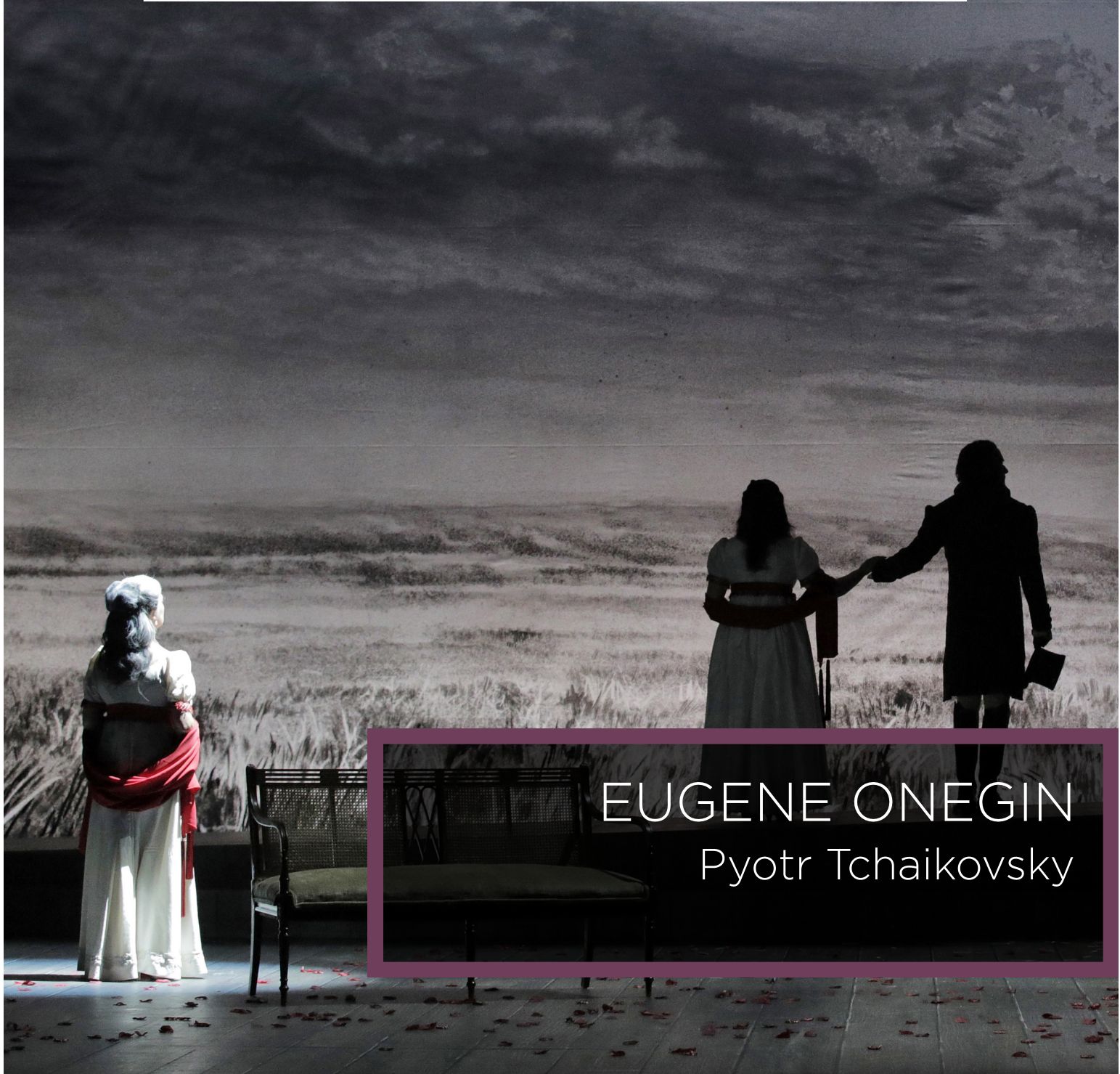


# PALM BEACH **OPERA**

Stories Told Through Singing



EUGENE ONEGIN  
Pyotr Tchaikovsky





## **OPERA:** Stories Told Through Singing

We believe that opera tells stories to which we can all relate, and that's why the operatic art form has thrived for centuries. The education programs at Palm Beach Opera strive to immerse the community directly into these stories, revealing timeless tales of love, passion, and joy. We challenge each person to find his or her own connection to opera's stories, therefore inspiring learners of all ages to explore the world of opera. At Palm Beach Opera, there is something for everyone! **#PBOperaForAll**

# EUGENE ONEGIN

Pyotr Tchaikovsky

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# The Masterminds







## EUGENE ONEGIN

Pyotr Tchaikovsky. Opera in Three Acts. 1877.

Libretto by the composer and Konstantin Shilovsky, based on the verse novel *Eugene Onegin* by Alexander Pushkin. Sung in Russian with English supertitles. First professional performance at the Bolshoi Theater, Moscow, Russia, Jan. 29, 1881.

## PYOTR TCHAIKOVSKY

Composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (May 7, 1840—November 6, 1893) was born in Votkinsk, a small town in the Russian Empire. He began taking piano lessons at the age of five and quickly surpassed his teacher within three years. Even though his parents were supportive of his talents, there were not opportunities for a musical career in Russia at the time. Out of practicality, his parents sent him to boarding school in 1850 where he then entered the Imperial School of Jurisprudence at the age of 12 to become a civil servant.



After starting his career at age 19, he began taking music theory courses organized by the Russian Musical Society, later becoming the Saint Petersburg Conservatory. Upon graduating from the Conservatory in 1865, Tchaikovsky was offered the post of Professor of Music Theory at the soon-to-open Moscow Conservatory.

His time teaching allowed him to expand his composition work and grow in popularity throughout Russia and Europe. The year 1876 saw the beginning of the extraordinary relationship that developed between Tchaikovsky and Nadezhda von Meck, a wealthy widow. A great admirer of his work, she arranged a monthly allowance for him which enabled him to resign from the conservatory and devote his efforts to writing.



**FUN FACT:** Tchaikovsky is most celebrated for his ballets, specifically *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and *The Nutcracker*.

Despite his many popular successes, Tchaikovsky's life was punctuated by personal crises and depression. Contributing factors included leaving his mother for boarding school, his mother's early death when he was 12 years old, and the collapse of the one enduring relationship of his adult life, his 13-year association with Nadezhda von Meck. His homosexuality, which he kept private, has traditionally also been considered a major factor to his depression, though some musicologists now downplay its importance. His sudden death at the age of 53 is generally ascribed to cholera; however, there is an ongoing debate as to whether it was accidental or self-inflicted.





