

Eugene Onegin



CLASSROOM STUDY GUIDE

MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE
Department of Education and Community Programs
www.MichiganOpera.org





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Characters & Synopsis

"Tchaikovsky wrote several operas throughout his career, but none have stood the test of time quite like Eugene Onegin." - OperaWire

Characters Pronunciation Description Voice Type

Eugene Onegin	yoo-JEEN oh-NYEH-gin	A spoiled, careless, and arrogant young man who has just inherited land near Madame Larina's estate.	Baritone
Tatyana	ta-TYAH-na	A shy and quiet, yet passionate girl who falls in love with Onegin.	Soprano
Lensky	LEN-skee	Onegin's best friend and Olga's fiancé. A poet and dreamer.	Tenor
Olga	AWL-guh	Tatyana's sister and Lenski's fiancé who flirts with Onegin at Tatyana's name day celebration.	Contralto
Madame Larina	LAH-ree-na	Tatyana and Olga's kind and dutiful mother.	Mezzo-soprano
Prince Gremin	GREH-min	Married to Tatyana in Act III and deeply in love with her.	Bass
Filippyevna	fil-eep-YEV-nah	Tatyana and Olga's nurse and nanny who has been with the family many years.	Mezzo-soprano
Zaretsky	Zah-RET-skee	Lenski's second for the duel with Onegin.	Bass

The Story

Act I.

Madame Larina, a widow, listens to her daughters, Tatyana and Olga, sing a song about young lovers, and reminisces with Filippyevna, the girls' nurse. They are interrupted by the estate's peasant workers who are finishing their daily work and celebrating the harvest. Lively Olga wants to join the festivities while Tatyana, a young dreamer, prefers a romantic novel. Lensky, Olga's fiancé appears with his friend, Eugene Onegin. Tatyana shares a connection with Onegin instantly and they go on a walk together. Later, Tatyana asks that Filippyevna share her own experiences with love and then asks to be left alone. With passion, Tatyana writes a letter professing her love to Onegin, which Filippyevna delivers. In response to her letter, Onegin returns to tell Tatyana his feelings, saying that he is not the type of man for marriage and is not worthy of the love she is giving him. He offers his friendship to her and advises her to control her feelings in future situations so that men don't take advantage of her. Tatyana, shocked and confused, is unable to reply.



Act II.

Three months later, it is Tatyana's name day and a ball is being held in her honor. Onegin dances a waltz with Tatyana but he quickly becomes bored, and is irritated with those gossiping around him. He blames Lensky for bringing him and, in order to get revenge, flirts openly with Olga. Lensky, increasingly enraged by Onegin's behavior, renounces his friendship with Onegin and impetuously challenges him to a duel.

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Act II. (Cont.)

The following morning, Lensky and his second, Zaretsky, wait for Onegin. Lensky reflects on life and his love for Olga. When Onegin arrives, the duel between the old friends goes ahead as planned. Onegin wins, killing Lensky.

Act III.

Several years later in St. Petersburg, a grand ball is taking place. Onegin is there after years of travel, seeking meaning for his empty life and haunted by his guilt. Prince Gremin enters with his beautiful young wife, and tells Onegin of the joy their marriage has brought him. Onegin recognizes that this dignified, elegant woman is Tatyana, and realizes that he is in love with her. He writes her a letter to arrange a private meeting, and while Tatyana waits for him to arrive, she wonders whether it was her new status or wealth that changed Onegin's mind and led him to profess his love. He enters and claims to love her deeply without any cynical motives. Tatyana is touched by this but she asks him to leave. Onegin begs but Tatyana explains that though she still loves him, her loyalty lies with her husband. She exits in tears and Onegin is left alone.



Composer/Librettist:

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) was born on May 7, 1840 in Kamsko-Votkinsk, in rural north-eastern Russia, the second son of Il'ya Petrovich Tchaikovsky, a mining engineer, and Aleksandra Andreyevna Tchaikovskaya.

In his early life, Tchaikovsky was known to have a sensitivity to words, according to his governess, and learned to read in French and German by age 6. His brother, Modest, took to writing and later became his librettist, but his family was not a musical one. They did, however, recognize the talent in young Pyotr and engaged a piano teacher, whose skills he surpassed in just one year.



Tchaikovsky attended the prestigious Imperial School of Jurisprudence from August 1852 until May 1859. His classmates recalled him as capable and well-liked, though somewhat absentminded. He studied choral singing with Gavriil Lomakin, a recognized specialist, and was a soloist in important church services and precentor of the choir for a time. He also pondered the composition of an opera, *Hyperbole* (in 1854), and composed one of his first surviving songs, *Moy geniy, moy angel, moy drug*, ('My Genius, My Angel, My Friend'), to words by Fet.

In 1866, Tchaikovsky moved to Moscow, the same year that the Moscow Conservatory opened, where he began his professional life teaching. There he enjoyed a celebrity lifestyle, and became friends with Nikolay Rubinstein, who introduced him to a new social scene with the Artistic circle, which he co-founded. He also met the élite of Muscovite literature and theatre, Nikolay Kashkin, a conservatory professor, intendant of the conservatory Konstantin Karl Albrecht, the architect Ivan Klimenko, and others.

