

DON GIOVANNI



DON GIOVANNI

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 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. In the spirit of exploration, we have included various lessons that connect *Don Giovanni* 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 Education Manager. We hope that you enjoy all that Opera Colorado has to offer!

THANK YOU!

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DISCLAIMER

Opera, like many other art forms, provides a glimpse into history. Opera Colorado's production of *Don Giovanni* is a classic version, complete with traditional sets, costumes, and props appropriate for the setting of Seville, Spain in the mid-seventeenth century. The following pages synopsise and analyze the work of Mozart from an academic lens. This opera is about choices and consequences and the women drive the action. The plot and character choices within *Don Giovanni* allow us to reflect upon cultural changes between the time it was composed and today.

DON GIOVANNI

MEET THE ARTISTS

Opera singers spend many years studying to become masters of music and drama to prepare for roles in operas like Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. To rehearse for their roles, they will temporarily live in Denver for five weeks before moving to the next city where their next performance will take place. Because of this, opera singers travel and work all across the U.S, and some, internationally!

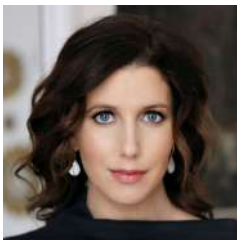
*These artists below perform in the mainstage production at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House. You will see a different cast if you attend the Student Matinee of *Don Giovanni*.



KERBY BAIER
soprano
Zerlina



BRUNO TADDIA
baritone
Don Giovanni



ELLIE DEHN
soprano
Donna Elvira



TUNER STATON
bass-baritone
Masetto



DANIELLE PASTIN
soprano
Donna Anna



JOSHUA BLOOM
bass
Leporello



JOHN BELLEMER
tenor
Don Ottavio



KEVIN THOMPSON
bass
Commendatore

DID YOU KNOW? The Ellie Caulkins Opera House holds 2,200 seats! Opera Colorado offers four performances in one week for each mainstage production. This means that if every ticket sells for all four shows, a total of 8,800 people can see the performance over the course of seven days! “How would you feel as an opera singer performing for that many people?”

DON GIOVANNI

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Don Giovanni

Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte

Debuted at Teatro di Praga in Prague, October 29, 1787

- **Donna Anna** (soprano) – A noblewoman and daughter of the Commendatore.
- **Donna Elvira** (soprano) – A noblewoman and Don Giovanni's former lover.
- **Don Ottavio** (tenor) – A nobleman and Donna Anna's fiancé.
- **Don Giovanni** (baritone) – A nobleman with a reputation for seducing women.
- **Commendatore** (bass) – An older nobleman and Donna Anna's father.
- **Leporello** (bass) – Don Giovanni's servant.
- **Zerlina** (soprano) – A commoner woman betrothed to Masetto.
- **Masetto** (bass-baritone) – A commoner man betrothed to Zerlina.



PHOTO | Kate Lindsey and Adam Plachetka
in *Don Giovanni* at the Met, February 2,
2015. Photograph by Julieta Cervantes/*The
New York Times*/Redux.

DON GIOVANNI

SYNOPSIS

Two Acts. Sung in Italian.

SETTING: Mid-seventeenth century in Seville, Spain

DON GIOVANNI — ACT I

In the garden of the Commendatore's house, **Leporello** keeps watch while **Don Giovanni** is inside attempting to woo the Commendatore's daughter, **Donna Anna**. Leporello grumbles about his life as a servant and dreams of nobility. Don Giovanni and Donna Anna stumble into the garden, struggling; she has found him hiding in her room and is shouting for help. **The Commendatore** appears and challenges Don Giovanni to a duel, which culminates in the Commendatore's death. Don Giovanni and Leporello flee just as Donna Anna reappears with her fiancé, **Don Ottavio**, who vows revenge on the mystery assailant.

