

# ANNABELLE FOLLOWS THE SOUND OF HER OWN VOICE

STUDY BOOKLET



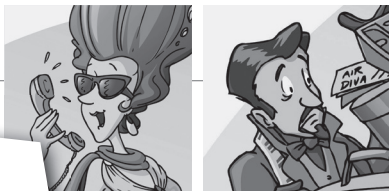
## HISTORY

We meet Annabelle Canto at the peak of her fame. Renowned by many as the greatest opera singer in the world, it comes as no surprise when a famous impresario offers her a world tour. But before signing the contract, he asks Annabelle to go to an audition. High-strung, vulnerable and anxious, Annabelle misunderstands the impresario's request. She thinks she has to show him that she can pack her suitcases in a flash, pass through customs with panache and sign 50 autographs in 10 minutes. That's when she asks her loyal accompanist, Henry, to help her to prepare for this tour to the land of opera. Henry is ready to play along, but he has his own ideas . . .



## THE

## CHARACTERS



**ANNABELLE CANTO** is an intense artist who lives her life like a character in an opera. Whether an event is sad or happy, for Annabelle, anything is an excuse to sing about the way she is feeling.

**HENRY** is much more than just Annabelle Canto's pianist; he is her rehearsal pianist. As a rehearsal pianist, Henry must know how to play his instrument very well but must also know about voice, since he helps Annabelle sing on key and in the right style. He must also be very knowledgeable about certain languages, like Italian and German, since he will need to help Annabelle properly pronounce her words and understand the meaning of what she is singing.

## WHAT IS OPERA?

Opera is a story set to music. Singers play the characters in the story. To express the way they feel, they don't talk the way you and I do, they sing instead! There are hundreds of different operas. Some tell funny stories, others are sad. Some composers wrote several operas. Mozart, for example, wrote 13.



# THE BIG OPERA FAMILY

Several people are involved in an opera:

**The librettist**  
This person writes the story and the dialogue.



**The composer**  
This person sets the story to music.



**Soloists**  
These are singers who portray the characters in the story. They sing “solo”—that is, on their own. They are the big stars of the opera.

**The chorus**  
Made up of several singers, the chorus also sings part of the story. The singers in the chorus always sing together, never as individuals.



**The rehearsal pianist**  
This person helps the soloists learn the words and the music. The chorus master does the same job but with the chorus instead of the soloists.



**The orchestra**  
The group of musicians that accompanies the singers. The conductor is the person who leads the orchestra.



**The stage director**  
This person helps the singers move around on stage and play their characters well.





# THE INSTRUMENTS

## YOU WILL HEAR DURING THE CONCERT!

### THE PIANO



Sometimes, when an opera is being performed, it's impossible to bring along a whole orchestra, so a **piano** is used in its place. The pianist therefore has the difficult task of replacing an entire orchestra by himself. If you pay close attention to the piano, you will hear the many notes it has to play.

Did you know that the piano is a stringed instrument? The strings are hidden inside the case, along with the little hammers used to strike them. When you touch the white and black keys on the keyboard, the little felt-covered hammers strike the strings. The vibration of the strings produces the piano's sounds.

### THE VOICE

**The voice** is the opera's star instrument. It's easy to forget that the voice is a musical instrument. It is used for talking, whispering, shouting, and... for singing.

**Each voice is unique: no two are identical.** First of all, there is a big difference between men's and women's voices. You've certainly already noticed that your father and mother have completely different voices. Also, certain women's voices are higher pitched, while others are lower. The same goes for men's voices.

Opera singers use different names to describe the various types of voices:

REGISTER			
	upper	middle	lower
Women	Soprano	Mezzo-soprano	Contralto
Men	Tenor	Baritone	Bass

Listen to people around you as they talk and notice how all the voices are different from one another. Do you know anyone who speaks with a nasal voice?

A deep voice? A soft voice? Does your father have a higher or lower voice than your little brother? Does your sister or your teacher have a higher voice?



# THE LIFE OF AN OPERA SINGER

Opera singers have very demanding careers. Here are a few aspects of this wonderful profession.



## 1. AUDITIONS

You may be asking yourself why Annabelle Canto is so nervous at having to audition? It is simply because she knows how important it is to perform well at an audition if she intends to get a role. During an audition, which never lasts more than fifteen minutes, singers must perform two or three arias in order to demonstrate their vocal, musical, and theatrical abilities.

## 2. TRAVEL

Travel is a big part of an opera singer's life. In fact, singers must often make their way from one city to another, or even from one country to another, to work. Just like Annabelle, they must be very efficient at packing suitcases!

## 3. CONCERTS

On the day of a performance, singers warm up their voices and make sure to be well rested. As their bodies are their musical instruments, they must be in good physical shape. Sometimes, after a concert, singers get flowers or are kept busy signing autographs.

Do you have what

it takes to be

an opera singer?

- \* You enjoy classical music and singing
- \* You enjoy languages (mainly Italian, German, and French)
- \* You enjoy performing (like an actor)
- \* You are able to adapt to different situations and play different characters





# FUN AND GAMES

Prepare things as you would for a puppet theatre but instead of making the puppets talk, make them sing. Practice singing in higher, lower, quieter, louder, and more nasal voices.

**A PUPPET**

**OPERA**

When you attend a concert, you must remain silent. The story may make you laugh, or the musicians may ask you to make certain sounds, but the rest of the time, silence is required so that the artists can concentrate and put on a good show for you.

**SILENT CHALLENGE**

How long can you stay completely silent, without laughing? Try to do it several times, trying to beat the previous record each time.

Each take a turn recording your voice. You can say "I have a very beautiful voice" or anything else you want to say but everyone must say exactly the same thing. Then, get together to listen to the recording and try to guess which voice belongs to each person.

**"I HAVE A VERY**

**BEAUTIFUL VOICE"**

You will soon realize how voices can be different from one another. Who knows? You may even have trouble recognizing your own voice!

Get in a circle. Ask the students to list objects they would pack in a suitcase when preparing for a trip. Each student must name one object and repeat those that others have listed before them, in the right order.

**WHEN I GO ON A TRIP,**

**I PACK...**





# LET'S TALK ABOUT THE CONCERT

## A FEW SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

### TO ASK STUDENTS AFTER THE CONCERT

- Did you enjoy attending this concert?
- What was your favourite part? Were there parts that made you laugh? What were they?
- Annabelle really loves to sing. Do you know many songs? What is your favourite song?
- Annabelle goes on a lot of trips. Have you ever travelled? Did you enjoy it?



## A FEW SUGGESTIONS

### READING - IN FRENCH

#### For the very young

- TIBO, Gilles, *Les musiques du Petit Bonhomme*  
Éditions Québec Amérique, 2002.

### READING - IN ENGLISH

#### For teachers

- POGUE & SPECK, *Opera for Dummies* (Book and Audio CD),  
New York: Hungry Minds, Inc, 1997.