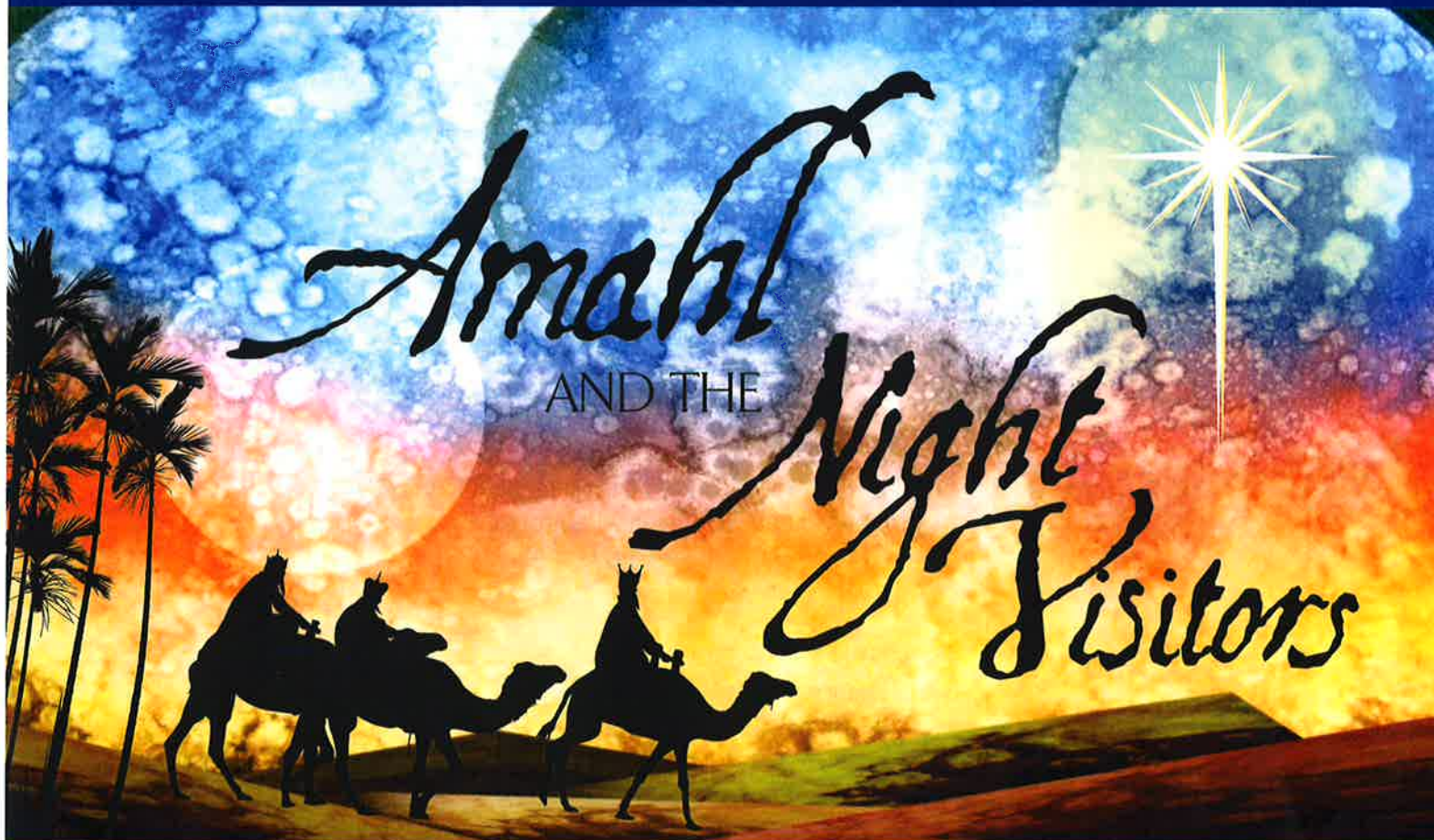


CHATTANOOGA SYMPHONY & OPERA PRESENTS



A Guide to the Opera for Educators

Amahl and the Night Visitors

Table of Contents

Section 1

INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

- Table of Contents
- Letter from Chattanooga Symphony and Opera
- Important Teaching Points
- References
- About the Composer

