

THE OPERA *HÄNSEL UND GRETEL* BY E. HUMPERDINCK IN THE PRIMARY CLASSES

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Abstract: *Music has a great influence upon the human being, but its capacity of modeling people remains only a potential, if it is not cultivated and nurtured. Music is an artistic product that satisfies the spiritual, affective and esthetic needs of human beings. Other arts also compete to satisfy those needs, but music is the art that accompanies one through the whole existence: from birth until death.*

If music becomes a subject of study, than it should be taught by taking into consideration the age differences of pupils and their expectations. The expectations of pupils should be at least partially satisfied. The opera is the musical genre that covers the most various ranges of means of receiving music. Opera is a spectacular genre that includes a great variety of arts like music, choreography, directing, scenography, drama and it also includes a multitude of musical genres (choir, duet, trio) and instrumental music with dance (waltz, minuet).

Keywords: *music, opera, musical education, the song*

„Let’s play...”

„Let’s pretend we were...”

1. Introduction

How familiar are children with this language, which defines the universe of childhood in the center of which lies *the game*. In addition, if to these we add the magical words „once upon a time there was...” we have completed everything there is to tell about the fairy world of childhood.

A child needs adventures and manifests an increased interest in the world of fairy tales and stories. The words used by the narrator describe images that the child cannot see. From this moment on, his imagination begins to work because he has to build sceneries, faces and situations in his mind.

The pleasure of „representing” appears in the beginning as an imitation: „let’s play the sleeping game”, „the falling game”, etc., but later becomes an opportunity to reveal their qualities of imitators, and, why not, of actors, because children can easily impersonate the heroes of different fairy tales.

If we add music to these fairy tales and games, we obtain little „operas” in the rigorous sense of the word. Moreover, it appears that the two terms – fairy tale and opera – have a strong connection, one of the first definitions of opera being *favola in musica (musical fairy tale)*. I say opera because the term represents nothing less but a work of art that synthesizes, combines the means of dramaturgy, vocal and instrumental music, arts and choreography, in other words: text, music, painting (drawing) and dance.

The same as in children’s games, it is well known that in opera everything is a convention – we all know that in daily life people communicate by verbal phrases and not by singing airs.

In opera, the music gives color to the actions and feelings, conferring the dramatic actions a great emotional force, an abundance of spiritual shades, even limpidity (serenity) of expression, which has a strong effect on the listener. While listening to an air, one can tell beyond any doubt if the singer is happy or sad, if she loves or hates.

Consequently, the opera means: words, game, dance and music, overall, the best way of stepping for the first time on the magical land of music, and of introducing musical education in primary classes.

This education is first realized by means of listening and interpretation activities, which offer the students the possibility of observing, comparing, recognizing, identifying and generalizing aesthetical judgment criteria. This is also an opportunity of developing their musical perception and it challenges their curiosity and interest in participating in authentic artistic manifestations.

In opera, the additive element is enriched by the visual element: besides the pleasure of listening to something beautiful, opera offers the possibility of seeing in addition. How magnificent is this magical experience of music, voices and story!

Children can easily become accustomed to this genre, especially with those opera created specifically for them.

One of the most representative examples in this respect is *Hänsel and Gretel* by Engelbert Humperdinck, an opera for children.

But for the first contact with this genre to be memorable and nothing to limit the experience of watching a „live” performance, it is recommended that we accustom the children with everything that *Hänsel and Gretel* opera means. Of course, this task is assigned to the teacher.

In order to unveil this magical world, the teacher has to guide his work with the children according to some goals and objectives. The most important are:

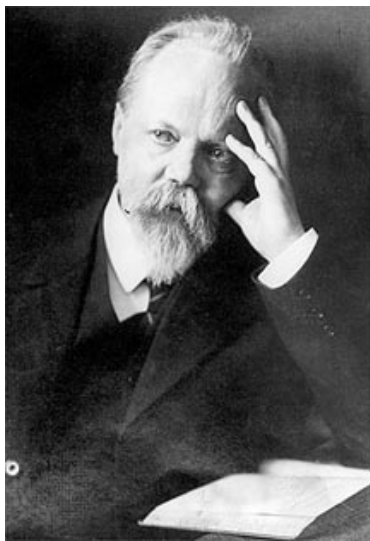
1. Learn something about the composer, and others involved in writing the opera
2. Understand the plot

3. Know some of the key musical elements, recognize certain melodies and to use them in musical activities.

2. Goals and objectives for teaching *Hänsel and Gretel in primary classes*

2.1. Learn something about the composer, and others involved in writing the opera

Engelbert Humperdinck, the composer of *Hänsel and Gretel*, was born in 1854 in Siegburg, a small town in the Rhine Provinces of what is now Germany.