## KONSTANTIN SHILOVSKY

Russian librettist and author (May 22, 1849—June 3, 1893), Konstantin Stepanovich Shilovsky was a close friend of Tchaikovsky. He was also an accomplished amateur poet, sculptor, and composer. For a brief period he found work as an actor in minor roles at the Maly Theatre when his family lost much of their fortune. Shilovsky was something of an eccentric, dabbling in alchemy and black magic, as well as studying the culture of Ancient Egypt. This led him to write a grand opera libretto set in Egypt, *Ephraim*, which he suggested to Tchaikovsky but was never realized. Shilovsky is known today for his collaboration in *Eugene Onegin*, which most of the music for the opera was written during Tchaikovsky's four-week stay at his family's estate in the summer of 1877.

## ALEXANDER PUSHKIN

Born in Moscow, Russia (May 26, 1799—January 29, 1837), Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin was a poet, playwright, and novelist of the Romantic era who is considered by many to be the greatest Russian poet and the founder of modern Russian literature. He revolutionized Russian literature with narrative poems, short stories, novels, plays, and fairytales.

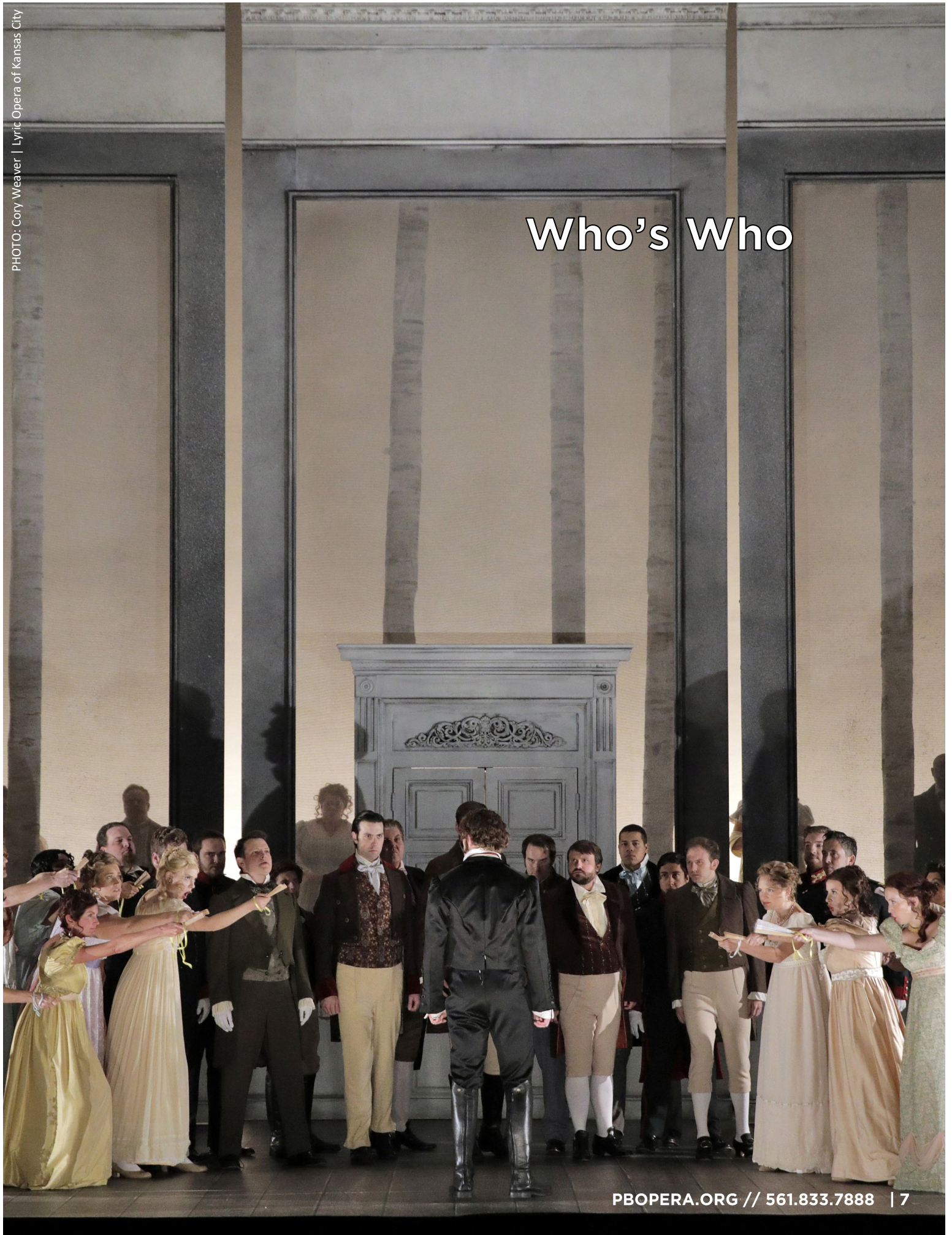
Pushkin published his first poem at age 15 and was widely recognized by the literary world by the time of his graduation. Shortly after, he recited his controversial political poem "Ode of Liberty," one of several that led to him being exiled by the tsar. It was during this time that he wrote his most famous play, *Boris Godunov*, and his novel in verse, *Eugene Onegin*, between 1825 and 1832.

Pushkin was fatally wounded in a duel with his brother-in-law, a French officer, defending his wife's honor.





