

FAUST

Charles Gounod



Faust

Music by **Charles Gounod**

Libretto by **Jules Barbier**

English Translation by **Ruth Martin & Thomas Martin** adapted by **SCO**

Doctor Faust is alone.

The promise of love and the return of his youth is enough to convince Faust to make a deal with the devil, Méphistophélès

As Méphistophélès' plan unravels, Faust is led down an increasingly darker path that will lead to love, death, greed and madness.



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Introduction

In September 1846 Verdi started work on a project to turn Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's play *Faust: Part 1* into an opera. The play tells the story of a doctor who is seduced by the devil with the promise of youth and love, and tracks his tragic fall into greed, lust and bloody violence. Gounod was seduced by the play's dramatic plot, its elements of the supernatural, and the potential for creating a spectacular theatrical experience. Working with the poet Jules Barbier from a version of Goethe's play by Michael Carré called "*Faust et Marguerite*", Gounod created a five act opera in French that was first performed in Paris in 1859.

In the following pages you will find out about:

- Gounod's life and work
- Key characters in the opera
- The historical backgrounds of Goethe and Gounod
- The challenges and benefits of touring an opera
- Interviews with the cast and creative team behind Faust.

At the end of the pack are lesson plans that can be used to help teach students key terms in opera, as well as give them an insight into how opera is relevant to other things that they know. These lessons are teachable without having seen the opera, however are much more effective if given after seeing Faust. To find more information on how you can take your students to see Faust, the end of the pack has tour dates and information on discount bookings for Faust in theatres.

"... Musical ideas sprang to my mind like butterflies, and all I had to do was to stretch out my hand to catch them"

- Charles Gounod



Key People

The Composer:

A Composer (literally “One who puts together”) is a person who creates music, either by notation or oral tradition. This is a particular challenge in opera as they are often very long, and music is composed throughout for the singers as well as the **orchestra**. The opera is written down in a book of musical notation known as a **score**

The Librettist:

A librettist writes the **libretto**, similar to the script in a piece of theatre or a film screenplay. Some librettos are completely original, but more often in opera they are adapted from stories, poems and plays, just as the opera *Faust* has been adapted from a play by Michael Carré which in turn was adapted from the play by Goethe. Normally the words are written first and the music is written to match the words. The composer and librettist form a very important partnership and work together closely to create a final score that is the starting point for all the other artists involved in the production to work from.

What is Opera?

Opera is a hybrid art form consisting of music, text, drama, dance and design elements. Why do you think this makes a particularly unique and exciting genre?

Think about the way that emotion is conveyed through music.

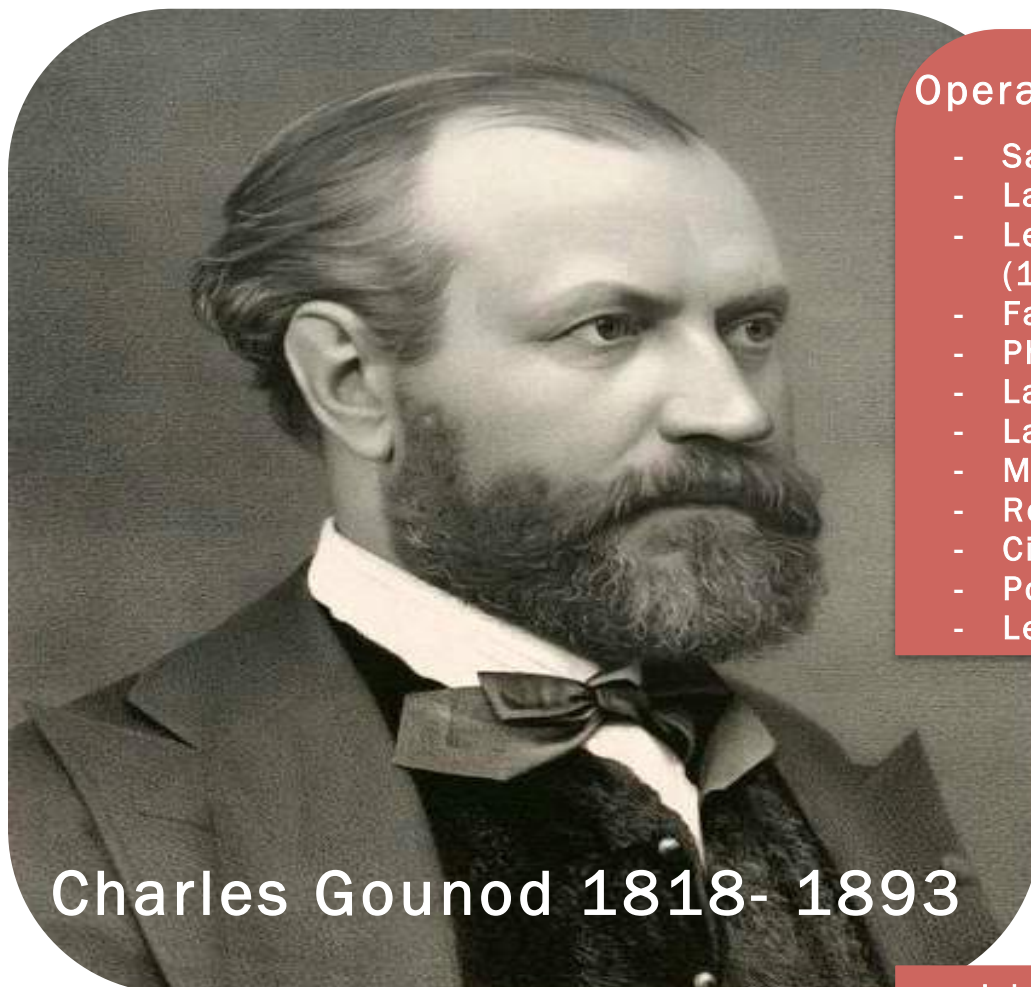
Think about the impact of opera being sung throughout.

