are in place.

## **Be quiet and courteous**

Be quiet and courteous to the actors on stage. Since a night at the opera is a live theater experience, things work a little differently than they would at a movie theater or school assembly. Since there are singers on stage actively working, our audience needs to be as respectful as possible.

## **Applaud after arias**

Let the singers know that you love the work they're doing. You can say "bravo" for men, "brava" for women, and "bravi" for a group!

## **No food or drinks allowed**

No food or drinks are allowed in the theater. Concessions will be open for purchase before the show and during intermission, and you can enjoy your treats in the lobby.

## **Don't leave the theater**

We lock our doors from the outside during the show, so if you leave for a bathroom break or to get some fresh air, you won't be able to get back to your original seat. Save your breaks for intermission or after the show.

## **Dress like yourself**

Whether you wear that dress or suit you've been saving for a special occasion, or you're more comfortable going out in jeans or basketball shorts, dress like yourself at the opera!

and finally... **Have fun!**