He was interested in music at an early age, and began studying piano at the age of seven. At fourteen, he heard his first opera. This experience affected him so greatly that he began to compose simple sing-spiels. He attended The Cologne Conservatory, where he studied for four years. His diligence paid off, and he won many important competitions across Germany. The esteemed Mozart Prize took Humperdinck to Munich to study for two additional years.

While studying in Munich in 1878, Humperdinck heard Richard Wagner's four-opera series, *Der Ring der Niebelungen (The Ring Cycle)* for the very first time. He was so impressed by this new work that he immediately joined the ranks of other

German composers that had fallen under Wagner's spell. He arranged to meet him in 1880. The meeting was a success and Wagner invited Humperdinck to his theatre in Bayreuth to help him mount a new opera. Wagner applauded Humperdinck's talent as a composer and encouraged him to continue writing. In 1887, Humperdinck took a job teaching at the Cologne Conservatory.

In 1892, he composed his most well known opera: *Hänsel and Gretel*. The great success of the opera *Hänsel and Gretel* proves to be hard to surpass even for Humperdinck. At the beginning, he continues to compose in the same manner, based on fairy tales, operas of which we mention *Die Sieben Geislein*, *Königskinder*, and *Dornröschen*. Because none of them manages to reach the story of the two children, Humperdinck heads for the comic opera. However, *Die Heirat wider Willen*, *Die Marketänderin* or *Das Mirakel* were not a big success. Only *Königskinder* – which had its premiere on 28 December 1910 at the Metropolitan Opera, New York – is still presented to public, occasionally.

Highly preoccupied of children opera, Humperdinck composes a carefully elaborated music, in a continuous symphonic flow (Wagnerian influence), but in the same time clear and accessible and in no way facile. Humperdinck, as a representative figure of German romanticism exploits in a personal manner his

inclination towards the opera-fairy tale based on a poetical and musical background of folkloric origin.

We can thank Adelheid Wette, Humperdinck's sister, for the charming little masterpiece called *Hänsel and Gretel*. The opera was destined at first to be a home performance only. The composer's sister Adelheid had written some verses based on the Grimm's fairy tale, which she sent to her brother, Engelbert, to set to music for a Christmas celebration intended for her daughters (Isolde and Gudrun) to perform at their home.

Collaborations between the Humperdinck siblings began when they were children, as Engelbert eagerly set to music the delightful verses penned by Adelheid. Humperdinck called the project a nursery-festival play and was pleased at the warm reception it was given by family and close friends. Among them was fellow composer-critic Hugo Wolf, who urged him to expand the little *Singspiel* into a full-length opera. Convinced, Humperdinck set to work turning the *Singspiel* into a complete opera with no spoken dialogue at all. His sister Adelheid worked on filling out the libretto for the full opera.

2.2. Understand the plot

Adelheid Wette based her libretto on a story from the Grimm Brothers' collection, Kinder- und Hausmärchen (*Nursery and Household Tales*). The first of many editions was published in Berlin in 1812.

When Engelbert Humperdinck's sister decided to adapt the Grimm story of Hänsel and Gretel as a play for her children, she made several changes in the story to become more moralistic and perhaps more religious. In the original version of the story, the stepmother is responsible for talking Hänsel and Gretel's father into leaving them in the woods. Her rationale is that they will all starve if they do not get rid of the children. Although he is reluctant, the father agrees and they take the children out several times to "lose" them in the woods. Hänsel and Gretel are clever and manage to return home thanks to Hänsel collecting pebbles and using them to find their way home. Unfortunately, the last time out, the stepmother locks the door and Hänsel cannot collect the pebbles and must use bread, which we know is eaten by the forest birds. When Hänsel and Gretel happen upon the witch, it is Gretel who manages to get the witch into her own oven and rescues Hänsel. They gather the witch's treasure and return home to find that their stepmother has died and their father is overjoyed to see them.

