

DIE TOTE STADT

(THE DEAD CITY)

2022-23 Guidebook



EXPERIENCE OPERA
WITH US!

A LETTER TO TEACHERS

Dear Teachers,

Opera Colorado is pleased to provide engaging educational programs and performances for students across Colorado. What follows is a guide we hope you and your students find useful in exploring Opera Colorado's production of Erich Korngold's *Die tote Stadt*.

In the spirit of exploration, we have included various lessons connecting the production with different subjects. The lessons reference the Colorado Department of Education's Academic Standards, focusing specifically on high school expectations. Please feel free to adapt Guidebook materials and use them in the manner most helpful for you and your students. We encourage you to expand, alter, and modify these lessons to best suit you and your students' needs. Following the performance, you will receive a link to a brief survey. Your feedback is much appreciated. We look forward to seeing you at the opera!

Thank you!



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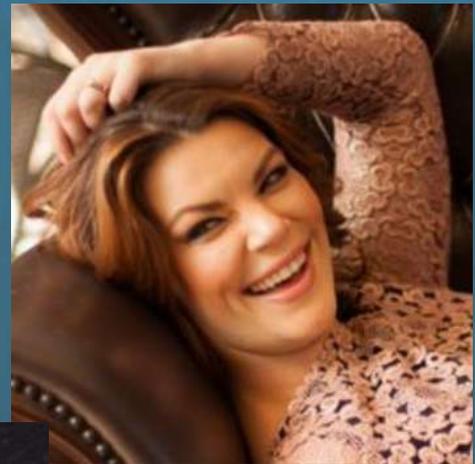
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MEET THE ARTISTS

In the months before rehearsals begin, opera singers study to master the music and the drama for their roles so they are ready to go on the first day of rehearsal. Opera Colorado's cast for *Die tote Stadt* includes premier artists from around the country, ready to share their incredible voices!



JONATHAN BURTON
PAUL



SARA GARTLAND
MARIE/MARIETTA



ELIZABETH BISHOP
BRIGITTE



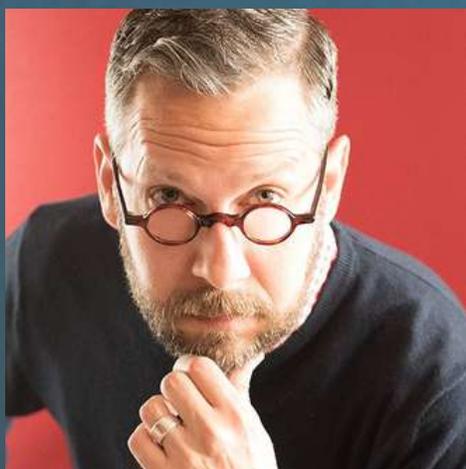
DANIEL BELCHER
FRANK/FRITZ



JONATHAN JOHNSON
VICTORIN/GASTONE

MEET THE PRODUCTION TEAM

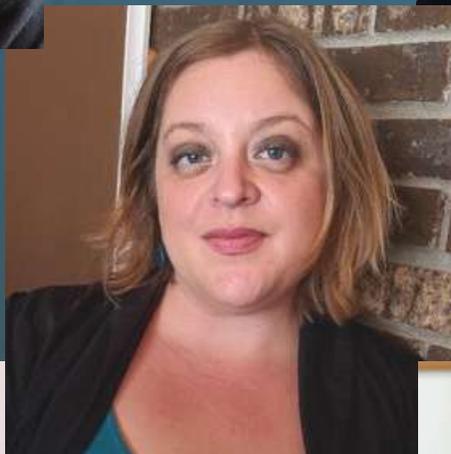
Opera Colorado's production of *Die tote Stadt* has over 200 people working behind the scenes. This includes technical staff, production staff, design staff, dressers, and stagehands.