Glossary

Libretto – The text of the opera, like the script of a film or a play.

Orchestra – The group of instruments (strings, woodwind, brass, percussion) that play the musical accompaniment in an opera.

Score – A book of musical notation showing all of the music of the opera, including the instrumental parts, chorus and vocal parts. The score also contains the words for the singers to learn.



Operas by Charles Gounod

- Sapho (1851)
- La nonne sanglante (1854)
- Le médecin malgré lui (1858)
- Faust (1859)
- Philémon et Baucis (1860)
- La colombe (1860)
- La reine de Saba (1862)
- Mireille (1864)
- Roméo et Juliette (1867)
- Cinq-Mars (1877)
- Polyeucte (1878)
- Le tribut de Zamora (1881)

Charles Gounod 1818- 1893

Charles Gounod:

Charles-François Gounod was born in Paris, on the 17th June 1818. Born the son of a pianist mother and artist father. Gounod was trained in music from an early age and eventually entered the Paris Conservatoire. Gounod wrote his first opera in 1851, *Sapho* and continued to write operas for the next thirty years. Gounod's most famous opera is *Faust*, which was one of the most frequently staged operas of all time, with no fewer than 2000 performances taking place at the Paris Opera alone (by 1975). During his life Gounod lived and studied in Paris, Italy and London. His contemporaries include Chopin, Liszt and Berlioz.

Did you know?

Gounod was extremely religious and studied for the priesthood for a while, until he decided to devote his life to music.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Goethe was a German writer who lived from 1749 to 1832. His most famous work was *Faust: Part 1*, which he completed in 1806 and was published in 1808. The play was hugely influential and hundreds of different versions of the play exist, including Gounod's Opera. A second part of *Faust* was released after Goethe's death in 1832 and focused much more on psychology, history and politics. Topics that occupied Goethe's mind in his last few years.

Swansea City Opera:

Swansea City Opera are critically acclaimed for their sparkling performances of famous operas, and are a hit with both seasoned operagoers and people new to opera alike. Regularly listed in The Times 'The Knowledge' Top Five opera companies, SCO is one of Britain's foremost touring companies with a reputation for high-quality, accessible productions. This year we celebrate our 10th anniversary.