Section 2

THE STORY OF AMAHL AND THE NIGHT VISITORS

- Characters, Setting, and Synopsis
- CD and Video Listening Guide
- Vocabulary

Section 3

TEACHING THE STORY AND MUSIC

- Lesson 1: In Your Own Words
- Lesson 2: Story Cards
- Lesson 3: Story Theater
- Lesson 4: Overture
- Lesson 5: Recitatives
- Lesson 6: Arias and Emotion
- Lesson 7: Duet
- Lesson 8: Ballet
- Lesson 9: March
- Lesson 10: Set Design
- Lesson 11: After the End
- Lesson 12: Re-write
- Lesson 13: Scientific Approach
- Lesson 14: Discussion
- Lesson 15: Seminar
- Audience Etiquette
- Post-Performance Questions

Section 1 | Concert Overview



Dear teachers and home school parents:

We are pleased to offer the following study guide for Chattanooga Symphony and Opera's production of Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*.

These materials are written for you as teachers and parents, to help you prepare students for the performance on Thursday, November 11, 2010 at either 10:00 am or 12:00 noon at the Tivoli Theater.

This is a very unique production in that it is a collaborative effort involving Chattanooga Ballet, Chattanooga Theatre Centre, UTC Department of Music, UTC Department of Theatre and Speech, and the International Alliance of Theatrical and Stage Employees Local 140. It is funded, in part, by a grant from The Maclellan Family Foundations. CSO is a funded agency of Allied Arts and the Tennessee Arts Commission.

This study guide was created by Kathy Allison, CSO Operations Manager. We thank Jim Bartsch, Director of Education at Minnesota Orchestra and Daniel A. Kelin II, Director of Drama Education at Honolulu Theatre for Youth, for their kind permission to use portions of their educational materials. For additional information, contact CSO's Education Director, Steve Tonkinson at stonkinson@chattanoogasympphony.org.

This is the first of what will become an annual production to welcome the holiday season. I hope you and your students enjoy *Amahl and the Night Visitors*!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Molly K. Sasse".

Molly Sasse
Executive Director

Important Teaching Points

- Gian Carlo Menotti was born in Italy in 1911 and studied composition in America. He died in 2007. In addition to writing the music for *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, Menotti also wrote the libretto (words), which is somewhat unusual for an opera composer. Menotti was a Pulitzer Prize winner. He wrote the first opera written especially for radio and the first opera written especially for television (*Amahl*).
- Menotti's best-known work is *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. It was composed for NBC Television, and was first performed on Christmas Eve, 1951. It was the first opera composed for television. *Amahl* was aired annually by NBC until the videotape was lost.
- *Amahl and the Night Visitors* is a true opera, in that all words are sung. It was written in English, especially for children. It is in one act, approximately 50 minutes long. Like many full-length operas, it contains a brief prelude, a ballet section, instrumental portions, recitatives, arias, and chorus. There are parts that are very funny and other parts that are serious.
- The Chattanooga Symphony and Opera will be conducted by Maestro Robert Bernhardt. Dancers are from Chattanooga Ballet. Stage direction is by George Quick, Producing Director of Chattanooga Theatre Centre.

References

CD RECORDINGS:

- 1 RCE #6485 Thomas Shippers, conductor. The original cast of the 1951 television production. Timings in this study guide refer to this recording.
- 2 Koch Int'l Classics #7005 Andrew Schenck, conductor
The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra

PIANO/VOCAL SCORE:

The complete piano/vocal score is published by G. Schirmer, Catalog #0337790.