CHAS RADER-SHIEBER
DIRECTOR



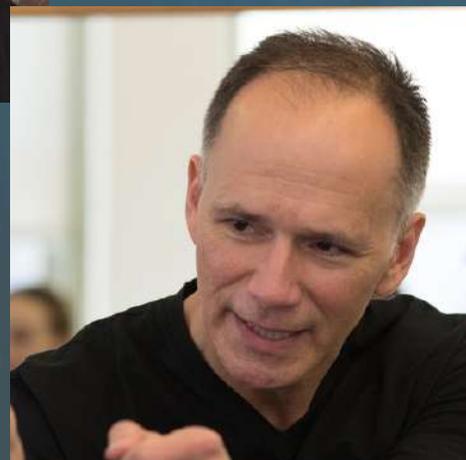
ALISON MILAN
COSTUME DIRECTOR



GINA HAYS
STAGE MANAGER



YI ZHAO
LIGHTING DESIGNER



ROBERT PERDZIOLA
SET AND COSTUME DESIGNER

MEET THE MUSIC TEAM

Members of Opera Colorado's music team for *Die tote Stadt* work with the on-stage performers as well as the sixty-six members of the opera's orchestra.



ARI PELTO
CONDUCTOR



NATHAN SALAZAR
REPETITEUR



SAHAR NOURI
CHORUS MASTER
AND ASSISTANT
CONDUCTOR



CODY GARRISON
CHORUS MUSIC REHEARSAL
ACCOMPANIST



ANGIE DOMBROWSKI
ORCHESTRA MANAGER

Quick Facts

Composer: Erich Wolfgang Korngold

Librettists: Erich and Julius Korngold

Premiere: December 4, 1920

Setting: The "dead" city of Bruges,
Belgium, late 1800s

Source Texts

Histories of *Die tote Stadt* often identify Georges Rodenbach's novel *Bruges-la-Morte* (1892) as the source for the libretto, but this is only partially true. Rodenbach adapted his Symbolist novel (see page 17) into the play *Le Mirage*, which was then translated into German by the poet Siegfried Trebitsch, who recommended the story to the Korngolds as the subject for an opera.

The Korngolds altered the script considerably in their libretto, removing much of the interaction between Paul and Brigitte and adding a company of fellow dancers who perform with Marietta. Julius also fundamentally altered Rodenbach's plot by portraying the events of the story as a dream, an alteration meant to make Paul's character more sympathetic.

13

Erich Korngold was thirteen when his ballet *Der Schneemann* (*The Snowman*) debuted.

2

Erich Korngold won two Oscars for his film scores, the first for *Anthony Adverse* and the second for *Robin Hood*.

1

Opera Colorado's production is the one chance to experience *Die tote Stadt* in the U.S. this season.

*I'm Erich
Korngold!*





DIE TOTE STADT

(THE DEAD CITY)

BASICS

[Enjoy Opera in Brief's video summary.](#)

Main Characters

Paul - A painter and resident of Bruges. He spends his days mourning his wife, Marie, who died two years before the action of the opera begins.

Marie - Paul's deceased wife

Brigitte - Paul's pious housekeeper

Frank - Paul's friend who becomes romantically involved with Marietta

Marietta - A dancer who looks and sounds (almost) exactly like Marie

Fritz - An actor who plays Pierrot, the sad commedia clown, at the theatre where Marietta works

Dancers - Marietta's friends from the theatre, who play commedia characters, including Harlequin and Columbine (see page 18)

Brief Summary

Operas portray grandiose stories about overwhelming emotions. This way, the grandeur of the plot matches the grandeur of the staging and music. *Die tote Stadt* centers on the emotional turmoil a widower experiences upon finding, he believes, his deceased wife alive again in the form of a dancer he meets while roaming the city of Bruges. Convincing himself his beloved has been restored to him, Paul pursues a relationship with Marietta, the dancer. When Marietta's vibrant passions jar with Paul's memories of his adored wife, Paul is torn between desire for Marietta and guilt over betraying the sacred love he still holds for Marie. The emotional conflict within him eventually erupts in a final, horrific act, which teaches him to leave the past behind.



DIE TOTE STADT

(THE DEAD CITY)

PLOT SUMMARY

Act One - *Setting: 1890s, a solemn room in Paul's house in the city of Bruges, Belgium*

Paul's housekeeper, Brigitte, and his friend Frank enter the sitting room that houses mementoes of Paul's late wife, Marie. For two years, Paul has mourned his dead wife, maintaining the room as a kind of shrine, filled with Marie's portraits and belongings, including a braid of her long blonde hair displayed in a glass case. Before today, Brigitte tells Frank, Paul spoke often of how he and Bruges, the dead city, were one, both caught in worshipping the beauty of the past. Yesterday, however, Paul returned from his usual walk laughing and shouting with joy. "The dead are resurrected!" he cried, before ordering Brigitte to open the room and decorate Marie's keepsakes with flowers.