The next morning, Don Giovanni and Leporello encounter a beautiful woman lamenting a past lover who abandoned her. Don Giovanni begins to flirt with her, and quickly discovers she is **Donna Elvira**, and that he is the lover she's referring to. Donna Elvira angrily recounts his mistreatment—she fell in love, he promised to marry her, and then he disappeared—and Don Giovanni flees. Leporello is left alone to justify his master's behavior and tells Donna Elvira that she is just one of Don Giovanni's many conquests, leaving her seething with rage.

As Don Giovanni and Leporello wander the streets of Seville, they meet **Zerlina** and **Masetto**, who are celebrating their wedding day. Immediately, Don Giovanni sets his



PHOTO | Map of Seville by Johannes Janssonius, 1617.

DON GIOVANNI

SYNOPSIS (CONTINUED)

sights on Zerlina. He attempts to separate her from Masetto by offering to host a party for the newlyweds at his nearby castle. Once Don Giovanni and Zerlina are alone, he begins to pursue her, but Donna Elvira arrives and thwarts his efforts.

Donna Anna and Don Ottavio enter and ask Don Giovanni for his help in finding the Commendatore's murderer. Donna Elvira returns to expose Don Giovanni's villainy, but he explains away her outburst as insanity. After Don Giovanni leaves, relieved to have not been caught, Donna Anna suddenly recognizes his voice and identifies him as her attacker and her father's killer. She recounts the ordeal to Don Ottavio and asks him once again to avenge her father's death.

Unaware he has just been recognized, Don Giovanni looks forward to an evening of dancing and merriment at the wedding party and has led Zerlina into a private room to seduce her. Donna Elvira, Donna Anna, and Don Ottavio arrive undercover in masks to confront him. Zerlina screams for help, and Don Giovanni unsuccessfully blames Leporello for the attack, but none of the partygoers are fooled. The three guests unmask and accuse him—and Don Giovanni manages to escape once again.

“Don Giovanni and Leporello flee just as Donna Anna reappears with her fiancé, Don Ottavio, who vows revenge on the mystery assailant.”



PHOTO | Serbian National Theatre

DON GIOVANNI

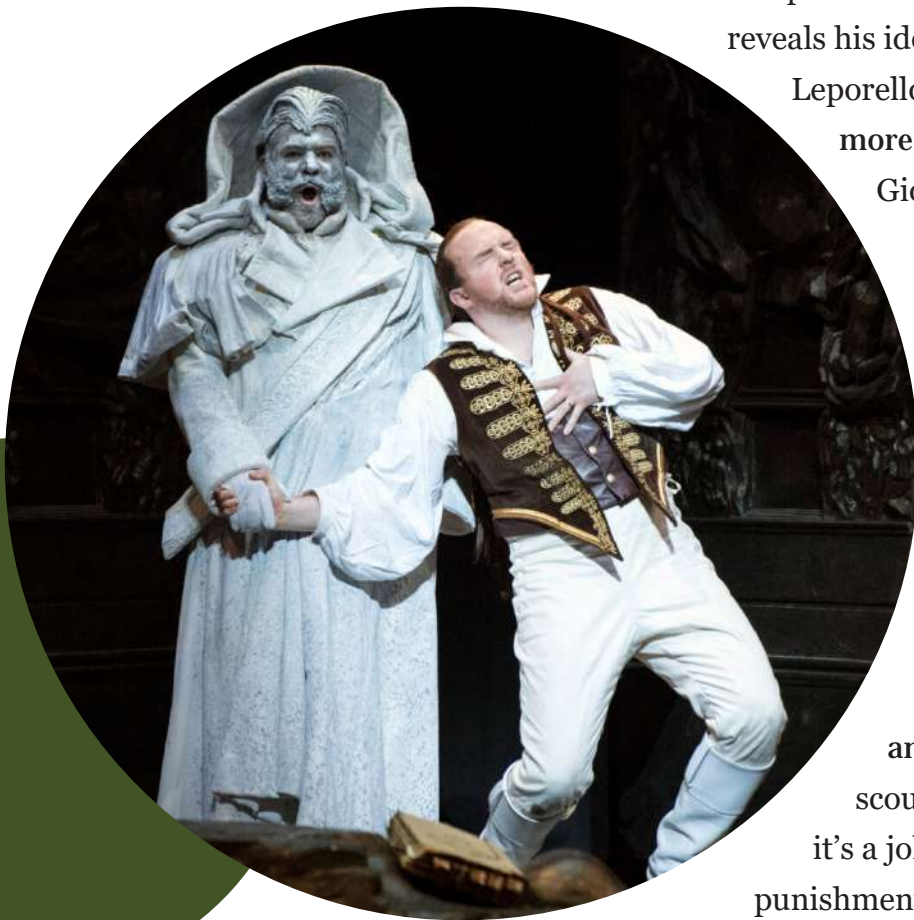
SYNOPSIS (CONTINUED)