BOOK:

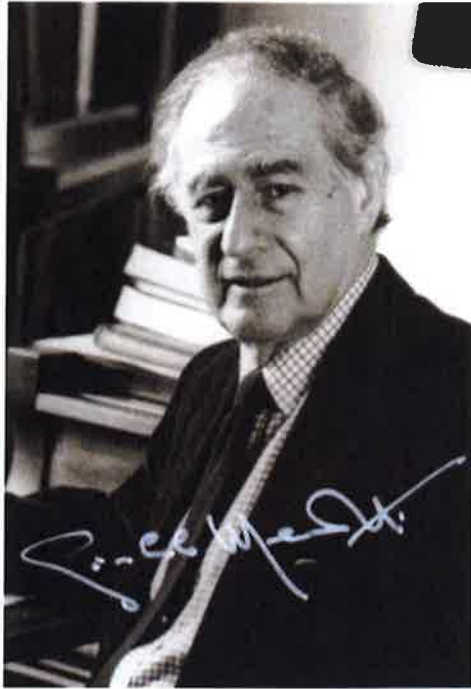
Amahl and the Night Visitors by Gian Carlo Menotti, with illustrations by Michelle Lemieux. William Morrow & Company; ISBN: 0688054269; September 1986.

VIDEO:

A 1992 production by the Metropolitan Opera featuring soprano Teresa Stratas as the Mother and Robert Sapolsky as Amahl. Distributed by Artisan Home Entertainment. Copyright 2000 Republic Entertainment, Inc. ISBN 1-56127-323-6.

About the Composer

Gian Carlo Menotti (1911 – 2007)



Gian Carlo Menotti was born in Cadegliano, Italy on July 7, 1911. At the age of seven, under the guidance of his mother, he began to compose songs. Four years later, he wrote the words and music of his first opera, *The Death of Pierrot*. In 1923 he began his formal musical training at the Verdi Conservatory in Milan. Following the death of his father, his mother took him to the United States, where he was enrolled at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music. He completed his musical studies there, working in composition under Rosario Scifero. Menotti's mother chose the Curtis Institute on the advice of the famed conductor Arturo Toscanini. Menotti said that leaving his mother for Curtis was similar to Amahl leaving his mother to travel with the Three Kings.

After the success of his opera *Amelia Goes to the Ball* in 1937, he was commissioned by NBC to write an opera for the radio. His opera, *The Old Maid and the Thief*, was the first opera especially for radio.

The Consul, Menotti's first full-length work, won the Pulitzer Prize and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award as the best musical play of the year 1954.

Menotti's own festival, the Festival of Two Worlds opened in 1958 in Spoleto, Italy. Devoted to the cultural collaboration of Europe and America in a program balancing all the arts, the Spoleto Festival has gone on to be one of the most popular festivals in Europe. The Festival expanded in 1977 with the founding of Spoleto USA in Charleston, South Carolina. Menotti led this festival until 1993, when he became Director of the Rome Opera.

In 1984 Menotti was awarded the Kennedy Center Honor for Lifetime Achievement in the arts. He was chosen as the 1991 "Musician of the Year" by Musical America. Menotti died on February 1, 2007 at the age of 95 in a hospital in Monte Carlo, Monaco, where he had a home.

Additional information on Menotti can be found online at:

<http://www.schirmer.com>

<http://www.classical.net/music/comp.lst/menotti.html>

"Italy created me, America nourished me and Scotland will bury me."

– Gian Carlo Menotti

Section 2

The Story of *Amahl and the Night Visitors*

CHARACTERS:

Amahl (a-MALL); a crippled boy, about 12 years old

Amahl's mother

The Three Kings

King Kaspar (slightly deaf)

King Melchior

King Balthazar

The Page (traveling with the kings)

Chorus of shepherds and villagers

SETTING:

The story is set around the hills of Bethlehem, at the time of the first Christmas.

SYNOPSIS:

As the opera begins, Amahl, a shepherd, tries to tell his Mother about what he has seen in the night sky: an enormous star with a long tail. His Mother, tired of his wild imagination and telling of tall tales, grows angry. She is even angrier when Amahl tells her that a knock at the door is from Three Kings who have come to visit them. The Kings enter and tell Amahl and his Mother that they are following a large star in the sky, on their way to find a new-born king. The Three Kings show Amahl and his Mother the rich gifts they have brought.

While Amahl's Mother is out gathering wood for the fire, Amahl asks the Kings questions about their lives. One of the Kings, Kaspar, shows Amahl his fancy box, full of magic stones, beads and candy. Amahl tells the Kings that he was once a shepherd, but his sheep were sold. Amahl goes out and gathers the neighbors, all shepherds. The shepherds greet each other and catch up on the local news. They present their gifts of special foods to the Kings and also perform a dance.