Frank is astonished, but Paul soon arrives, bursting with excitement. Marie is alive, he tells Frank, restored to him through a woman he met yesterday, a woman who looks and sounds almost exactly like Marie. Paul believes Marie has returned to him in this woman. Frank warns Paul that trying to control death is a dangerous game. Paul, however, refuses to listen, enthralled by the idea his wife has somehow come back to him in this woman, Marietta.

Frank leaves just as Brigitte announces the arrival of a woman. Marietta enters, and Paul marvels at what seems to be the presence of his dead wife returning to her rooms. At Paul's request, Marietta dons a scarf and plays a lute, unaware these items once belonged to Marie.

(Continued on next page)



Maria Jeritza as Marietta and Orville Harrold as Paul in The Metropolitan Opera's 1921 production.



DIE TOTE STADT

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PLOT SUMMARY

A group of theatre performers passes by outside, singing a comic song about kissing a mistress. Marietta greets them and tells Paul she must follow them to rehearsal since she is a dancer at the theatre. When she dances, Marietta explains, she feels as if “a demon excites me, masters me, possesses me.” Paul is shocked by Marietta’s profession but declares heaven has sent her to him. He tries to embrace Marietta, who dances around the room to tease him. As she dances, Marietta becomes tangled in a curtain hiding Marie’s portrait. The curtain falls, revealing a painting of Paul’s wife with the same scarf and lute Marietta now

holds. Marietta understands Paul is using her as a substitute for another woman and leaves for the theatre, where she is dancing the role of Abbess Helena in *Robert le diable* (see page 19).

Paul calls to Marietta, but she is gone. As he stands distraught, Marie steps out from the painting behind him. Marie tells Paul her presence still haunts the house and, through the power of the tresses she left behind, the braid in the glass case, she will keep watch over their home. Paul sinks in despair but then remembers Marietta dancing and calls her name once again.

(Continued on next page)



Costumes by Robert Perdziola show the contrast between Marietta (left) and Marie (right). Because the same singer plays both Marie and Marietta, costumes play an especially important role in helping the performer portray two distinct characters.



DIE TOTE STADT

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PLOT SUMMARY

Act Two - *Setting: late evening a few months later, a canal and street near Marietta's house in Bruges*

Paul stands on the street corner, watching Marietta's window. She did not appear at the theatre, and he has come to see if she is with another man.

A group of nuns passes by on their way to mass. Paul recognizes one of the nuns, Brigitte, his former housekeeper. Brigitte maintains his sinful relationship with Marietta drove her away, but Paul believes he is not betraying Marie, who has returned to him in the form of Marietta. Brigitte says she does not understand him and follows her sisters into mass.

Frank arrives and notices Paul watching Marietta's house. Frank confronts Paul, telling him to return home to the memory of his wife. Paul refuses. Frank confesses he is in a relationship with Marietta, and, to prove it, shows Paul the key Marietta has given him to her house. Paul snatches the key, and Frank staggers away.

Just then, a boat of Marietta's fellow dancers floats along the canal towards her house. They are coming to see why she missed her performance at the theatre. Paul hides and watches as they sing and laugh. Marietta enters on the arm of a handsome man named Gaston. The dancers tease Marietta for abandoning her gloomy companion (Paul) in favor of this new relationship. Marietta drinks champagne and flirts as Paul spies on her.

In a festive mood, Marietta declares that since she missed the show, she will now perform her dance from *Robert le diable*. Marietta and her fellow

dancers enact the part of disgraced, resurrected nuns who entice Robert (acted by Gaston) to his doom. As they perform, actual nuns walk home after mass, adding to the surreal atmosphere (see page 19).

Horrified, Paul rushes to stop the macabre act. Marietta's friends leave as she and Paul argue. Marietta accuses him of making a scene, and he accuses her of loving Frank. Finally, Paul reveals his secret to Marietta: he has loved her only as a shadow of his true love for Marie. Stunned, Marietta makes Paul admit the fact that she herself has brought him happiness. She insists Paul confess his love for her, Marietta, not Marie. Paul concedes his love for Marietta and agrees to take her to his home where she plans to banish Marie's ghost forever!