10 years of SCO: Previous Tour's

Daughter of the Regiment (2007)

The Magic Flute (2008)

L'Elisir d'Amore (2009)

The Pearl Fishers (2010)

The Barber of Seville (2011)

Così fan tutte (2012)

Don Pasquale (2013)

The Marriage of Figaro (2014)



Swansea City Opera is the culmination of the 35-year long career in opera by its Artistic Directors, Brendan Wheatley and Bridgett Gill, both professional singers. You can follow SCO on:

Twitter
@SwanseaOpera
Facebook
Facebook/SwanseaOpera
Website
SwanseaCityOpera.Com

An image from SCO's production of L'Elisir d'Amore in 2009

Faust Plot Summary

Act 1

Doctor Faust is alone, after dedicating his life to the study of science he is now old, weary and disillusioned. Realising that he has never experienced love in his life, he resolves to end his life by taking poison. As Faust attempts this, he hears a choir outside of his window cursing and renouncing God, Faust calls upon the devil to provide him with guidance. Méphistophélès appears before Faust and promises Faust riches and power, but Faust instead asks for the return of his youth and the promise of love.

Méphistophélès agrees and promises to be Faust's servant on earth, however he has one condition. Faust must promise Méphistophélès his eternal soul. Faust is troubled by this and hesitates until Méphistophélès shows him a vision of a young girl Marguerite. Faust is transfixed and promises Méphistophélès his soul, the poison is suddenly turned into a potion of youth which Faust drinks. Within moments Faust has become a young man and he sets off with Méphistophélès to find Marguerite.

Act 2

Méphistophélès and Faust arrive at a town square where townspeople sing in merriment as soldiers prepare to go to war. Valentin, one of these soldiers, confesses to his friend Wagner that he is worried about leaving his sister Marguerite alone. Valentin asks his friend Siébel to protect Marguerite whilst he is gone. Wagner attempts to improve Valentin's mood by singing a cheerful song. Before Wagner can finish his song he is interrupted by Méphistophélès, who conjures wine for the crowd and sings a song about gold and greed. Méphistophélès predicts that Wagner will die in battle and that someone close to Méphistophélès will kill Valentin. Méphistophélès then makes a derogatory toast to Marguerite, which angers Valentin who draws his sword to attack him. However the moment Valentin strikes, his sword magically shatters. Realising he is in the presence of the devil, Valentin and the other villagers use the hilts of their swords as a cross to ward off Méphistophélès. Faust rejoins Méphistophélès who takes him to meet Marguerite, Faust explains that he admires her and offers her his arm. Marguerite refuses Faust's arm, though her refusal is so charming that Faust finds himself even more besotted than before.

Act 3

Siébel, who is also in love with Marguerite, gathers flowers for her and lays the bouquet outside her house. This worries Faust who has been watching, and so he commands Méphistophélès to find a better gift for him to give to Marguerite. Méphistophélès returns with a beautiful ornate box containing exquisite jewellery, Faust places the box next to the flowers. Marguerite appears and her neighbour Marthe points out the jewellery and says they must be from an admirer. Marguerite tries on the jewels and is captivated by their beauty and falls in love with the jewels. Faust and Méphistophélès appear and, whilst Méphistophélès distracts Marthe by flirting with her, Faust takes the opportunity to seduce Marguerite. Marguerite at first resists Faust's advances, but as Faust leaves, Marguerite sings a song in which she realises she loves him and wishes he would return. Faust hears this and overjoyed returns to her once again. Méphistophélès watches on and laughs maniacally; it is clear that Faust's seduction of Marguerite will be successful and that Méphistophélès' plan is working.

Act 4

Months later, Marguerite is pregnant with Faust's child and has become a social outcast. Still in love with Faust however, she prays for both him and her unborn child. Outside, Valentin and the other soldiers return from war. Exhausted and frustrated Valentin attempts to see Marguerite, but Siébel stops him and asks him to forgive his sister. Valentin suspects the worst and pushes past him. Meanwhile Faust, feeling remorse for abandoning Marguerite, returns to her home with Méphistophélès. Méphistophélès mocks Marguerite and Faust with a lewd love ballad. Hearing this, the enraged Valentin charges out of the house to confront Faust and Méphistophélès. Valentin and Faust fight, but with the magical intervention of Méphistophélès, Valentin is mortally wounded. Faust and Méphistophélès leave as Marguerite rushes out to comfort her brother. Valentin dies, cursing Marguerite with his final breath. Distraught Marguerite runs to the church to beg for forgiveness, but she is stopped by Méphistophélès, who taunts her by telling her she is damned. Marguerite faints in fear.