DON GIOVANNI — ACT II

Horried by Don Giovanni's behavior, Leporello threatens to quit, and Don Giovanni offers him money to appease him. Don Giovanni sets his sights on Donna Elvira's maid as his next conquest. To avoid getting caught as he makes advances, he convinces Leporello to switch clothes with him. Don Giovanni decides to play several games with the wardrobe change: Leporello (disguised as Don Giovanni), making false promises of love to Donna Elvira, lures her away while Don Giovanni serenades her maid; and Don Giovanni (disguised as Leporello) escapes from Masetto, who arrives to fight him.

Leporello, still in Don Giovanni's clothes, runs into Don Ottavio, Zerlina, and Masetto, who all threaten to punish him. Fearing for his life, Leporello reveals his identity and begs for mercy.

Leporello escapes, leaving Don Ottavio more convinced than ever that Don Giovanni killed the Commendatore.



Leporello meets up with Don Giovanni in a cemetery, where they discuss the night's encounters. They are interrupted by a mysterious voice that emanates from a nearby statue—a memorial to the Commendatore. The inscription on the statue's base reads, "Here am I waiting for revenge against the scoundrel who killed me." Thinking it's a joke and that he is above any sort of punishment, Don Giovanni invites the statue to dinner—and it agrees to come.

PHOTO | Don Giovanni and the Commendatore's Statue at Welsh National Opera, 2018.

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SYNOPSIS (CONTINUED)

CONCLUSION

At the dinner, Donna Elvira appears one more time to beg Don Giovanni to change his ways, but he only laughs at her. The Commendatore's statue arrives and offers Don Giovanni a final chance to repent, but he refuses. As Leporello watches in terror, the earth cracks open in flames and demons drag Don Giovanni to the underworld, an ultimate retribution for his crimes.

Donna Anna, Don Ottavio, Donna Elvira, Zerlina, and Masetto arrive, searching for Giovanni. A shaken Leporello tells them they will never see Don Giovanni again. They all contemplate their futures and Don Giovanni's fate, saying, "Such is the end of the evildoer: the death of a sinner always reflects his life."

DID YOU KNOW?

The character Don Giovanni was not invented by Mozart or his librettist, Lorenzo da Ponte. Instead, they took inspiration from the popular literary character of Don Juan, a well-known, charming villain from a 1630 play by Spanish playwright Tirso de Molina. Mozart appropriated the existing character and narrative of Don Juan and created the evergreen opera of *Don Giovanni* that is still performed today.



PHOTO | Don Juan Costume Designs. Unidentified artist. n.d.

DON GIOVANNI

MEET THE COMPOSER: WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART



WHO WROTE THE MUSIC?

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Mozart wrote the music in 1787, first performed in Prague.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was a prolific composer of the Classical Era. He was born in Salzburg, now known as Austria, as Johann Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus Amadeus Gottlieb Mozart on January 27, 1756. His father, Leopold, was a musician who quickly realized his son's musical talents with a keyboard and violin at a young age. Mozart was known for his remarkable tricks, such as playing instruments blindfolded or with his hands behind his back. Mozart's first compositions were written at age five!

During Mozart's childhood years, his family embarked upon several European travels during which Mozart's talents were exhibited across Munich, Vienna, and Prague. Throughout his travels he became acquainted with other great musicians and composers including Johann Christian Bach. He composed his first opera,

La finta semplice, in 1768 at the age of twelve. By the time Mozart was only thirteen, he had written numerous symphonies, concertos, and sonatas, and became famous as a musical prodigy.