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Tchaikovsky's successes as a composer during this time were hard won and occasional; the chief works of his youth have vanished, are rarely performed, or survive in versions made later, though a number of short pieces achieved popularity. Middling success exacerbated the composer's lifelong sensitivity to criticism. Laroche's reviews of the tone poem *Fatum* and the opera *Voyevoda* led to a temporary break in their friendship along with Nikolay Rubinstein's critical remarks, but his were always given in private.

In 1874, he established himself with *Piano Concerto No.1 in B-flat Minor*. Tchaikovsky redefined concertante in light of the soloist-dominated concertos of Chopin and Ries, partly by using the orchestra to the full extent of its expressive capability and by writing extended passages where the piano accompanies it. Tchaikovsky deploys his forces at full capacity to a sonata-allegro structure, engaging in a much more involved musical argument. As had become his way by 1874, he individualized the classical pattern with striking materials (the song of blind Ukrainian singers, a café waltz and a folksong) and with the celebrated first-movement introduction,

On July 18, 1877 Tchaikovsky married Antonina Ivanovna Milyukova. Within two months they had separated, though they never divorced. This marriage crisis had had several lingering effects such as impaired creativity, exploration of new genres, and aimless wanderlust. Later, Tchaikovsky resigned from the Moscow Conservatory in 1878, and spent the rest of his career working on his own music which he could afford to do because of the patronage of a wealthy widow, Nadezhda von Meck, who gave him a monthly allowance. During this time, he composed *Eugene Onegin*, as well as the ballets, *The Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker*. Tchaikovsky died in St. Petersburg on November 6, 1893.

Librettist: **Konstantin Shilovsky**

Konstantin Shilovsky (1849-1893) was the son of Major Stepan Stepanovich Shilovsky and his wife Mariya. He was an accomplished amateur in many of the arts: he wrote poems and short stories, was a fine draftsman, a sculptor (he fashioned a giant head for a staging of Glinka's *Ruslan and Lyudmila* at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow), and he also composed some folk songs which became quite popular in Moscow. Shilovsky was something of an eccentric, dabbling in alchemy and black magic on his estate, as well as studying the culture of Ancient Egypt (which led him to suggest to his friend Tchaikovsky the subject for an opera set in Egypt – *Ephraim*, a project that was never realized). He regularly took part in amateur theatrical performances, and when his family lost much of their fortune, he managed to find employment as an actor at the Maly Theatre, where he successfully performed the various minor roles that he was given.



Konstantin Shilovsky is now mainly remembered for being Tchaikovsky's co-librettist in *Eugene Onegin*, and most of the music of the opera was in fact written during the composer's four-week stay at his friend's family estate

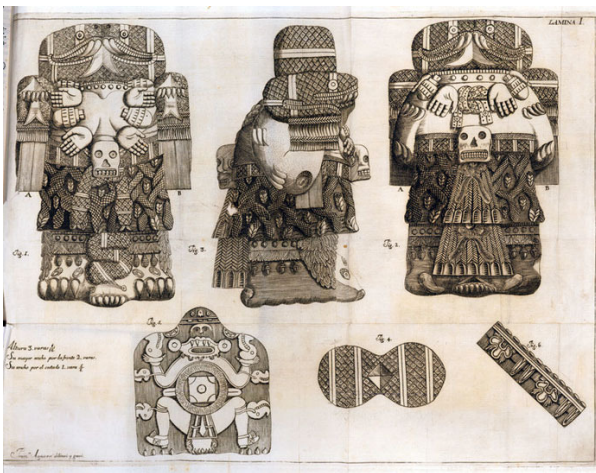


TIMELINE:

The World of Pushkin and Tchaikovsky

1790-1800

- Louis XVI and his family attempt to flee from Paris during the French Revolution but are captured.
- The first ten amendments to the US Constitution, collectively known as the Bill of Rights, are ratified by the states.
- The shoelace is invented.
- Haitian Revolution begins.
- Literature flourishes in Thailand, including the appropriation of numerous Asian classics such as the Chinese *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, the Mon (Burmese) chronicle *Rachathirat*, and the Persian *Duodecagon*.



- The monumental statue of the Aztec earth goddess Coatlicue and the so-called Calendar Stone are discovered in Mexico City. *Descripción histórica y cronológica de las dos piedras* is published in Mexico by Antonio de León y Gama (1735-1802), known as the first Mexican archaeologist, describing and illustrating (left) Coatlicue and the Calendar Stone.

- *The Magic Flute*, the last opera composed by Mozart (right) premieres at Theater an der Wien in Vienna, Austria.



June 6, 1799

- Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin (right) is born in Moscow, Russia to an aristocratic family.



1800-1810

- Thomas Jefferson is the first US President to be inaugurated in Washington, D.C.
- Napoleon conquers Italy and firmly establishes himself as First Consul in France.
- U.S. negotiates Louisiana Purchase from France for \$15 million.

