



THE ELIXIR OF LOVE

THE ELIXIR OF LOVE

Dear Teachers,

Opera Colorado is pleased to provide engaging educational programs and performances for students across Colorado. What follows is a guide that we hope you and your students find useful, as we explore Gaetano Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love*. In the spirit of exploration, we have included various lessons that connect *The Elixir of Love* with different subjects of learning.

The lessons reference the Colorado Department of Education's Academic Standards: specifically, focusing on the fifth-grade expectations. This does not mean, however, that these lessons should be limited to this age group. While we would be incredibly pleased if you used these lessons in the exact format provided, we encourage you to expand, alter, and adapt these lessons so that they best fit your students' abilities and development. After all, the teacher knows their student's needs best. We would appreciate your feedback on our teacher evaluation form emailed to you after the performance by our Manager of Education & Community Engagement. We hope that you enjoy all that Opera Colorado has to offer!

THANK YOU!

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MEET THE ARTISTS



KERBY BAIER

soprano

Adina

(ad-DEE-nah)



RANDY HO

tenor

Nemorino

(nem-uh-REE-no)



SAANE HALAHOLO

soprano

Giannetta

(jah-NEH-tah)



ALEXANDER GRANITO

baritone

Belcore

(bel-CORE-ay)



MELANIE DUBIL

mezzo-soprano

Giannetta, cover

(jah-NEH-tah)



TURNER STATON

bass-baritone

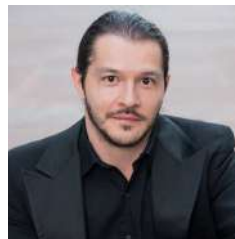
Dulcamara

(dull-ka-MAR-uh)



CERITY KOEPKE

Director



OLEG BELLINI

Pianist

DID YOU KNOW?

These artists are a part of the Opera Colorado Artist in Residence Program. Over 400 singers audition for the program each year and these six artists made it! They live and work in Denver for eight months with Opera Colorado so that students like you can experience opera in your school.

THE ELIXIR OF LOVE

CAST OF CHARACTERS

The Elixir of Love

Composed by Gaetano Donizetti

Libretto by Felice Romani

Debuted at the Teatro della Canobbiana in Milan, Italy, on May 12, 1832

Adina (soprano) – The town's wealthy, educated beauty who catches the eye of both Nemorino and Belcore. Her feisty spirit keeps everyone on their toes.

Giannetta (mezzo-soprano) – Adina's best friend who loves to know everyone's business, even if it's a secret.

Nemorino (tenor) – A simple cowhand in love with Adina. To try and finally win her heart, he purchases a fake love potion with the last of his money.

Belcore (baritone) – A handsome and successful sergeant, who believes he's the best at everything, including charming the ladies of the town.

Dulcamara (bass-baritone) – A crafty snake oil salesman who specializes in selling people a remedy for anything that ails them, even if it's fake, including a love potion that he sells to Nemorino.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Elixir of Love is often described as a 'dramma giocoso' which roughly translates to a 'drama with jokes' and includes a blend of serious and comedic action into one story. An 'opera buffa' is a 'comic opera' while its opposite is 'opera seria' meaning 'serious opera'.

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SYNOPSIS

It's morning in a small, western town in the mountains of Colorado. Some of the town has gathered at Auntie Jan's Root Beer Saloon. Nemorino, a simple cowhand, dreamily watches Adina from a distance, sad about being too poor to offer her anything but his love and too shy to approach her. Adina, the town's brainy beauty, is reading a fairytale adventure about heroes and princesses. She excitedly relays the story to the group, telling them about a wizard who creates a magical elixir that makes people fall in love.

An army Sergeant named Belcore suddenly arrives. The ladies of the town are instantly curious about the dashing and handsome newcomer. Belcore flirts with the girls, impressing them with his bravery, and irritating Nemorino with his ego. Within minutes, Belcore declares his love for Adina, asking her to marry him. She is flattered but refuses the offer. Now facing a rival for Adina's attention, Nemorino finds the courage to declare his love for her. Adina laughs at him, telling Nemorino she is like a breeze, she'll do as she pleases and doesn't want to settle down.

