

OPERA
COLORADO



falstaff



2017-2018 GUIDEBOOK

A Letter to the Teachers

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 Giuseppe Verid's *Falstaff*. In the spirit of exploration, we have included various lessons that connect *Falstaff* with different subjects of learning. The lessons reference the new Colorado Department of Education's Academic Standards: specifically, focusing on the fourth grade expectations. This does not mean, however, that these lessons should be limited to this age group. While we would be very 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 found at the end of this guide, and we hope that you enjoy all that Opera Colorado has to offer!

Thank you!

Opera Colorado makes every effort to ensure that the information provided in this guidebook is as accurate as possible. With the exception of materials used for educational purposes, none of the contents of this guidebook may be reprinted without the permission of Opera Colorado's Education & Community Programs department. Dictionary definitions were taken from www.Merriam-Webster.com, and unless marked otherwise, educational information was gathered from www.Wikipedia.com. Unless otherwise noted, the materials in the La Bohème guidebook were developed and compiled by the Manager of Education and Community Engagement, Parisa Zaeri.



- Cherity Koepke -

Director of Education & Community Engagement

ckoepke@operacolorado.org 303.778.0371



- Parisa Zaeri -

Manager of Education & Community Engagement

pzaeri@operacolorado.org 303.778.7350

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Falstaff

Music by Giuseppe Verdi – Libretto by Arrigo Boito

based on Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and scenes from *Henry IV*

Premiered in Milan, Italy, on February 9, 1893

Sir John Falstaff.....an oafish knight.....baritone
(FAHL-staff)

Ford.....a wealthy man.....baritone
(as in English)

Alice Ford.....Ford's clever wife.....soprano
(ah-LEE-chay)

Nanetta.....the Fords' teenage daughter.....soprano
(nun-NET-ah)

Meg Page.....Alice's friend.....mezzo-soprano
(as in English)

Mistress Quickly.....a friend to Alice and Meg.....mezzo-soprano
(as in English)

Fenton.....one of Nanetta's suitors.....tenor
(as in English)

Dr. Caius.....a friend of Ford's, and his choice for Nanetta's husband.....tenor
(KAH-yoos)

Bardolfo.....a member of Falstaff's crew.....tenor
(bar-DOHL-foh)

Pistola.....another member of Falstaff's crew.....bass
(pee-STOHL-ah)

Chorus of townspeople, Ford's servants, and masqueraders dressed as fairies, etc.

Synopsis

Courtesy of Opera Slovakia



Act I Sir John Falstaff, an old bumbling knight from Windsor, sits in the Garter Inn with his "partners in crime," Bardolfo and Pistola.

As they enjoy their drinks, Dr. Caius interrupts the men and accuses Falstaff of breaking into and robbing his house. Falstaff is able to redirect Dr. Caius' anger and accusations and Dr. Caius soon leaves. Falstaff scolds Bardolfo and Pistola for being inept thieves. He soon develops another scheme to

acquire money - he will woo two wealthy matrons (Alice Ford and Meg Page) and take advantage of their husbands' wealth. He writes two love letters and instructs his partners to deliver them, but they refuse, proclaiming that it is not honorable to do such a thing. Hearing their irony, Falstaff kicks them out of the inn and finds a page to deliver the letters instead.

In the garden outside of Alice Ford's home, she and her daughter, Nannetta, are exchanging stories with Meg Page and Dame Quickly. It isn't long before Alice and Meg discover that they have been sent identical love letters. The four women decide to teach Falstaff a lesson and design a plan to punish him.

Bardolfo and Pistola have told Mr. Ford, Alice's husband, of Falstaff's intentions. As Mr. Ford, Bardolfo, Pistola, and Fenton (an employee of Mr. Ford) approach the garden, the four women move inside to further discuss their plans. However, Nannetta stays behind for a while longer to steal a kiss from Fenton.

The women have decided that they will set up a secret rendezvous between Alice and Falstaff, while the men decide that Bardolfo and Pistola will introduce Mr. Ford to Falstaff under a different name.