1811-1820

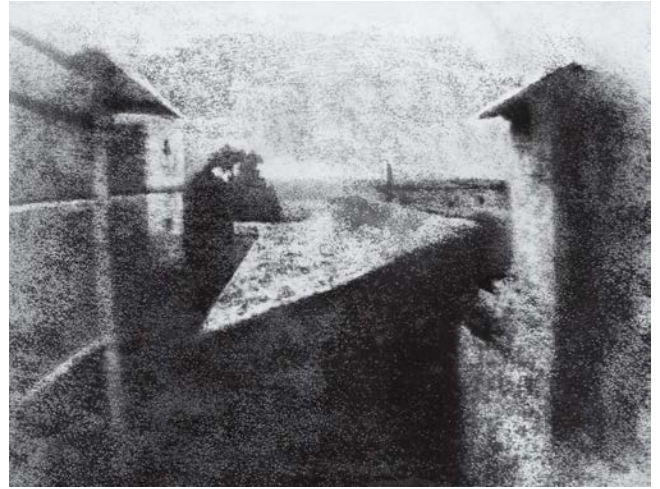
- Pushkin begins writing poetry while going to a French school in Russia.
- Napoleon's Grand Army invades Russia, but most of his men die during the cold Russian winter.
- The Spanish are defeated by the Army of the Andes at the Battle of Maipú and Chilean independence is achieved.
- Called the father of Latin American independence, Simón Bolívar leads armies to liberate Venezuela and Colombia. Bolívar is ratified as president of the new country of Gran Colombia.

1820-1825

- Pushkin is exiled to southern Russia for writing 'liberal' verses on political topics. While living in the Russian countryside, he begins writing *Eugene Onegin*.
- After eleven years of war, Mexico achieves independence from Spain. The defeat of the Spanish at Ayacucho, Peru, signals the end of Spanish rule in Central and South America.
- Great Britain begins its conquest of Burma (present-day Myanmar) in the first Anglo-Burmese War.
- The first passenger-carrying railroad runs in England.

1826-1830

- Freed from exile, Pushkin is summoned to Moscow to write for Tsar Nicholas I under heavy censorship.
- Joseph-Nicéphore Niepce takes the world's first photograph, *View from the Window at Le Gras* (right).



1830's

- Pushkin marries his wife Natalya (below) and settles down in St. Petersburg. He also completes *Eugene Onegin*.
- Pushkin continues writing about social activism until he is requested by the Russian government to retire.
- The Mexican army besieges Texans in the Battle of the Alamo.
- A committee of the British House of Commons, investigating the condition of Aborigines in the Australian colonies, condemns the genocidal war being waged by settlers against the native peoples and declares that the Aborigines have a "plain right and sacred right" to their land.



January 1837

- Although it is outlawed in Russia, Pushkin duels with Baron D'Anthes over his wife, Natalya, and consequently is shot in the stomach. After dying two days later, he is buried in secret to avoid expressions of public sympathy.

1840S – 1850S

- On May 7, 1840, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky is born in Votkinsk, some 600 miles east of Moscow. At age 4, he composes his first song. At age 5, he begins piano lessons.
- Ecological and political disruptions in southern Africa result in the large-scale northern migration of Ngoni populations, some of whom settle around Lakes Malawi and Tanganyika.
- Costa Rica abolishes its army. This measure ensures that, unlike its neighboring Central American republics, Costa Rica will develop a peaceful state free of wars.
- In Vietnam, France establishes dominion over Saigon. Cambodia becomes a French Protectorate.
- Sojourner Truth and William Wells Brown begin their campaigns against slavery.
- First Women's Rights convention held at Seneca Falls, NY., organized by Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton

1850S – 1860S

- As a teenager, Tchaikovsky makes the acquaintance of Italian singer and voice teacher Luigi Piccioli, who significantly influences his musical development. Under the influence of Piccioli, Tchiakovsky becomes an admirer of Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, and Mozart.
- He enrolls in the newly-opened Saint Petersburg Conservatory. The song *Mezza notte* becomes his first published composition. The 1865 premiere of the *Characteristic Dances in Pavlovsk* was the first public performance of any of his works.
- American Civil War begins.
- Mexican president Benito Juárez, of Zapotec heritage, institutes radical changes. The new liberal constitution declares Mexico a representative, democratic, republican nation.
- Independence movements begin in Cuba and Puerto Rico, leading to the Ten Years' War in Cuba.

1870s – 1880s

- The Premiere of Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* in Moscow passes almost unnoticed by the critics. He completes work on the ballet *Swan Lake* and the opera *Eugene Onegin*. He also held European concert tours, traveling to Cologne, Frankfurt am Main, Dresden, Berlin, Geneva, Hamburg, and London.
- The linguistic and cultural societies established by the students of the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut become centers of Arab nationalism, demanding the adoption of Arabic as the official language, freedom of the press, and self-government for Syria and Lebanon.
- The European powers partition Africa at the Berlin Conference.
- 25-year-old Booker T. Washington opens Tuskegee Institute in central Alabama.

1890's

- Tchaikovsky completes work on the ballet *The Nutcracker* (right). He conducts the premiere of the *Symphony No. 6* in Saint Petersburg; days later, he complains of stomach pains, and a doctor is called, who diagnoses cholera. He dies within a week. Requiem services and tributes are held throughout Russia, and his funeral takes place in the Kazan Cathedral in Saint Petersburg. He is buried in Tikhvinsky Cemetery at the Aleksandr Nevsky Monastery.





Pushkin's "Novel in Verse"

Tchaikovsky took inspiration for his libretto directly from the Russian poet Alexander Pushkin, the original author of *Eugene Onegin*. Pushkin's novel, which took over seven years to write, is actually a collection of poems which use very similar forms and combine to create one single story. Pushkin primarily uses **iambic tetrameter** in his poetry, which has its roots in ancient Greek and Latin poetry, but has evolved and changed since then. Pushkin was undoubtedly inspired by English poets such as William Shakespeare, who famously used the similar iambic pentameter in his plays and sonnets.