Later that night, Amahl's Mother is tempted to steal some of the Kings' gold since she and Amahl are so poor. She is caught, but the Kings offer to let her keep the gold, explaining that the king they seek will need nothing but love to rule his kingdom. The Mother declines their offer, returning the gold. Amahl then offers his crutch, which is his only possession, as an additional gift. Suddenly, he finds that he can walk. He leaves with the Kings to pay homage to the child who has healed him.

Menotti also has said that part of the inspiration for Amahl is his own experience with temporary lameness as a child.

CD/Video Listening Guide

The following guide indicates highlights in the music and story of Amahl and the Night Visitors using either the original cast CD or the video starring Teresa Stratas.

STORY HIGHLIGHT	CD TIMING	VIDEO TIMING
Overture begins.	Track 1, 0:00	Start at 0:00
Overture: 2nd section (pipes).	Track 1, 0:58	1:05
Mother calls Amahl inside.	Track 1, 1:38	1:42
Amahl describes the star.	Track 2, 0:00	4:15
Mother chides Amahl for telling tall tales.	Track 2, 0:54	5:00
Mother worries about having to beg.	Track 5, 0:00-0:39	7:24
Amahl says he will be a good beggar.	Track 5, 0:00	7:47
The Three Kings approach the house.	Track 6, 0:00	10:26
The Kings knock on the door.	Track 6, 2:14	12:39
Amahl answers the door three times, and finds another King each time.	Track 7, 0:00	12:56
Mother answers the door herself.	Track 8, 0:00	15:37
“March of the Kings” entering the house.	Track 9, 0:00	16:53
Amahl tells the Kings he was a shepherd.	Track 10, 0:30	19:19
Kaspar shows Amahl his box.	Track 11, 0:00	20:52
The Kings tell about the child they seek; Mother thinks they’re singing about Amahl.	Track 14, 0:00	23:58
The Shepherds greet each other.	Track 16, 0:00	28:35
The Shepherds present their gifts.	Track 17, 0:00	30:20
The Shepherds dance.	Track 18, 1:31	31:25
Amahl asks Kaspar if he has a magic stone to cure a crippled boy.	Track 19, 1:00	35:39
The Mother is tempted to take some gold.	Track 20, 0:00	37:55
The Mother is caught by the Page.	Track 21, 0:00	40:38
Music of the overture returns, as King Melchior offers the gold to the Mother.	Track 23, 0:00	41:44
Amahl offers his crutch as a gift.	Track 24, 0:34	44:21
Amahl leaves with the Kings.	Track 27, 1:09	48:20

Simple Vocabulary for *Amahl and the Night Visitors*

Act	One large part of an opera; "Amahl" is a one act opera
Alto	The lowest female and child voice
Aria	A solo sung by one person conveying feeling rather than fact; a generic Italian word for featured solos in opera; (pronounced ARE-ee-ah)
Ballet	A dance performed in an opera; the shepherds dance in "Amahl"
Baritone	The male voice range between tenor and bass; Melchior is a baritone
Bass	The lowest male singing voice; Balthazar and the Page are basses
Boy Soprano	The highest of a boy's unchanged voice; Amahl's part is for boy soprano
Chorus	A song sung in parts by a group of people; the shepherds are a chorus
Conductor	Directs music to keep both orchestra and singers together
Costumes	Clothing worn by the actors to establish the time, place, and mood adding color and interest to the story
Duet	Two people singing two different parts together; the mother and Amahl sing a duet
Librettist	The person who writes the libretto or words; in some cases this person is different from the composer of the opera, and in other cases this person is also the composer
Libretto	Literally, "little book", it is the actual text of the opera
Opera	A play that is sung; a drama with costumes and scenery in which all or most of the text is sung to the accompaniment of an orchestra
Orchestra	A group of musicians accompanying the entire opera and occasionally playing purely instrumental sections.
Pit	The area where the orchestra is located below and in front of the stage
Recitative	A song-speech performed by one person which is half-sung, half-spoken; it is used to quickly convey ideas important to the action of the story; (pronounced reh-chit-a-TEEVE)
Scene	A part of an act
Set	Scenery used to establish the time, place, and mood adding color and interest to the story
Soprano	The highest female and child voice; the Mother in Amahl is a soprano
Tenor	The highest male singing voice; Kaspar is a tenor
Trio	Three people singing three different parts together