Act I "Letter Quartet" courtesy of
Des Moines Metro Opera



Act II Back in the Garter Inn, Bardolfo and Pistola (secretly employed by Mr. Ford), beg for Falstaff's forgiveness. They announce the arrival of Dame Quickly. She tells Falstaff that the two women have accepted his letters with neither of them knowing he had sent it to both women. Quickly tells him that Alice, in fact, has arranged a meeting between 2 and 3 o'clock that very day. Ecstatic, Falstaff begins to clean himself up. It isn't long after that Bardolfo and Pistola introduce a disguised Mr. Ford to Falstaff. He tells Falstaff that he has a burning desire for Alice, but Falstaff states that he has already won her over and she arranged a meeting with him later that day. Mr. Ford, becomes furious. He is unaware of his wife's plan, and believes her to be cheating on him. Both men leave the inn.



Courtesy of MetOpera / Ken Howard

Dame Quickly arrives in Alice's room and tells Alice, Meg, and Nannetta of Falstaff's reaction. Though Nannetta seems uninterested, the other three women have a laugh. Nannetta has learned that her father, Mr. Ford, has given her away to Dr. Caius for marriage.

The other women assure her that will never happen. All the women, except for Alice, hide when Falstaff is heard approaching. As she sits in her chair playing the lute, Falstaff begins recounting his past to her, attempting to win over her heart. Then Dame Quickly suddenly announces Meg's arrival and Falstaff jumps behind a screen to hide. Meg has learned that Mr. Ford is on his way over and that he is beyond mad. The women then hide Falstaff inside a hamper full of dirty laundry. Mr. Ford enters the house with Fenton, Bardolfo, and Pistola. As the men search the house, Fenton and Nannetta sneak behind the screen. Mr. Ford hears kissing from behind the screen. Thinking it is Falstaff, he discovers it is his daughter and Fenton. He throws Fenton out of the house and continues searching for Falstaff.

The women, worried that he will find Falstaff, especially when Falstaff starts audibly complaining of the heat, throw the hamper out of the window and Falstaff is able to escape.



The hamper scene courtesy of MetOpera / Ken Howard

Synopsis

[continued]

Courtesy of LA Opera



Sulking in his misfortunes, Falstaff is about to go into the inn to drown his sorrows with wine and beer. Dame Quickly arrives and tells him that Alice still loves him and would like to arrange another meeting at midnight. She shows him a note from Alice to prove she is telling the truth. Falstaff's face lights up once more. Dame Quickly tells him that the meeting will take place in Windsor Park, even though it is often said that the park becomes haunted at midnight, and that Alice has requested him to dress as the Black Hunter. Fenton and the other women plan to dress up as spirits later that night to frighten Falstaff senseless. Mr. Ford promises to wed Dr. Caius and Nannetta that night and is told how he can recognize her in costume. Dame Quickly overhears their plan.

Later that night in the moonlit park, Fenton sings of his love for Nannetta, which she joins in. The women give Fenton a monk costume and tell him that it will spoil Mr. Ford's and Dr. Caius' plan. They quickly hide when Falstaff enters wearing his antlered, Black Hunter costume. He proceeds to address Alice when Meg runs in shouting that demons are moving quickly and are about to enter the park. Nannetta, dressed as the Fairy Queen orders the spirits to torment Falstaff. The spirits surround Falstaff and he begs for mercy.

Moments later, he recognizes one of his tormentors as Bardolfo. When the joke is over, he tells them it was well deserved. Mr. Ford then announces that they will end the day with a wedding. A second couple also asks to be married. Mr. Ford calls upon Dr. Caius and the Fairy Queen and the second couple. He marries both couples before realizing that Bardolfo has changed into the Fairy Queen costume and the second couple was Fenton and Nannetta. Happy with the outcome of events, and knowing that he was not the only one tricked, Falstaff proclaims the world is nothing more than a jest and everyone shares a good hearty laugh.

