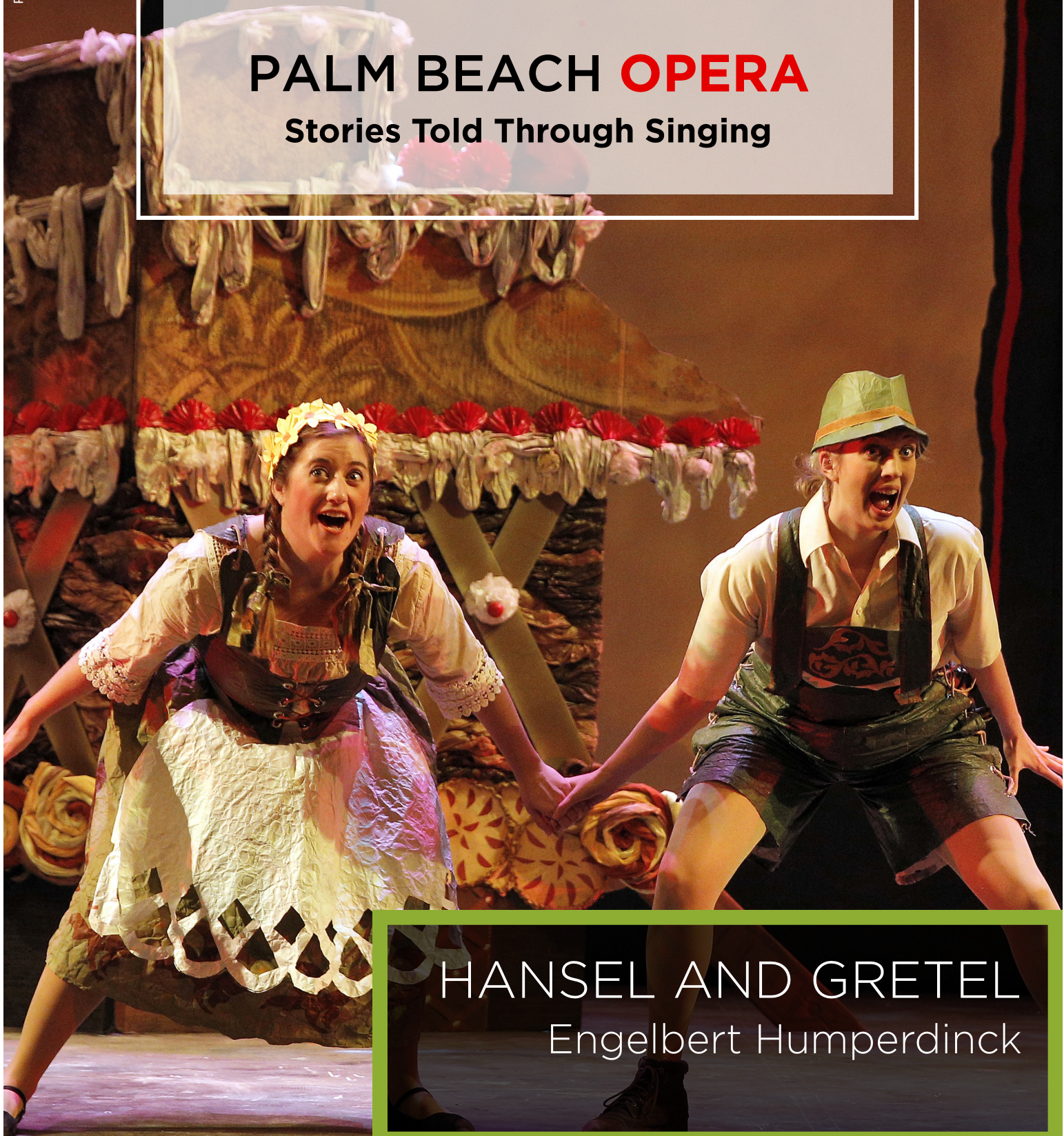


PALM BEACH **OPERA**

Stories Told Through Singing



HANSEL AND GRETEL
Engelbert Humperdinck



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**

HANSEL AND GRETEL

Engelbert Humperdinck

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The Masterminds

PHOTO: Cory Weaver



HANSEL AND GRETEL

Engelbert Humperdinck. An Opera in Three Acts. 1892

Libretto by Adelheid Wette, based on the folktale collected by the Brothers Grimm.