(Continued on next page)



Marietta flirts with her fellow performers, dressed as commedia characters, in the 1920 Hamburg production



DIE TOTE STADT

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PLOT SUMMARY

Act Three - *Setting: morning of the following day, the room of mementos in Paul's home*

Marietta enters in her nightgown. She compares the powerless painting of Marie to her own passionate vitality. As she sings, an Easter celebration begins outside. Children in the procession sing of life as Paul rushes in, distraught. The prayers and music of the church have awakened his remorse for betraying his wife. Marietta laughs and sings of Gaston as Paul becomes enthralled with the procession, his guilt mounting until, finally, he bows in prayer as the religious relic passes. Marietta declares she will not share Paul with the dead, whether they be saints or his wife, and demands a kiss. Repulsed and overwhelmed with grief, Paul envisions the procession entering the room, condemning him for betraying his sacred love for Marie.

Marietta is insulted that Paul prefers mourning the dead to love and life with her. Paul orders her to leave,

but she insists she will triumph over her dead rival and shatters the glass case containing Marie's braided hair. Marietta then winds the braid about her neck like a scarf and dances mockingly before Marie's portrait. Furious at this desecration, Paul strangles Marietta with the golden braid as darkness falls on stage.

The darkness lifts as Paul stands bewildered. The room looks untouched. Marie's hair is in the case just as before, and nothing has been damaged. Brigitte enters, telling him the woman who was just with him has returned. Astounded, Paul watches as Marietta enters, retrieves her parasol, and leaves. Frank enters, and Paul realizes his relationship with Marietta was an illusion, sent as a warning of what dangers may befall if he continues to mourn his wife so fiercely. He tells Frank he will try to leave the dead city of Bruges and is finally ready to say goodbye to Marie.



Paul envisions the Easter procession entering as Marietta clings to him in Dallas Opera's 2014 production. Photo by Karen Almond



Erich with his parents, 1911

Composer and Librettists' Biographies:

Julius and Erich Korngold

“I never wanted to compose. I only did it to please my father.” – *Erich Korngold*

Julius Korngold

December 24, 1860-September 25, 1945

The careers of Julius Korngold and his son Erich are intertwined. Both father and son were born in Brünn, a city in the Austro-Hungarian Empire (now Brno in the Czech Republic), and both spent their lives pursuing music, Julius as a critic and Erich as a composer.

As a young man, Julius studied law and music at the University of Vienna. In 1885, he joined a legal firm in Brünn, and, six years later, married Josephine Witrofsky, a witty woman who shared his love of music. The couple named their sons in honor of famous composers, Hanns Robert (after Schumann) and Erich Wolfgang (after Mozart).

The family's life changed after Julius published a lengthy letter defending a Johannes

Erich Wolfgang Korngold

May 29, 1897-November 29, 1957

Brahms symphony against attacks in the press. Eduard Hanslick, head of the influential paper *Die Neue Freie Presse*, was impressed with Julius's letter and, in 1902, invited Julius to join his staff in Vienna, the music capital of the time. The paper championed traditional styles of music, a cause Julius promoted throughout his lifetime. After Hanslick's death in 1904, Julius headed the paper's music editorials, becoming the most powerful and feared critic in Vienna.

Through his father, Erich grew up among the world's musical elites. As a child, he was taken to watch Gustav Mahler conduct rehearsals at the Vienna Hofoper (the city's opera house).

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Julius and Erich Korngold (Continued)

Erich around age sixteen - The Mahler Foundation

From an early age, Erich demonstrated a talent for music, beating time with a spoon at the age of three, playing piano at four, and writing music at six. Erich's passion for music prevailed even during his bout with chickenpox, when he convinced his parents to push a piano near his bed so he could improvise and compose while he recovered.

Julius suspected his son of genius but worried he might be deluded by parental bias. To test his assessment, Julius showed Erich's compositions to Mahler, who declared, "A genius! A genius!" and recommended Erich study with composer Alexander von Zemlinsky. Erich flourished under Zemlinsky's tutelage and, by age eleven, had composed a ballet, *Der Schneemann* (*The Snowman*). The ballet's story centers on characters from commedia dell'arte (see page 18), a form of comedy based on stock characters, including the sad clown Pierrot, the greedy Pantalon, and the lovely Columbine. In *Der Schneemann*, the love-sick Pierrot disguises himself as a snowman so he can wait outside

Pantalon's house for his beloved Columbine, who is kept there under lock and key.