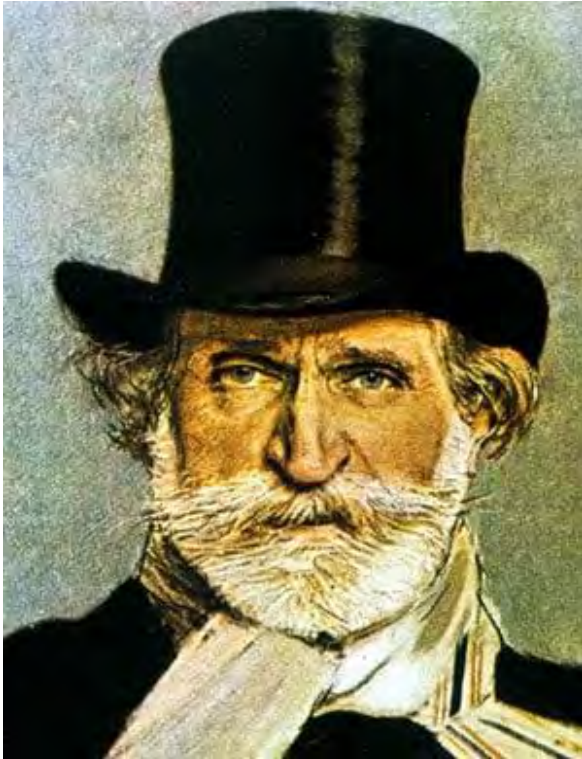
Synopsis courtesy of www.thoughtco.com

Falstaff and the spirits
courtesy of Opera Australia /
Jeff Busby



Giuseppe Verdi

COMPOSER



Giuseppe Verdi is known as one of the greatest Italian opera composers of all time. He produced many successful operas, including *Falstaff*, *La Traviata*, and *Aida*, which are still being performed frequently today.

Verdi was born on October 10, 1813, near Busseto, Italy. His parents, Luigia Uttini and Carlo Verdi, fostered his musical talent at an early age by encouraging him to study composition. In 1832, after being rejected from the Milan Conservatory due to his age, Verdi began studying with famed composer Vincenzo Lavigna. Only a year later, he had claimed a strong foothold in Italy's music scene by becoming a conductor and organist near his hometown.

In the next handful of years, Verdi met and married his wife, Margherita Barezzi, began a family, and moved back to Milan in order to begin work on his first opera, *Oberto*. During its composition, however, personal disaster struck for Verdi, and he lost his two infant children within a year of each other (1838-1839). *Oberto* was well-received by

audiences, but Verdi's second opera, a comedy titled *Un giorno di regno*, was practically a total flop. To make matters worse, its premiere was overshadowed by Margherita's death in 1840.

Having lost his entire family in such a short matter of time, Verdi struggled to find inspiration to continue creating new music. However, he eventually found solace in his work and presented two more operas which ended up being successful: *Nabucco* in 1842 and *I Lombardi* in 1843. By this point, Verdi had earned himself a prominent place in Italy's theater world by defining himself through his use of melodies and theatrical effect, and also his rejection of traditional operatic format which adhered to integrated scenes and unified acts.

Verdi spent the next several decades (1840s-1870s) writing operas that would eventually become the staples of Italian opera. These include *Rigoletto* (1851), *Il trovatore* (1853), *La traviata* (1853), *Don Carlos* (1867), and *Aida* (1871). Several years later, Verdi completed his *Requiem*, which was meant to be his last piece before his retirement.

Despite his plans, Verdi came out of retirement shortly thereafter to collaborate with composer and novelist Arrigo Boito to complete *Otello* (1886), based on Shakespeare's play. This opera was an immediate hit and prompted Verdi to follow its success with one more opera, *Falstaff*, based on Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Like *Otello*, *Falstaff* also received many positive reactions from the audience, and both operas continue to earn great renown today.

Verdi suffered a stroke and died on January 27, 1901, in Milan. During the course of his lifetime, he composed over 25 operas, and his works have reportedly been performed more than any other composer's worldwide.

Arrigo Boito

LIBRETTIST

Italian librettist, composer, poet, and critic Arrigo Boito (pseudonym Tobia Gorrio) is best known today for his librettos for Verdi's *Falstaff* and *Otello*, Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*, and his own *Mefistofele*. He was born in Padua in 1842, was raised in Venice by his Polish mother, and then eventually went on to further his studies at the Milan Conservatory.