Before they can continue, there's a commotion from the street. As the town watches, a flashy snake oil salesman, Dr. Dulcamara, arrives with a supply of medicine for sale. He claims to have the cure for anything that ails you. Nemorino asks him if he knows of the magical elixir of love from the story he heard about earlier. Dulcamara replies that he was the one who created it and he craftily sells a bottle of the "potion" to Nemorino. He drinks it at once, not realizing that Dulcamara is tricking him. It's not magical at all but an ordinary bottle of sweet tea. However, Nemorino's belief in the magic is absolute. Certain that he will win Adina's love, he begins to turn the tables on her, acting as if he's no longer interested. To get even, Adina begins to flirt with Belcore and finally agrees to marry him. When orders arrive calling for Belcore to report to duty at once, he and Adina decide to wed the very next day. Distraught, Nemorino pleads for Dulcamara's help as the rest of the town looks on with

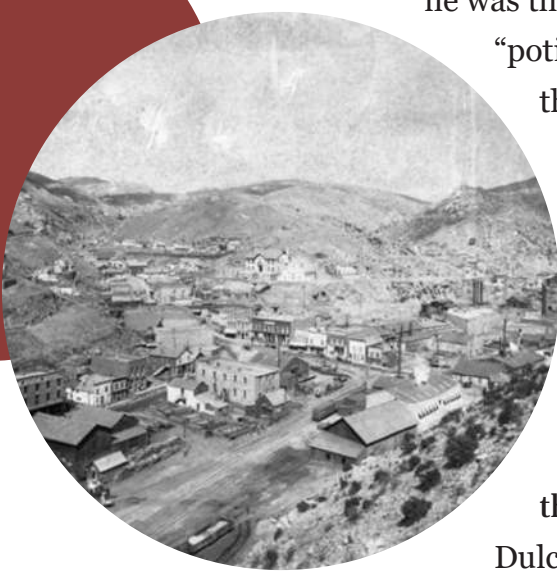


PHOTO | "Black Hawk, Colorado". Photograph by A. M. Thomas. Circa, 1880-1890. ID 83.240.2 Courtesy of History Colorado.

THE ELIXIR OF LOVE

SYNOPSIS

concern. Knowing he has no more money to buy another bottle of the elixir, Nemorino is desperate. Seeing that, Belcore swoops in to take advantage of his adversary's weakness. He offers him twenty dollars, the only requirement is that he must sign up to join the army. Nemorino agrees and the two sign a contract. Nemorino takes the money and immediately goes to look for Dulcamara.

Giannetta has intercepted a letter for Nemorino and learned that his rich uncle has died, leaving him a large inheritance. She shares her secret with Dulcamara and the two hatch a plot. Nemorino swaggers in, having purchased another bottle of the elixir. Giannetta showers him with her affections, which, not knowing of his newly acquired inheritance, Nemorino credits to Dulcamara's potion. Adina sees Nemorino with the Giannetta. Jealous, she sheds a single tear and storms off. Seeing her response, Nemorino realizes that Adina must love him and proclaims that they will be together forever.

However, by next morning, nothing has changed. Adina is still set to marry Belcore and Nemorino is still scheduled to join the army. Standing alone in the street, Nemorino sadly contemplates leaving his town and the girl that he loves. Adina appears and tells him that she has bought back his enlistment papers, so he doesn't have to join the army. She asks him to stay and proclaims her love for him. Finally together, the couple rejoices. Belcore is astonished that he's lost to such a simpleton. The town celebrates with the new couple and bids goodbye to Dulcamara, praising him and his magic elixir.

“The town celebrates with the new couple and bids goodbye to Dulcamara, praising him and his magic elixir.”



PHOTO | “John Bianchu (at right) in front of his store in Sopris, Colorado”. Photograph. Colorado Fuel and Iron Company. Circa, 1854-1902. ID 84.193.68. Courtesy of History Colorado.

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MEET THE COMPOSER: GETANO DONIZETTI



WHO WROTE THE MUSIC?

Gentano Donizetti

Donizetti wrote the music for *The Elixir of Love* in 1842 in Milan, Italy.

Getano Donizetti was a leading composer of the bel canto opera style during the first half of the nineteenth century and wrote nearly seventy operas over the course of his career. Born in 1797 in the city of Bergamo, Italy to a humble, impoverished family, Donizetti was the only family member to show an affinity and talent for music. Fortunately, at an early age, he was taken under the wing of the maestro di capella at Bergamo cathedral, a successful composer who had written dozens of operas, named Simon Mayr. As Mayr's apprentice, Donizetti attended school and studied music for twelve years.