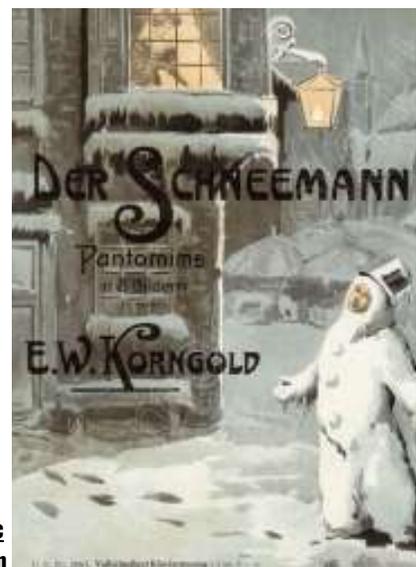
As a further test of Erich's abilities, Julius sent copies of his compositions to musicians outside Vienna, requesting their feedback. Most expressed amazement at the boy's ability.

Richard Strauss replied, "the first reaction on learning that this has been written by a boy of eleven is something of a shock . . . The stylistic assurance, mastery of form, individuality of expression in the sonata, these harmonies - they all are really astonishing." The public echoed this amazement

when *Der Schneemann* premiered in 1910. The composer was then thirteen.

(Continued on next page)

Cover for piano music from *Der Schneemann*





Erich c. 1927 - Korngold Society

Julius and Erich Korngold (Continued)

As a powerful critic, Julius had made many enemies in the music world, and several criticized young Erich as a result, claiming Julius as the true composer of his works and even accusing Erich's parents of recently adding "Wolfgang" to his name to position their son as a genius. Despite this, Erich soon gained a following. According to one historian, "not since Mozart had a child prodigy so riveted Vienna." Erich and his father began traveling across Europe, attending performances of his works in various cities, including Prague and Berlin.

The Korngold's life changed again in 1916, when playwright Siegfried Trebitsch suggested Erich adapt Georges Rodenbach's play *Le Miarge*, itself an adaptation of Rodenbach's Symbolist novel *Bruges-la-Morte* (see page 17), into an opera. After reading Trebitsch's German translation of the play, Erich drafted a scenario, which he and his father turned into a libretto. Worried Julius's involvement would invite accusations of favoritism, the father and son team authored the libretto under the penname "Paul Schott." Their ruse was so successful, the secret remained within the Korngold family until 1975.

The turmoil of World War I interrupted work on the opera. Erich served as musical director for an infantry regiment during the war and composed pieces to raise money for the Austrian War Relief Fund. After the war, Erich returned to adapting Rodenbach's play. By this time, he was so well known, theatres vied for the premiere, and *Die tote Stadt* obtained a rare double-debut, opening December 4, 1920 in both Cologne and Hamburg.

(Continued on next page)



Maria Jeritzka and Orville Harrold in the Metropolitan Opera debut of *Die tote Stadt*, 1921



Erich 1934 - National Portrait Gallery



Erich and Luzi 1924

Julius and Erich Korngold (Continued)

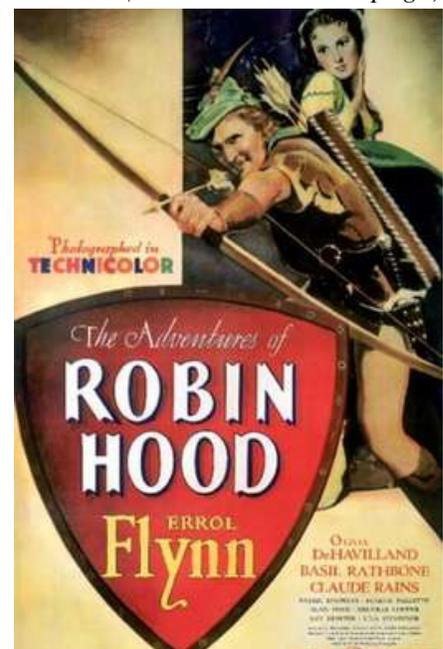
Now in his 20s, Erich had met and fallen in love with Luzi von Sonnenthal who, like the Korngolds, was Jewish. Julius feared romance would distract Erich from his music, and Luzi's family worried Erich would be unable to support their daughter, since post-war inflation had devalued his earnings. The food shortages, inflation, and unemployment of post-war Vienna would foster Hitler's rise to power just two decades later, as Erich and Luzi were raising their family.