First performance at the Hoftheater, Weimar, Germany, December 23, 1893.

Engelbert Humperdinck

German composer Engelbert Humperdinck (September 1, 1854—September 27, 1921) was born in the town of Siegburg in the Rhine Province. He began taking piano lessons at a young age and actually wrote his first musical composition at only 7 years old. His parents, however, had aspirations for their son to become an architect.

At the age of 18, Humperdinck began studies in voice and composition at the Cologne Conservatory. As a star pupil, he won the Mozart Award (1876) which allowed him to move to Munich to continue his work. Then another award from the Mendelssohn Foundation in Berlin (1879) allowed him to travel to Italy where he met Richard Wagner and assisted with his production of *Parsifal*.



Even though Humperdinck wrote many operatic and orchestral works, there is one that made him a household name: *Hansel and Gretel*. His career allowed him many prestigious positions as music editor, critic, and teacher. In fact, he even tutored Richard Wagner's son, Siegfried.



FUN FACT: Humperdinck's son grew up to be an opera stage director!

In January of 1912, Humperdinck suffered a severe stroke that paralyzed his left hand. He continued to compose with the help of his son, Wolfram, until a series of two heart attacks took his life. The composer was buried at the Südwestkirchhof in Stahnsdorf near Berlin.



Adelheid Wette

German writer and librettist Adelheid Wette was born September 4, 1858. She was the younger sister of composer Engelbert Humperdinck.

After growing up in Siegburg, Germany, Adelheid married Hermann Wette, a doctor in Cologne. Hermann shared Adelheid's interest in folktales and had written two folktale-inspired librettos for the composer Arnold Mendelssohn. Adelheid originally asked her brother to write a few folksongs to accompany a small play she had written for her children based on *Hansel and Gretel* by The Brothers Grimm. She later expanded this story meant for her children to perform into a full-fledged operatic libretto.

Adelheid also collaborated with her brother on another project based on a story by the Brothers Grimm in 1895 called *Die sieben Geisslein* (The Seven Young Kids). Even though she wrote other plays and a collection of songs, Adelheid and Engelbert will always be best known for *Hansel and Gretel*.

The Brothers Grimm

Jacob Ludwig Carl Grimm was born on January 4, 1785 in Hanau, Hesse-Kassel (now Germany). His brother, Wilhelm Carl Grimm, would follow a year later on February 24. The brothers' father was a lawyer, but, when Jacob was only 11 years old, he died, leaving the family in social poverty.

In 1802, the brothers followed in their father's footsteps and attended the University of Marburg with the intention of studying law. In 1805, Jacob, with one of his professors, would go to Paris to research medieval legal manuscripts and, over the next several years, would work in different capacities for both the Hessian and Napoleonic governments. Wilhelm, meanwhile, would fall sick and be unable to take a job until 1814, when he became the secretary at the Elector's library in Kassel. Jacob joined him there in 1816.

During this time, the brothers had completely left behind law for literary research. They realized that the basis for modern social institutions resided in the past. With this in

mind, they published their collection of Germanic folk tales, *Kinder und Hausmärchen*, in 1812. The collection was an immediate success and would serve as the earliest decisive text on the collection and science of folklore. The brothers would continue to publish collections of folktales, but none of their later compilations would replicate the success of their first collection.



“The Brothers Grimm knew the power of storytelling: being able to pass down fragments of culture, religion, and faith so they could continue to exist and survive.”