He studied at the Accademia Filarmonica in Bologna and eventually earned his first commission from the Teatro San Luca in Venice in 1818. An offer in 1822 from Domenico Barbaja, the impresario of the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples, followed the composer's ninth

opera and led to his move to Naples and his residency there which lasted until the production of *Caterina Cornaro* in January 1844. Donizetti produced on average three operas a year, many of which are still appreciated and produced today. In all, Naples presented fifty one of Donizetti's operas.

Before 1830, success came primarily with his comic operas, the serious ones failing to attract significant audiences. Then in 1830, his thirty-first opera about the Tudor dynasty, *Anna Bolena*, premiered in Milan and became his first true smash hit. *L'elisir d'amore* (*The Elixir of Love*) (1832), *La fille du regiment* (*Daughter of the Regiment*) (1840) and *Don Pasquale* (1843) are three of his timeless comedic operas. Whereas *Gemma di Vergy* (1834) and *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835) are examples of successful tragic operas. Many attribute his ability to craft both light-hearted and serious operas to the sorrow and misfortune in his life. He lost both parents, three infant children, and his wife of seven years in under a decade and suffered from syphilis, a disease suspected to be the cause of the death of his loved ones.

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MEET THE COMPOSER: GIOACHINO ROSSINI

Donizetti had a brief stint in Paris, debuting *Marino Faliero* in 1835 and concluded with *Dom Sebastien* in 1843. He then traveled to Austria and became director of the imperial theaters. His final works premiered at the Karntnertortheater venue in Vienna. After *Linda di Chamounix* (1842) became a success, he was appointed Composer to the Austrian Court, a valued position that only 50 years prior had been held by Mozart. But soon after, by 1845, his disease took over, causing paralysis, erratic behavior, and disorientation. He was cared for by family and relocated back to Bergamo, his city of birth, where he passed at the age of 49. Over a span of twenty-five years, Donizetti produced over seventy operas and helped establish the artform in Italy. His operas are still globally enjoyed by audiences today.



PHOTO | The 2023-24 Artists in Residence in their performance of *The Elixir of Love*.

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MEET THE LIBRETTIST: FELICE ROMANI



WHO WROTE THE LYRICS?

Felice Romani

Romani wrote the words for the opera, based on Eugène Scribe's libretto for Auber's *Le philtre*.

Giuseppe Felice Romani was born in 1788 in Milan, Italy and after studying law in school to please his family and literature to please himself, he worked as a lawyer, then as a poet before later pursuing libretto writing. He relocated to Milan in 1814 and immersed himself in the musical and literary worlds, meeting many important individuals. He worked with famous composers including Bellini, Donizetti, and Verdi and even wrote two librettos for Donizetti's mentor, Simon Mayr. Over time he produced over 100 librettos and as such, is one of the most well-known Italian librettists of his era.

He focused almost entirely upon French literature and mythology, and therefore never invented his own narratives, instead choosing to adopt and appropriate existing tales. He is known for contributing to the development of the bel canto style of opera and adapt

historical and classical stories to the stage, helping to increase popularity for these themes in opera. His librettos were known for being romantic and poetic, focusing on the character's depth and psychology with tragic plot lines that conclude in happy endings.

DID YOU KNOW?

Many of the most well-loved and most frequently performed operas such as *The Elixir of Love* have been performed hundreds or thousands of times since their debut. For this reason, you, as an audience member, can see the same opera multiple times. [Operabase](#) is a global database that tracks operatic activity worldwide since 1996. Use this to explore where performances of *The Elixir of Love*, or another opera you are curious about, are taking place around the world.

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LESSON 1: MUSIC–VOICE AS AN INSTRUMENT

Colorado Academic Standard: 2022 Music – Fifth Grade, Standard 1. Expression of Music

GLE: Demonstrate music that exhibits learned rhythmic, melodic, and accompaniment components.

A **composer** writes the music the symphony plays during an opera while the **librettist** writes the text that is sung. Both the instruments and the singer’s voice work together to portray the vast array of emotion an opera expresses.

Part 1: Observe.

Ensure the class has read the synopsis. Next, the class will listen to Nemorino’s aria from act two of *The Elixir of Love* twice, once as only piano accompaniment and once with the lyrics. Provide students with the questions in Part 2 ahead of time for them to review and consider as they listen. Now, provide the following context:

“Una furtiva lagrima” is an **aria**; an accompanied song for a solo voice, from act two, scene two of *The Elixir of Love* sung by the character of Nemorino, a simple, young man in love with Adina. Nemorino has purchased a second bottle of the fake love potion from Dulcamara. As his confidence increases, he ignores Adina when he enters the room and flirts with Giannetta instead. Adina, jealous and upset by his actions, sheds a single tear, and leaves. Nemorino realizes that she does in fact love him and sings out with joy at this discovery. “Una furtiva lagrima” translate to “a furtive (hidden) tear”.