# Who's Who





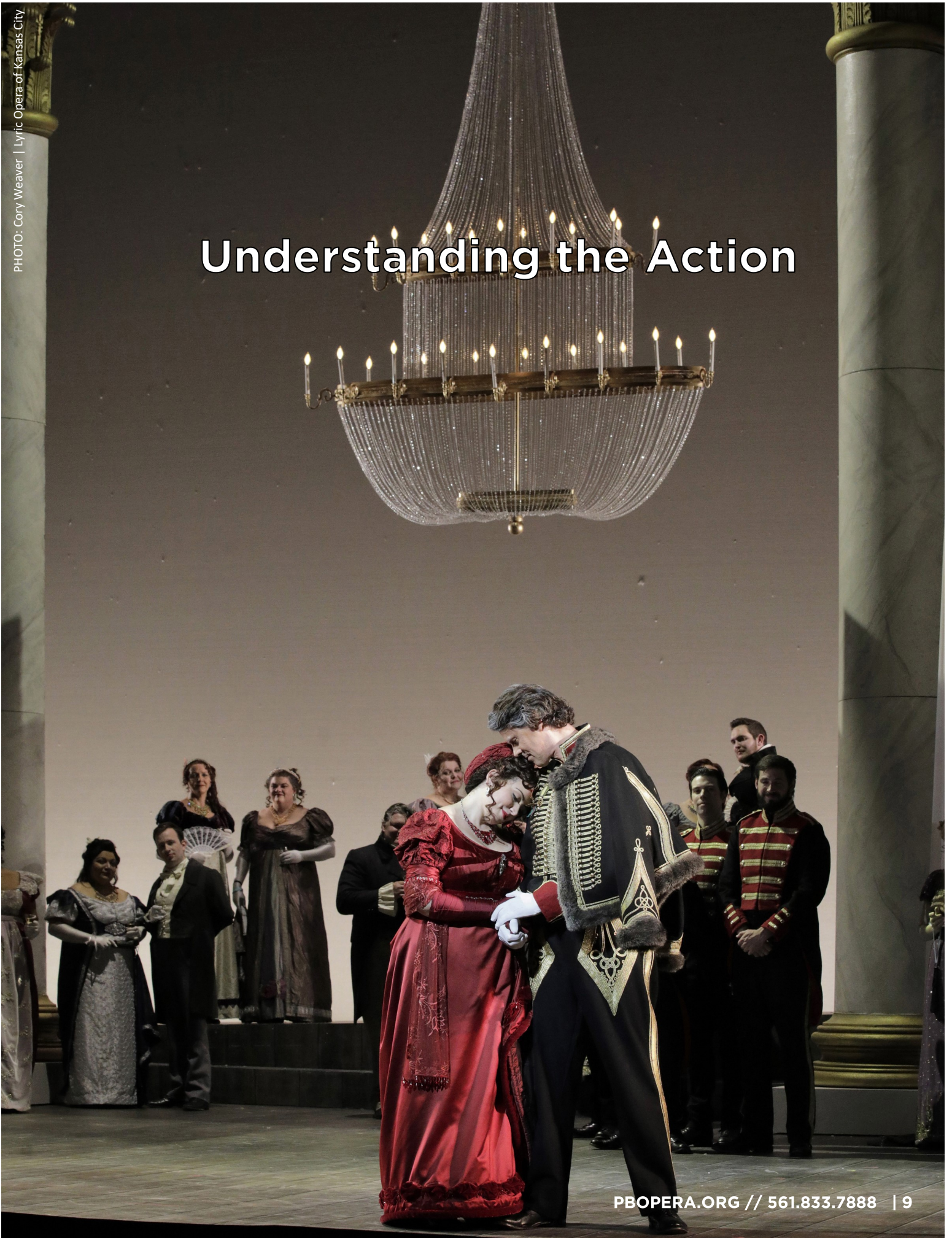
# EUGENE ONEGIN

## The Characters

CHARACTER		PRONUNCIATION	VOICE TYPE
<b>Tatiana Larina</b>	A young woman from a country estate. Tatiana's life has been secluded, and although is shy and bookish, she is capable of passionate expression and deep attachment.	ta-TYAH-na LAY-ree-na	soprano
<b>Eugene Oegin</b>	A young aristocrat. Disillusioned and aloof, Oegin is dismissive of the world and people around him. His careless attitude will lead him to tragedy and loss.	yoo-JEEN oh-NYEH-gin	baritone
<b>Lensky</b>	A young poet and neighbor of the Larina family. Lenski is earnest, idealistic, and deeply in love with Olga.	LEN-skee	tenor
<b>Olga Larina</b>	Tatiana's younger sister. More extroverted than her sister, Olga's innocent flirtation with Oegin ultimately leads to tragedy.	AWL-guh LAY-ree-na	contralto
<b>Prince Gremin</b>	A wealthy aristocrat.	GREH-min	bass
<b>Madame Larina</b>	The mother of Tatiana and Olga.	LAH-ree-na	mezzo-soprano
<b>Filippyevna</b>	The sisters' aging nanny.	fil-eeep-YEV-nah	mezzo-soprano



# Understanding the Action





# EUGENE ONEGIN

## Setting

St. Petersburg, Russia in the 1820s.



**PG-13:** Check out lighthearted look at *Eugene Onegin* by The Dallas Opera:

<https://youtu.be/1l3EsD3zW-w>

## The short of it

A dramatic tale about young lovers, *Eugene Onegin* portrays the interplay of friendship, jealousy, callousness, and pride and has resonated with audiences for hundreds of years. When the narcissistic Onegin spurns the affections of the young Tatiana, and kills his friend in a duel, he is filled with regret. Years later, Onegin returns home and sees the now-married Tatiana and realizes he loves her. Onegin tries desperately to win back her love. Can Onegin win back the affection of Tatiana? Or will she remain true to her new husband?

## The long of it

### ACT I

Madame Larina and the nurse Filippyevna are sitting outside in the garden. They can hear Madame Larina's two daughters, Tatiana and her younger sister Olga, singing a love song. Madame Larina begins to reminisce about her own courtship and marriage. A group of peasants enter, and celebrate the harvest with songs and dances. Tatiana and Olga watch. Tatiana has been reading a romantic novel and is absorbed by the story; her carefree sister, on the other hand, wants to join in the celebrations. Madame Larina tells Tatiana that real life is very different from her novels. Filippyevna announces that visitors have arrived: Olga's fiancé Lensky, a young poet, and his friend Eugene Onegin, are visiting the area from St. Petersburg. The pair are shown in and Lensky introduces Onegin to the Larin family. Onegin is initially surprised that Lensky has chosen the extrovert Olga rather than her more subtle elder sister as his fiancée. Tatiana is immediately and strongly attracted to Onegin. Lensky expresses his delight at seeing Olga and she responds flirtatiously. Onegin tells Tatiana of his boredom in the country and describes the death of his uncle and his subsequent inheritance of a nearby estate. Filippyevna recognizes that Onegin has had a profound effect on Tatiana.