What makes Pushkin's poetry so different from other writing at the time is the way that he adapts his use of verse form from the traditional forms of English poets. For example, he uses 14 lines in his verses instead of Shakespeare's usual 10, has a very specific rhyming scheme, and includes a series of stressed and unstressed syllables. This form is appropriately called the "Onegin stanza" or the "Pushkin sonnet."

One way to show Pushkin's rhyming scheme is:

ABABCCDDEFFEGG

To show which syllable is stressed in each rhyming word, we use the terms "feminine ending" and "masculine ending." Masculine endings refer to words that are stressed on the final syllable, such as the words "concern," "inclined," and one-syllable words. Feminine endings refer to words that are stressed on the penultimate, or second-to-last syllable. Some words with feminine endings include "attention," "dangle," and -ing words such as "sleeping" and "walking."

The Onegin stanza uses the following stress sequence:

FMFMFFMMFMMFMM

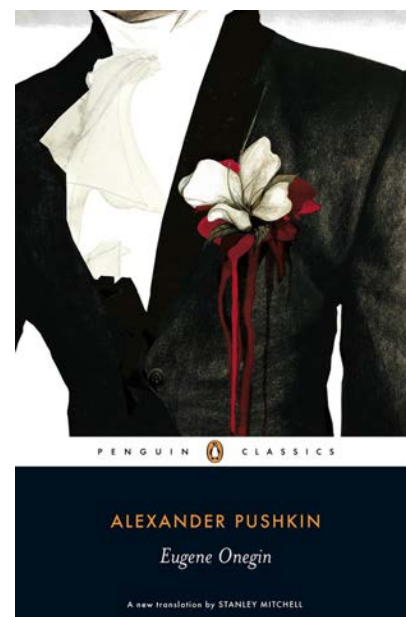
Below is a stanza from the second chapter of *Eugene Onegin*. Stresses are underlined.

25

1 Upon her balcony, preceding
 2 The rising of the dawn, she loved
 3 To watch the dancing stars recedeing
 4 That on the pale horizon moved,
 5 When earth's fine edge is softly glowing,
 6 The wind that heralds morn is blowing,
 7 And by degrees the day grows bright.
 8 In winter when the shade of night
 9 Possesses half the world much longer,
 10 And longer, too, the lazy East,
 11 In moonlight overcome by mist,
 12 Continues to repose in languor,
 13 Awakened at her usual time,
 14 By candlelight from bed she'd climb.

	Stress	Rhyme
1	F	A
2	M	B
3	F	A
4	M	B
5	F	C
6	F	C
7	M	D
8	M	D
9	F	E
10	M	F
11	M	F
12	F	E
13	M	G
14	M	G

-translation by Stanley Mitchell



Although the “Onegin stanza” was made famous by Pushkin, the verse form is not often used in other poets’ writings. This may be in part because the form is so closely related to *Eugene Onegin* that readers of the verse form automatically correlate the two. This can lead to poets’ writings being colored by Pushkin’s ideas and/or imagery. Regardless of this potential implicit bias, a handful of writers from around the globe have used the “Onegin stanza” in their own poetry. Some examples include:

- The English poet John Fuller's novel "The Illusionists" (1980)
- The Indian novelist Vikram Seth's novel *The Golden Gate* (1986)
- The Australian novelist Matthew Rubinstein’s novel *Equinox*



Key Terms

- **Aristocracy:** A form of hereditary government, where power is held by a small, but privileged ruling class and its families.
- **Censorship:** Suppression of speech, art, or other information by government authorities.
- **Duel:** An arranged combat in which two people fight with matched weapons. These combats were fought not necessarily for satisfaction of killing another man, but to restore honor by showing willingness to risk one's life. Although duels were frequently outlawed, many male members of nobility participated in these fights during the 19th and 20th centuries.
- **Exile:** A form of punishment that forces individuals to stay away from a certain place. Often, exile meant that one could not return to their home city, state, or country.
- **Feminine ending:** In poetry, this refers to a word that has a stress on the penultimate, or second-to-last syllable. See also "masculine ending."
- **Iambic pentameter:** A poetic "rhythm" that is very common in traditional English poetry and drama. This meter consists of five sets of unstressed and stressed syllables.
- **Iambic tetrameter:** A poetic "rhythm" that Pushkin uses frequently in his novel *Eugene Onegin*. This meter consists of four sets of unstressed and stressed syllables.
- **Masculine ending:** In poetry, this refers to a word that has a stress on the final syllable. See also "feminine ending."
- **Onegin stanza:** A type of verse form first made famous in Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*. Attributes of this verse form include 14-line stanzas, a rhyming scheme (ABABCCDDEFFEGG) and stress pattern (FMFMFFMMFMMFMM).
- **Pushkin sonnet:** See "Onegin stanza."
- **Stanza:** A grouping of lines commonly found in poetry.
- **Verse form:** A series of poetry that combines to create one single work.



Adaptations

Opera:

Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*.

As we've mentioned before, this opera is not an original story; it is based on a novel by the same name written by Alexander Pushkin.