While working on his opera *Mefistofele*, Boito also began to write and publish articles influenced by Richard Wagner in which he attacked Italian music and musicians. Perhaps most notorious of his articles was *Ode all'arte italiana* ("Ode to Italian art") where he says:

"May [Italian art] soon escape from the prison of the old and the stupid... perhaps the one has already been born who will raise up that art, modest and pure, on the altar that has been fouled like the wall of a brothel." As one might guess, many were offended by his words – including Verdi. Verdi saw it as a personal attack on himself and did not forgive Boito for many years.

Boito and Verdi were reconciled in 1873, when their mutual friend Giulio Ricordi proposed that they work together to create an operatic version of Shakespeare's *Othello*.

Meanwhile, Boito's first performances of *Mefistofele* were not received well by audiences, and the opera was withdrawn after two performances. After a much-revised version was presented in Bologna in 1875, and then again at La Scala in 1881, it became a standard in the Italian repertory.

Boito was unable to finish his second opera, *Nerone*, though it consumed him for over fifty years. Arthur Toscanini and Vincenzo Tommasini worked together to complete the work after his death, and a version was performed at La Scala after heavy revisions.



compare & contrast

Shakespeare's *Merry Wives* vs. Verdi's *Falstaff*

So now that you have some information on Verdi's opera, *Falstaff*, you might be wondering what makes it different from Shakespeare's play, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, on which the opera is based. We've got you covered! Take a look at the chart below for some key differences.

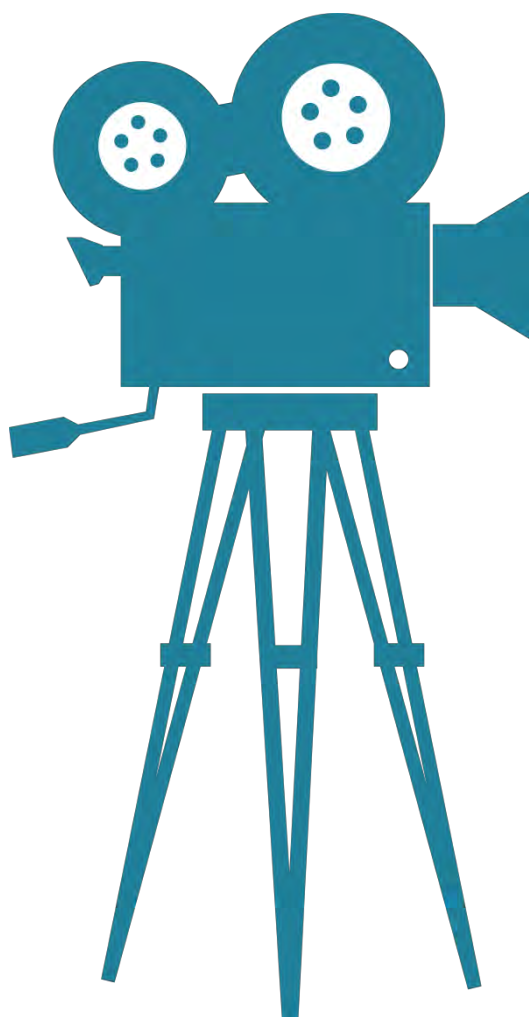
	Shakespeare's <i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i>	Verdi's <i>Falstaff</i>
How is the story delivered?	A mixture of prose/verse; in general, speech	Dramatic music; the entire show is sung throughout
How long is it?	23 scenes	6 scenes
What language is it in?	English	Italian
How complex is the drama?	Shakespeare's original story contains various plots and several subplots	Verdi's adaptation streamlines the action; excludes the second time Falstaff is humiliated and also omits subplots

LIT TO LYRIC

activity

How does an operatic composer go about turning a play into an opera? Let's try it and find out! Pick a piece of literature you've read recently (play, novel, or story) and create an outline to determine the beginnings of an opera. How many acts and scenes would your opera have? What kind of music would go best with certain types of drama? Would you need a huge cast complete with a large chorus, or would you prefer to have a smaller, more intimate cast? Which vocal ranges (soprano, mezzo soprano, tenor, baritone, bass) would best suit each character?

