

Opera Boulder Company Presents

# LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

By Cesar Lui



BOULDER OPERA



## The story of Little Red Riding Hood

The story of Little Red Riding Hood is one about the never-ending fight between good and evil, a story about greed and hope, and a story about responsibility and second chances. Little Red is sent to her sick grandmother's house by her mother to deliver fresh bread, cookies, and other treats. Little Red's mother warns her not to stray from the path and not to talk to strangers. On the way to her grandmother's house, Little Red encounters a dangerous wolf, and she must make the choice to either listen to her mother or be tempted to stray from the path.

**Write the story of Little Red Riding Hood using your own words and include an introduction, development, and conclusion. You get to decide what happens at the end of the story!**

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## The composer

**What is a composer?** A composer is someone who writes the music for operas, musicals, movies, and even TV and radio programs. We are going to be learning about an opera composer, specifically, the composer of *Little Red Riding Hood*: **César Cui**. César Cui was a Russian composer and music critic who lived from 1835 to 1918. Cui was a well-respected military academic, in addition to a composer and music critic. Most of Cui's operatic compositions were written in Russian, with the exception of one opera written in French, *Le filibustier*, which premiered at the Opera-comique in Paris in 1894. César Cui had a very successful career up until his death in 1918.



***How many operas did César Cui compose in French?***

## The librettist

**What is a librettist?** A librettist for an opera is someone who writes the **libretto**, or the story of the opera. The original libretto for *Little Red Riding Hood* was written in Russian by Marina Stanislavovna. It was translated into English for our production by Adam C. Wright.

## What is opera?

OPERA is the only art form that combines vocal music, instrumental music, dance, visual art, and acting into one big performance. The Italian word *opera* means "work," because this was the first type of work that combined so many different art forms. Also, it takes a lot of work, and a lot of people, to make an opera come together!

***What is the difference between the composer and the librettist?***



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## When did people start writing opera?



The first opera, *Dafne*, was written around 1597 by Jacopo Peri under the inspiration of the Florentine Camerata, a small group of artists, writers, and musicians who decided to re-create the Greek drama of storytelling through music. After that, many subgenres of

opera emerged, such as baroque, classical, romantic, and contemporary. *Little Red Riding Hood* would be considered a contemporary opera!

### ***When was the first opera written?***

## What should you expect when you attend the opera?

An opera is like a play, but instead of the actors speaking the lines, the singers sing the lines. The story of *Little Red Riding Hood* will be told by professional singers acting as the characters. In *Little Red Riding Hood* you will hear singers sing recitative, arias, duets, trios, quartets, and ensembles. **Recitative** is usually a conversation between two or more characters, and is a style of singing closest to speaking. It moves along very quickly. An **aria** is sung by one singer; usually the character is telling you how they feel about something. A **duet** is sung by two singers, and is usually more of a conversation about something important. A **trio** is written for three singers, and a **quartet** is written for four singers. An **ensemble** is sung by many singers, and sometimes even a chorus.

### ***What is an aria? What is a duet?***



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## Who can sing opera?

Opera singers train and practice for a very long time, just like athletes, to become skilled singers. If you love to sing, you can train to become an opera singer! There are four main voice parts in opera:

*sopranos*—female singers who have the highest range;

*mezzo-sopranos*—female singers who

have a medium-high range; *tenors*—male singers who have the highest range; and

*baritones*—male singers who have the lowest range.



***Which voice part do you think the wolf would be?***

## Which languages can opera be performed in?

The main four languages in which opera is performed are German, French, Italian, and English (otherwise known as the “romance” languages); however, opera can be sung in any language! *Little Red Riding Hood* was originally written in **Russian**, but for Boulder Opera Company’s production, it will be sung in **English**.

***What language was Little Red Riding Hood originally written in?***

## What is an orchestra?

An orchestra is a group of instrumentalists, usually combining string, woodwind, brass, and percussion sections, and playing classical music. In the production of *Little Red Riding Hood* that you will see, the orchestra will be made up of a **piano, bassoon, oboe, clarinet, and flute**. This is also called a **piano wind quintet**.

***Can you name the instruments that will make up the orchestra for Little Red Riding Hood?***



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## Opera Etiquette and Guidelines

When you attend an opera as an audience member, you are a part of the performance in a very important way! Without you, the singers and the orchestra would be performing for an empty theater. Here are a few things to keep in mind when you attend the opera so that everyone can have a great time:

- ~ When the performance starts, it's important to stay in your seat for the whole opera so that you don't miss anything! (Unless it's an emergency, of course.)
- ~ As an audience member, it's important not to talk during the performance; this would be distracting to your fellow audience members and to the performers.
- ~ It's okay (and wonderful!) to laugh during a performance when something is funny—the performers love to hear you laugh at the appropriate time!
- ~ At the end of the performance, applaud! It lets the performers know they did a good job. To cheer for a female singer, you say **"Brava!"** To cheer for a male singer, you say **"Bravo!"** To cheer for a group of singers, you say **"Bravi!"**

## Opera Keywords and Vocabulary

**ACCOMPANIST** (uh-COME-pan-ist) The person who plays the piano to accompany a singer or instrumentalist.

**ARIA** (AH-ree-uh) A musical piece from an opera for solo voice.

**BARITONE** (BEAR-ih-tone) The middle-range male voice.

**BASS** (base) Lowest male voice.

**COLORATURA** (COH-lor-a-TUR-ah) A singing style where the vocalist sings very light and fast, often on one sound or syllable of a word.

**COMPOSER** (com-POSE-ur) The person who writes the music.

**CONDUCTOR** (con-DUCK-tor) The person who leads the orchestra.

**DESIGNER** (dee-ZINE-er) The person who creates the concepts for the lighting, costumes, and scenery.

**DUET** (doo-ET) A musical piece for two singers or instrumentalists.

**ENSEMBLE** (on-SOM-bel) Two or more singers singing and expressing their emotions at the



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same time.

**LIBRETTO** (lih-BRET-toe) "The Book," or the text or words of an opera.

**MEZZO-SOPRANO** (MET-zo soh-PRAHN-oh) The middle female voice.

**OPERA** (AH-pruh) A play that uses singing instead of speaking and is accompanied by instrumental music.

**OVERTURE** (OH-vehr-ture) The prelude to an opera, played by the orchestra alone.

**PROPS** (prohps) Objects placed onstage and used by actors.

**RECITATIVE** (REH-chih-tuh-TEEV) A type of musical singing where the words are sung in the rhythm of natural speech, with melody added.

**SCORE** (skohr) Book that contains the music of the opera.

**SET** (seht) Scenery used onstage to show location.

**SOPRANO** (soh-PRAHN-oh) The highest female voice.

**TENOR** (TEH-nor) The highest male voice.

**VIBRATO** (vih-BRAH-toe) The natural way for a voice to get louder, causing a small waver in the pitch being sung.