The brothers worked as individuals as well. In 1825, Wilhelm married Dorothea Wild and four years later, published his book, *Die Deutsche Heldensage*, a literary commentary on the German heroic saga. Jacob, in turn, would study philology, specifically looking at issues of grammar. His work would eventually create the basis for modern scientific etymology (the study of the history of words).

In 1829, the brothers would move to the University of Göttingen, after failing to receive a promotion in Kassel. At Göttingen, the brothers would continue their individual work with the publication of Jacob’s *Deutsche Mythologie*, an exploration of pre-Christian German beliefs and superstitions through folklore, and Wilhelm’s edition of Freidank’s epigrams. However, when Ernest Augustus, Duke of Cumberland, would become the king of Hanover, the Grimm brothers, along with five of their colleagues, would protest his repeal of the constitution. As a result, both brothers lost their jobs and Jacob was banished from the country.

In 1840, the brothers moved to Berlin where they would live out the rest of their years in



FUN FACT: Actors Matt Damon & Heath Ledger played these famous brothers, “Will and Jake,” in the 2005 film *The Brothers Grimm*.

financial security and with the respect of their peers. Berlin would also be the place where the brothers undertook their most ambitious project, the *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, a dictionary of every German word used in literature for the previous three centuries. Regrettably, however, both brothers would die before its completion. Wilhelm would die on December 16, 1859, and Jacob would die four years later on September 20, 1863.

Who's Who



HANSEL AND GRETEL

The Characters

CHARACTER <i>(in order of vocal appearance)</i>		PRONUNCIATION	VOICE TYPE
Gretel	A young girl	GRET-uhl / 'grɛtəl /	soprano
Hansel	Gretel's brother	HAN-suhl / 'hænsəl /	mezzo-soprano
Gertrude	The children's mother	GUR-trood / 'gɜr trud /	mezzo-soprano
Peter	The children's father	PEE-ter / 'pi tər /	baritone
Sandman	The sleep fairy	SAND-man / 'sænd,mæn /	mezzo-soprano
Dew Fairy	The dawn fairy	DOO FAIR-ee / 'du 'fɛri /	soprano
The Witch	...who eats children	Witch / wɪtʃ /	mezzo-soprano (or tenor)

Understanding the Action



HANSEL AND GRETEL



For a brief narrative summary, check out this video from Glyndebourne: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mpPauSqw2j8>

Setting

Medieval Germany, in and around a forest.

The short of it

Hansel and Gretel is a fairy tale opera that follows two young siblings. As punishment for abandoning their daily chores, Hansel and Gretel are sent into the woods to pick strawberries. The children get lost and fall asleep. Upon waking, they discover a house made of sweets, belonging to an evil witch. The Witch captures the children, preparing to bake them into gingerbread. Outsmarting the witch, Hansel and Gretel push her into the oven, freeing the souls of the gingerbread children, and reuniting with their parents.

The long of it

ACT I

A poor cottage at the edge of a forest.

Once upon a time, a brother and sister named Hansel and Gretel lived with their father and mother, Peter and Gertrude, at the edge of a huge forest. When the story opens, they are alone in their poor cottage, hard at work at their chores, and quite hungry. Gretel teases Hansel for being a grump and promises to tell him a secret if he will cheer up: there is milk in the jug and their mother will make them a nice pudding when she comes home. Hansel sneaks a taste of the milk, but Gretel warns him that their mother will be angry if they do not get back to work. Hansel refuses; he prefers to dance. Gretel is infected with her brother's high spirits, and both begin to dance ("Brüderchen, komm tanz' mit mir").

In the middle of all the fun, Gertrude comes home in a very bad mood, angry at them for not having finished their work. She gets a stick to hit them, and, as they escape, she accidentally knocks over the jug, spilling all the milk. She furiously orders them out of the house to pick strawberries. Then she despairs and begs God for help in feeding her children. Exhausted, she falls asleep.