After his travels concluded in 1773, Mozart returned home to Salzburg and worked within the Salzburg Court where he had many admirers and opportunities to compose a variety of genres including symphonies, sonatas, serenades, string quartets, and operas. However, despite his remarkable talents, he was provided a low salary for his work. This, combined with a preference for extravagant lifestyle comforts, confined him to a life of financial struggle throughout his career.

In 1781, at the age of twenty-five, Mozart moved to Vienna, Austria, where he gained quick notoriety as a skilled pianist and composer. Over the next three years Mozart put on a series of concerts and concertos that earned him substantial wealth. It was during this time that he met Constanze Weber, marrying in 1782. Their family enjoyed a lavish lifestyle at this time, saving

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MEET THE COMPOSER: WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (CONTINUED)

little wealth which later contributed to financial struggles.

Between 1788 and 1791, Mozart's career and income declined in part due to the Austro-Turkish war, a period of decreased prosperity, and lower aristocratic support for the arts. Mozart struggled to find work and his output of new works dropped. In 1791, Mozart composed his last three symphonies in less than seven weeks. In the same year, Mozart was commissioned to write a requiem, but he couldn't finish it, having fallen ill from an undetermined cause and passing away on December 5.

In total, Mozart composed twenty-two operas between 1767 and 1791, before his death at the age of thirty-five! This means he created on average just shy of one opera per year from age twelve to age thirty-five. By the time of his death, he had produced more than 600 works of numerous genres, almost all of them with astonishing quality. For this reason, he is considered one of the greatest composers to ever live.



PHOTOS | Mozart, Oil on Canvas, Barbara Krafft, 1819.

Limited Edition Fine Art Serigraph Print by Melanie Taylor Kent (1990)

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MEET THE LIBRETTIST: LORENZO DA PONTE



WHO WROTE THE LYRICS?

Lorenzo Da Ponte

Da Ponte wrote the words for the opera, based on the legend of Don Juan.

Lorenzo Da Ponte (March 10, 1749 - August 17, 1838) was a Venetian opera librettist and poet. He wrote the librettos for twenty-eight operas by eleven composers, including three of Mozart's greatest operas, *Don Giovanni*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, and *Così fan tutte*.

Lorenzo Da Ponte was born Emanuele Conegliano in Ceneda, in the Republic of Venice (now Vittorio Veneto, Italy). Jewish by birth, Emanuele later took the name of Lorenzo Da Ponte from the Bishop of Ceneda who baptized him when he converted to Catholicism in 1763. He studied to be a teacher in seminary and was ordained as a Catholic priest in 1773. However, he strayed from his religious practices, later moving to Vienna, and applied for the post of Poet to the Theatres. Austrian Emperor, Joseph II, agreed and as court librettist,

Da Ponte wrote texts in French, German, Spanish, and Italian. He collaborated with Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Antonio Salieri, and Vicente Martín y Soler.

In 1792, da Ponte married Ann Celestine Grahl (Nancy), a woman twenty years younger than him, and had four children. When Emperor Joseph II died, Da Ponte lost his patronage and moved briefly to Paris, and then to London where he started a new career as an opera producer. However, he was not a business person, and eventually found himself bankrupt. To escape his creditors, he fled to the U.S. and settled in New York where he became the first Professor of Italian Literature at Columbia College. He was the first Roman Catholic priest to be appointed to the faculty, and he was also the first to have been born Jewish. He introduced New York to opera with a performance of *Don Giovanni* and Gioachino Rossini's music. In 1828, at the age of seventy-nine, Da Ponte became a naturalized U.S. citizen. He died in 1838 in New York.

All Da Ponte's works were adaptations of pre-existing plots, as was common at the time, with the exceptions of *L'arbore di Diana* with Vicente Martín y Soler, and *Così fan tutte*, which he began with Salieri, but completed with Mozart. However, the quality of his elaboration gave them new life, in particular the Don Giovanni character, often seen in contrast with Giacomo Casanova as the archetypal libertine character.