Ballet:

John Cranko's *Onegin*

After choreographing dances for a production of *Eugene Onegin* the opera in 1952, Cranko was inspired to create a ballet based on the story. Although the ballet does not include music directly from the opera, its composer—Kurt-Heinz Stolze—arranged some of Tchaikovsky's other works, such as piano and orchestral works, to accompany the dancers. The ballet premiered at the Stuttgart Ballet in Germany in 1965 and has been revised a few times since.

Boris Eifman's *Eugene Onegin*

Eifman, a living Russian choreographer, staged a modern version of the story as a ballet taking place in Moscow, Russia. The music accompanying the dancers includes direct excerpts from Tchaikovsky's opera. (right)



Play:

Christopher Webber's *Tatyana*

In 1989, the Nottingham Playhouse in England premiered Webber's play based on Pushkin's novel. Webber was especially inspired by Tatyana's dreams in the novel which are prominently displayed in the play, hence the title *Tatyana* instead of *Eugene Onegin*. The play incorporates spoken dialogue and narration from the novel, as well as music arranged from Tchaikovsky's opera.

Film:

Yevgeni Onegin ("Eugene Onegin") (1911)

This Russian silent film is considered to be the first adaptation of the novel. (right)



Eugene Onegin (1919)

This German silent film based on Pushkin's novel came shortly after the Russian version.

Eugene Onegin (1958)

Rather than basing the film on the novel, Russian film studio Lenfilm produced a film adaptation of Tchaikovsky's opera. The principal solo parts were performed by notable opera singers of the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, Russia.

Eugene Onegin (1988)

This production was another adaptation of Tchaikovsky's opera, but with one major change to the plot: during the ending duel, Onegin is presented as deliberately shooting to hit his opponent instead of unwillingly participating to survive.

Onegin (1999)

The first English film adaptation of Pushkin's novel, this film included celebrities such as Liv Tyler and Ralph Fiennes. Like the 1988 film adaptation, this film also changes Onegin's motives during the ending duel. This version was criticized for several mistakes and inconsistencies with the novel.





Discussion Questions

Part I: Art in Our Lives

- What is art? What is music? How do these fit into our lives?
- Define what opera is, and what it is not. How does it differ from other musical and/or theatrical forms?
- What was your first exposure to opera? What do you remember about it?
- Do you consider yourself an artist? What are the criteria for being an artist?
- Did you identify with any characters in this opera? Why or why not?

Part II: About the Production

- How did you see the technical elements support the story? What did the costumes tell us about the characters, etc.? Did anything in particular stand out?
- How did the music reinforce the action on stage? What musical changes did you note throughout in terms changes in setting and atmosphere?
- How does Tchaikovsky's music help to build the characters in this opera?

Part III: Story and Themes

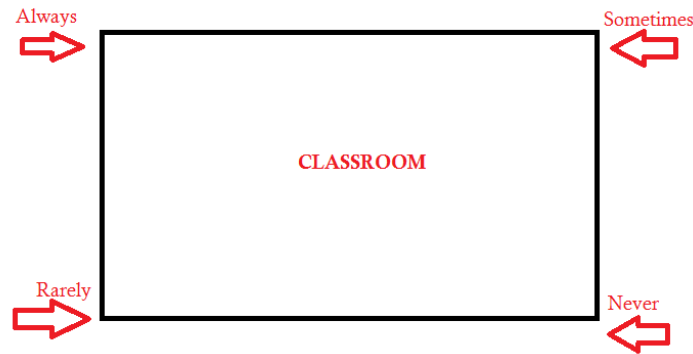
- Some scholars and critics (and according to one rumor, Dostoevsky) have suggested that Pushkin's novel should have been called *Tatyana* rather than *Eugene Onegin*. Why do you suppose he felt this way? Whose story is this, and why? Do you believe the same can be said of Tchaikovsky's opera? Where, when, and how do we find *Tatyana* overshadowing the titular *Onegin*?
- Upon meeting the sisters, *Onegin* is surprised to find that *Lensky* is engaged to the vivacious *Olga* instead of the quiet, bookish *Tatyana*, who seems more similar to his friend the poet. Why do you suppose *Lensky* and *Olga* were drawn together? What is it about *Onegin* that makes *Tatyana* fall for him?
- Why does *Eugene* fall in love with *Tatyana* when he meets her again in Moscow at the end of the story?
- Consider *Tatyana*'s bravery in professing love to *Onegin* in a time and place where men would make the first move. What does this tell us about *Tatyana*? In what ways is *Tatyana* a product of her environment, and in what ways is she a woman ahead of her time?



In the Classroom

Pre- and Post-Performance Activity: Always, Sometimes, Rarely, Never

Assign four corners of the room (or four spaces within the room) to be the location for Always, Sometimes, Rarely, and Never.



When a statement is given, have students move to the location that matches their answer and discuss with their group members why those chose their answer. After several minutes of discussion, choose one group member from each area to share with the whole class why the group as a whole answered Always, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never.

Statements about live performance:

- I (always, sometimes, rarely, or never) think that attending a live performance (an opera, play, concert, or sporting event) is more enjoyable than watching the same event on television.
- I (always, sometimes, rarely, or never) think that attending live performances is an important thing to do.
- Live performances hold my interest (always, sometimes, rarely, or never).
- When I attend live performances, I (always, sometimes, rarely, or never) feel like the story is relevant to my life.
- I (always, sometimes, rarely, or never) wish I could attend live performances more often than I do.