Act 5

Marguerite has been driven insane by the death of her brother and the curses of Méphistophélès. She sits in prison awaiting death for murdering her child. With the help of Méphistophélès, Faust enters the prison. Upon seeing Faust, Marguerite is filled with joy and recalls the night they first spent with each other. Faust is distraught at the thought of Marguerite's fate and offers to save her. Marguerite refuses though, saying she prefers to leave her fate to God and the angels. She begs God for forgiveness. Marguerite dies and Méphistophélès curses her. However an angelic chorus proclaims that she is saved. Faust watches on in despair and knows that Méphistophélès will drag him down to eternal hell.



Key Characters of Faust:

Dr Faust (Tenor) – An old scientist who is angry at what he sees as the waste of his life. He sells his soul to the devil in exchange for youth and love and his greed and desperation for this is what drives the opera.

Marguerite (Soprano) – Faust becomes infatuated with Marguerite. She tries to resist him but is eventually seduced. Faust then abandons her after she becomes pregnant which drives her to insanity. God saves her at the end of the opera.

Méphistophélès (Bass) – When Faust renounces god he is convinced by Méphistophélès to sell him his eternal soul. He delights in chaos and leads Faust down an increasingly dark path. He is the true villain of the opera.

Valentin (Baritone) – Marguerite's protective brother Valentin is a soldier and when he is called off to war he asks his friend Siebel to look after her. When he returns he is angry at what has happened to Marguerite, he tries to fight Faust but is killed.

Wagner (Baritone) – A friend of Valentin and a young student. He is also a soldier and goes with Valentin to fight in the war. Wagner leads everyone as they sing at the Inn in Act 2, but is warned by Méphistophélès that he will die in battle.

Siébel (Mezzo Soprano) – A friend of Wagner and Valentin he stays behind when they go off to war and promises Valentin that he will look after Marguerite. He is in love with Marguerite and makes Faust jealous when he takes her flowers.

Marthe (Mezzo Soprano) – Marguerite's neighbour, she encourages Marguerite to try on the jewels that have been left for her by Faust. Méphistophélès flirts with her to allow Faust to seduce Marguerite.

Voice Types

These are the categories that soloist's voices fall into dependant on how high or low they can sing.

Female Voice Types (High to Low):

- Soprano
- Mezzo Soprano
- Alto

Male Voice Types (High to Low):

- Counter-tenor
- Tenor
- Baritone
- Bass

Opera terms:

Aria – A song sung by a soloist that usually conveys the singer's inner emotions.

Brindisi – A toast or drinking song.

Detached/Legato – Instructions on how to play or sing notes. Detached means separated, legato means smoothly.

Coloratura – A chance for singers to show their skill with quick runny notes and trills.

Did you know?

Tenors are often the heroes in operas and Bases are often the villains. Arguably in Faust Marguerite is the heroin as she is the one who is saved at the end of the opera and Faust is another villain.

The Challenges and Benefits of Performing on Tour

Performing on tour is very different from performing in a fixed venue. We asked our cast about the benefits and challenges, and you can see some of their answers to the right.

Swansea City Opera was formed with the intention of bringing opera to as many people as possible, despite the challenges that come with touring an opera, Faust director Brendan Wheatley believes that “The excitement at getting opera to the people outweighs any of the challenges that come along with that task.”

Touring productions rarely have a long time to prepare for the show, shows have to adapt constantly for each theatre depending on the space and the acoustics, “It can be incredibly difficult, but bringing the result of many months hard work to many audiences around the UK is worth it. Here’s hoping Faust will ignite a love of opera in someone who is new to it” says Caroline Carragher who plays Marthe.

What are the challenges and benefits of performing on tour rather than in a fixed venue?

Ben Kerslake (Faust): The challenge is keeping yourself relaxed and calm while travelling as the distances covered can be significant. But you get to visit some amazing places and performance spaces that have so much history.

