

Visual Arts: Scene Design Sketch

Students will

- Create a sketch of scenes from *Don Carlo*
- Read the *Don Carlo Synopsis* for information about the scenes
- Discuss and answer questions on the appropriate portion(s) of the **Activity Worksheet**.

Before the Lesson

Gather art materials and examples for your students.

Provide copies of the Activity Worksheet or display it on a screen

Review lesson and guide discussion with your students.

Introduction

Explain to your students that operas are performed in Acts – a portion of an opera designated by the composer, which has a dramatic structure of its own. Each act as one or more scene(s) – the physical location where the story takes place – or can use the same scenery throughout the story. The scenes can be a garden, a living room, a train, a dungeon, a mountain, or any location that is a part of the story.

Sometimes scenes change within a single Act, or remain the same. The creative team often works together to interpret opera scenes and decide how best to tell the story.

Guided/Independent Practice

Depending on your grade level, the ability of your students and time constraints, you may choose to have your class work as a whole, in small groups, with a partner or individually. Read the directions on the **Activity Worksheet**. Have students complete the portion(s) of the **Activity Worksheet**, indicating which scene(s) they will design before sketching the scene(s). Have students share their work individually or by groups and tell why they chose their respective artistic elements.

Evaluation

Have students discuss and evaluate the work of others. The teacher may want to guide the discussion with questions concerning interpretation and fluidity to the next scene/ Act. Have the class combine their work to create a scene board which tells the story of the opera through scenes.

For Further Study

The teacher may want to have students research the original sources of *Don Carlo*. Students may want to do additional research on different scene designs including theater and film, along with other related topics online or in their school library. Their findings can be shared with the class at the beginning of a later lesson.

TEKS: Fine Arts

Middle School 1, Art

- 117.202 c. 1 A,B,C,D Foundations: observation and perception
- 117.202 c. 2 A,C Creative expressions
- 117.202 c. 4 A,B, Critical evaluation and response

Middle School 2, Art

- 117.203. b. 1 A,B,C,D Foundations: observation and perception
- 117.203. b. 2 A,C, Creative expression
- 117.203. b. 4 A,B, Critical evaluation and response

Middle School 3, Art

- 117.204. b. 1 A,B,C,D Foundations: observation and perception
- 117.204. b. 2 A,C,D Creative expression
- 117.204. b. 3 B Historical and cultural relevance
- 117.204. b. 4 A,B, Critical evaluation and response

Art, Level I

- 117.302. c. 1 A,B Foundations: observation and perception
- 117.302. c. 2 A,D,F Creative expression
- 117.302. c. 4 B Critical evaluation and response

Art, Level II

- 117.303. c. 1 A,B Foundations: observation and perception
- 117.303. c. 2 A,C,D,F Creative expression
- 117.303. c. 4 B,C Critical evaluation and response

Art, Level III

- 117.304. c. 1 B,C,D Foundations: observation and perception
- 117.304. c. 2 A,C,D,F Creative expression
- 117.304. c. 3 A Historical and cultural relevance
- 117.304. c. 4 B,C,D Critical evaluation and response

Art, Level IV

- 117.305. c. 1 B,C,D Foundations: observation and perception
- 117.305. c. 2 C,D Creative expression
- 117.305. c. 3 A Historical and cultural relevance
- 117.305. c. 4 B,C,D Critical evaluation and response

Correlates: Language Arts, Social Studies, Drama

Gardner's Intelligences: Verbal-Linguistic, **Logical-Mathematical**, **Visual-Spatial**, Intrapersonal

Bloom's Taxonomy: Understand, Analyze, Apply, Evaluate

Sources:

Don Carlo Libretto

Warrack, John and West, Ewan, The Oxford Dictionary of Opera, Oxford University Press, 1992.