Notes on this activity:

Remember to encourage your students to talk about WHY they chose their answers. Follow questions with more questions- for example, if students RARELY believe that operas and live performances are relevant to their lives, make sure to ask why. And how can we change that? Who is telling the stories right now? How do we position ourselves to make sure our stories, and stories that are important to us, get told? What stories would we like to see represented on stage? Also, if this activity is conducted both pre- and post-performance, make sure to encourage students to note if their answer has changed, and why it changed. Encourage them to talk about elements of the performance that may have contributed to their answer changing.

Cross-Curricular Connections: Grades 5-8

English Language Arts

- 1. Write a review of *Eugene Onegin* and send a copy to the Michigan Opera Theatre.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.
- 2. Compare and contrast two English translations of the same text from Pushkin’s novel (below). Which translation is most effective for you and why? Which rhyming words most contribute to the meaning?
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.5 Analyze how a drama’s or poem’s form or structure (e.g., soliloquy, sonnet) contributes to its meaning
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.6 Describe how a narrator’s or speaker’s point of view influences how events are described.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone

<p>“My uncle is a man of honour, When in good earnest he fell ill, He won respect by his demeanour And found the role he best could fill. Let others profit by his lesson, But, oh my God, what desolation To tend a sick man day and night And not to venture from his sight! What shameful cunning to be cheerful With someone who is halfway dead, To prop up pillows by his head, To bring him medicine, looking tearful, To sigh - while inwardly you think: When will the devil let him sink?”</p> <p>-translation by Stanley Mitchell</p>	<p>“My uncle, man of firm convictions... By falling gravely ill, he’s won A due respect for his afflictions– The only clever thing he’s done. May his example profit others; But God, what deadly boredom, brothers, To tend a sick man night and day, Not daring once to steal away! And, oh, how base to pamper grossly And entertain the nearly dead, To fluff the pillows for his head, And pass him medicines morosely– While thinking under every sigh; The devil take you, Uncle. Die!”</p> <p>-translation by James E. Falen</p>
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Social Studies

1. There are many themes throughout *Eugene Onegin* that critique Russia's government in Pushkin's time. Research what you can about Russia's government and ruling class during the nineteenth century and write a reflection paper based on your findings. Make sure to answer the following questions:

- What do you think the government wouldn't have liked about the novel?
- Why do you think Russia's government attempted to censor Pushkin's writings?
- Based on your findings, was the government successful in censoring the story?

ART.T.IV.6.4 Identify examples of how theatrical productions can influence or be influenced by politics and culture.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes.

2. Alexander Pushkin lived in different areas of Russia throughout his lifetime. Select a region from the map below (Far-East, Volga, etc.) and research the area during the 1800's. Next, research the current state of the area. What differences and/or similarities can you find? Did any of your findings surprise you? Write down a list of interesting findings and compare with a partner who selected a different region.

7 - H1.2.2 Read and comprehend a historical passage to identify basic factual knowledge and the literal meaning by indicating who was involved, what happened, where it happened, what events led to the development, and what consequences or outcomes followed.

7 - G2.2.1 Describe the human characteristics of the region under study (including languages, religion, economic system, governmental system, cultural traditions).



STEM

1. You probably know that Russia is large, but how large is it? Create your own series of calculations to answer the following, making sure to show your work:

- How much larger is Russia to another country of your choosing?
- How many times could the country you've chosen fit inside Russia?
- How many times could the state of Michigan fit inside Russia?
- Craft two more comparative questions on your own and calculate the answer.

5.G.4 Classify two-dimensional figures in a hierarchy based on properties.

6.EE.1 Apply and extend previous understandings; Write and evaluate numerical expressions involving whole-number exponents

2. After seeing the opera, select one of your favorite scenes. Write down everything you can remember about the set. For example:

- What furniture or decorations were on the stage?
- Were there walls that created a differently-shaped room than the straight-edged stage?
- Were there other large structures on the stage?