shakespeare in the movies



Film

Kiss Me Kate (1953)

Forbidden Planet (1956)

Throne of Blood (1957)

Manchurian Candidate (1961)

Chimes at Midnight (1965)

Strange Brew (1983)

Ran (1985)

My Own Private Idaho (1991)

Green Eggs and Hamlet (1995)

Romeo and Juliet (1996)

10 Things I Hate About You (1999)

Romeo Must Die (2000)

Macbeth: The Comedy (2001)

My Kingdom (2001)

O (2001)

Scotland, PA (2001)

Manchurian Candidate (2004)

She's the Man (2006)

Based on

The Taming of the Shrew

The Tempest

Hamlet

Hamlet

The Merry Wives of Windsor

Hamlet

King Lear

Henry IV

Hamlet

Romeo and Juliet

The Taming of the Shrew

Romeo and Juliet

Macbeth

King Lear

Othello

Macbeth

Hamlet

Twelfth Night



shakespeare in opera

The Tempest

The Enchanted Isle by Thomas Shadwell
The Tempest by Felice Lattuada
The Knot Garden by Michael Tippett
Un Re In Ascolto by Luciano Berio
The Tempest by John C. Eaton

Romeo and Juliet

Giulietta e Romeo by Nicola Vaccai
I Capuleti e I Montecchi by Vincenzo Bellini
Romeo et Juliette by Charles Gounod
A Village Romeo and Juliet by Frederick Delius
West Side Story by Leonard Bernstein

A Midsummer Night's Dream

The Fairy Queen by Henry Purcell
A Midsummer Night's Dream by Benjamin Britten

Macbeth

Macbeth by Giuseppe Verdi
Macbeth by Ernest Bloch

Hamlet

Hamlet by Ambroise Thomas

Othello

Otello by Giulio Rossini
Otello by Giuseppe Verdi

Much Ado About Nothing

Beatrice et Benedict by Hector Berlioz

Timon of Athens

Timon of Athens by Stephen Oliver

The Taming of the Shrew

Kiss Me Kate by Cole Porter

Operas based on Falstaff

Der Lustigen Weiber von Windsor by Otto Nicolai
Falstaff by Giuseppe Verdi
At the Boar's Head by Gustav Holst
Sir John in Love by Ralph Vaughan Williams

List provided by No Sweat Shakespeare

fast facts on william shakespeare

1 Shakespeare's name was spelled many different ways! In the few original signatures that have survived, the writer himself spelled his name "Willm Shaksp," "William Shakespe," "Wm Shaksp," and "William Shakspeare." There are, however, no records of him ever spelling his name the way we commonly do today.

2 During his life, Shakespeare wrote at least 37 plays, 154 sonnets, and a good number of poems that we know of. There are also some "lost plays" and other plays that he collaborated on. This means that Shakespeare wrote an average of 1.5 plays per year since he began writing in 1589.

