

CINCINNATI OPERA

# OPERA

STORYBOOK HOUR



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# The Dog Who Sang at the Opera

by Jim West and Marshall Izen

## THE STORY

Pasha is a beautiful dog who loves all things lovely, especially opera. When her owner Shirley gets cast as a supernumerary at the Metropolitan Opera, Pasha finally gets her chance to be on stage. However, once she hears the music, Pasha can't help but howl along.

## Story Comprehension

1. Where does Pasha's owner, Shirley, work, and what kind of work does she do?
2. What is the name of the opera Shirley and Pasha will be supernumeraries in?
3. What is the name of the clown dog? What breed of dog is he?
4. What tricks are the clown dog and his owner able to perform?  
What is the name of the owner?
5. In Pasha's dream, what kind of costume is she wearing?
6. What happens when Pasha starts to sing on stage? How does the audience react?  
How does the conductor react?
7. What unexpectedly happens the day after Pasha sings on stage?
8. How would you describe Pasha's overall personality? How do things change by the end of the story?

# Opera Comprehension

Please refer to the previous study guides for definitions and help with the following sections.

## **What is Opera?**

Answer the questions to refresh your opera knowledge.

1. What performance elements can be found in opera?
2. What is the definition of opera?
3. Do opera singers use microphones?
4. Where did opera begin?
5. What languages are operas written in?
6. What are the “subtitles” of opera called?
7. What are singers with leading roles in an opera called?
8. What are the background actors and singers in an opera called?
9. Who tells singers how to act and move on stage?
10. Who makes sure the orchestra and singers are working together?



## The Silent Actor

Supernumeraries, or supers, are actors that serve as background characters in movies, shows, and operas. The word comes from the Latin term supernumeraries, which means “a person no one cares about.” However, this is far from the truth. While supers play silent roles (meaning they have no lines or words to say or sing), their presence often makes the stage feel more believable and full of life.

Cincinnati Opera’s supernumeraries come from many different places. Once a year, we hold an audition, and anyone who is interested in being in an opera is welcome to attend. In the past, we have had supers come from our Cincinnati Opera staff and Board of Directors, including many children of staff members. We have also had audience members audition and star in operas. Sometimes, supers come to us with no knowledge of opera, but become big opera fans after being on stage!

If you have ever been interested in being on stage, but aren’t quite ready to audition for the lead roles, look into being a supernumerary. It is a fun and fulfilling experience, and at the end of it all, you will always be remembered as being **super**.

# Opera Terms

Complete the word scramble using opera terms.

RIAA	_____
VRBAO	_____
ORAATLOURC	_____
UTED	_____
RNOECE	_____
SNEBLMEE	_____
LEANIF	_____
TTOILEBR	_____
PRAOTTEE	_____
ARUETTQ	_____

## Operatic Voices

Do you recall the various operatic voice types? Match each voice type based on definition. Then fill in the blank with each story character's voice type.

<b>Soprano</b>	The lowest male voice
<b>Mezzo-Soprano</b>	The middle female voice
<b>Alto/Contralto</b>	The highest male voice
<b>Tenor</b>	The lowest female voice
<b>Baritone</b>	The highest female voice
<b>Bass</b>	The middle male voice

Complete the scale by plugging in the corresponding voice type in order of highest to lowest.

Highest Voice -----Lowest Voice

# The Aria

“Bella siccome un angelo” is from the opera *Don Pasquale* by Gaetano Donizetti. It is an Italian aria about a man who is deeply in love with a woman, and speaks about her beauty and wonders. Pasha is a dog who believes she embodies such greatness. Was there a time in your life when you were full of confidence like Pasha? Read the lyrics, then write a story about a character who is very confident, or lacks confidence.

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## Lyrics and Translation

### Bella siccome un angelo

Bella siccome un angelo  
in terra pellegrino.  
Fresca siccome il giglio  
che s'apre in sul mattino.  
Occhio che parla e ride,  
sguardo che i cor conquide.  
Chioma che vince l'ebano  
sorriso incantator.  
Sorriso incantator.  
Alma innocente e candida,  
che sé medesima ignora;  
modestia impareggiabile,  
dolcezza che innamora  
ai miseri pietosa,  
gentil, buona, amorosa.  
Il ciel l'ha fatta nascere  
per far beato un cor.  
per far beato un cor.  
Il ciel l'ha fatta nascere  
per far beato un cor.  
Il ciel l'ha fatta nascere  
per far beato un cor.

Beautiful as an angel  
like a pilgrim on earth.  
Fresh as a lily  
which opens in the morning.  
Eyes that speak and laugh,  
looks that can conquer the heart.  
Hair blacker than ebony  
enchancing smile.  
Enchancing smile.  
A soul so innocent and candid,  
that ignores itself;  
unparalleled modesty,  
sweetness that with which one falls in love  
compassionate to the poor,  
gentle, good, loving.  
Heaven gave her birth  
to make happy hearts.  
to make happy hearts.  
Heaven gave her birth  
to make happy hearts.  
Heaven gave her birth  
to make happy hearts.