Online Resources:

<https://operaamerica.org/Applications/Notes/glossary.aspx>

www.oxfordmusiconline.com

www.metopera.org

www.aria-database.com

Don Carlo Synopsis

ACT ONE

In the monastery of San Juste, monks pray at the tomb of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. Don Carlo comes to lament his ill-starred love for Elisabeth de Valois, who, for reasons of state, has been married to Carlo's father, King Philip II. He is joined by his friend Rodrigo, Marquis of Posa, who urges Carlo to forget his private grief and join him in Flanders to aid the Protestant population there, oppressed by Philip's Catholic regime.

Awaiting the queen, Princess Eboli amuses the ladies of the court by singing the Veil Song, about a Moorish king and a veiled beauty who turns out to be his neglected queen. When Elisabeth joins them, Rodrigo brings the queen a letter from her mother. He also gives her another note, a request from Don Carlo for a private audience, and distracts Eboli (who thinks Carlo is in love with her) while Elisabeth reads it. She agrees to see Carlo and dismisses her ladies.

Carlo asks Elisabeth to help him gain Philip's consent to leave for Flanders. He cannot refrain from speaking also of their past love. Alarmed by the dangerous change in subject, Elisabeth tells him that, as queen, she must remain aloof, but admits that to live beside him would seem like paradise. Overwhelmed, Carlo sinks to the ground. When he regains consciousness and attempts to embrace her, she breaks away. Carlo flees in despair.

Philip arrives to find his queen unattended, and angrily banishes her lady-in-waiting, the Countess of Aremberg, for neglecting her duty. The queen bids her friend a somber farewell. Rodrigo lingers behind with the king and begs him to adopt a more tolerant policy toward his Flemish subjects. Philip refuses and warns Rodrigo to beware of the Grand Inquisitor. Nevertheless, he is impressed with this young man who seeks nothing for himself; he confides to Rodrigo his jealous suspicions about Don Carlo and the queen.

ACT TWO

Don Carlo comes to the garden in response to an unsigned note which he believes is from Elisabeth. However, the letter is from Eboli, who arrives dressed in a veil. Mistaking her for the queen, Carlo passionately declares his love. Enraptured, the princess uncovers her face; she quickly realizes, however, that his ardent speeches were not for her. Rodrigo enters and tries to undo Don Carlo's indiscretion. Eboli, furious, threatens to tell the king that Elisabeth and Carlo are lovers. Rodrigo tells the imperiled Don Carlo to entrust him with any sensitive political documents in his possession.

The Spanish populace and royal court assemble to witness an auto-da-fé, in which those condemned by the Inquisition are to be burned to death. Don Carlo approaches his father with a group of Flemish deputies who have come to plead for clemency. Philip is unmoved by their entreaty. Carlo infuriates his father by continuing the discussion, asking that the rule of Flanders be entrusted to him. Seeing that words are of no use, Carlo draws his sword. Philip calls for his guards and nobles to disarm the defiant prince, but no one moves to obey him. Finally, Rodrigo steps forward and asks Carlo for his sword, which he then gives to the king. Philip leads his wife to the auto-da-fé as guards remove Carlo to prison. In the distance, a heavenly voice is heard in prayer for the souls of the condemned.

Don Carlo
Don Carlo synopsis continued

ACT THREE

Philip has spent the entire night in his study in melancholy reverie. His queen, he realizes, never loved him. Don Carlo, whom he suspects of an illicit love for Elisabeth, has now committed open treason against him. The Count of Lerma announces the arrival of the Grand Inquisitor, whom Philip has summoned to discuss Carlo's punishment. The blind, aged man is led into the king's presence. Philip hesitates to invoke the death penalty against his son, but the Grand Inquisitor absolves Philip in advance of all guilt, pointing out that God sacrificed His own son for the redemption of the world. The Grand Inquisitor then denounces Rodrigo as a heretic for his efforts on behalf of Flanders; he demands Rodrigo's death. Philip defends Rodrigo, the only man in his court he can trust. The Inquisitor accuses the king himself of failing in his duty before the Holy Office. Philip's will collapses; he abandons Rodrigo's defense.