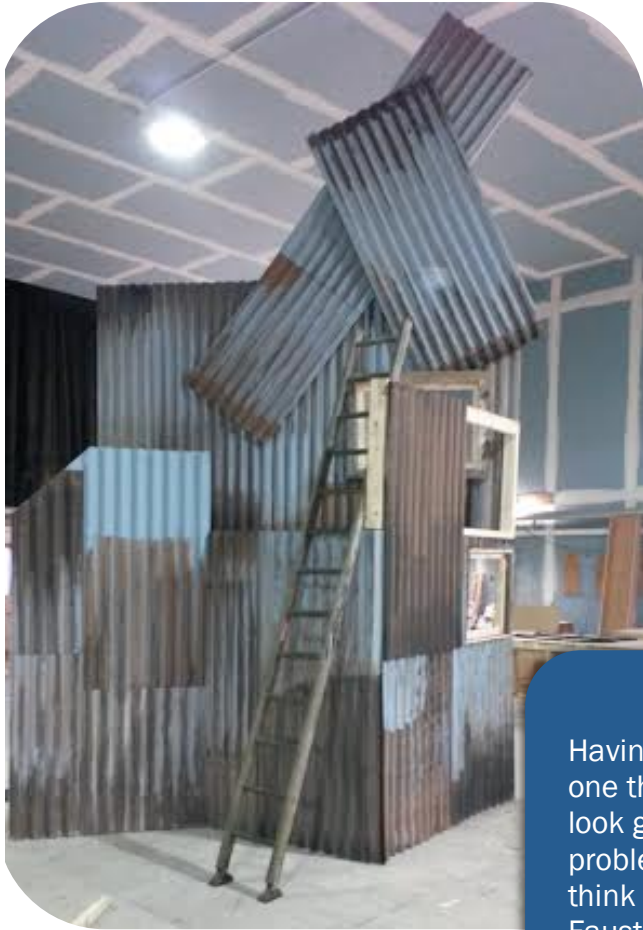
Hakan Vramso (Valentin): Spending a lot of time on the road and the fatigue of changing beds every night is a challenge. But I love seeing new places in different seasons, as well as getting to sing in different venues.

Ricardo Panela (Wagner): You have to quickly adapt to new venues with different acoustics and different stage dimensions. But it’s exciting as every night feels like opening night.



One of the biggest challenges that come from touring a production is the set. The set has to fit into one van in order to be driven from theatre to theatre.

Because of this the sets have to be easy to pack and as adaptable as possible, operas though are well known for their lavish sets. Companies like SCO get around this by being creative; the above image is from SCO’s “Daughter of the Regiment”. SCO used a cartoony cardboard cut out design for the soldiers costume and the set. Not only did it look remarkable, it was practical as well!



The Set for Faust

The sets in opera are usually extremely grand and help draw the audience into the magical world of the opera. For Faust, SCO wanted to create a Victorian city slum. Achieving this was no small feat. The image to the left shows the set under construction. The corrugated iron is actually plastic corrugated roofing that has been painted to resemble metal. This is not only cheaper but helps keep the set light and portable, very important for a touring production. To bring the set to life, it will be covered in torn posters and decorated with stage furniture such as benches. Arguably most important of all, it is lit using the theatre lighting! Only once all these elements are in

Did you know?

Having a set and costume is one thing but making them look great is a different problem entirely. How do you think lighting is used to bring Faust to life?

Costume for Faust

Opera is a wonderful mixture of visual and acoustic drama, and costume is a hugely important element. Although SCO are singing Faust in English, many operas are sung in the language in which they were originally composed, (often Italian or German), and the creative team faces a big challenge to make the audience understand what is happening. Not only must the costumes make an impact, they must add magic and visual clarity to the show. In the photos to the left, Valentin (*right*) is dressed as a traditional soldier but he wears a steam punk inspired arm brace. Marguerite (*left*) has an almost ghostly look; this helps show the gradual fall of her character. The real inspiration for Faust can be seen in the costume for Méphistophélès (*Centre*) the metal shoes, bone scarf, leather gloves and sunglasses help set the tone for the audience. This tells them that whilst it is set in the Victorian gothic era this is not going to be a highly traditional telling of the tale of Faust



We interviewed our cast about Faust and Opera in general. Here are their answers:

What was your first opera and when did you see it?

Rebecca Goulden (Marguerite): I was exposed to Opera from a very young age (my dad is a musician and my mum is an avid opera lover). The first opera I ever saw was Pagliacci by Ruggero Leoncavallo.

Mark Saberton (Méphistophélès): My first visit was to see "The Marriage of Figaro". I saw it when I was a 19-year-old music student and didn't appreciate it! My mind was elsewhere. 5 years later I saw Madam Butterfly at English National Opera. It was stunning and very moving.

Ben Kerslake (Faust): It was probably Carmen when I was young. I was amazed by the amount of energy and colour on stage. It was so illuminating for a young child.