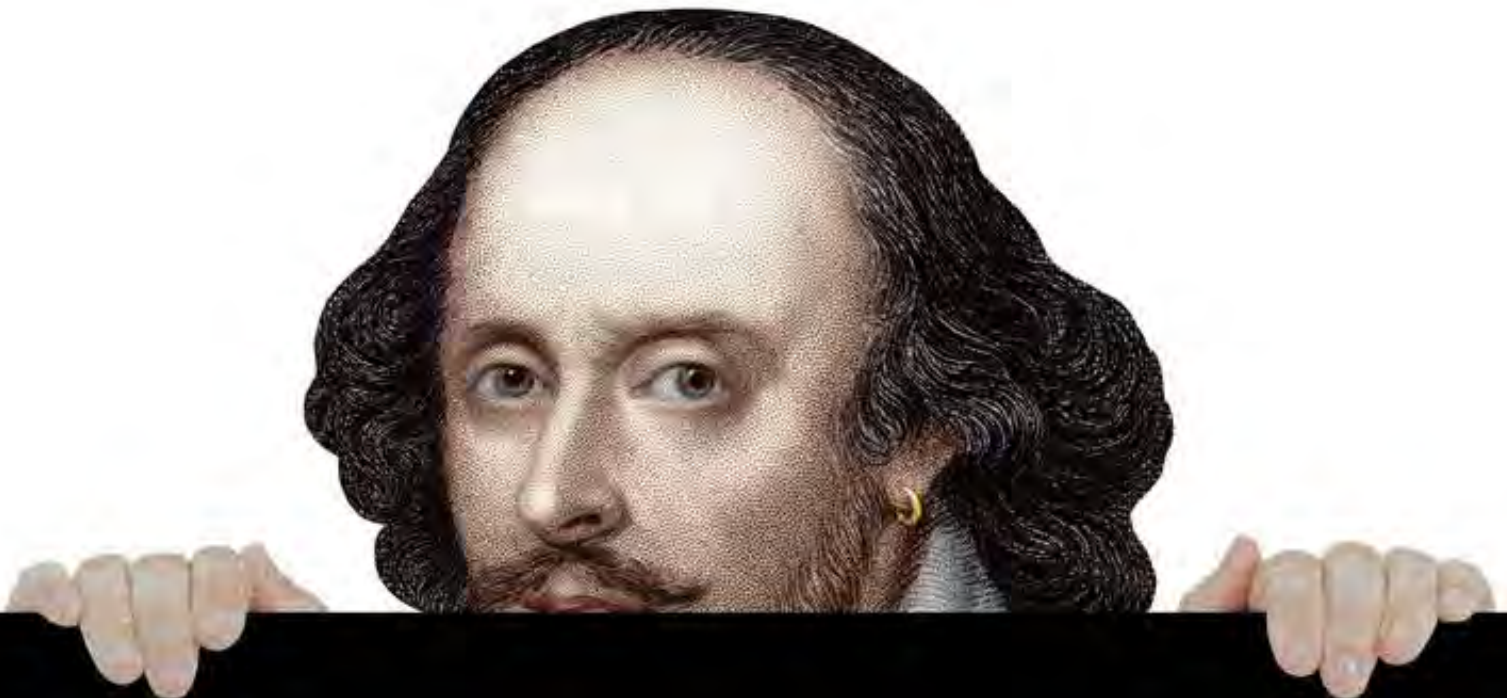
3 Apart from being a writer, few people know that Shakespeare was also an actor! He performed not only in his own plays, but also in

those from other playwrights. There is evidence that he played the ghost in *Hamlet* and Adam in *As You Like It*.

4 Shakespeare has no descendants! His only grandchild, Elizabeth, died childless in 1670.

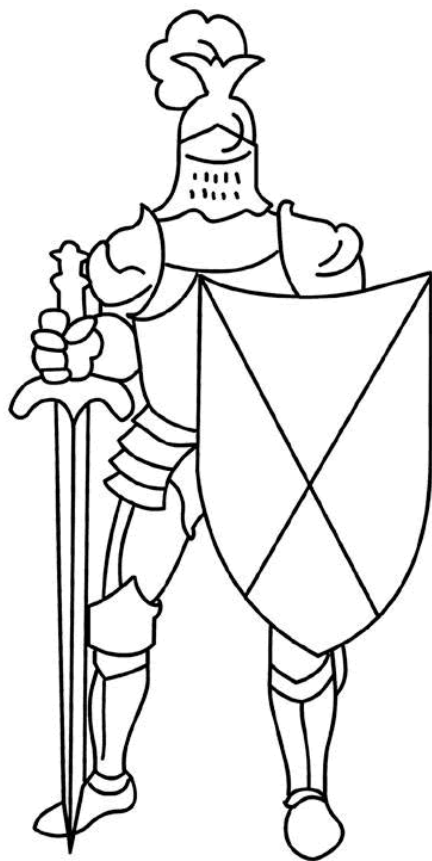
5 It's likely that Shakespeare wore a gold hoop earring in his left ear – a symbol of the creative, bohemian look from the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras.

6 The Oxford English Dictionary has credited Shakespeare with introducing almost 3,000 words to the English language. Estimations of his vocabulary range from 17,000 to 29,000 words – practically double the number of words the average person uses!



DID YOU KNOW?