Elisabeth bursts in: a box containing her jewels and personal effects has been stolen. Philip points to the box, which is on his table, and asks her to open it. When she refuses, he breaks it open and finds a portrait of Carlo inside. Elisabeth defends her innocence in the face of Philip's fury, but faints when he accuses her of adultery. When Philip calls for help, Eboli and Rodrigo rush into the room. As Eboli looks after the queen, each is troubled by private thoughts. Philip realizes that he has not been betrayed; Eboli repents of her treachery now that she sees its results; Rodrigo resolves that he must sacrifice himself for Spain. When Elisabeth recovers, Philip and Rodrigo withdraw. Eboli confesses to the queen that it was she who gave the jewel box to Philip, in reprisal for being spurned by Carlo. Elisabeth forgives her. Eboli's contrition also forces her to admit that she herself has committed adultery with Philip. At that, Elisabeth commands Eboli to choose either exile or the cloister. Alone, Eboli resolves to save Don Carlo's life before she seeks peace in a convent.

Rodrigo comes to Don Carlo's prison cell to say farewell. He has obtained Carlo's freedom by claiming ownership of the incriminating papers Carlo gave him. Carlo protests, but Rodrigo is adamant. He is sacrificing himself so that Carlo may live, reign and save Flanders. Suddenly, a gunshot sounds and Rodrigo falls. Mortally wounded, he tells Carlo that Elisabeth knows everything and will meet Carlo the next day at the monastery of San Juste. As he dies, he enjoins Carlo once more to save Flanders. Philip enters to free Carlo, but Carlo turns on him, bitterly accusing him of complicity in Rodrigo's death. A courtier rushes in to tell Philip that an angry mob has gathered, demanding Carlo's freedom. Philip orders the gates thrown open, and the mob fills the room. In the confusion, Eboli, disguised, urges Carlo to flee. The Grand Inquisitor appears and invokes the power of God to quell the disturbance.

ACT FOUR

Waiting in the monastery, Elisabeth kneels and unburdens her heart in prayer. Don Carlo arrives for their last meeting. Rodrigo hovers in their thoughts as they speak of Don Carlo's mission to Flanders. They formally renounce their love and dedicate themselves to their respective duties in a solemn, platonic farewell. Philip enters with the Grand Inquisitor, ready to deliver his son to the Inquisition. From the tomb of Charles V, the figure of a spectral monk emerges leading Don Carlo away into the darkness of the tomb and death.

Synopsis courtesy of Lyric Opera of Chicago

Name _____

Date _____

Visual Arts: Scene Design

Part I

Instructions: Read the *Don Carlo* synopsis, keeping in mind the different ways in which the scenes in each act can be expressed. Using the following list of Acts, label and briefly describe each possible scene in each Act. The scenes should be labeled Act I Scene 1, Act I Scene 2, etc. Remember that it is possible to combine scenes or use the same design for more than one scene in the opera.

ACT I

ACT II

ACT III

ACT IV

Name: _____

Date: _____

Visual Arts: Scene Design

Part II

Instructions: Choose a scene from one of the Acts in the opera. Sketch the scene in the space provided below or on a separate art/ sketch surface of your choice.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Visual Arts: Scene Design

Part III

Instructions: Answer the following reflection questions about your work and the work of your classmates.

1. Which scene did you sketch? What is happening in this scene?

2. How did you choose to represent this scene and why? Provide support for your decision from the synopsis.

3. Is it possible to use this scene design for another scene in the opera? If so, how? Will you make changes to the scene or use the exact same scene design?

Answer the following questions about your classmate's work.

1. What scene did your classmate sketch?

2. Does the sketch capture the action of the scene and story of the opera well? Why or why not?

EXAMPLE:

ACT II, Scene 1

In the garden.