In Germany, the new Nazi government began replacing Jews and their sympathizers with musicians who agreed with the regime's racist ideology. Jews were forbidden to teach music, and, in 1933, the German government banned music by Jewish composers, including Korngold. Despite these developments, Erich and his family, like most Europe's population, believed such outrages would be contained.

In 1934, Erich and Luzi began traveling regularly to and from Hollywood, where Erich had been hired to score several films. In 1937, they made a return trip to Vienna where they remained through the new year to attend the

premiere of Erich's opera, *Die Kathrin*. Wary of increasing aggression from Nazi Germany, the couple decided to accept an offer from Warner Brothers for Erich to score *Robin Hood*, starring Errol Flynn and Olivia de Havilland. Convinced Austria would never allow the evils rumored to be happening in Germany, the Korngolds sailed for the U. S. on January 29, 1938, leaving their oldest son Ernst with relatives so his school year would not be interrupted. Hitler entered Austria on March 12, 1938. Fortunately, Julius had obtained

(Continued on next page)



Poster for the Warner Bros. 1938 film



Julius and Erich Korngold (Continued)

Julius 1942 - Korngold Family Estate

a visa in anticipation and was able to flee with his wife and grandson on the last unrestricted train out of Austria. The family soon reunited in California, where they spent the remainder of the war supported by Erich's work composing film scores.

Throughout his time in Hollywood, Erich wrote music for over twenty films, earning two Academy Awards and revolutionizing music in cinema. As biographer Jessica Duchen explains, "instead of scribbling 'wall-to-wall' atmospheric accompaniment, Korngold showed how music could be woven integrally into the structure of a film; he not only raised the quality of the music

but also its relevance to the movie as a whole."

In 1945, Julius passed away. The following year, Erich decided to turn his attention back to classical composing. Hoping to repeat his success in Europe, he returned to war-torn Vienna in 1949, but the city and its tastes in music had changed. Korngold's Romantic style no longer appealed in a world of modern, atonal composition. Korngold eventually returned to California and, in 1957, died from a cerebral hemorrhage.

After his death, Korngold's music went largely unperformed until the 1970s, when a renewed

interest in composers suppressed by the Nazis prompted recordings and performances of his work. Today, he is widely recognized as one of the great composers of his day and *Die tote Stadt* one of his crowning triumphs.

Erich working on the score for Deception, with Bette Davis - Korngold Society



1946
During a break session with Paul Henreid and Bette Davis (*Deception*)



Why are Boats Floating in Air?: Symbolist Aesthetics

Opera Colorado's production of *Die tote Stadt* offers a host of puzzling sights: a church tower inside an artist's studio, a painting come to life, and boats floating in air. The almost surreal visions in *Die tote Stadt* reflect the Symbolist aesthetics of Georges Rodenbach's novel *Bruges-la-Morte* (1892), later adapted into the play that inspired Erich Korngold's opera.

As a writer, Rodenbach worked to explore the ideals of the Symbolists, an artistic movement focused on portraying states of mind and indefinable experiences, such as the loss of a loved one. To do this, Symbolists avoided literal description and employed highly symbolic language and images to convey emotion.

Rodenbach wrote in the vein of Belgian Symbolism, which employed locations as evocative symbols for states of mind. In *Bruges-la-Morte*, Rodenbach uses the grey, "dead" city of Bruges to convey Hugues's (Paul in the opera) grieving state as a widower. To emphasize the correlation between Hugues's grief and the city's ambiance, Rodenbach included photographs of Bruges in his novel. The atmosphere of the town, as described and pictured in the novel, acts as a rich symbol for Hugues's frame of mind as a widower deep in mourning.

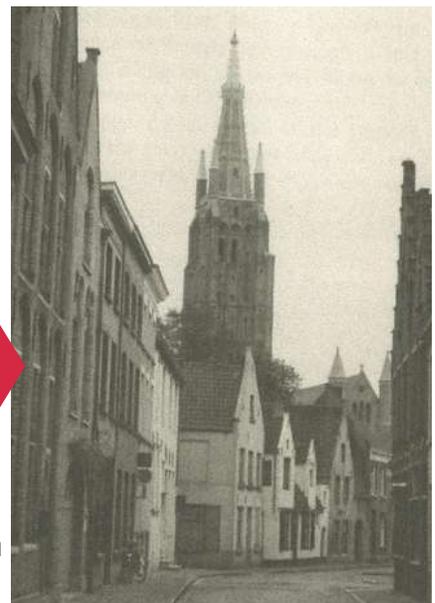
Korngold's opera opens after Paul has

discovered Marietta, the woman he believes is his dear wife restored. The protagonist's state of mourning, central to the novel, has dissolved before the action of the opera begins.