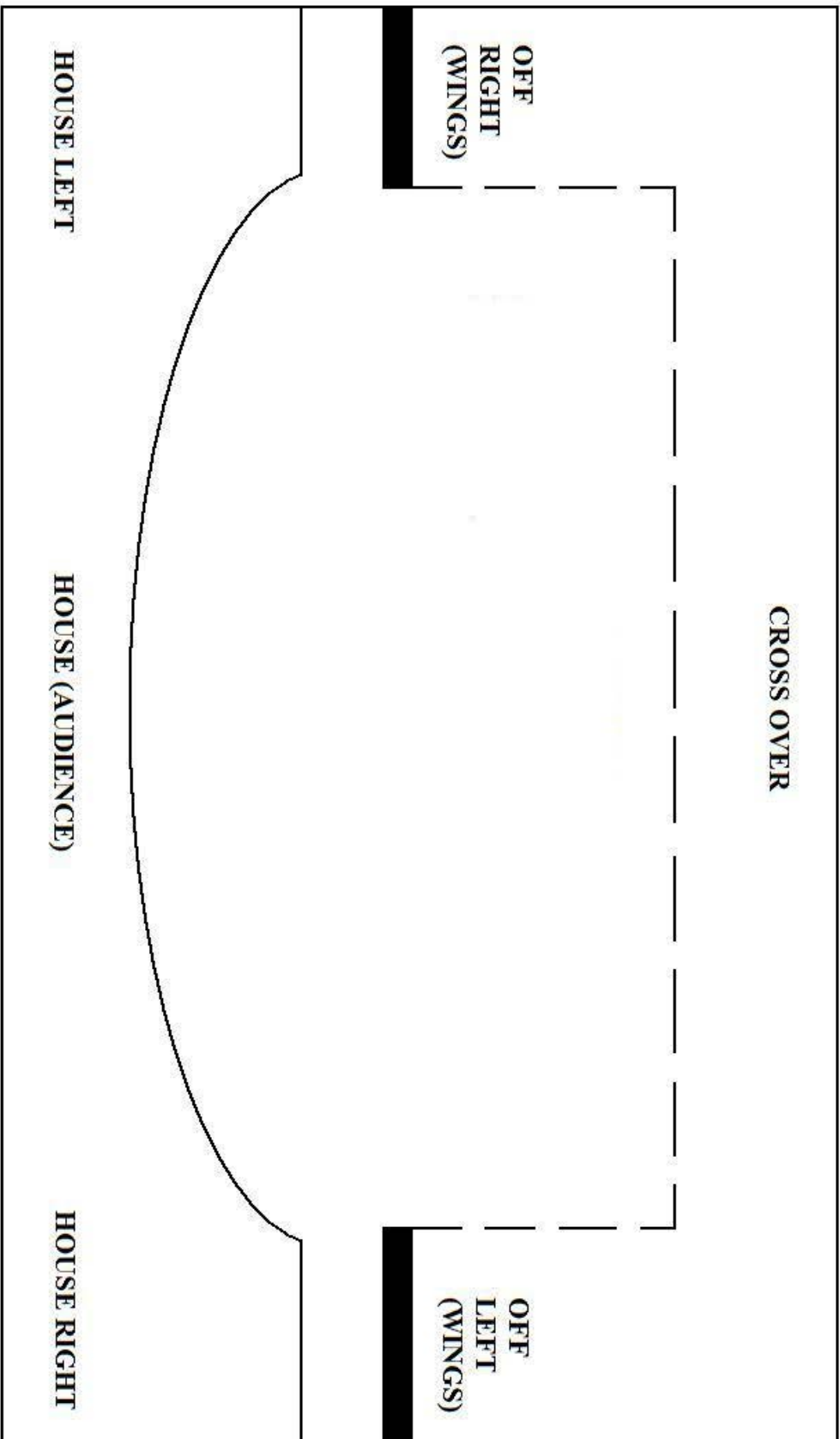
Next, use the template on the next page to draft what you remember. This is an aerial view of the stage, so only draw the top of the structure. For example, a circle may designate a chair or column, a rectangle a table, and a very thin rectangle a wall. Make sure to label all your set pieces.

Now that you've practiced sketching a set design, select a scene from a familiar story, such as *Cinderella* or *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. Design your own set for your selected scene and sketch it just like before. If you have difficulty, ask yourself questions such as:

- Is the scene inside or outside?
- Where and when does the story take place?
- What kinds of furniture do the characters interact with?
- Do I want my stage to have minimal objects on it, or be busy and crowded?
- How can I set the stage so that actors have room to move and be visible to the audience?

Once you finish drafting your set, share your project in small groups. If you have the space, resources, and time, follow through with your design by creating the set in your classroom.

ART.T.III.6.1 Study a play or story, and visualize, draw, and create a simple theatrical environment for it.



Cross-Curricular Connections: Grades 9-12

English Language Arts

1. Write a review of *Eugene Onegin* and send a copy to the Michigan Opera Theatre.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
2. Compare and contrast two English translations of the same text from Pushkin’s novel (below). Which translation is most effective for you and why? Which rhyming words most contribute to the meaning?
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

<p>"My uncle is a man of honour, When in good earnest he fell ill, He won respect by his demeanour And found the role he best could fill. Let others profit by his lesson, But, oh my God, what desolation To tend a sick man day and night And not to venture from his sight! What shameful cunning to be cheerful With someone who is halfway dead, To prop up pillows by his head, To bring him medicine, looking tearful, To sigh - while inwardly you think: When will the devil let him sink?"</p> <p>-translation by Stanley Mitchell</p>	<p>"My uncle, man of firm convictions... By falling gravely ill, he's won A due respect for his afflictions— The only clever thing he's done. May his example profit others; But God, what deadly boredom, brothers, To tend a sick man night and day, Not daring once to steal away! And, oh, how base to pamper grossly And entertain the nearly dead, To fluff the pillows for his head, And pass him medicines morosely— While thinking under every sigh; The devil take you, Uncle. Die!"</p> <p>-translation by James E. Falen</p>
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English Language Arts

3. Using the “Onegin stanza” description in this workbook, craft your own poem with the same form. If you have difficulty working with the feminine and masculine stresses, focus more on the rhyming scheme, or vice versa. Even Pushkin didn’t follow all the rules every time!