Tatiana is dressed for bed. Restless and unable to sleep, she asks her nurse Filippyevna to tell her about her youth and early marriage. Tatiana confesses that she is in love. Left alone, Tatiana pours out her feelings in a letter to Onegin. She tells him that she loves him and believes that she will never feel this way about anyone else, and begs him to



understand and help her. She finishes writing the letter at dawn. A shepherd's pipe is heard in the distance. Filippyevna enters the room to wake Tatiana. Tatiana persuades her to send her grandson to deliver the letter to Onegin.

Servant girls pick fruit and sing as they work. Tatiana waits anxiously for Onegin's arrival. Onegin enters to see Tatiana and give her his answer to her letter. He explains, not unkindly, that he is not a man who loves easily and is unsuited to marriage. He is unworthy of her love and can only offer her brotherly affection. He warns Tatiana to be less emotionally open in the future. The voices of the servant girls singing are heard again. Tatiana is crushed and unable to reply.

## ACT II

A ball is being given in honor of Tatiana, whose name day it is. Onegin is dancing with her. He grows irritated with a group of neighbors who gossip about him and Tatiana, and with Lensky for persuading him to come to the ball. He decides to avenge himself by dancing and flirting with Olga. Lensky is astounded and becomes extremely jealous. He confronts Olga but she cannot see that she has done anything wrong and tells Lensky not to be ridiculous. Onegin asks Olga to dance with him again and she agrees, as "punishment" for Lensky's jealousy. The elderly French tutor Monsieur Triquet sings some couplets in honor of Tatiana, after which the quarrel between Lensky and Onegin becomes more intense. Lensky renounces his friendship with Onegin in front of all the guests, and challenges Onegin to a duel, which the latter is forced, with many misgivings, to accept. Tatiana collapses and the ball ends in confusion.

Lensky is waiting for Onegin with his second Zaretsky. Lensky reflects on his life, his fear of death and his love for Olga. Onegin arrives with his manservant Guillot. Both Lensky and Onegin are reluctant to go ahead with the duel, reflecting on the senselessness of their sudden enmity. But it is too late; neither man has the courage to stop the duel. Zaretsky gives them the signal and Onegin shoots Lensky dead.

## ACT II

Five years have passed, during which Onegin has travelled extensively around Europe. Standing alone at a ball, he reflects on the emptiness of his life and his remorse over the death of Lensky. Prince Gremin enters with Tatiana, his wife, now a grand, aristocratic beauty. She is greeted by many of the guests with great deference. Onegin



is taken aback when he sees Tatiana, and deeply impressed by her beauty and noble bearing. Tatiana, in turn, is overwhelmed with emotion when she recognizes him, but tries to suppress it. Gremin tells Onegin about his great happiness and love for Tatiana, and re-introduces Onegin to his wife. Onegin, suddenly injected with new life, realizes that he is in love with Tatiana. He determines to write to her and arrange a meeting.

Tatiana has received Onegin's letter, which has stirred up the passion she felt for him as a young girl and disturbed her. Onegin enters. Tatiana recalls her earlier feelings and asks why Onegin is pursuing her now. Is it because of her social position? Onegin denies any cynical motivation: his passion is real and overwhelming. Tatiana, moved to tears, reflects how near they once were to happiness, but nevertheless asks him to leave. He asks her to have pity. Tatiana admits she still loves Onegin, but asserts that their union can never be realized, as she is now married and determined to remain faithful to her husband despite her true feelings. Onegin implores her to relent, but she bids him farewell forever, leaving him alone and in despair.

# DUELS

A practice dating back to at least the early Middle Ages and the stylized code of chivalry, dueling was long the preferred method, and considered the honorable way by some, to settle disagreements and satisfy affronts between two men, who were both typically members of the aristocracy. Duels might be fought for a range of reasons, from a perceived verbal insult to competition over a woman. Highly formalized and requiring a series of actions in preparation and execution, the duel would begin with the men meeting at a prearranged location. If they were unable to resolve their differences, they would count off a set number of paces, aim their pistols, and fire at each other.

Given Pushkin's sensitive treatment of the duel in *Eugene Onegin*—its avoidability, meaninglessness, and the personal disaster it brings about for the title character, it is tragically ironic that the original author himself would eventually die in the same way. Only a few years after completing the novel, Pushkin fought a duel in defense of his wife's honor. He was mortally wounded and died two days later.

# BRING THE LETTER BACK

Letters clearly play a major role in *Eugene Onegin* just as they did in Tchaikovsky's real life (in addition to his correspondence with his fiancée, Tchaikovsky struck up a literary relationship with Nadezhda von Meck who would become his long-time friend and patron, but who would refuse to meet him in person). In the opera, Tatiana and Onegin each serve as both writer and receiver of a painfully honest letter—and the results are entirely mixed. That's with good reason. A long-form letter acts as a window into another person's emotions and can leave both writer and reader feeling exposed.

But that's not always a bad thing.

In the age of texting and Twitter, it's become less and less common to express yourself using more than a few characters, words, or sentences. Why not try and break that 280-character barrier and

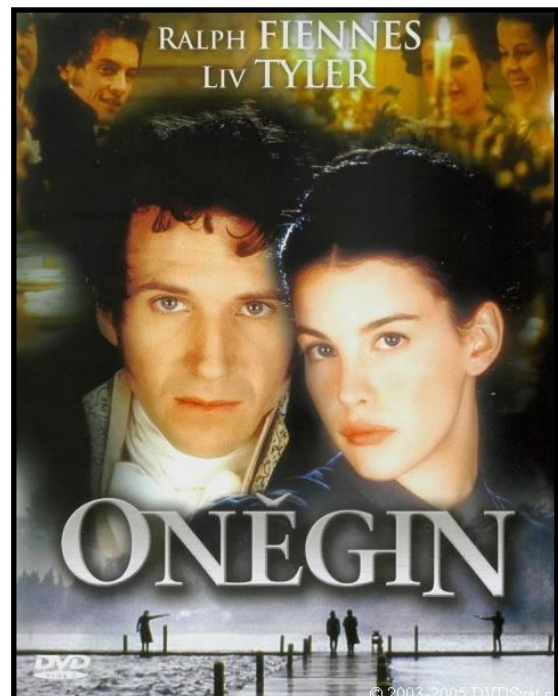
explore writing about your feelings over several paragraphs...or even pages?