Alberto Sousa (Faust) gives advice to young people interested in opera:

To someone new to opera, I always say the same thing, regardless of age. DO YOUR HOMEWORK! Opera is a complicated art form often sang in a foreign language. You need to understand it to enjoy it and that means doing some research, Read the Wikipedia article, check bits on YouTube (Music you recognise is always more enjoyable) look online for a translation of the text so you really know it and understand what's happening. When you buy a ticket make the most out of the investment, really get to know what's happening so you enjoy it fully. And dress appropriately and have a great meal before the show. A night at the opera should feel like a special occasion.

Ricardo Panela (Wagner) describes an average day of working on an opera:

You wake up at least 2 hours before you have to sing, have a good breakfast, warm up and be ready to sing on the dot. We usually work during 2 sessions of 3 hours where we can start by reviewing a scene musically with the music director and then we crack on with staging. This bit usually involves a lot of repetition until we get the blocking and dramatic intentions right, so you really need to pace yourself in order not to exhaust your voice. I rarely mark (singing softly to save your voice) and try to sing out as much as I can so that the role settles perfectly in my body, but there are only so many times you can sing a top note!



*Clockwise from upper left:
Mark Saberton, Alberto Sousa, Ricardo Panela*

AQA Unit 1 (Listening to and Appraising Music AO3)/EDEXCEL Unit 3 (Listening and Appraising Music) Opera Lesson

Below are some activities to be used in the classroom. These activities are written in relation to the EDEXCEL GCSE Specification for music, however they can be modified to fit others such as the AQA specification. Activities may be stretched out across multiple lessons depending on the ability of the class.

Learning Objectives

- Reviewing and evaluating:
 - Analyse, review, evaluate and compare pieces of music
 - Identify conventions and contextual influences in music of different styles, genres and traditions
 - Communicate ideas and feelings about music using expressive language and musical vocabulary
- Performing, composing and listening
 - Sing in solo or group contexts, developing vocal techniques and musical expression
 - Improvise and develop musical ideas

Classroom Activity

- Play Valentin's Aria from Faust as the students come into the room.
- Ask students their thoughts on opera, what do they know about it and what they thought of the music they were just listening to. Force them to justify their opinions and articulate their thoughts and feelings. Challenge them, as they will likely describe it as "boring".
- Explain that an aria in an opera is like a monologue in a play, during which a key character reveals their innermost feelings to the audience. Then listen to "Avant de quitter ces lieux" from Act 2 of the opera and ask the class to try to work out what Valentin is singing about, using musical terminology the class should explain to each other what the aria is saying. Go through the translation using the synopsis as a guide.
- Listen to "I'd Give My Life for You" from Miss Saigon. Ask the students what the difference is between a musical and an opera. Does the song from Miss Saigon have anything in common with the previous piece of music? Explain that Miss Saigon is an adaptation of a famous opera by Puccini called "Madame Butterfly".
- Compare it to a piece of modern music with similar themes, for instance "Ain't no mountain high enough" by Marvin Gaye. Ask the class to explore what themes the modern music has in common with Valentin's aria from the opera and "I'd Give My Life for You" from Miss Saigon. All the pieces have themes of protection and watching over someone they love. They also both say that the love they have allows them to do anything they want.

- Use the pieces as inspiration to discuss love and protecting people. What would they include in an aria with similar themes? What ideas would they want to put across in that aria? Ask the students to write a simple aria (no more than 6 lines) to express similar themes. Ask them to perform them to each other.

Teaching Notes

- Tell the students there is no right or wrong answer. They may well come up with words like boring, old, loud etc. Challenge these and get the students to justify their opinions.
- Many students believe that classical music is a million miles away from the music they are interested in. By getting them to compare the aria with the modern music, encourage them to see the similarities between them.
- Arias, like pop songs, are all about conveying the emotion and story behind the words. By getting students to look at the lyrics in detail, they will hopefully see how similar the themes and emotions are in both pieces of music.
- By getting the students to compare the aria to music they enjoy and understand, the barriers students usually have against opera will come down, and they will foster a greater understanding of an art form to which they are not often exposed. By writing an aria, students will be able to see how an aria sets up the emotional content of an opera.

Resources

- Valentin's Aria from Act 2 of Faust: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fp_cu4PsiU
- Aria translation: http://www.aria-database.com/translations/faust04_avant.txt
- Synopsis of Faust
- Marvin Gaye "Ain't no Mountain high Enough": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xz-UvQYAmbg>
- Miss Saigon "I'd Give My Life for You": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVmn73Cx7Ic>

Drama Opera Lesson Plan

Below are some activities to be used in the classroom. These activities are written in relation to the AQA Specification for Drama however they can be modified to fit others. Activities may be stretched out across multiple lessons depending on the ability of the class.