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

4. Create and present an informational presentation about opera that utilizes video and/or audio clips, Power Point slides, photos, etc.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.5 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4 Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

Social Studies

1. Because Alexander Pushkin wrote negatively about governmental agencies and policies, he was frequently censored by his own government. Think of a time when you had a disagreement with someone of authority or different beliefs about societal norms. Write a stream-of-consciousness reflection about your experience, particularly if and how you expressed your beliefs. Additionally, what critiques would you make about government agencies and policies? Write out your thoughts on how you could take action to effect change in this area.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

ART.T.IV.HS.1 Construct social meanings from informal and formal productions and from dramatic performances from a variety of cultures and historical periods, and relate to current personal, national, and international issues.

P4.2 Citizen Involvement Demonstrate knowledge of how, when, and where individuals would plan and conduct activities intended to advance views on matters of public policy, report the results, and evaluate effectiveness.

Social Studies

2. After seeing *Eugene Onegin*, reflect on the topics from the show that could have been difficult for Pushkin to write about. If Pushkin was not being censored, what else do you think he would have included? Brainstorming with a partner, write a scene that includes these new topics.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

ART.T.IV.HS.1 Construct social meanings from informal and formal productions and from dramatic performances from a variety of cultures and historical periods, and relate to current personal, national, and international issues.

P4.2 Citizen Involvement Demonstrate knowledge of how, when, and where individuals would plan and conduct activities intended to advance views on matters of public policy, report the results, and evaluate effectiveness.

3. Research the cost of putting on an opera production in 1879 and today (don't forget the cost paying the singers, directors, and orchestra for rehearsals and performances, set and costume production, theater rental, et cetera). Next, research how opera was and is funded, then and now. Compare your results. How has society's view of the value of the arts changed? Using what you know about how art impacts the world, discuss what about opera's effect makes it worth the time, effort, and money put into the production?

K1.8 Apply social studies concepts to better understand major current local, national, and world events, issues, and problems.

K1.9 Integrate concepts from at least two different social studies disciplines.

P2.4 Use multiple perspectives and resources to identify and analyze issues appropriate to the social studies discipline being studied.

P2.5 Use deductive and inductive problem-solving skills as appropriate to the problem being studied.



Introduction

Michigan Opera Theatre (MOT), the state of Michigan's premier opera company, which, through its commitment to producing and presenting the very best professional productions of opera, dance, musical theater, and arts education programming, serves as a statewide cultural resource.

The vision of Founder and Artistic Director Dr. David DiChiera, and led by President and Chief Executive Officer Wayne S. Brown, MOT offers an essential, vibrant contribution to the quality of life for Detroit-area residents and to communities throughout the region. This dynamic cultural resource exemplifies artistic excellence. Since its founding in 1971, MOT has offered southeast Michigan the finest arts and cultural performances, concerts, education, and entertainment. By presenting culturally significant productions relative to the diverse populace of the region, such as *Porgy and Bess*, *Anoush*, *King Roger*, *Dead Man Walking*, and the world premiere production of *Margaret Garner*, MOT has brought the magic of live theatre to thousands of people.

In April of 1996, on the Company's twenty-fifth anniversary, the ribbon was cut for the grand opening of the Detroit Opera House. Michigan Opera Theatre joined the ranks of major opera companies worldwide with the multi-million renovation of a 1922 movie palace. Michigan Opera Theatre is one of only a few opera companies in the United States to own its own opera house. The product of Dr. DiChiera's dream, the Detroit Opera House is comparable to the world's greatest houses in visual and acoustical beauty.

Our Mission

Michigan Opera Theatre is the premier multi-disciplined producer and presenter for opera, musical theatre, and dance in the Great Lakes Region. Based in the city of Detroit, the organization engages artists of national and international stature for stellar main stage and outreach performances, and provides compelling cultural enrichment programs for the diverse audiences and communities that it serves, making it one of Detroit's pillars of arts and culture.

Select Awards and Honors

Best Opera: *Cyrano*, Wilde Awards 2017 | Best Opera: *The Passenger*, Wilde Awards 2016 | Best Opera, *Elektra*, Wilde Awards, 2015 | Founder and Artistic Director Dr. David DiChiera named the 2013 Kresge Eminent Artist | Opera Honors Award to Dr. David DiChiera, National Endowment for the Arts, 2010 | Outstanding Service in the Field of Opera for Youth, National Opera Society, 2006 | Success in Education Award, Opera America, 2002

Michigan Opera Theatre's Department of Education and Community Programs

The Department of Education and Community Programs has brought its varied musical programs to every age group in Michigan for nearly 40 years. Artists visit schools, community centers, and stages throughout Michigan, performing shows that range from lively children's operas to musical revues.

Founded by Karen V. DiChiera, the Department of Education and Community Programs serves the entire state with quality entertainment and education. Since its inception, the Department of Education and Community Programs has been honored with awards and recognitions including the Governor's Arts Award, a Spirit of Detroit Award, and multiple Philo T. Farnsworth Awards for Excellence in Community Programming, among others. Touring productions, concerts, workshops, and residencies have reached many thousands of people throughout the state of Michigan, and programs have extended as far as Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, and



Canada. With an ever-growing repertoire of productions, an exciting roster of up-and-coming singers, and a circle of experienced and passionate teaching artists, the Department of Education and Community Programs continues to provide people of all ages with opportunities for access, growth, and learning through the arts.



Contact and Sources

Contact

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Visit us online: Website: www.michiganopera.org

Facebook: Michigan Opera Theatre

Instagram: @MichiganOpera

Twitter: @DetOperaHouse

Sources

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<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

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<https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/chronology/>