Peter is heard singing in the distance. He reels into the house and gives Gertrude a big kiss. She is not amused and accuses him of being drunk. He ignores her nagging and

playfully asks for supper. She tells him that they have nothing to eat. To her surprise, he pulls out a sackful of food. He reports that he had gone to town to sell his brooms, and because he happened upon a festival, he managed to make a huge profit. Gertrude toasts his success, and, as they begin to dig into the food, he realizes that the children are absent. Gertrude reports that Hansel and Gretel were misbehaving and that she broke the milk jug trying to punish them. Peter laughs heartily at this, and Gertrude cannot help joining in. He asks again where they are, and she replies, “For all I know, at the Ilsenstein.” Peter is struck with horror, for the Ilsenstein is the mountain abode of a horrible witch who rides on a broomstick, lures children to her gingerbread house, and bakes them into gingerbread. The two rush out of the house in search of the children.

ACT II

The forest.

It is now sunset. Hansel is roaming about in the forest picking strawberries, while Gretel makes a crown of flowers and sings a little song. They begin snacking on the berries as they listen to a cuckoo singing in the distance. Soon they begin fighting over the strawberries, but Hansel grabs the basket away from Gretel and eats them all. Gretel is aghast; now they’ll have to start over. Meanwhile, darkness is falling, and they realize that they are lost in the woods. Hansel tries to reassure Gretel, but they begin to see strange shapes and lights. When Hansel asks who is there, only an echo replies. Gretel thinks she sees ghostly figures coming for them and cries out for her parents. Out of the mist, a little man appears with a sack on his back. It is the Sandman, who sprinkles his magic sand on them to help them sleep. The children say their evening prayer (“Abends will ich schlafen geh’n”) and fall into a deep sleep as angels watch over them.

ACT III

The Witch’s house in the forest. Dawn.

The Dew Fairy sprinkles dew on the children to gently wake them. Gretel wakes up first and greets the morning with a song. Then she tickles Hansel awake. She tells him that she dreamt of angels; Hansel is surprised, for he had the same dream. Suddenly, a beautiful gingerbread house appears in the forest. They run up to it, inspecting the candy and cake trim on the house, eager to start eating, and hoping that whoever lives in the house will invite them in. Gretel stops Hansel from opening the door, but he argues that the angels they saw in their dreams must live in the house and that it will

be all right if they just start eating. As Hansel breaks off a piece of cake, they hear a strange voice from inside the house (“Knusper, knusper, Knäuschen”)—someone wondering what little mouse is nibbling at her house.

The children freeze with fear but then, concluding that it must be the wind, go on to taste the treats, which they think are delicious. Hansel and Gretel continue to eat the sweets they pull from the house but once again stop in their tracks when they hear the voice again asking what is nibbling at her house.

They answer that it is the wind. Laughing at their own cleverness, they continue to eat, but soon they see that they are not alone. A horrible Witch takes hold of them, eyeing them hungrily and telling them how much she loves children—to eat. While Hansel and Gretel struggle to escape, the Witch laughs at them, describing all the goodies she will feed them to fatten them up and make them tender and tasty. When they manage to break away, she freezes them with a spell that she casts, with a magic stick.

The Witch puts Hansel in a cage and goes into the house, leaving Gretel frozen in place. Hansel tells Gretel that he has a plan and that she should do whatever the Witch tells her to do.

The Witch returns with a basket of sweets, ordering Hansel to eat. She unfreezes Gretel with another spell and orders her to go into the house to set the table for supper. Hansel, meanwhile, pretends to be asleep. The Witch gloats over her plan to eat Gretel first by having her look into the oven and then pushing her into it, baking her into gingerbread. She dances with her broomstick in gleeful anticipation of her feast.