Because of this, the task of evoking the gloom of the "dead" city falls largely to the show's set designer, Robert Perdziola, whose evocative set places the architecture of Bruges at the center of each scene. A looming tower, reminiscent of Bruges, dominates the stage, representing the commanding presence of the church in both the city and the protagonist's psyche. Boats and spires float in the air in act two, reflecting the psychological turmoil Paul experiences seeing his beloved Marietta/Marie kissed and embraced by other men. As with Rodenbach's novel, the settings in the opera help convey Paul's inner thoughts and emotions.

[Read the Symbolists' Manifesto!](#)

Photo of the Church of Our Lady, Bruges as it appears in Rodenbach's novel



Commedia Characters



Commedia characters, c. 1615 - New York Public Library



Erich Korngold loved the characters from commedia dell'arte, a form of comedy based on stock characters. He used commedia characters in several pieces, including his ballet, *Der Schneemann* (*The Snowman*), and in *Die tote Stadt*, when Marietta's fellow dancers come looking for her, still dressed in their commedia costumes from the theatre.

Pierrot - a sad clown, wearing white clothes and makeup and usually pining for the love of Columbine. In *Der Schneemann*, Pierrot sings to Columbine as she watches from her window.

Columbine - a clever female servant, usually the love interest of both Pierrot and Harlequin

Harlequin - a servant character known for clever schemes and his distinctive, colorful costume



Renderings of costumes by Robert Perdziola for Opera Colorado's 2023 production



Nun Zombies: The Act Two Ballet in *Die tote Stadt*

In act two of *Die tote Stadt*, Marietta decides to show her friends the dance she performs at the theatre. She proceeds to dance a role familiar to Korngold's 1920 audiences but almost entirely unknown today—Abbess Helena, the disgraced, resurrected nun from Giacomo Meyerbeer's 1831 opera *Robert le diable*.

Meyerbeer's opera tells the tale of Robert, who is the son of the devil. In the opera's most famous scene, Robert arrives in a cemetery for sinful nuns. His father, in an attempt to entice him to damnation, resurrects the evil nuns, who dance seductively to tempt Robert.

The opera was tremendously popular, receiving over five hundred performances by the mid-1860s. Audiences flocked to see the ballet of nuns, a spectacle enhanced by the nuns' white costumes, eerily illuminated by gaslight. The scene also used



Edgar Degas, painting of the nun ballet, 1876

multiple trap doors to depict nuns rising from their graves. The ballet was so popular it inspired lithographs and paintings, and its ethereal quality prompted a new genre called ballet blanc in which ballerinas appear in white, usually representing supernatural characters.

In Georges Rodenbach's novel and play, Hugues (Paul in the opera) witnesses his wife's lookalike perform the role of Helena, which solidifies his impression she is his wife resurrected. Rather than having Paul relate this experience, as he does in the play adaptation, Korngold places the scene before the audience in what biographer Brendan Carroll has called a parody of the nun ballet, since the *Die tote Stadt* version uses dancers in commedia costumes.



A lithograph showing the nun ballet, 1831

MUSIC

Theory of Music

Hear songs from
the show!

Grade Level: High School (adaptable for other grades)

Time: 45-60 minutes

Overview: Students use two arias from Die tote Stadt to analyze Romanticism (Evidence Outcome b).

Materials:

- Computer with internet connection and speakers to play audio and video links embedded in lesson
- Writing materials

COLORADO ACADEMIC STANDARD

Standard

3. Theory of Music

GLE (Accomplished)

2. Analyze structure, use of musical elements, and expressive choices within musical compositions

Aesthetic Valuation (45-60 minutes)

Description: Students use "Glück, das mir verblieb" and "Mein Sehnen, Mein Wähnen," the two most oft-performed arias from *Die tote Stadt*, to discuss Romanticism in composition.