Listen to the piano accompaniment “Una furtiva lagrima”, Nemorino’s aria from act two of *The Elixir of Love*. Video by Opera Karaoke. It is recommended to display the video so students may follow the sheet music.



Now listen to “Una furtiva lagrima,” sung in Italian by Luciano Pavarotti for the Metropolitan Opera in 1991.

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LESSON 1: MUSIC–VOICE AS AN INSTRUMENT

Allow students to follow the lyric translation as they listen.

Translation by Cherity Koepke, Opera Colorado.

ITALIAN

Una furtiva lagrima
negli occhi suoi spuntò
quelle festose giovani
invidiar sembrò
Che più cercando io vo?
M'ama, lo vedo.
Un solo istante i palpiti
del suo bel cor sentir!..
Co' suoi sospir confondere
per poco i miei sospir!...
Cielo, si può morir;
di più non chiedo.

ENGLISH

One single tear, Adina cried
Only one tear from her eye
And though she thought I did not hear,
I heard her breathe a sigh
Was it a sigh of love?
The heavens smile from above!
Darlin', oh darlin'
You love me!
Soon I will hold you in my arms
And you'll be mine alone
Then I will hear your heart reply,
And answer to my own
Yes, soon my love, I'll hold you in my arms,
Protecting you from all the world's harms
Heavens, how happy we'll be!
Our love will last forever!



PHOTO | Soprano Kerby Baier and tenor Randy Ho in their performance of *The Elixir of Love*.

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LESSON 1: MUSIC–VOICE AS AN INSTRUMENT

Part 2

Allow students 5-10 minutes to write in their answers to the following questions. You may replay the audio a second time as needed. Once complete, share and discuss their answers as a class.

- How do different rhythm patterns affect the feel of music?
- How do the different instruments of the orchestra work together to portray Nemorino's feelings?
- How does this music stimulate visual ideas, feelings, and perception?
- How do harmony and modes and/or tonalities affect the music?
- How is music like a language?
- How is the human voice like other instruments?

FUN FACT

Proper care of instruments, including an opera singer's voice, aids in the success of a performance. Opera singers train for many years to learn how to sing in an operatic style which involves being able to project their voices across an entire opera house from the stage with no microphone to help them. Singers use their diaphragm, to support their lungs, vocal cords, and vocal folds to create the vibrations we hear. The bones in the face become resonating chambers, and the rest of their bodies support their singing as well. Vocal cords are a muscle and must undergo regular exercise just like any other muscle to gain strength and flexibility. This also means, that if used incorrectly, they can be injured and require time to recover. This requires opera singers to take expert care of their vocal cords so they can sing for many years without injury.



PHOTO | Baritone Alexander Granito in their performance of *The Elixir of Love*.

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LESSON 2: CREATIVE WRITING—THE IMPORTANCE OF SETTING

Colorado Academic Standard: 2022 Reading, Writing, and Communicating – Fifth Grade, Standard 3. Writing and Composition

GLE: 3. Write engaging, real, or imagined narratives using literary techniques, character development, sensory and descriptive details, and a variety of transition words to signal a clear sequence of events.

Some operas are viewed as **concept operas**; stories that can happen in any setting or time. In opera, the music and narrative remain the same while the set, costumes, wigs, makeup, and period of the production will change in order to show audiences an opera they may have seen before, in a new way. For example, *The Elixir of Love* was written to be set in Bergamo, Italy in the early 19th century and is intended to be sung in Italian. Opera Colorado has adapted the story and set it to the old America West, specifically Colorado, in the late 1800s, and changed the language to English so that you may better understand the lyrics. However, despite these changes, the story remains as Donizetti intended.



PHOTO | The open sets for Opera Colorado's touring production of *The Elixir of Love*.

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LESSON 2: CREATIVE WRITING—THE IMPORTANCE OF SETTING

Part 1: Brainstorm

Instruct students to spend 5 minutes answering the following questions in only a few words:

- If you were to create a new setting for this opera, what location would you choose?
Outer space, another country, another universe, etc.?
- Is your opera in the past, present, or future? What year is it?
- Would the characters be human or something else?
- What are they wearing? What do their costumes look like? Consider hair, makeup, and jewelry as well.
- What is the love potion made of? What color is it? How does it taste and smell?
- What does your set look like? Is it an indoor or outdoor setting, or a bit of both?
- What props would you select?

