



VH1's "Movies That Rock": Moulin Rouge

VH1 Music Studio
Cable in the Classroom

Lesson for Music Classes, Grades 7-12

Lesson 3

Note to Teachers: The programs viewed in conjunction with these lesson plans may include references, consistent with the eras portrayed, to substance abuse, violent acts, and topics of a sexual and/or political nature. Because this may be considered inappropriate for classroom use in some communities, you are encouraged to review the programs before presenting them to your students, and if necessary, choose those sections that enhance your lesson and are acceptable for use in your classroom.

While this lesson can be completed by viewing the necessary portions of the programs, the most benefit and enjoyment of them will be gained by having students view the opera "La Bohème" and VH1's "Movies That Rock": Moulin Rouge in their entirety in preparation for these activities.

Objective

- Students will explore the similarities and differences between the opera "La Bohème" and the movie "Moulin Rouge."
- Students will gain understanding of set construction needs for both a movie and a staged opera production.
- Students will experiment with period costume design.

National Standards for Music Education

6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7. Evaluating music and music performances.
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

Materials

- VHS VCR Player
- Television
- VH1's "Movies That Rock": *Moulin Rouge*
- Web-based lesson materials
- Pencils and paper (students)
- Chalkboard, overhead projector, chart, etc.
- Teacher selected video of a traditional performance of "La Bohème" (recommended: San Francisco Opera, 1989, Tiziano Severini, conductor)
- If above video is not available, a teacher selected audio recording of a traditional performance of "La Bohème" may be substituted (recommended: RCA Records, Sir Georg Solti, conductor)

Prior Knowledge:

- Students have a basic familiarity with the musical genres of opera and movie musicals.
- Students have watched the opera "La Bohème" and VH1's "Movies That Rock": *Moulin Rouge* in their entirety. (To complete this lesson, students must watch at least the portions of the VH1 program required in Lessons one and two, and at least Acts I and IV of "La Bohème.")

Procedures

1. Show VH1's Movies That Rock: *Moulin Rouge*, from the beginning through the introduction of the dramatic idea presented by the actors Ewan McGregor and Nicole Kidman in her boudoir, and the final scenes, approximately the last 30 minutes of the program; and show teacher selected video of "La Bohème," at least Acts I and IV. (If students have already viewed these entire programs, this step may be omitted.)
2. Lead students in discussing the characters of the opera and the general storyline. Use the following as needed:

Marcello, a painter, *Rodolfo*, a poet, *Colline*, a philosopher, and *Schaunard*, a musician; these four "bohemians" share a residence
Benoit is their landlord

Musetta, a flirt, is Marcello's "sometimes" girlfriend

Mimi is a seamstress who suffers from tuberculosis; she also lives in Benoit's building

Alcindoro is a councilor of state, and one of Musetta's "gentlemen"

The storyline of the opera is one of love and Bohemian life in Paris in the 1830s. The threads tying the characters together are those of love, friendship, poverty, and in the case of the four roommates, their art. Mimi is a lonely seamstress who is very ill, and Rodolfo is a poor poet. They meet on Christmas Eve and fall in love. A crowd of friends joins together to celebrate Christmas, during which all characters become acquainted. Musetta and Marcello have an ongoing and tumultuous relationship, as do Mimi and Rodolfo later in the opera, although the two couples love each other deeply. Mimi's illness progresses, and she spends her dying moments with her love, Rodolfo.

3. Guide students in discovering the similarities and differences between the opera and the movie. List the comparisons on the board, chart, etc., and have students make notes on their own paper. Some examples are:

MOVIE

1899
Paris, France
Death of the female lead, Satine
Bohemian lifestyle
Story of love
Female lead is a performer
Contrast rich/poor
Contrast Healthy/Unhealthy
Real life experiences
Day to day life
Contrast wisdom/youthful dreams

OPERA

1830s
Paris, France
Death of the female lead, Mimi
Bohemian lifestyle
Story of love

Contrast rich/poor
Contrast Healthy/Unhealthy
Real life experiences
Day to day life

4. Draw students' attention to the use of music from "La Bohème" as part of the soundtrack for "Moulin Rouge." Have them discuss which they prefer, the opera or the movie, and why.
5. Divide students into groups, and tell them that they are going to design the set for either an opera or movie scene. Ask them to express their ideas within their group regarding set construction and design. Have students use the Internet to research various set designs for musicals and operas. If possible, it would be beneficial for the school drama teacher/technical advisor, or a person from outside the school who works in set design and construction, to visit the class to discuss the specifics of their field.
6. Have students design their own set for either a scene in the movie "Moulin Rouge" or for the opera "La Bohème." The groups should sketch their set on paper to share with the class.
7. Lead students in a discussion of the costume design for "La Bohème," set in the 1830s. Students should then develop their ideas about costuming for a movie version of La Bohème. Have them research the time period and learn what people were wearing in 1830s Paris, taking into consideration the Bohemian lifestyle.
8. Have students, working in their groups, if preferred, design costumes for the characters in a movie version of La Bohème.

Extensions:

1. To create a unit with lessons two and three of this series, have students design sets and costuming for the final scenes that they wrote during lesson two.

Interdisciplinary Extensions:

1. Social Studies: Have students research the Bohemian lifestyle in Paris during the 1830s, and the hippie movement of the 1960s in America. Their reports should show a comparison between the Bohemian lifestyle, and the lifestyle in America that led to the hippie movement in several large American cultural centers.
2. Art: Coordinate with the art and/or drama instructors to design sets and costumes for a production.

National Standards for Music Education

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.
4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
5. Reading and notating music.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7. Evaluating music and music performances.
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.



These standards-based materials are provided through a partnership with MENC: The National Association for Music Education. This lesson plan was created by MENC member Alice Backus, Alexander Graham Bell Academy, Cleveland Municipal School District, Cleveland, Ohio.