Section 3

Teaching the Story and the Music

Lesson 1:	In Your Own Words
Lesson 2:	Story Cards
Lesson 3:	Story Theater
Lesson 4:	Overture
Lesson 5:	Recitatives
Lesson 6:	Arias and Emotion
Lesson 7:	Duet
Lesson 8:	Ballet
Lesson 9:	March
Lesson 10:	Set Design
Lesson 11:	After the End
Lesson 12:	Re-write
Lesson 13:	Scientific Approach
Lesson 14:	Discussion
Lesson 15:	Seminar
	Audience Etiquette
	Post Performance Questions

Within this section there are several non-sequential, mini-lessons of varying lengths appropriate for parents, music teachers, classroom teachers and interdisciplinary collaboration. Choose an activity with which you are comfortable. Share the others with your colleagues. Enjoy!

Lesson 1: In Your Own Words, Teach The Story

Use your own words, the Amahl and the Night Visitors CD, the video, or the story book (listed in the bibliography) to teach the story of the opera. A synopsis is included in the second section of this study guide.

Lesson 2: Story Cards

Recall the plot and organize the scenes in sequence with story cards. Write the significant scenes of the story on cards. Pass cards out to students, and ask each to read what is on their card. Then ask students to organize the events on the cards in chronological order. The text for story cards follows:

- Amahl tells his Mother he sees a huge star with a tail.
- Mother tells Amahl to come to bed.
- There is a knock on the door.
- Amahl answers the door to find Three Kings outside.
- Mother invites the Kings in, but says she is very poor and has nothing to offer them.
- The Kings explain they are following the star to visit a new-born child.
- Amahl tells the Kings he used to have sheep, but they were sold for money to buy food. He and his Mother are about to become beggars.
- King Kaspar shows Amahl his fancy box with jewels, beads, and candy inside.
- The neighboring Shepherds bring the gifts to the Kings and perform a dance.
- The Mother is tempted to take some of the Kings' gold since she and Amahl are so poor.
- The Page catches the Mother reaching for the gold. Amahl fights with the Page.
- King Melchior offers to let the Mother keep the gold, but she refuses.
- Amahl offers his crutch to the Kings as a gift for the child they seek.
- Amahl's lameness is healed.
- Amahl leaves, joining the Three Kings for the rest of their journey.

Then, listen to the piece and follow the story time line.

Lesson 3: Story Theater

Teach the plot with a story theater activity. Choose six actors and give each a number and copy of the script. Have them highlight their parts and rehearse the reading using expressive voices. Having the readers perform their parts in the random order as indicated on the script below creates anticipation on the part of the listeners.

- Reader 4 Amahl, a crippled shepherd boy about 12 years old, lives with his Mother in a small hut in the hills around Bethlehem, at the time of the first Christmas. Amahl and his Mother are very poor.
- Reader 1 Amahl tries to tell his Mother that there is a huge star in the night sky, and that it has a huge tail.
- Reader 6 Mother tells Amahl to stop telling lies and to come to bed.
- Reader 2 The Mother is worried that she and Amahl will have to beg for food. Amahl says he will be a good beggar if he must.
- Reader 3 After going to bed, Amahl gets up to answer a knock on the door. He tells his mother that there are Three Kings outside the door.
- Reader 1 The Mother doesn't believe Amahl. When she looks for herself, she is very surprised to find that there really are Three Kings outside their door. She invites them in.
- Reader 5 The Kings explain they are following a large star on their way to find a new-born child. They have many gifts to bring this child king, including gold. Amahl's mother hurries out to gather firewood.
- Reader 2 While his Mother is gone, Amahl asks the Kings about their lives. One of the Kings, Kaspar, shows Amahl his fancy box with three drawers contain magic stones, beads and candy.
- Reader 6 Amahl gathers the neighbors, who are also Shepherds. Amahl's Mother returns with the neighboring Shepherds. The Shepherds present the Kings with gifts of many foods and spices from their farms and gardens. They also perform a shepherd's dance for the Kings.
- Reader 5 The Kings thank the Shepherds, but explain that they must get some sleep before re-summing their journey.
- Reader 3 While the Kings sleep, Amahl's Mother is tempted to take some of the gold they are carrying. She wonders if it wouldn't be better to use it for her own crippled child. As she reaches to touch the gold, the Page catches her.
- Reader 2 Amahl tries to get the Page to release his other, and the Kings tell her she can keep the gold. They explain the king they seek will need nothing but love to rule his kingdom. Amahl's mother returns the gold anyway.
- Reader 6 Amahl offers his crutch to the Kings, saying he would like them to give it to the child. The crutch is Amahl's only possession.
- Reader 1 As soon as he offers his crutch, Amahl is healed
- Reader 5 The Kings ask if Amahl can join them on their journey. Amahl's Mother agrees, and the Kings leave with Amahl, promising to return him safely.