In Adelheid Wette's operatic version, the stepmother is now the children's biological mother. Hänsel and Gretel have been playing. When their mother returns from working, she is angry that they have been up to no good. She accidentally spills the pitcher of milk (their only food for the day) and loses her temper. She sends the children out to pick strawberries for dinner. When their father returns from selling his brooms (a most successful day that gives him money to buy food), he asks where the children are. The wife tells him they are

in the woods and he tells her of “the witch of the wood” who rides on a broomstick and eats children. They both rush into the woods to try to save their children. There is more magic in this version, with the children meeting the Sand Man and the Dew Fairy as well as the witch putting a spell on them. As in the Grimm version, Gretel pushes the witch into the oven and rescues Hänsel. However, both mother and father appear to find their children and celebrate the glory of God. There are also gingerbread children who turn back into real children upon the death of the witch.

The main difference between the Grimm version and the operatic version is the mother character; her relationship (whether biological or step) to the children, her reasons for sending the children into the woods and whether or not she appears at the end of the story. In some newer interpretations of the opera, sometimes the mother is also the witch (a single mezzo-soprano sings both roles). This provides an interesting twist on the idea of sending the children into the woods, but this version is not the norm.

Whatever changes were made by Adelheid, they have not changed the effectiveness and charm of the story. Coupled with Humperdinck’s music, the opera quickly became an international favorite. In 1923, *Hänsel and Gretel* became the first opera broadcast from start-to-finish by BBC Radio. On Christmas Day of 1931, *Hänsel and Gretel* became the Metropolitan Opera’s first Saturday matinee broadcast. Since its first performance, *Hänsel and Gretel* has been translated into more than a dozen languages and performed all over the World.

2.2.1. Plot of the Opera

Act I – In the broom-maker’s house

Hänsel is making brooms and Gretel is knitting socks (*Susie, little Susie*). Hänsel complains of being hungry but Gretel makes a game of sweeping his complaints out the door. Gretel shows Hänsel some milk that a neighbor has given to them for supper. Gretel reminds him that they must get back to work. Hänsel mentions the word “dancing” and forgets about his work (*Brother come and dance with me*). Gretel is caught in the dance and both stop working to play. Gertrud, their mother, interrupts this.

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The children try to explain why they have done very little work. In her anger, Gertrud accidentally spills the milk and chases the children out to pick strawberries. The children's father, Peter, appears seemingly joyous. Gertrud suspects drinking, but Peter begins pulling food from his basket. Gertrud tells him of the spilled milk and dancing incidents. Peter asks where the children are and Gertrud tells him she sent them out to pick strawberries in the woods. Peter warns of the dangers of the witch and after being convinced the children are in real danger, Gertrud and Peter run out of the house to find them.



2

¹ http://www.boppard-stadthalle.de/cms//files/foto_haensel_und_gretel_it.jpg

² http://www.bayerische.staatsoper.de/upload/media/200809/24/16/rsys_26038_48da4d1a55cab.jpg

Act II – In the woods

Hänsel is picking strawberries and Gretel is making a garland of rosehips. Together, they sing a folksong (*There stands a little man*).



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A cuckoo begins singing with them and they make a game of the cuckoo's habits, like stealing strawberries. During this game, they discover that they have eaten every single strawberry. Hänsel admits that they are lost. Mist begins rising in the forest. The Sandman appears and sprinkles his sleeping dust into the children's eyes. The children sing their Evening Prayer (*Now I lay me down to sleep*). A dream sequence begins with 14 angels appearing to guard the sleeping children.



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³ <http://www.montessori-rothenburg.de/cms/upload/bilder/kinderoper-bild.jpg>

⁴ <http://www.omm.de/veranstaltungen/musiktheater20072008/bilder/DO-haensel-und-gretel3.jpg>

Act III – The Gingerbread house

The Dew Fairy awakens the children. Gretel awakens and turns to wake Hansel. They compare the dreams they had of 14 angels watching over their sleep. The morning mist clears to reveal the gingerbread house. The children are delighted with their discovery, unaware that the Witch is sneaking up from behind. The Witch throws a noose around Hansel's neck. Hansel slips out from the noose and tries to escape with Gretel, but the Witch casts a spell on them.