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LESSON: LISTENING & DISCUSSION, MUSIC AS A NARRATIVE TOOL

- **Colorado Academic Standard: Intermediate, Responding to Music.**
- **GLE: Compare uses for music in a culturally responsive manner.**

The beginning of an opera begins with an **overture**: a musical introduction to an opera played by the orchestra. The overture does not include singing and is used to set the tone and mood for the audience by providing a preview of what is to come.

PART ONE

Have students listen to the overture for Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. (6 min.) As they listen, direct them to close their eyes, and periodically write down thoughts or words that come to mind.

Listen to the Overture:



Consider these questions:

- Does the music seem to change as you listen to it or stay the same?
- Does the tempo increase and decrease?
- What mood does the music set?
- What tone does the music have? Does it change?
- How do you feel while listening?
- If you were to make a prediction based only on the overture, what would you say is going to happen in the performance?
- What visuals came to mind? Draw a picture or write a description of what you saw in your mind while listening.

PHOTOS | Portrait by Samuel Finley Breese Morse (1791-1872).

The Opera Colorado Orchestra with Music Director Ari Peltó

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LESSON: LISTENING & DISCUSSION, MUSIC AS A NARRATIVE TOOL (CONTINUED)

PART TWO

After 5-10 minutes of reflection, engage the class in discussion of these questions.

PART THREE

Opera is not the only genre that uses music to set the scene and prepare audiences for the story they are about to see. Who recognizes this theme song?

Listen to “Hedwig’s Theme” from *Harry Potter*:



PART FOUR

Instruct the class to reflect upon the same questions above by listening to the music. And include the following additions:

- What other movies, TV shows, plays, or musicals can you think of that use music to set the tone and hook their audience?
- What other situations or examples come to mind that use music to introduce you to something?
 - (Possible examples include gameshows, retail shops, restaurants, podcasts, concerts with opening acts.)
- Do different kinds of music evoke different feelings, behaviors, or moods from you? Why is this?

CONCLUSION

Wrap discussion by highlighting the role music plays in setting the tone for parts of our daily lives. Relate to how the orchestra plays music during an opera that is specifically written to make the audience feel explicit emotions and connect with the story they see onstage.

DID YOU KNOW? *Don Giovanni* 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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LESSON: THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND SOCIAL STATUS

- **Colorado Academic Standard: Fifth Grade, Social Studies; History**
- **GLE: Examine the historical eras, individuals, groups, ideas, and themes of a time period.**

Mozart wrote *Don Giovanni* in 1787, a period referred to as the mid-eighteenth century. He chose to make seventeenth-century Seville, Spain the time and setting for his opera; a full century (100 years) before his time. In other words, Mozart placed the characters in the past. Just like you are influenced by the world around you; Mozart was influenced by the cultural and political norms of his daily life. These appear in the opera of *Don Giovanni*.