Lesson 4: Overture

Amahl and the Night Visitors begins with a brief prelude. Play this music for students before telling them the story of Amahl. Ask them, based on the music, what kind of story they think this opera will have. Encourage them to take into consideration that the music has two parts, each with a different style of music.

On the board, start a list of words or phrases that describe each of the two sections.

First Section

Strings, harp

Slow

Sad

Etc.

Second Section

Oboes play the melody

Faster

happy

Etc.

Continue the two lists with suggestions from the students. How do their descriptions of the music support their ideas about what the opera might be about?

Students can sight-read, sing, play, or simply follow the notation for the “Shepherd’s Pipe Melodies”. This notation can easily be adapted for Kodaly methodologies.

Melody one



Melody two



Lesson 5: Recitatives

Opera composers throughout the years have used a musical style called “recitative” (reh-chit-a-TEEVE). Our English word “recite” has the same roots. When a singer sings a recitative, the style is half speaking and half singing. Traditionally, the characters in the opera advance the plot in a recitative, and then sing an “aria” (ARE-ee-ah) based on the action.

Ask students to speak each of the following lines as if they are on stage, exaggerating the accented syllables.

As they are comfortable, ask them to start on a given pitch, and change pitch for emphasis as they think the words indicate.

Finally listen to each of these as Menotti set them.

Discuss with students whether Menotti’s recitative sections sound natural

Recitative sections can be found at:

CD TIMING: TRACK 1, 2:29

“How long must I shout to make you obey?” “I’m sorry mother”. “Hurry in! It’s time to go to bed.”

CD TIMING, TRACK 7, 0:47

“What shall I do with this boy, what shall I do, what shall I do? If you don’t learn to tell the truth, I’ll have to spank you! Go back and see who it is and ask them what they want.”

CD TIMING, TRACK 19, 0:00

“Thank you, good friends, for your dances and your gifts. But now we must bid you good night. We have little time for sleep and a long journey ahead.”

CD TIMING: TRACK 19, 1:00

“Excuse me sir, amongst your magic stones in there...is there one that could cure a crippled boy?”

CD TIMING: TRACK 25, 1:39

“Well, I don’t know if I’m going to let you touch me...Oh...alright...but just once.”

Lesson 6 – Arias and Emotion

Explore a range of human emotions with Amahl's aria "I was a shepherd" and the recitative with Amahl and Kaspar, "Are you a real king, too?"

In the very short aria, "I was a shepherd", Amahl explains to the Kings that he once had sheep but they were sold. He also had a goat but it died from old age.

Listen to this section. Ask students if they were one of the three kings, how they would react to Amahl's sad story. Discuss with students how this music is different from Amahl's other music so far. Bring some gorgeous pieces of fabric which might have been used for King's robes for students to see and feel. Bring some burlap or less colorful, homespun fabric for Amahl and his mother to provide a stark contrast.

Following this section, Amahl asks King Kaspar about his parrot. Since Kaspar is hard of hearing, Amahl must repeat each question. Together, these two sections are an excellent example of how an opera can have both sad and funny sections. Opera explores a range of human emotions!

Lesson 7: Duet

King Melchior and the Mother sing a duet, "Have you seen..."

In this duet, the two are not really singing to each other. King Melchior is describing the child that he and the other two kings are seeking. The Mother sings about Amahl. Years after Amahl was written, Mr. Menotti said that he thought this section was too long for children. Do you agree?