*Why not give it a try?*

Pick a current topic, news story, or cause you're passionate about and construct a long letter (we're talking over 500 words) about why it moves you or why it holds your interest. Don't be afraid to dig deep and expose your innermost thoughts on the matter. Dive into the subject and look at it from as many angles as possible. Try and put down on paper exactly how it makes you feel and why. (Even better if you take time to write it out by hand instead of type it!)

If you're comfortable, share your letter with friends and family, or take things a step further and send it to a local legislator or journalist who you think might be willing to hear your opinion on an important issue.

**FUN FACT:** The tale of *Eugene Onegin* has been adapted many times since its publication, in films, ballets, plays, and more. These works include a 1911 silent film directed by Vasili Goncharov, a German film (also from the silent era) directed by Alfred Halm, and much more recently, a 1999 film starring Ralph Fiennes as Onegin and Liv Tyler as Tatiana.





## Beyond the score

**Learning to Listen.** Try thinking of opera singing as it's own type of language or speech. When we're speaking, our emotions can change the way our voices sound from moment to moment—and one word can have a thousand different meanings depending on *how* we say it (loudly, softly, quickly, slowly, with a high- or low-pitched voice, etc.). The same is true for the characters in an opera. Each voice you'll hear will have its own special flavor depending on who the character is and what he or she is saying.

Tatiana, for example, is a shy young woman with a very romantic streak. Her voice, therefore, will be on the higher side (to provide a clue that she's innocent and wistful) but will occasionally soar above the orchestra (to represent her passionate hopes and dreams). Her singing will also sound weightier and more dramatic when we meet her as a mature woman in Act 3.

Onegin, on the other hand, is a brooding young aristocrat with a serious attitude problem. His darker baritone voice (a departure from the typical heroic sound that's usually represented by the higher-voiced tenor) indicates he's a bit more confident and experienced than the standard romantic lead. His short, elegant phrases also tend to suggest his character is mostly calm and in control.

When in doubt about how a character is feeling or what they're thinking, always pay close attention to exactly how they *sound*. (The instruments in the orchestra will give you helpful hints as well.)

**FAST FACT:** While composing at an intense pace, Tchaikovsky was contacted by Antonina Milyukova, a former pupil, who sent him an ardent letter in which she confessed her love for him. Tchaikovsky understood his situation as uniquely similar to that of the characters of *Eugene Onegin*. He and Antonia married in July; within two weeks, Tchaikovsky left her and they separated permanently two months later. His marriage and the resulting psychological turmoil launched the composer into a period of medical crises, restlessness, and writer's block.

Tchaikovsky continued work on *Eugene Onegin* while convalescing in Switzerland and Italy. He completed the opera, despite the difficulties of the past months, within only eight months.

HISTORICAL EVENTS HAPPENING WHEN TCHAIKOVSKY WROTE  
EUGENE ONEGIN (1877)

Jan 8	Native American War Leader, Crazy Horse, and his warriors fight their last battle with the United States Cavalry at Wolf Mountain (Montana)
Jan 25	Congress establishes the Electoral Commission to determine the disputed presidential election
Feb 12	US railroad builders strike against wage reduction
Feb 20	First cantilever bridge in US completed in Harrodsburg, Kentucky
Mar 2	US Electoral Commission declares Rutherford B. Hayes (R) winner of the presidential election with an electoral vote of 185-184 against Samuel J. Tilden (D)
Mar 13	American Chester Greenwood patents earmuffs (“ear mufflers”) after inventing them at age 15
Mar 18	US President Rutherford B. Hayes appoints abolitionist Frederick Douglass marshal of Washington, D.C.
Apr 2	First Easter egg roll held on White House lawn
Apr 10	First human cannonball act performed in London
Apr 12	Catcher’s mask first used in a baseball game
Apr 24	Russo-Turkish War, 1877-1878: Russia declares war on the Ottoman Empire
June 15	Soldier and former slave, Henry Ossian Flipper, becomes first African American to graduate from West Point Military Academy
July 9	First ever Wimbledon tennis championship begins; men’s singles only
July 31	Second Russian assault of Plevna, Turkey fails, during Russo-Turkish War, 7,300 Russians casualties
Aug 12	Thomas Edison completes the first model for the phonograph
Dec 6	Washington Post publishes their first edition



# Engage Your Mind



# EUGENE ONEGIN

## Curriculum for further study

The following pages contain Lesson Plans and accompanying materials for grades 6-12. Lesson Plans were crafted according to curriculum standards set forth and approved by the state of Florida. Palm Beach Opera's curriculum is approved by The School District of Palm Beach County.

For questions about the Lesson Plans, or for more information about how Palm Beach Opera can serve your classroom, email [education@pbopera.org](mailto:education@pbopera.org).







PALM  
BEACH  
**OPERA**

EUGENE ONEGIN  
OPERA REHEARSAL 101

68

LESSON PLAN & MATERIALS

Character Examination in *Eugene Onegin*

# PALM BEACH OPERA

## Opera Rehearsal 101: EUGENE ONEGIN Curriculum (68)

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SCHOOL NAME:

DATE:

LESSON PLAN

CHARACTER EXAMINATION in *Eugene Onegin* (68)

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UNIT LESSON

Students use the descriptive plot to create a backstory for a character.

Suggested time frame: 1 or 2 class periods

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

How can we build a character's backstory using historical facts and clues from a story resulting in creative expressions of our own storytelling?

### CORE CONTENT LEARNING GOAL

Students will use evidence from text to develop a clear story that reveals their point of view.

### CORE STANDARD(S)

LAFS.68.RH.2.6

LAFS.68.WHST.2.4

LAFS.68.WHST.3.9

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### ART CONTENT LEARNING GOAL

Students will imagine alternate storylines for characters that reflect understanding of a different culture.

### ART STANDARD(S)

TH.68.O.2.3

TH.68.H.1.4

I CAN STATEMENTS

- Understand the plot of an opera.
- Create an expanded storyline based on information presented.
- Make personal creative choices and defend them.