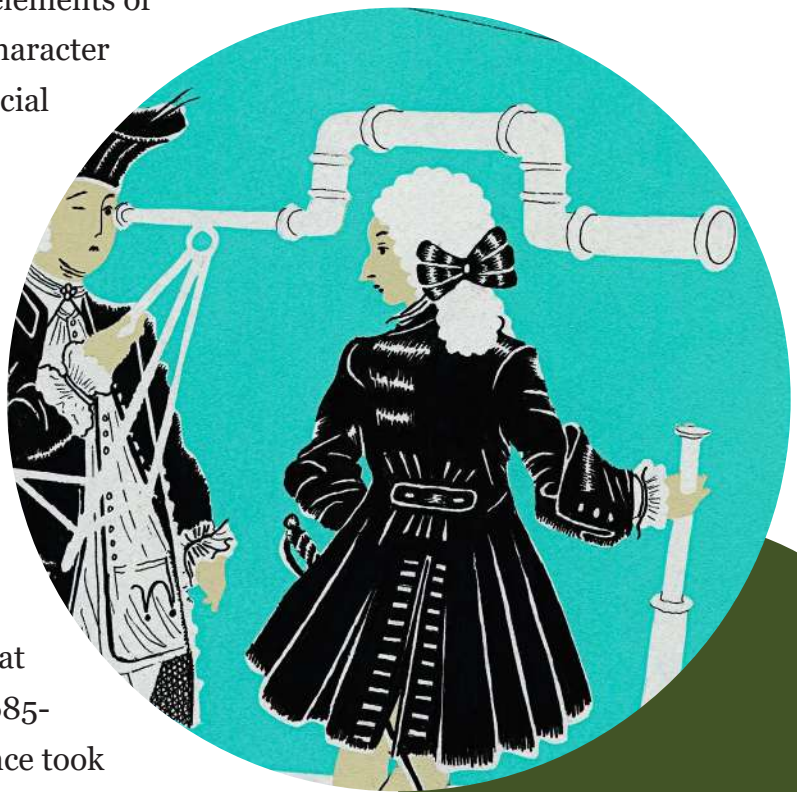
For this lesson, students will focus on key elements of the Enlightenment, how this impacts the character relationships in *Don Giovanni*, and how social class affects privilege.

PART ONE

In a class discussion, review the historical content below and discuss each question together. Use a whiteboard to gather student ideas.

A. Historical Context:

Mozart lived during The Enlightenment, often referred to as the “Age of Reason,” that characterized European society between 1685-1815. Exploration, individualism, and science took center stage leading to what many determine as the beginning of the ‘modern’ world. Leaders began to think about new ways to structure government and politics.



PHOTOS | ‘The Dream of Enlightenment’ by Anthony Gottlieb

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LESSON: THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND SOCIAL STATUS (CONTINUED)

Previously, social classes created a rigid structure by which people lived, worked, and made decisions. For example, if you were a nobleman, or a part of high society with wealth and status, working was considered beneath you, and therefore you would not have a job like adults today do. On the other hand, if you were a commoner, or a member of a lower, working class, you had to work to make money, often working for a member of the noble class.

Class Discussion: Identify the characters' different social classes in *Don Giovanni*. Where are these class differences apparent?

Answers may include:

- **Don Giovanni:** noble aristocrat
- **Leporello:** peasant/servant
- **Donna Elvira:** noble aristocrat
- **Donna Anna:** noble aristocrat
- **Don Ottavio:** noble aristocrat
- **Zerlina:** commoner
- **Masetto:** commoner
- The relationship between a nobleman and a servant is seen between Don Giovanni and Leporello.
- Zerlina and Masetto are lured into Don Giovanni's trap by the appeal of a party at his castle; a luxury they are not accustomed to.

B. Historical Context:

During The Enlightenment when Mozart wrote *Don Giovanni*, economic prosperity increased. General population growth, increased trade of goods from different parts of the world, and the expansion of cities like Seville, Spain resulted in public gathering spaces like coffee shops and public libraries. These spaces became popular for discussion and helped break down the lines between social classes as lower, middle, and upper class members of society now had culturally acceptable places to congregate and share ideas.

Class Discussion: Where do you see instances of characters in *Don Giovanni* breaking social class norms?

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LESSON: THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND SOCIAL STATUS (CONTINUED)

Answers may include:

- Don Giovanni inviting Zerlina and Masetto to his castle for a wedding celebration.
- Anna, Ottavio, Elvira, Zerlina, and Masetto working together to catch and accuse Giovanni of his crimes.
- Leporello disagreeing with Don Giovanni's actions and threatening to quit working for Giovanni.

PART TWO (OPTIONAL)

Connect Social Status and Privilege in a follow-up class discussion.

Despite the improvements made within society during The Enlightenment, people of a higher social class still maintained privileges over those in lower classes. Due to their wealth and status, they were often allowed to partake in behavior that would be unacceptable for others. For example, Don Giovanni, a nobleman, murdered the Commendatore and repeatedly fooled the women—Elvira, Anna, and Zerlina. Had these actions been taken by someone of the peasant class, such as Leporello, he would have been caught and punished for his crimes. Instead of the other characters catching Giovanni, it is the supernatural spirit of the Commendatore in the form of his statue that lures Giovanni to his fate. This suggests that only the order of the natural world, or karma, could make Giovanni account for his crimes.