Lesson 8: Ballet

"SHEPHERD'S DANCE" (VIDEO 31:23)

The "Shepherd's Dance" is an instrumental piece during which the Shepherds perform a dance for the visiting kings. Many operas have ballet sections as part of the production. Students should first be familiar with the story of Amahl and the form of the music. There are two sections. The first section features an ostinato or repeated rhythm. The second section is much faster in a complex triple meter, meaning that each beat can be divided into 3 eighth notes. Watch the video and begin discussion.

Where is the action taking place? Who is the dance about? What is the dance about? What happens in the dance? What messages are carried by the dance? What kinds of movements are needed to communicate these messages? What happens as the dance moves along? What patterns are repeated? What image will be left with the audience at the end of the dance?

Lesson 9: March

As the Three Kings enter the hut of Amahl and his Mother, the orchestra plays the “March of the Kings”. This is an example of a purely instrumental section in opera. The staging instructions indicate that as each King enters the house, the Page must scurry back and forth to carry the trains. After entering the house, each King takes a seat on the wooden bench.

Have students form three groups, and assign a leader for each group. Each group will take the part of one of the Kings assuming a very regal stance. As the music begins, the first group begins its march, led by their lead king. Students in each group should follow the gestures of their lead king. Find spots in the music for each king to nod to Amahl and his Mother and music appropriate for sitting down on the bench.

Menotti indicates in the score that each step in the “March” should fall on the first and third beats of the measure making for a very slow, regal march. Compare and contrast the music of this march with the music heard earlier as the Kings sing “From Far Away we Come...” Ask students what differences they hear. Suggest that the first music matches the Kings when they are cold and tired. Once they are invited in, they perk up.

Lesson 10: Set Design

Build a shoebox theater creating a miniature set for *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. A shoebox theater may be fairly simple or quite elaborate. Use construction paper to make background, sets and characters. Cut a one inch “peephole” on one side of the shoebox for viewing. (See www.papergoods.com/shoe_box.shtml for more information.)

The stage directions from Menotti’s score make a good description of the set for students to follow:

It is night. The crystal-clear winter sky is dotted with stars. The Eastern Star, with its flaming tail, floods both the sky and earth with glowing radiance. Outside the cottage, not far from the door, Amahl, wrapped in an oversized cloak, sits on a stone, playing his shepherd’s pipe. His crudely-made crutch lies on the ground beside him. Within, the Mother works at household chores. The room is lighted only by the dying low flame of a tiny oil lamp.

Menotti said his inspiration was *The Adoration of the Magi* by Hieronymus Bosch painted in 1510.

View this painting online at:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Epiphany_\(Bosch_triptych\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Epiphany_(Bosch_triptych))

There is a fascinating analysis of this painting (perhaps not appropriate for children) at <http://fictionwise.com/knight/boschtwenty.html>

Lesson 11: After the End

This activity is appropriate before or after seeing the opera.

Ask students to continue the story of *Amahl and the Night Visitors*.

As the opera ends, Amahl leaves with the Three Kings. The Kings promise Amahl's mother that they will "bring him back on a camel's back."

What will Amahl tell his mother about his trip with the kings? What happens to Amahl and his Mother after he returns? Do they become beggars as she feared?

After students have written their 'After the End' stories, consider having small groups of students share them with each other or seek volunteers to read their story aloud. Then compare how the stories are similar and different. Copy and send the stories to the Chattanooga Symphony and Opera.

Lesson 12: Re-Write

"SHEPHERD'S CHORUS" (TIMING: CD TRACK 16, VIDEO 28:35)

Many operas include a section for a chorus of singers. In this case, the chorus is made up of shepherds who are neighbors of Amahl and his Mother. In the first part, the shepherds greet each other by name and ask about each other's children and sheep. They also comment on the weather. Ask students if children and weather are topics their own parents talk about when they get together.

Menotti uses two rhythmic patterns as he sets names to music: a three syllable name, which is repeated, followed by a two syllable name, and finally a four syllable name. In the second part, the shepherds describe gifts they have brought for the three visiting Kings. The gifts are things they have raised in their gardens of farms.

