

PASSION IN A PANDEMIC

Making Opera at Hanover High School

A documentary film by Nora Jacobson
Produced by Jennifer Chambers and Nora Jacobson



Discussion Guide

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, New Hampshire choral director Jennifer Chambers and Italian conductor Filippo Ciabatti guided 11 teenagers in learning a new musical form amidst an international, aerosol borne, pandemic. Documentary filmmaker Nora Jacobson documented the process that culminated in a live performance of pieces from 4 celebrated operas.

We created this discussion guide to promote conversation after watching the film. We encourage you to answer the prompts, use the links for further information and fill out a short survey afterwards. Thank you!

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Discussion Prompts

- How did Covid 19 impact you and your life?
- Reflect on the different emotional responses the Hanover High School students had to the pandemic. How was Una's response different from Riley's? What does that say about their personalities and differences that can be seen in human nature?
- Why do you think the lockdown from COVID-19 is said to have been hardest on tweens and teenagers?
- Can you name some artistic accomplishments that came out of a pandemic time period in our world?
- Read the article [Finding Joy During Difficult Times](#)
- What stresses do you negotiate on a daily basis?
- Read the article [The Implications of COVID-19 for Mental Health and Substance Use](#)
- and examine the graphs outlining the data on mental health over the past 5 years.
- What trends do you see in the brief provided, and, how can we as a society work to improve these outcomes?
- What would your life be like without music in it?
- In what ways do you utilize music to improve your mood and state of mind?
- How does singing impact us physically?
- How could you use music in a therapeutic capacity for yourself or others?
- Do you currently experience music in a way other than singing? How?
- Watch this Ted Talk ["Why Singing is Good For You"](#) with Alexandra Anderson from Lake Forest High School. What does she stress as the physical benefits of singing?
- How does music provide joy in your life during times of isolation or loneliness?
- Read the article, [How Classical and Instrumental Music Affect Mental Health](#)
- Did your ideas and feelings about opera change after viewing the film?
- Watch the Ted Talk [Why Opera is Worth Fighting For](#).
- Was there one opera song in the film that appealed to you the most? Why?



Photo Credits
Left: Rick Read
Right: Kata Sasvari

DISCUSSION GUIDE

- Read: [What Does an Opera Singer Do?](#) by Berklee College
- What other careers require the same level of discipline?
- Have you made a commitment to a passion in your life that has required training, practicing, and a culminating experience?
- Listen to this Podcast "[Confessions of Life as an Opera Singer](#)"
- In the article perspective is discussed, whether it is the performer's perspective or the audience perspective. What do YOU like about performances? What do YOU find dull?
- Read this article on cellist Yo-Yo Ma about his life and pathway to success.
- What do you do in your own life that requires this level of discipline?
- Watch the [Opera Legends Documentary](#) on Renee Fleming.
- Had you heard of Renee Fleming prior to watching this documentary? Did you hear her sing the [National Anthem](#) at the Superbowl in 2014?
- Taking instrumental or vocal lessons can be expensive. What ideas do you have for providing greater access to the arts for underserved communities who may not have the resources to afford lessons?

Suggested Activities

- Listen in its entirety one or more of the operas that are included in the film; Read the libretto.
- Go on a field trip to watch a live opera.

More Resources

- [How Humans Have Reacted to Pandemics Through History](#)
- [A Visual Guide of How Humans Have Reacted to Pandemics](#)
- [Depictions of Global Pandemics Throughout Art History](#)
- [Art in the Time of Pandemic](#)
- [How Pandemics Have Inspired Art, Music, and Literature](#)
- [Why Happiness is a Choice](#)
- [Impact of Opera on Mental Health Stigma: Pilot of Provider/Community Workshop](#)
- [How People Turned Pandemic Pain into Song Across History](#)
- [Is Classical Music Elitist](#)
- [Music Teaches Discipline and Hard Work](#)
- [Piano Puzzler](#)
- [The Unstarving Musician](#)
- [Female Entrepreneur Musician Podcast](#)

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Acknowledgements

This project was made possible in part with support from New Hampshire Humanities, in partnership with the National Endowment for the Humanities. Learn more at: nhhumanities.org.



Funding was also provided by Denise and Tom Frawley and Upper Valley Arts.

Survey

We appreciate your feedback! Please fill out [this brief survey](#) to share how you have used this lesson plan. You can also access the survey through this QR code:



This study guide is a project of Upper Valley Arts, New England School of the Arts (NESAs) and New Hampshire PBS.



nesarts.org



nhpbs.org

Off The Grid
Productions

offthegridproductions.com