VOCABULARY

Opera, Plot, Synopsis, Backstory

TECHNOLOGY & MATERIALS

Synopsis, Character Examination: Creative Writing worksheet, Computer for research



## LESSON

Step 1	Ask students to identify elements of plot: introduction/exposition, conflict/rising action, climax, falling action, resolution, as well as the setting and characters. (Note: more detailed versions of the opera synopsis can be found online by other reputable opera companies and institutions).
Step 2	Ask students to keep characters in mind as they read through the synopsis of the opera <i>Eugene Onegin</i> . Hand out the synopsis and read through it together. Identify/discuss the characters of Tchaikovsky <i>Eugene Onegin</i> as a class and what we can learn about them from the description.
Step 3	Next, explain to the class that every character has a <i>backstory</i> . We only see them in a single moment in time during which this story happens. However, for fictional characters in literature, a history or background is created, something very evident in motion pictures or television programs. We also learn just enough about characters that we often wonder what happens to them at the end of the story. Give examples from stories the students may be familiar with. For example: The <i>Star Wars</i> saga originally introduced the audience to Darth Vader in Episode IV and followed his story through to his death in Episode VI. His backstory was so interesting that, many years later, they produced three additional films just to tell it. They continue to make movies as part of this saga because characters still have stories to tell based on past events.
Step 4	Task students with a small fact-finding mission. They should use online resources and/or printed materials from the school library to research what life was like in St. Petersburg, Russia in the early 1800's. This can be done as a class, keeping a running list of facts available to everyone, or done individually as part of personal research to prepare for their writing assignment.
Step 5	Give students the handout <i>Character Examination: Creative Writing</i> . Ask students to choose one scenario to write about. Tell them to use the information they collected about Russia in 1800's and what they learned about characters in <i>Eugene Onegin</i> to write an additional story for an individual. The word count, time to complete the assignment, and delivery format is at the teacher's discretion and should be clearly communicated to the students. Feel free to create additional prompts or leading questions to aid students in their writing.
Step 6	OPTIONAL: Ask students to read their completed story to the class to illustrate how some facts remain the same based on the location and what we know about the character, but details can vary by use of their imagination.

## ASSESSMENT

4

Student completed a well written and creative assignment in an appropriate context based on historical facts with a thorough description of choices and communicated his or her ideas effectively.

3

Student executed a completed assignment with a creative concept that enhanced the story but provided little historical context; effectively communicated his or her ideas.

2

Presented an incomplete concept and did not attempt to creatively add to the character's storyline; briefly explained choices but showed a lack of interest with little or no historical context.

1

Student did not complete the assignment or did very little to attempt writing in the spirit of the assignment.

## TEST TAKING STRATEGIES

Following instructions, analyzing information, time management, organizing information, written communication

## ESOL STRATEGIES

Text connections, reading aloud, flexible timing, and group discussion



# PALM BEACH OPERA

## Opera Rehearsal 101: EUGENE ONEGIN

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Student Name:

Date:

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### CHARACTER EXAMINATION: CREATIVE WRITING

Review the two scenarios below. After researching life in Russia in the early 1800's, select one assignment that interests you. Be sure to meet all additional requirements set for your writing, including word count, format, etc. But most importantly, stay creative!

#### OPTION #1:

In *Eugene Onegin*, Tatiana has a younger sister named Olga. We see from the beginning that the girls have entirely different personalities. Tatiana is a romantic who easily gets lost in the book she is reading. Olga seems much more carefree and is ready to go join in the harvest celebration. What do you think it was like growing up as sisters? Write a biography for the fictional character, Olga, keeping in mind the setting is Russia in the early 1800's. Did their mother treat the girls differently? Did the girls play together, or was Tatiana always studious, leaving Olga to find her own entertainment? How did Olga meet her fiancé, Lensky? What was their first date? How did he propose marriage, or did she? Why is Lensky so jealous of Onegin? What happened to Olga after the duel between Onegin and Lensky?

#### OPTION #2:

Five years have passed between the second and third act of *Eugene Onegin*. At this point, Onegin is feeling alone, empty, and regretful over his duel with Lensky. We are never informed as to what Onegin has been doing other than traveling extensively around Europe. Write some entries in Onegin's travel journal. Think about where he traveled, how he traveled, who he met along the way, in what hotels, inns, or homes did he stay, where he ate, etc. What landmarks did he see? Did he create any relationships along the way? Include as many details as possible, including why he came to the ball where he reunites with Tatiana.

# PALM BEACH OPERA

## Opera Rehearsal 101: EUGENE ONEGIN

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### CHARACTER EXAMINATION: EUGENE ONEGIN SYNOPSIS

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#### Setting

St. Petersburg, Russia in the 1820s.

#### ACT I

Madame Larina and the nurse Filippyevna are sitting outside in the garden. They can hear Madame Larina's two daughters, Tatiana and her younger sister Olga, singing a love song. Madame Larina begins to reminisce about her own courtship and marriage. A group of peasants enter, and celebrate the harvest with songs and dances. Tatiana and Olga watch. Tatiana has been reading a romantic novel and is absorbed by the story; her carefree sister, on the other hand, wants to join in the celebrations. Madame Larina tells Tatiana that real life is very different from her novels. Filippyevna announces that visitors have arrived: Olga's fiancé Lensky, a young poet, and his friend Eugene Onegin, visiting the area from St Petersburg. The pair are shown in and Lensky introduces Onegin to the Larin family. Onegin is initially surprised that Lensky has chosen the extrovert Olga rather than her more subtle elder sister as his fiancée. Tatiana for her part is immediately and strongly attracted to Onegin. Lensky expresses his delight at seeing Olga and she responds flirtatiously. Onegin tells Tatiana of his boredom in the country and describes the death of his uncle and his subsequent inheritance of a nearby estate. Filippyevna recognizes that Onegin has had a profound effect on Tatiana.

Tatiana is dressed for bed. Restless and unable to sleep, she asks her nurse Filippyevna to tell her about her youth and early marriage. Tatiana confesses that she is in love. Left alone, Tatiana pours out her feelings in a letter to Onegin. She tells him that she loves him and believes that she will never feel this way about anyone else, and begs him to understand and help her. She finishes writing the letter at dawn. A shepherd's pipe is heard in the distance. Filippyevna enters the room to wake Tatiana. Tatiana persuades her to send her grandson to deliver the letter to Onegin.

Servant girls pick fruit and sing as they work. Tatiana waits anxiously for Onegin's arrival. Onegin enters to see Tatiana and give her his answer to her letter. He explains, not unkindly, that he is not a man who loves easily and is unsuited to marriage. He is unworthy of her love and can only offer her brotherly affection. He warns Tatiana to be less emotionally open in the future. The voices of the servant girls singing are heard again. Tatiana is crushed and unable to reply.