Although **Sir John Falstaff** is a fictional character, evidence from Shakespeare scholars suggests that he might've originally been called "**John Oldcastle**" after one of King Henry V's companions. However, a descendant of John Oldcastle was offended by Shakespeare's unfavorable portrayal of his ancestor and demanded a name change. In his search for a new name, Shakespeare drew inspiration from one of his other characters, a **John Fastolf**, who appears in *Henry VI*, part one. That character was based on a real-life 15th century knight called "**Sir John Fastolfe**," who fought at the Battle of Patay alongside Joan of Arc. By changing a few letters and the pronunciation, Shakespeare came up with "**Falstaff**."



LISTENING

activity

Listen to some of the excerpts from *Falstaff* listed on the next page. See if you can guess what they're about before you read the descriptions provided. Did you guess any of them correctly? What tools did you use to understand even though the words are sung in Italian?



>> “Quand’ero Paggio”
 (“When I was a page”)

Falstaff tries to seduce the married Alice Ford, while she plays along as part of her efforts to teach him a lesson. In this gem of a mini-aria, Falstaff recalls the good ol’ days when he used to be slim and handsome.



>> “Sul fil d’un soffio etesio”
 (“On the breath of a fragrant breeze”)

Falstaff has been lured to the “haunted” Windsor Park for one last attempt at a rendezvous with Alice Ford. Nanetta, disguised as the Queen of the Fairies, sings this aria to call the other “fairies” out of their hiding places and commands them to dance.



>> “Tutto nel mondo è burla”
 (“All the world’s a joke”)

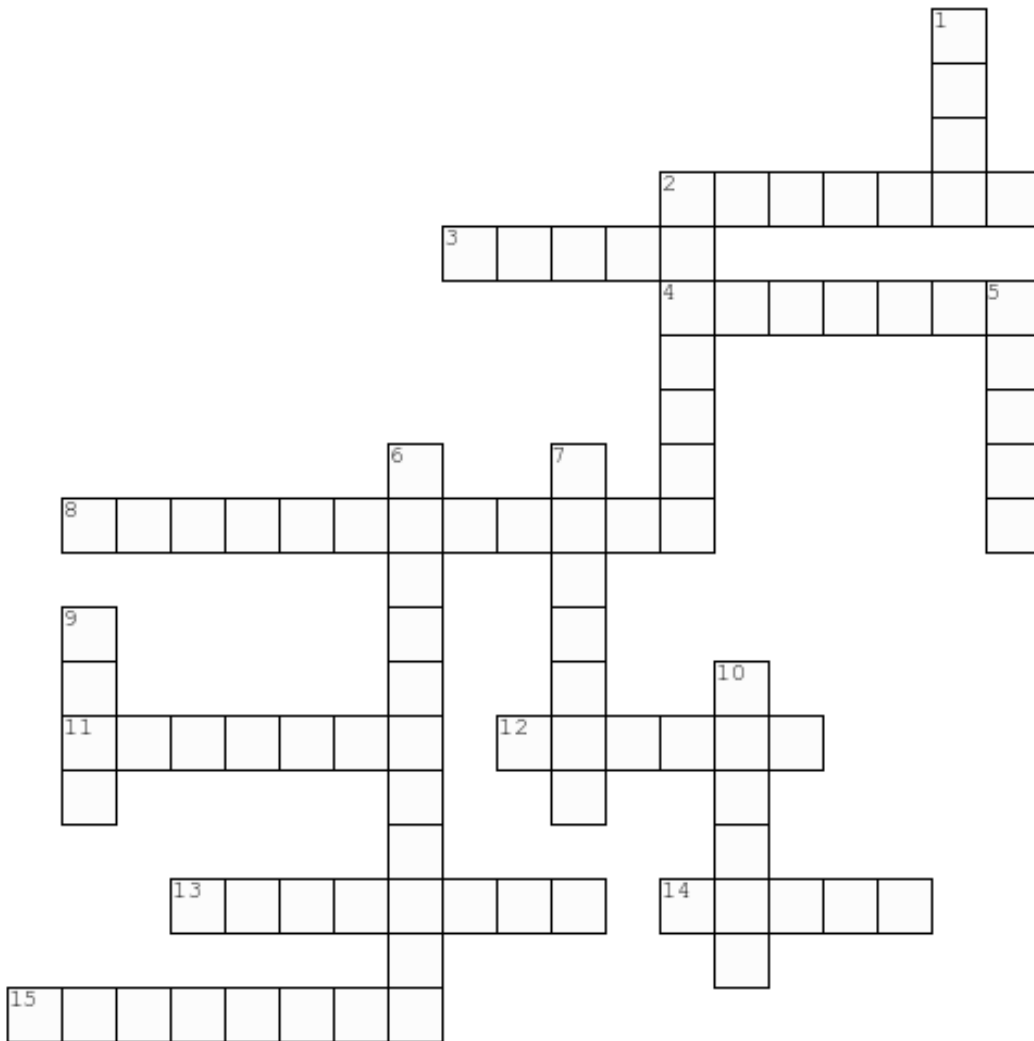
Verdi ends the opera with a final fugue, which is a compositional style where one or more themes create an interwoven texture in the music (similar to singing in a round). Falstaff eventually recognizes one of the disguised beings in the forest as Bardolfo and accepts that he has been tricked. In good spirits, he proclaims that all the world is folly, and all are figures of fun.