Part 2: Write

Now, have students spend 20 minutes writing a synopsis of *The Elixir of Love* story with the same plot and characters, but also incorporating all of the elements they described in Part 1. They should pay attention to the following three narrative techniques; description, pacing, and sensory details, ensuring that all three are present in their synopsis.

Part 3: Share and Compare

Lastly, students should gather into groups of 3-4 and share their stories aloud. Direct them to notice how the narrative stays the same, but each version comes alive with entirely different scenes that bring new excitement and interest to the opera.

Part 4: Debrief

Facilitate a full class debrief after all groups complete sharing to connect concept operas to other examples from daily life where a familiar story is told many different ways. Consider movies, theater, music, novels, comics, games, etc. For example, there are over 40 different Spider Man variations, all with a common narrative of an ordinary person getting bit by a spider, gaining new powers, and fighting an evil villain with those powers. What other examples can the class think of?

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FUN FACT

Opera Colorado offers two different touring productions a year. The sets for these operas must be uniquely built to be portable and easily set up and taken down. They also must creatively portray the setting of the opera. For these reasons, each set is custom built by a team of artists. Opera companies, like Opera Colorado, are nonprofits, which means that they rely upon donors to provide financial support. The creation of the set you see for *The Elixir of Love* was sponsored by one of Opera Colorado's donors, Mrs. Barrow! Thank you, Mrs. Barrow for making this production possible!



PHOTO | Auntie Jan's Root Beer Saloon set for Opera Colorado's touring production of *The Elixir of Love*.

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LESSON 3: HISTORY: ASSUMPTION VERSUS FACT

Colorado Academic Standard: Fifth Grade, Standard 1. History

GLE: Examine the historical eras, individuals, groups, ideas, and themes in North America.

There is a lot of research that goes into creating an opera. The characters, set, costumes, and props are all specifically designed to portray a certain historical period or theme. In this lesson, we will explore the daily life and a few female historical figures from old west mining towns of the late 1800s.

Part 1: Assumptions and Prior Knowledge

Lead the class in a sharing session. Encourage students to share what they know and assume about the roles women played in society during the 1800s in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. On the board, visible for all, create a list of things student believe women did and a list of things they didn't do.

- Challenge them to be specific. There are no right or wrong answers in this exercise. Collect all answers and add them to the board. For duplicate responses add tallies to the items.

Next, identify trends or themes for both sections as a class.

Part 2: Research

The gold rush attracted a surge of men looking to get rich by working in mines peppered throughout the Rocky Mountains. As more people migrated West, mining towns sprang up to provide necessities for the miners. Main streets included a bank, a general store, a hotel/restaurant, and a saloon. (These town staples are visible in our set of *The Elixir of Love*!) While men often vastly outnumbered women, the ladies of the late 1800s contributed greatly to their communities and found their own innovative ways to make money while the fellas dug for gold and coal.



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LESSON 3: HISTORY: ASSUMPTION VERSUS FACT

The characters of Adina and Giannetta are modeled after a few of these strong women.

- **Lucy Maud Montgomery** and **Victoria Woodhull** are inspiration for Adina.
- **Annie Oakley** and **Belle Starr** are inspiration for Giannetta.

Instruct students to choose one female character, either Adina or Gianetta, and then spend 15-20 minutes researching the biographies of their inspirations. Students should take notes on any key elements of their history that jump out at them.

Part 3: Interpretation

Next, allow 10 minutes for students to think critically about the notes they chose to write down. Beside each item, they should reflect upon the character traits the historical figure would have needed to employ.

- For example, Annie Oakley learned how to shoot a gun in order to hunt animals to feed her family. This would take resourcefulness and determination in the face of fear.

Part 4: First Hand Accounts

Read the following first hand accounts from women working in the mining towns:

WEARY DAYS OF LABOR AND PAIN

“July, 1859—Have not seen a woman yet. The men had a celebration on the 4th, present about 500 men and Indians—two Dutch women from Mexico. Plenty of squaws and one white woman just arrived from Missouri. I was homesick and could have cried, but Cam [her husband] feels so sadly when I get discouraged that I try hard to be cheerful when he is about. He helps me all he can about my work, but there is much to do with so many boarders, and all being out of money we cannot get rid of them. . . . I have made some \$30.00 out of butter and cheese or smearcase [cottage cheese] I have made since we arrived, in fact have made all the money Cam and John have had, as their last copper was spent at Council Grove in Eastern Kansas, but the work made me sick and now I sell the milk at 10 cts per quart and make \$2.75 a day. My butter brought \$1.00 per lb. and balls of smearcase 40 cts per doz. . . . Weary days of labor and pain. Have made 175 loaves of bread and 450 pies. Taken all the care of the children and done all the house work but the washing.”

