



# Opera is ALWAYS a Good Idea

## Improvising and Performing in a Class Opera

Suggested Grades: 3-5

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### National Core Arts Standards

- #1 – Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
- #2 – Perform on instrument, alone and with other, a varied repertoire of music.
- #3 — Refine and complete artistic work.
- #4 — Analyze, interpret, and select artistic work for presentation.
- #5 — Develop and refine artistic work for presentation.
- #6 — Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.
- #7 — Perceive and analyze artistic work.
- #8 — Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
- #10 — Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

### Objectives

- Students will improvise and perform an original scene in a class opera, using their singing voices.

### Materials

- Playlist of songs that fit the theme of the opera (these will be the “arias”)
  - Imagination
  - Props (not required)
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### Overview:

Students will work in small groups to design and perform an original opera scene based on a selected theme. This lesson emphasizes active participation allowing students to engage as they are comfortable. Plus, the outcome of the lesson allows for informal reflection and assessment.

### Suggested Teaching Process:

#### Part 1: Introduction to Theme

1. Present your students with a theme for the opera. You can choose one from a storybook, create one yourself, or brainstorm with the class.
  - a. Theme Examples:
    - Things that aren't good ideas (e.g., stealing, lying, cheating)
    - Shoes (perfect if OFtY is performing *Cinderella* at your school)
    - Hair (ideal for a year with *The Barber of Seville*)

#### Part 2: Group Opera

1. Divide the class into small groups (3-4 students each). Flexibility in group size is okay depending on class dynamics.
2. Each group will create a short scene around the chosen theme. Inform the students they will perform their scene in front of the class but reassure them that participation is at their comfort level.





- **Teacher Tip:** Encourage participation in a way that feels playful and inclusive. Remind students that it's perfectly fine to take on non-speaking roles, such as being a tree or a chair. Often, students who are initially hesitant end up being the stars of the show
3. Allow students approximately 5 minutes to organize and rehearse their scenes. Limiting preparation time helps maintain energy and keeps the activity within one class period.

### Part 3: Performance

1. Once the preparation time is up, it's time to perform! Arrange the groups in a specific order and post it on the board so students know when it's their turn.
2. The playlist of thematic songs serves as the "arias" in the opera. These songs cue the groups when to perform or return to their seats. Play each song for about 30-45 seconds, enough time for transitions.
  - a. Example Playlist for a Shoe-Themed Opera:
    - "Blue Suede Shoes" by Elvis Presley: Sarah's group
    - "Diamonds on the Soles of Her Shoes" by Paul Simon: Patrick's group
    - "These Boots Are Made for Walking" by Nancy Sinatra: Evelyn's group
    - "Dancing Shoes" by Arctic Monkeys: Jamal's group
    - "New Shoes" by Paolo Nutini: Mya's group
3. Maintain silent transitions during the arias, and hold all applause until the end of all performances.

### Extension:

Incorporating improvisation, opera, and literature into the music class is a wonderful way to engage students in creative expression and teamwork. This lesson plan celebrates both National Literacy Month and the joy of music education. Happy performing!

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## Britt Crowe



Wait...I've spent 23 years in music education...why don't I know everything by now? I think that's one of the best things about being a music educator—you're also always a music student. There's always a new strategy to learn or technique to discover! On my quest to learn as much as I can, I've earned my Bachelor's Degree in Music Education from Augustana College, my Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction from American College of Education, and have continued post-graduate studies at Vandercook College of Music. When I'm not making music with my 3rd-5th graders at school, I'm facilitating the curriculum and providing professional development for my district's music department. When those roles offer me a spare moment, I'm performing with various music ensembles in our area and enjoying life in Huntley, Illinois with my two sons, my husband and our dog.