A language arts teacher might consider re-writing Menotti's libretto (text) using names with an appropriate number of syllables and foods with which students are familiar.

Lesson 13: A Scientific Approach

"THIS IS MY BOX" (CD TRACK 11, VIDEO 20:52).

In the aria, "This is my box", King Kaspar describes to Amahl the contents of his fancy box. The first drawer contains magic stones: a carnelian, a moonstone, red coral, lapis lazuli, jasper, topaz, and a red ruby.

Ask students to investigate and report back to the class on each of these stones. They might show a map where each is found or describe them.

Lesson 14: Discussion

“ALL THAT GOLD” (CD TRACK 20, VIDEO 37:55)

The music from the opening of the opera returns as Amahl, his Mother, and the Kings lie down to sleep. The Mother sings about the gold the Kings have brought on their journey. She is tempted to take the gold for her own child.

This scene could be the basis for a class discussion about stealing. Since her own son is crippled and very poor, is this a good reason for her to take some of the King's gold?

How does the music in this aria help us understand the story?

Following this scene, the Page catches the Mother as she reaches for the gold. Amahl attacks the Page, demanding that he release his Mother.

Was the King right to forgive the Mother for trying to steal the gold? Was she right to give it back?

Discuss what each of the characters give in the story:

- Amahl offers his crutch, and he receives healing.
- The Mother refuses the gold and gives Amahl to the Kings during their journey.
- The Kings carry gifts to give to the child king and offer to give their gold and forgiveness to Amahl's Mother.
- The Shepherds give foods and perform a dance for the Kings.

Lesson 15: Seminar

After seeing the production or video, consider discussing the following questions in pairs or small groups before sharing ideas with the whole group.

- What is your favorite part of this story? Why is it your favorite?
- Why does Amahl's Mother have trouble believing Amahl when he tells his stories?

Read aloud the words of this song sung by Amahl. What does this tell you about him? What is he trying to do for his Mother?

“Don't cry mother dear; don't worry for me.
If we must go begging, a good beggar I'll be.
I know sweet tunes to set people dancing.
We'll walk and walk from village to town-
you dressed as a gypsy and I as a clown.
We'll walk and walk from village to town.
At noon, we shall eat roast goose and sweet almonds.
At night we shall sleep with the sheep and the stars.
I'll play my pipes, you'll sing and you'll shout.
The windows will open and people lean out.
The king will ride by and hear your loud voice
and throw us some gold to stop all the noise.
At noon we shall eat roast goose and sweet almonds;
At night we shall sleep with the sheep and the stars.”

Each of the characters faces different problems or challenges in the story. What problems does each of the characters face?

- What do you think was the major problem of the story? Whose problem was it? How did the problem get resolved?
- Which character do you think was the hero of the story? Why? What did he or she do that makes that person a hero?
- Which character of the story do you believe lives the best life? Why? What makes his or her life a good one?
- Which characters' life is changed by his or her actions? What actions did that character do that changed his or her life? Were those actions worthy of the reward the character received? Why or why not?
- Why do the Kings spend the night at Amahl's house? Are there other places they might stay?
- Why do the shepherds offer food to the visiting Kings?
- If you were one of the Kings, how might you have acted when you visited Amahl's house?
- Why did Mother steal the gold? Why did she think it was okay to steal?

Audience Etiquette

- Arrive early and enter quietly.
- Leave food and drink in the lobby.
- Turn off pagers, cell phones, and watches. Remember that cell phones are also a visual distraction for those around you when you text.
- Do not take pictures. The sounds and flashes are annoying distractions to those around you and pose a hazard to the performers on stage.
- Applaud at the end of musical selections. The performers appreciate your enthusiasm!
- Observe the performance as quietly as possible. Talking, or even whispering, can be annoying to those around you as well as being a distraction to the performers.
- Remain seated during the performance.
- After the performance, exit quietly as directed by the House Manager.

Post Performance Questions for Students

1. What were your favorite parts of the opera?
2. What was different about this production than you expected?
3. How did the sets compare to what you thought they would look like?
4. Before attending, what are some things you learned about opera?
5. What are some things you learned at the actual performance?
6. If you saw the video version of Amahl, how was it different from the live performance?
7. How is live performance more interesting than video?