Class Discussion:

- Where do we see privilege today?
- Are there individual people or groups of people who have more privilege than others because of their jobs, age, gender, wealth, etc.?
- What can each of us do to make the places and communities we live in more equitable for everyone?
- What aspects of The Enlightenment can we learn from to help us achieve this?



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LESSON: CREATIVE WRITING, TAKE TWO

- **Colorado Academic Standard: Fifth Grade, Writing and Composition.**
- **GLE: Write engaging narratives using literary techniques, character development, sensory and descriptive details, and a clear sequence of events.**

**Note* This lesson is intended to be used after students attend the performance*

The plot of *Don Giovanni* is one full of twists and disguises, complete with a surprising and fantastical ending. For example, did you expect Don Giovanni to invite a talking statue to dinner?! And for the statue to say yes? Mozart and Da Ponte included several fictional elements that are used to emphasize to the story's message; those who deceive others will pay for their cruel choices.

But what if the story didn't stop there? What happens after Don Giovanni is dragged to the underworld for committing his crimes?

Let's write the sequel to Mozart's *Don Giovanni*!

Step 1: Introduce the project – Students may use writing or typing materials.

Step 2: First Draft – Allow 20-30 minutes for a rough draft. Students must include the following five elements in their stories:

- Three literary techniques (alliteration, simile, hyperbole, personification, metaphor, imagery, etc.)
- A clear, descriptive setting
- Character development that builds upon the cast of characters in *Don Giovanni*
- Plot development with conflict
- A consistent theme throughout the narrative

For those interested in literary drama specifically, suggest they include scenes and acts within their writing.

(Please reference page 5 for a list of characters)

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LESSON: CREATIVE WRITING, TAKE TWO (CONTINUED)

Step 3: Peer Review – Have students swap their first draft with a neighbor. Peer reviewers should ensure all five elements above are included in the author's sequel and provide notes for the author.

Step 4: Revisions – Allot 20 minutes for the class to make edits, additions, and revisions to their writing.

Step 5: Sequel Sharing – Have students break into small groups to share their sequels with the group!



PHOTO | Portrait of Italian opera singer Giovanni Mario (1810-1883) as Don Giovanni by Mozart. Unidentified painter, 1850s.

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LESSON: MASQUERADE MASK

MAKE YOUR OWN MASQUERADE MASK!

Materials:

- Cardstock
- Decorative materials: buttons, stickers, ribbon, aluminum foil, sequins, etc.
- Dowel or disposable chopsticks
- Feathers
- Glue
- Paint and paintbrush or crayons and markers
- Scissors

Steps:

1. Draw your mask outline on the cardstock.
2. Cut out the mask with scissors.
3. Decorate the mask with your materials.
4. Wait for all glue and paint to dry.
5. Glue the dowel or chopstick to one side of the mask by the cheek. Allow to dry.
6. **Wear your mask to the Ellie Caulkins Opera House to watch *Don Giovanni*!**



VOCABULARY

All definitions are sourced from the Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

Aristocrat: a member of an aristocracy: a class or group of people believed to be superior

Composer: a person who writes music

Concertos: a piece for one or more soloists and orchestra with three contrasting movements

Conquest: the act or process of acquiring by force of arms

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

Nobility: the body of persons forming the noble class in a country or state

Opera: a drama set to music and made up of vocal pieces with orchestral accompaniment

Production: a literary or artistic work presented to the public

Requiem: a musical composition in honor of the dead

Serenade: an instrumental composition written for a small ensemble

Sonatas: an instrumental musical composition typically of three or four movements in contrasting forms and keys

String quartet: a quartet of performers on stringed instruments usually including a first and second violin, a viola, and a cello

Symphony: symphony orchestra concert; a musical composition of complexity or variety

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