Source: Mrs. A. Cameron Hunt.

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LESSON 3: HISTORY: ASSUMPTION VERSUS FACT

TAKING IN BOARDERS

“When the Vulcan boom came, we moved there. Again I kept boarders. My husband worked in the mines and prospected for himself.”

Source: Mary Nichols Williams, (1934), CWA Interviews, Doc. 350/68, Colorado Historical Society.

KEEPING A BOARDING HOUSE

“Really the women did more in the early days than the men. There was so much for them to do, the sick to take care of. I have had so many unfortunate men shot by accident, brought to my cabin to take care of. There were so many men who could not cook and did not like men’s cooking and would insist upon boarding where there was a woman and they would board there all they could. . . . My husband kept the Post Office and Express Office and I kept a boarding house in California Gulch.”

Source: Augusta Tabor, “Cabin Life in Colorado,” Colorado Magazine, 36 (1959): 151.

DRESS MAKING

“Fidelia could make more money here than half the men if she had her [sewing] machine here and would go into dress cutting and making. The woman I board with cut eight dresses yesterday for one dollar a piece and done the work for six boarders (board six dollars a week).”

Source: Alonzo Harris Boardman to his wife, Nancy, Aug. 16, 1863.

Part 5: Checking our Assumptions

Now that students have researched four notable female figures from this era and read first hand accounts, it is time to reflect as a class on what they have learned. Create a second chart next to the first of the things students learned that women did and didn’t do in this time period.

Compare the two charts. Consider:

- What stands out?
- What kinds of assumptions were made?
- How were women breaking gender norms during this time?
- How did women contribute to these small-town communities?

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ACTIVITY 1: BREW YOUR OWN ELIXIR!

Materials

- Funnel
- Small bottle with a cork or screw top
- Baby oil (For food safe potion, use a cooking oil.)
- Liquid food coloring
- Glitter (For food safe potion use edible glitter.)
- Water

Optional Materials

- String
- Paper or cardstock, any color
- Drawing materials
- Stickers
- Blank stick-on labels

Directions

1. Fill the bottle 1/3 of the way full of oil using the funnel.
2. Drop in 1-3 drops of food coloring, any color.
3. Add glitter.
4. Fill the rest of the bottle with water and cap it. Shake to combine.
5. Optional: Decorate the bottle with a label or tag and decorations. Invent a name for your potion. Use the label or tag with a string tie to display the name, add a price tag, write an ingredient list, or leave a note to someone you want to gift it to. Decorate the bottle with stickers, gems, and any other items you like.



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VOCABULARY USED IN THE GUIDEBOOK

All definitions are sourced from the Miriam-Webster dictionary.

Composer: a person who writes music

Bel canto: a style of opera singing originating in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Italy which stresses ease, purity, and evenness of tone production and an agile and precise vocal technique

Librettist: the writer of a libretto: the text of a work (such as an opera) for the musical theater

Maestro di capella: Choir master

Impresario: the promoter, manager, or conductor of an opera or concert company



PHOTO | Soprano Saane Halaholo and mezzo-soprano Melanie Dubil in their performance of *The Elixir of Love*.

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VOCABULARY USED IN THE PERFORMANCE

Charlatan: one making usually showy pretenses to knowledge or ability, fraud, faker

Happy trails: a farewell or parting expression associated with Western culture

Corporal: the first non-commissioned officer rank, and the lowest rank officially empowered to issue a lawful command

Cowhand: cowboy

Dawdle: to spend time idly, to move lackadaisically

Elixir: a medicinal concoction also called a potion or tonic

Half-wit: a foolish or stupid person

Heir: one who receives or inherits property from an ancestor

Hoot: to shout or laugh usually derisively

Howdy: an informal greeting

Jubilation: an act of rejoicing

Prairie: a tract of grassland

Rascal: a mean, unprincipled, or dishonest person

Simpleton: a person lacking in common sense

Swoon: to become enraptured

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PHOTO | Soprano Saane Halaholo and bass-baritone Turner Staton in their performance of *The Elixir of Love*.