Name: _____

FALSTAFF

How well do you know the story?



Created with TheTeachersCorner.net [Crossword Puzzle Generator](http://TheTeachersCorner.net)

Across

2. The opera ends with this kind of celebration
3. The composer of the opera
4. The Fords' teenage daughter
8. For his midnight meeting with Alice, Falstaff dresses up as the _____
11. The women in the opera dress up as these in order to scare Falstaff at the end of Act II
12. In Act II, Falstaff is thrown out of a _____
13. The man Ford wants Nanetta to marry
14. The librettist of the opera
15. The real-life 15th century knight from whom Falstaff's name was adapted

Down

1. Falstaff's first name
2. The name of the park that becomes haunted at midnight
5. Ford's clever wife
6. A famous playwright in the 1500s
7. The language in which the opera was written
9. At the end of the opera, Falstaff claims that the world is nothing more than a _____
10. The man Nanetta is truly in love with

Program Evaluation

Opera Colorado strives to provide quality programs that meet the needs of students and teachers across the state. Please take a few minutes to complete this evaluation and give us feedback on your experience. **Opera Colorado is also interested in your students' response to the programs. We would be happy to receive any letters or artwork from them!**

Program:

- ☐ **La Boheme** (dress rehearsal)
☐ **Falstaff** Please circle one: (dress rehearsal / matinee)
☐ **Backstage Workshops** (Please circle one: Nov. 7 | Nov. 9 | Nov. 10 | May 7 | May 8 | May 11)
☐ **Touring Opera Performance** (Please circle one: *Cinderella* / *Elixir of Love*)
☐ **Opera in a Trunk** (Please name which trunk: _____)
☐ **In-School Workshop** (Please specify: _____)
☐ **Other** (Please specify: _____)

Is this your first time participating in Opera Colorado's Education programs? YES / NO

If YES, what made you participate this year?

If NO, how many years have you been a participant?

Were you able to incorporate opera into your curriculum? YES / NO

If YES, please share how.

If NO, do you have suggestions?

Please estimate the percentage of your students who had never been exposed to Opera prior to this event: _____

How would you describe your students' initial attitude toward exposure to Opera?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7

negative/unwilling

neutral

positive/excited

Did their attitude change after learning more about opera and attending the event? If so, please show on the scale:

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7

negative/unwilling

neutral

positive/excited

Was the Opera Colorado Teacher Guidebook helpful in preparing your students to attend the event?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7

not helpful

very helpful

On a scale of 1 to 7, how would you rate the priority of Arts Education in your school?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7

not important

very important

Please share with us any additional comments you have. We especially love stories of how Opera impacted your students. Please use space on back if needed.

Thank you for your time and comments!

Name _____ School/Subject _____

Teacher _____ Administrator _____ Paraprofessional _____ Parent / Chaperone _____ Other _____

My students are: K-2 3-5 6-8 9-12 College