## About the Composer

The composer, or person who wrote *Don Pasquale*, was named Gaetano Donizetti. He was born in Northern Italy on November 29, 1797. Here are some personal characteristics about this highly prolific musician.

**Amicable to a Fault:** Donizetti was a pleasant guy, full of good humor and energy, and mostly indifferent to the professional jealousies and squabbles of the Italian opera world. Some of his students at the Naples Conservatory remembered him as warm and friendly.



**A Great Mentor:** Because of his great personality, Donizetti stayed away from rivalries and competition, unlike others in his field. He valued the work of composers younger than himself, and often helped to educate them. He even did work as a professor for a while. He believed that younger composers had just as much right to create masterpieces, like he did.

**Lost family:** Donizetti was tall, relatively handsome, and very popular with the ladies! He eventually married, but lost all of his children and his wife to disease.

**All Work and No Play:** Donizetti was known for being a workaholic. From 1822–1830, he wrote nearly 30 operas—an average of almost four operas per year! At the end of his career, he composed over seventy operas.

**Life in the Fast Lane:** While most Italian opera composers slowed down or retired once they became successful and earned high fees, Donizetti thrived on his busy and overcrowded schedule. In his letters of the 1830s, he joyfully recounts his many activities and commitments. He famously wrote *The Elixir of Love* in a little over a week.

**A Sad Ending:** Sadly, Donizetti's last years were filled with illness, including fevers, headaches, nausea, paralysis, and dementia. He was confined to an asylum outside of Paris before finally returning home to Italy, where he died.

# Create Your Own Mask

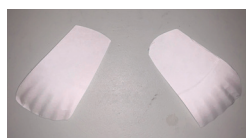
Howl like a dog at the opera by creating your own dog mask.

## Materials:

Stencil	Coloring tools
Paper plate	Pencil
Scissors	Glue/Tape

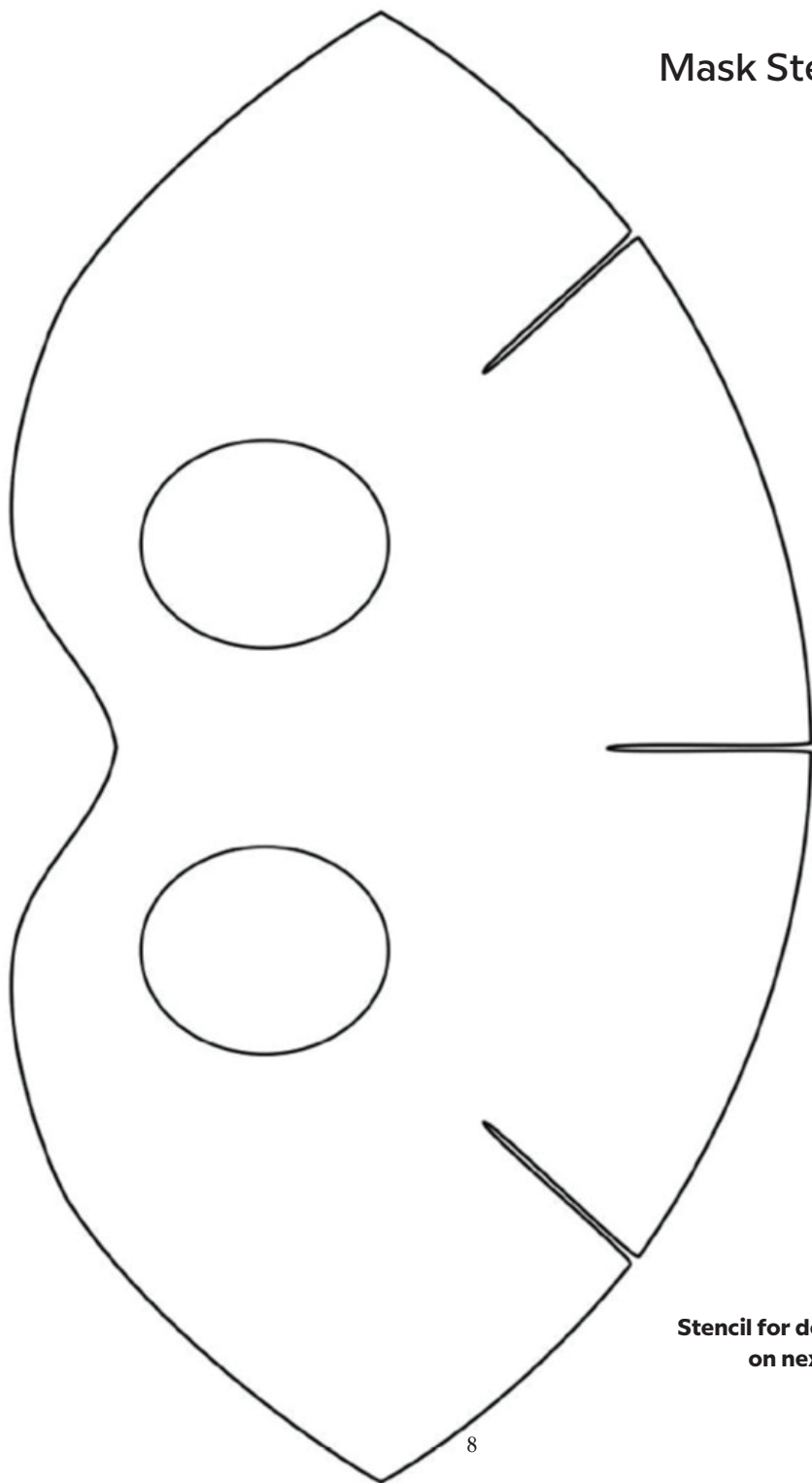
## Steps:

1. Cut the stencil and trace stencil over paper plate. Be sure to trace the three lines at the top of the mask. Use top of plate for the mask and bottom of plate for ears.
2. Cut all shapes from paper plate.  
Ask an adult to help cut the eyes.
3. Cut three slits where the traced lines are in the mask.
4. Decorate your mask before assembling.
5. Glue/tape the top of the mask together, using the right side of the cut to overlap the left. Repeat for all three slits. This will give the mask a rounded shape.
6. Glue your ears on the top left and top right of the mask, and enjoy!



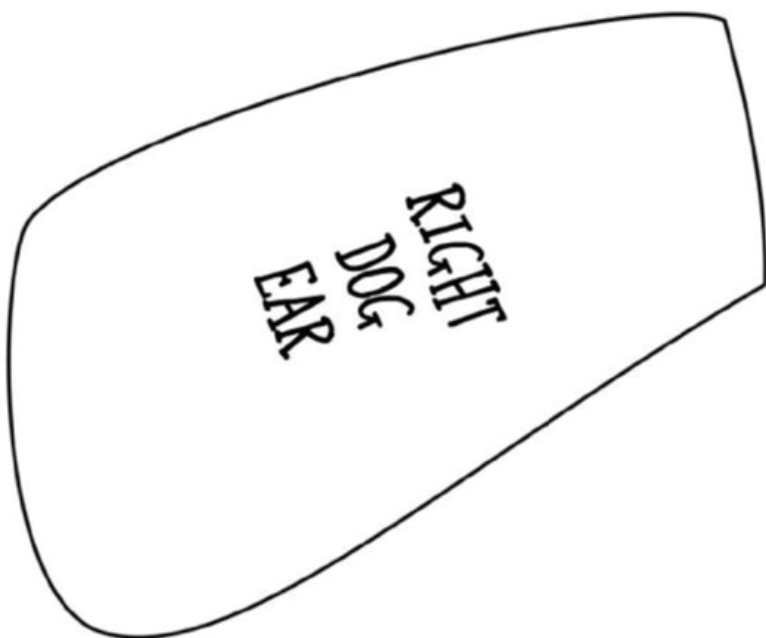
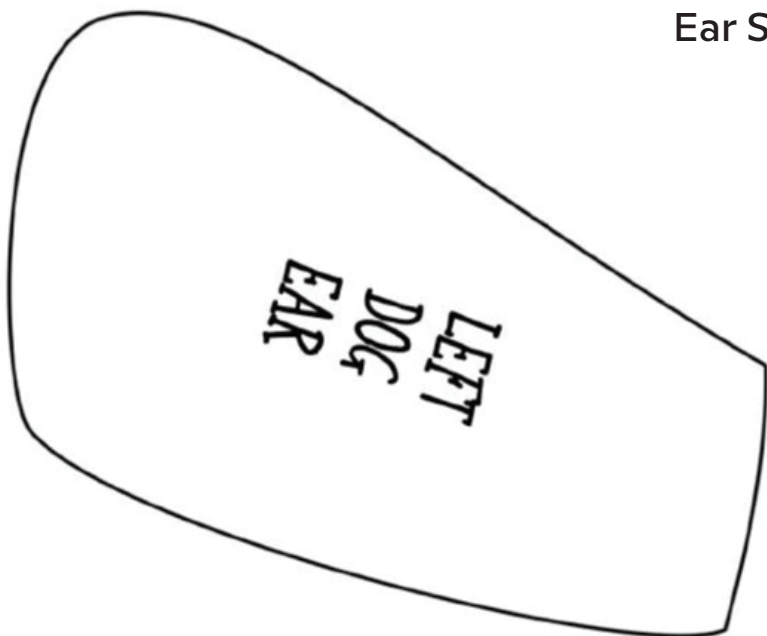


# Mask Stencil



**Stencil for dog ears  
on next page**

## Ear Stencil



## Color