#### ACT II

A ball is being given in honor of Tatiana, whose name day it is. Onegin is dancing with her. He grows irritated with a group of neighbors who gossip about him and Tatiana, and with Lensky for persuading him to come to the ball. He decides to avenge himself by dancing and flirting with Olga. Lensky is astounded and becomes



extremely jealous. He confronts Olga but she cannot see that she has done anything wrong and tells Lensky not to be ridiculous. Onegin asks Olga to dance with him again and she agrees, as “punishment” for Lensky’s jealousy. The elderly French tutor Monsieur Triquet sings some couplets in honor of Tatiana, after which the quarrel between Lensky and Onegin becomes more intense. Lensky renounces his friendship with Onegin in front of all the guests, and challenges Onegin to a duel, which the latter is forced, with many misgivings, to accept. Tatiana collapses and the ball ends in confusion.

Lensky is waiting for Onegin with his second Zaretsky. Lensky reflects on his life, his fear of death and his love for Olga. Onegin arrives with his manservant Guillot. Both Lensky and Onegin are reluctant to go ahead with the duel, reflecting on the senselessness of their sudden enmity. But it is too late; neither man has the courage to stop the duel. Zaretsky gives them the signal and Onegin shoots Lensky dead.

## **ACT III**

Five years have passed, during which Onegin has travelled extensively around Europe. Standing alone at a ball, he reflects on the emptiness of his life and his remorse over the death of Lensky. Prince Gremin enters with Tatiana, his wife, now a grand, aristocratic beauty. She is greeted by many of the guests with great deference. Onegin is taken aback when he sees Tatiana, and deeply impressed by her beauty and noble bearing. Tatiana, in turn, is overwhelmed with emotion when she recognizes him, but tries to suppress it. Gremin tells Onegin about his great happiness and love for Tatiana, and re-introduces Onegin to his wife. Onegin, suddenly injected with new life, realizes that he is in love with Tatiana. He determines to write to her and arrange a meeting.

Tatiana has received Onegin’s letter, which has stirred up the passion she felt for him as a young girl and disturbed her. Onegin enters. Tatiana recalls her earlier feelings and asks why Onegin is pursuing her now. Is it because of her social position? Onegin denies any cynical motivation: his passion is real and overwhelming. Tatiana, moved to tears, reflects how near they once were to happiness but nevertheless asks him to leave. He asks her to have pity. Tatiana admits she still loves Onegin, but asserts that their union can never be realized, as she is now married, and determined to remain faithful to her husband despite her true feelings. Onegin implores her to relent, but she bids him farewell forever, leaving him alone and in despair.



PALM  
BEACH  
**OPERA**

EUGENE ONEGIN  
OPERA REHEARSAL 101

912

LESSON PLAN & MATERIALS

Understanding Russian Culture  
as it Relates to Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*.

# PALM BEACH OPERA

## Opera Rehearsal 101: EUGENE ONEGIN Curriculum (912)

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SCHOOL NAME:

DATE:

### LESSON PLAN

Understanding Russian Culture as it Relates to Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*.  
(912)

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### UNIT LESSON

Students will research specific aspects of Russian culture in the early-19<sup>th</sup> century in order to build a knowledge base of Russian culture and glean a deeper understanding of the opera *Eugene Onegin*.

Suggested time frame: 2-3 periods, at home work required

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

How does our knowledge and understanding of a culture enhance our artistic experiences?

### CORE CONTENT LEARNING GOAL

Students will gather relevant information from several sources regarding a selected topic and conduct a short research project to answer a question.

### CORE STANDARD(S)

LAFS.910.WHST.3.7  
LAFS.910.WHST.3.8  
LAFS.910.SL.2.5  
LAFS.1112.WHST.3.7  
LAFS.1112.WHST.3.8  
LAFS.1112.SL.2.5

### ART CONTENT LEARNING GOAL

Students will identify and respond to historical, social, and/or cultural contexts as it relates to the operatic work *Eugene Onegin*.

### ART STANDARD(S)

TH.912.C.1.6

### I CAN STATEMENTS

- Choose a topic that is meaningful to me.
- Make connections between a society's culture and a work of art.
- Answer a research question.
- Present my personal findings in an interesting and articulate way.



## VOCABULARY

Opera, Synopsis, Culture, Research Question, Topic, Digital Element

## TECHNOLOGY & MATERIALS

*Eugene Onegin* Resource Guide (includes the synopsis), Topic List Handout, Projector or Computer Screen as needed for display of digital elements to support paper presentations

## LESSON

Step 1	Read through the synopsis of <i>Eugene Onegin</i> with your class. It is suggested that students are called upon to read the synopsis aloud to accommodate both visual and auditory learners.
Step 2a	Ask the students what elements make up a society's culture. Define culture.
Step 2b	Hand out the Topic List to your students, explaining that each student should select the topic they find most interesting.
Step 3	<p>Task students with a brief exploratory project – they are to use internet access or library access to find three interesting points about their topic and subsequently choose a research question for deeper study.</p> <p>Students should turn in their written research questions accompanied by their interesting points to you at your designated time.</p>
Step 4	<p>Once you have approved their research question, students should complete a three to four page paper that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) answers their research question,</li><li>2) thoroughly explains their topic choice,</li><li>3) connects the topic choice to the synopsis of <i>Eugene Onegin</i>, and</li><li>4) explains why a deeper understanding of Russian culture will enhance their viewing of Palm Beach Opera's <i>Eugene Onegin</i>.</li></ol> <p>The paper should be completed based on your timeline.</p>
Step 5	<p>Paper presentations should take place at the teacher's discretion and include a visual representation of work. The visual component should showcase images relevant to <i>Eugene Onegin</i> and the topic choice/research questions.</p> <p>It is recommended that students include some digital element in their presentation (i.e. collective website visit during the presentation, slide presentation with video or animation inclusion, etc.).</p>

## ASSESSMENT

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Student effectively answered the research question, provided a thorough explanation of the topic, connected the topic to Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, explained their expectations of an enhanced experience at the opera, and included digital elements in their paper presentation.

3

Student effectively answered the research questions, provided some insight into the topic choice, connected the topic to *Eugene Onegin*, and used a digital element in their presentation.

2

Student answered the research question, used a digital element in their presentation, but did not adequately inform the class on their topic and/or did not meet the paper length requirement.

1

Student did participate in the exercise.