Now the Witch wakes Hansel to see if he is fat enough. She tells him to put out a finger so she can feel it, but Hansel pokes out a twig instead, and the nearsighted old hag is sorely disappointed at how skinny he is. She calls for Gretel to bring more sweets for him. While the Witch is feeding him, Gretel, seeing the magic stick unattended, grabs it and recites the unfreeze spell. The Witch suddenly turns to her and asks what she said, but Gretel merely replies that Hansel will never get fat. The Witch stops Gretel’s mouth with food. As the Witch goes to check the outdoor oven, Hansel tells Gretel to be careful. The Witch calls Gretel over and asks her to look into the oven to see if the gingerbread is done yet. Gretel pretends not to understand and asks the Witch to show her how. Annoyed, the Witch sticks her head in. Hansel, meanwhile, has crept out of the cage, and he and Gretel shove the Witch into the oven and bang the door shut. They dance with joy at having beaten the Witch at her own game.

Hansel rushes into the house and comes out again with all sorts of delicious food. Then the oven explodes, and all the Witch's gingerbread victims are suddenly transformed into real children, frozen in place with their eyes closed. The children ask Hansel and Gretel to touch them to open their eyes. Then Hansel grabs the magic stick, recites the unfreeze spell, and frees the children. Everyone celebrates.

Suddenly Peter is heard in the distance sadly calling for his children. When he and Gertrude arrive onstage, Hansel and Gretel rush into their arms. The other children take the Witch, who has now herself turned into gingerbread, out of the oven. All thank God for their rescue and dance triumphantly.

HUMPERDINCK'S ONE-HIT WONDER



Engelbert Humperdinck was a prolific composer, highly respected by his peers such as Hugo Wolf, Gustav Mahler, Richard Strauss, and Giacomo Puccini. Nonetheless, Humperdinck's reputation rests on his instantly popular work, *Hansel and Gretel*. Richard Strauss himself conducted the premiere in Weimar, Germany on December 23, 1893 and it became an instant and overwhelming success.

In 1923, the Royal Opera house in London chose *Hansel and Gretel* as its first complete radio opera broadcast.

Then in 1931, the first opera transmitted live from the Metropolitan Opera in New York City was (you guessed it!), *Hansel and Gretel*.

To this day, *Hansel and Gretel* is a favorite of opera houses around the world and is often performed during the holiday season in the month of December.

HISTORICAL EVENTS HAPPENING WHEN HUMPERDINCK WROTE HANSEL AND GRETEL (1892)

January 1	Ellis Island first opened to allow European immigrants into the United States and remained open until 1954
January 24	The Coca-Cola Company is incorporated in Atlanta, Georgia
March 18	Sir Frederick Stanley donated the silver challenge cup for hockey (Stanley Cup)
April 15	General Electric Company came into existence after the merger of two companies
May 28	The Sierra Club was founded by John Muir for conservation of nature
August 4	Sunday school teacher, Lizzy Borden, arrested in Fall River, Massachusetts on two counts of murder
October 12	The Pledge of Allegiance was first recited in public schools
October 14	The first publication of <i>The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes</i> by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in London
October 18	First long distance phone lines open from Chicago to New York
November 8	Grover Cleveland was elected 24th U.S. President
December 18	Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky's <i>The Nutcracker</i> ballet was first performed and becomes a holiday favorite

Dr. B. J. Kreuzberg wrote about the *Hansel and Gretel* composer in his article "Engelbert Humperdinck in Boppard": *Dizzying world success and an excel of recognition have not changed Humperdinck: He remains the same balanced, modest, proper, kind, humorous and loving person, who—like his intellectual and poetic wife Hedwig—valued a simple, private family life and cultivated many hearty friendships this side of the boarder and beyond.*



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*The Goldner Center for Children's Opera Education is generously supported by
Sandra & Paul Goldner, with additional funding provided by The Daft Family Foundation.*

*Additional Opera Rehearsal 101 sponsorship is provided by
the Palm Beach Opera Guild and
The Honorable & Mrs. Roger H. Lourie*