Learning Objectives

- To know the key characters of the opera and how aspects of these characters can be communicated to an audience.
- To develop an understanding of the key characters' motivations.
- To look at the function of an aria or monologue within a play, and how similar they are.

Classroom Activity

- Have Valentin's aria playing as the students come into the classroom
- Ask students their thoughts on the music from the opera, what did they think it meant, what didn't they enjoy. Force them to justify their opinions and articulate their thoughts and feelings, challenge them, as they will likely describe it as "boring".
- Go through the plot synopsis and discuss the various characters of the opera with the class. Ask them who the characters were, what words could be used to describe the characters and what their characters motivations are. Ask the class to think about the way the actors could get this across in the opera.
- Have the class walk round the room whilst names of different characters are called out. When a characters name is yelled, the class must try to convey that character silently in the way opera singers must. Using movement, facial expressions and stature.
- Explain to the class that an aria in an opera is like a monologue in a play, during which a key character reveals their innermost feelings to the audience. Listen to Valentin's Aria and The Jewel Song (Marguerite's aria). Read through the translation of these arias with the class. Compare it to the Mrs Lintott monologue from the History Boys. Ask the class to discuss how the two are different and how they are the same.
- Ask them to think about how this might have been different in a play rather than an opera. For homework ask them to write a monologue of about six lines that expresses similar themes to the arias they have been played. Have them perform these to each other at the start of the next lesson.

Teaching Notes

- Tell the students there is no right or wrong answer. They may well come up with words like boring, old, loud etc. Challenge these and get the students to justify their opinions.
- Many students believe that classical music is a million miles away from the music they are interested in. By getting them to compare the aria with the modern music, encourage them to see the similarities between them.

- Arias, like monologues, are all about conveying the emotion and story behind the words. By getting students to look at the lyrics in detail, they will hopefully see how similar the themes and emotions are between them both, and that more often than not it is the delivery that makes it believable.
- Arias are an important operatic device, which often carry the story. By getting them to write their own monologue it will hopefully encourage students to think how the aria conveys the emotional feelings of each of the characters.

Resources

- Valentin's Aria from Act 2 of Faust: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fp-cu4PsiU>
- Aria translation: http://www.aria-database.com/translations/faust04_avant.txt
- Marguerite's aria "Jewel Song": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNBcckJLLol>
- Aria translation: http://www.aria-database.com/translations/faust09b_jewel.txt
- History Boys Monologue: http://www.whysanity.net/monos/history_boys.html

Tour dates for Faust

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Date	Theatre	Location	Phone Number
28/02/2015	Queens Theatre	Barnstaple	01271 324 242
13.03/2015	Theatre Royal	Winchester	01962 840 440
15.03/2015	Wilde Theatre	Bracknell	01344 484 123
18/03/2015	Buxton Opera House	Buxton	08451 272 190
20/03/2015	Wolsey Theatre	Ipswich	01473 295 900
22/03/2015	Palace Theatre	Mansfield	01623 633 133
28/03/2015	Torch Theatre	Milford Haven	01646 695 267
07/04/2015	The Gaiety Theatre	Ayr	01292 288 235
17/04/2015	Neuadd Dwyfor	Pwllheli	01758 704 088
18/04/2015	Theatr Brycheiniog	Brecon	01874 611 622
24/04/2015	Woodville Halls	Gravesend	01474 337 774
06/05/2015	The Borough Theatre	Abergavenny	01873 850 805
08/05/2015	Fairfields Hall	Croydon	02086 889 291
16/05/2015	Ucheldre Centre	Holyhead	01407 763 361
22/05/2015	Theatre Severn	Shrewsbury	01743 281 281
23/05/2015	The Pavilion	Rhyl	01745 330 000
28/05/2015	The Taliesin	Swansea	01792 602060
30/05/2015	The Spa Theatre	Bridlington	01262 678 258
03/06/2015	Harrogate Theatre	Harrogate	01423 502 116
06/06/2015	King's Theatre	Southsea	02392 828 828

For ticket information including details on school group booking discounts please contact the theatres in the phone numbers above.

Each theatre also has an education officer who can also be reached by calling the above number.