## TEST TAKING STRATEGIES

Following instructions, analyzing information, time management, organizing information, written communication

## ESOL STRATEGIES

Using visuals, verbal communication

# PALM BEACH OPERA

## Opera Rehearsal 101: EUGENE ONEGIN

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Student Name:

Date:

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### UNDERSTANDING RUSSIAN CULTURE | TOPIC LIST

Review the Topic List below. Select one topic pertaining to the Russian culture that interests you. Uncover three interesting facts about your chosen topic. Based on your interesting facts, develop a research question which will:

- 1) explore Russian culture and
- 2) connect your findings to Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*

Each of these topics should be explored near the early-19<sup>th</sup> century in Russia.

RUSSIAN PAINTERS

RUSSIAN LITERATURE

RUSSIAN ARCHITECTURE

SOCIAL CLASSES IN RUSSIA

DISEASE & MEDICAL CARE

THE RUSSIAN OPERA

ALEXANDER PUSHKIN'S LITERARY INFLUENCE

TSAR ALEXANDER I

TSAR NICHOLAS I

CONGRESS OF VIENNA

THE DECEMBRIST REVOLT

THE HOLY ALLIANCE

PATRIOTIC WAR OF 1812

BYRONIC HERO VS. ROMANTIC HERO

CLASSICISM

ROMANTICISM

REALISM

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION (1750-1850)



# PALM BEACH OPERA

## Opera Rehearsal 101: EUGENE ONEGIN (912)

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### UNDERSTANDING RUSSIAN CULTURE: EUGENE ONEGIN SYNOPSIS

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#### Setting

St. Petersburg, Russia in the 1820s.

#### ACT I

Madame Larina and the nurse Filippyevna are sitting outside in the garden. They can hear Madame Larina's two daughters, Tatiana and her younger sister Olga, singing a love song. Madame Larina begins to reminisce about her own courtship and marriage. A group of peasants enter, and celebrate the harvest with songs and dances. Tatiana and Olga watch. Tatiana has been reading a romantic novel and is absorbed by the story; her carefree sister, on the other hand, wants to join in the celebrations. Madame Larina tells Tatiana that real life is very different from her novels. Filippyevna announces that visitors have arrived: Olga's fiancé Lensky, a young poet, and his friend Eugene Onegin, visiting the area from St Petersburg. The pair are shown in and Lensky introduces Onegin to the Larin family. Onegin is initially surprised that Lensky has chosen the extrovert Olga rather than her more subtle elder sister as his fiancée. Tatiana for her part is immediately and strongly attracted to Onegin. Lensky expresses his delight at seeing Olga and she responds flirtatiously. Onegin tells Tatiana of his boredom in the country and describes the death of his uncle and his subsequent inheritance of a nearby estate. Filippyevna recognizes that Onegin has had a profound effect on Tatiana.

Tatiana is dressed for bed. Restless and unable to sleep, she asks her nurse Filippyevna to tell her about her youth and early marriage. Tatiana confesses that she is in love. Left alone, Tatiana pours out her feelings in a letter to Onegin. She tells him that she loves him and believes that she will never feel this way about anyone else, and begs him to understand and help her. She finishes writing the letter at dawn. A shepherd's pipe is heard in the distance. Filippyevna enters the room to wake Tatiana. Tatiana persuades her to send her grandson to deliver the letter to Onegin.

Servant girls pick fruit and sing as they work. Tatiana waits anxiously for Onegin's arrival. Onegin enters to see Tatiana and give her his answer to her letter. He explains, not unkindly, that he is not a man who loves easily and is unsuited to marriage. He is unworthy of her love and can only offer her brotherly affection. He warns Tatiana to be less emotionally open in the future. The voices of the servant girls singing are heard again. Tatiana is crushed and unable to reply.

#### ACT II

A ball is being given in honor of Tatiana, whose name day it is. Onegin is dancing with her. He grows irritated with a group of neighbors who gossip about him and Tatiana, and with Lensky for persuading him to come to the ball. He decides to avenge himself by dancing and flirting with Olga. Lensky is astounded and becomes

extremely jealous. He confronts Olga but she cannot see that she has done anything wrong and tells Lensky not to be ridiculous. Onegin asks Olga to dance with him again and she agrees, as “punishment” for Lensky’s jealousy. The elderly French tutor Monsieur Triquet sings some couplets in honor of Tatiana, after which the quarrel between Lensky and Onegin becomes more intense. Lensky renounces his friendship with Onegin in front of all the guests, and challenges Onegin to a duel, which the latter is forced, with many misgivings, to accept. Tatiana collapses and the ball ends in confusion.

Lensky is waiting for Onegin with his second Zaretsky. Lensky reflects on his life, his fear of death and his love for Olga. Onegin arrives with his manservant Guillot. Both Lensky and Onegin are reluctant to go ahead with the duel, reflecting on the senselessness of their sudden enmity. But it is too late; neither man has the courage to stop the duel. Zaretsky gives them the signal and Onegin shoots Lensky dead.

## ACT III

Five years have passed, during which Onegin has travelled extensively around Europe. Standing alone at a ball, he reflects on the emptiness of his life and his remorse over the death of Lensky. Prince Gremin enters with Tatiana, his wife, now a grand, aristocratic beauty. She is greeted by many of the guests with great deference. Onegin is taken aback when he sees Tatiana, and deeply impressed by her beauty and noble bearing. Tatiana, in turn, is overwhelmed with emotion when she recognizes him, but tries to suppress it. Gremin tells Onegin about his great happiness and love for Tatiana, and re-introduces Onegin to his wife. Onegin, suddenly injected with new life, realizes that he is in love with Tatiana. He determines to write to her and arrange a meeting.

Tatiana has received Onegin’s letter, which has stirred up the passion she felt for him as a young girl and disturbed her. Onegin enters. Tatiana recalls her earlier feelings and asks why Onegin is pursuing her now. Is it because of her social position? Onegin denies any cynical motivation: his passion is real and overwhelming. Tatiana, moved to tears, reflects how near they once were to happiness but nevertheless asks him to leave. He asks her to have pity. Tatiana admits she still loves Onegin, but asserts that their union can never be realized, as she is now married, and determined to remain faithful to her husband despite her true feelings. Onegin implores her to relent, but she bids him farewell forever, leaving him alone and in despair.



PHOTO: Coastal Click Photography

**Interested in learning more about opera?**

**We'd love to hear from you!**

Reach out to Palm Beach Opera's  
Education & Community Engagement Department  
561.835.7566 or [education@pbopera.org](mailto:education@pbopera.org)

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