Detailed Steps:

1. Context: Korngold's music was heavily influenced by his father's preference for the Romantic style of the nineteenth century. Romanticism rejected the rigid rules of classicism in favor of expressing emotion. Rich, lush orchestral compositions that swelled with feeling came to characterize the period, including music by composers the Korngolds admired, such as Brahms and Mahler.
2. Listen to the two arias from *Die tote Stadt* described on the following page. For each aria, list the prominent emotions you think the composer might be trying to convey to his audience.
3. Then, listen again and identify specific sections that seem crafted to prompt emotion. After listening several times, pair and share responses, then discuss as a class.
4. Consider where responses align and differ and whether students believe these arias qualify as Romantic compositions.

(Continued on next page)

MUSIC

Theory of Music (Continued)

Aria #1: "Glück, das mir verblieb," also known as "Marietta's Lied"

In act one of *Die tote Stadt*, Paul asks Marietta to sing a song with him that, unbeknownst to her, his wife used to sing. The song is about a faithful lover who is dying. She tells her love that death cannot separate them. The beauty of the music inspired many sopranos to perform the duet as an aria, and "Glück, das mir verblieb" became one of the most performed pieces after *Die tote Stadt* debuted. Hear two versions of the aria:

- In performance by [Jacek Laszczkowski](#) (Paul) and [Marlis Petersen](#) (Marie/Marietta) from the Opera Narodowa Warsaw production (2017)
- In concert by [Renee Fleming](#) in Munich's open-air concert (2019)

Aria #2: Pierrot's "Mein Sehnen, Mein Wähnen"

In act two of *Die tote Stadt*, Marietta asks her actor friend Fritz, still dressed in his Pierrot costume from the theatre, to sing a song. Pierrot sings "Mein Sehnen, Mein Wähnen," which means "My Yearning, My Obsession." The song has become known as "Pierrot's Tanzlied" or "Pierrot's dance song," and is a popular concert piece for baritones. Hear two versions of the aria:

- In [concert](#) by Johannes Kammler
- Hear baritone [Jose Carbo](#) discuss the sensation of singing Pierrot's Tanzlied

Translation of Pierrot's Tanzlied

My yearning, my obsession,
They take me back in dreams.
In the dance I once obtained it,
Now I've lost my happiness.
While dancing on the Rhein
In the moonlight,
She confessed to me with a loving
Look in her blue eyes,
Confessed to me with her pleading words:
O stay, don't go far away,
Preserve the memory of your homeland's
Peaceful, flourishing happiness.

My yearning, my obsession,
They take me back in dreams.
The magic of things far away
Brings the burning of my soul
The magic of the dance lured me,
And I was then Pierrot.
I followed her, my wonderful sweetheart,
And learned from kissed tears.
Intoxication and misery,
Illusion and happiness:
Ah, this is a clown's destiny.

READING, WRITING, AND COMMUNICATING

Ninth/Twelfth Grade Band, Writing and Composition

Grade Level: High School (adaptable for other grades)

Time: 45 minutes

Overview: Students discuss setting in Die tote Stadt as a prompt for descriptive writing

Materials:

- Page 17 of this Guidebook
- Writing materials

COLORADO ACADEMIC STANDARD

Standard

3. Writing and Composition

GLE

3. Write engaging real or imagined narratives using multiple plot lines
Evidence Outcome iv: Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

Writing and Composition (45 minutes)

Detailed Steps:

1. Ask students to provide examples of stories, films, or video game where the setting conveys the emotions of the characters or acts as a kind of character itself (consider Gotham City in DC Comics, Hogwarts in *Harry Potter*, or the boat/ocean in *Life of Pi*).
2. Introduce students to the idea of using setting to evoke emotion, rather than convey a meticulously accurate description. (Use page 17 of the Guidebook and explore the Symbolist manifesto if useful.)
3. Discuss how the "dead" city of Bruges works to convey Paul/Hugues's melancholy (see page 17). If students have seen the opera, discuss how the set conveyed his state of mind.
4. Have students choose an emotion or mood. Then, ask them to select or imagine an environment that epitomizes this mood. Have them write a description evoking the emotion of the selected place. (If desired, students may work in small groups.)
5. When finished, ask students to exchange descriptions. Then ask students to identify the emotion and sketch the location described in the writing.
6. Share final drawings to compare readers' impressions with the authors' intent.

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Act one set design by
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