The Witch puts Hansel into a cage, hoping to fatten him up, and tells Gretel to go set the table (Gretel is already plump enough for cooking). The Witch is delighted with her new dinner “guests” (*Hurr hopp hopp*). As the oven burns hotter, the Witch becomes more and more excited. Gretel manages to break free of the spell and releases Hansel. The Witch tells Gretel to check the oven, but Gretel feigns stupidity and tricks the Witch into looking into the oven. Hansel and Gretel shove the Witch into the oven. The Witch's oven explodes and all the gingerbread figures transform into dead children waiting for Hansel and Gretel to touch them to bring them back to life. Peter and Gertrud arrive to witness Hansel and Gretel's triumph.

⁵ http://www.bayerische.staatsoper.de/upload/media/200809/24/16/rsys_26035_48da4cb23937f.jpg



2.3. Know some of the key musical elements, recognize certain melodies and to use them in musical activities

Even if Humperdinck was influenced by Wagner, we cannot talk in Hänsel and Gretel about a Wagnerian music. We can rather say that he was inspired by the first stage of Wagnerian composition when stories and mythology were in the air.

Folksongs

Humperdinck wanted something simple so he used folksongs in order to compose his opera, and he introduces us right from the beginning into the atmosphere of the German fairy tales' world of Brothers Grimm.

A folksong is a popular song that is familiar to the people of the country it is from. Therefore, at the beginning of act I, in order to describe the atmosphere in which the two children, Hänsel and Gretel, are playing, Humperdinck uses a melody specific to German folklore, composed only on six notes:

Song 1

Gretel

Suse, liebe Suse, was raschelt im Stroh?
Die Gänse gehen barfuß und haben kein' Schuh!
Der Schuster hat's Leder, kein' Leisten dazu,
Drum kann er den Gänselein auch machen kein' Schuh!⁷

⁶ http://www.volksoper.at/Content.Node2/home/Haensel_0910.JPG

⁷ Gretel: Susy, little Susy, and what is the news? / The geese are running barefoot because they've no shoes! / The cobbler has leather and plenty to spare, / Why can't he make the poor goose a new... pair!

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Su- se,lie-be Su-se,was ra-schelt im Stroh? Die Gän- se gehen barfuß und ha-ben kein' Schuh'!

Der Schuster hat's Le-der,kein' Lei-sten da- zu, drum kann er den Gänselein auch machen kein' Schuh'!

The music is built in phrases, much like sentences that we speak. The song sung by Gretel is composed in a question-answer manner (exactly like in usual speaking)

Question: “Suse, liebe Suse, was raschelt im Stroh?”

The last note (A) takes the melody upwards and stands for the question found in the usual speaking

Su- se,lie-be Su-se,was ra-schelt im Stroh?

Answer: „Die Gänse gehen barfuß und haben kein' Schuh'!“

The last note (F) takes the melody downwards and stands for the statement or full stop found in the usual speaking

Die Gän- se gehen barfuß und ha-ben kein' Schuh'!

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Activities:

Rhythmic and melodic question-answer improvisations can be made, similar to the following pattern. In this way, children can be trained to create short melodies on simple words, or on verses like these:

Questions	Answers
Why did you let the big fish go?	Because it bit my finger so.

⁸ Act I, Scene 1, measure 4-12

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Questions	Answers
Which finger did it bite?	This little finger on the right.
Pussycat pussycat, where have you been?	I've been up to London to visit the Queen.
Baa baa black sheep, have you any wool?	Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full.
Why does the lamb love Mary so?	Well, Mary loves the lamb, you know.

The improvisation that the children make spontaneously in songs and games represents the most direct way of developing the imagination and spirit of musical creation.

As it has already been said, Humperdinck uses folk songs in order to compose his opera, but he does not use all of them the way they were „collected” – he alters them with small modifications.

Activities: Find in your folklore, songs similar to the one sung by Gretel and discuss how changing certain elements of the music (tempo, instrumentation, vocal timbre, text) would alter the overall effect of the song.

The second act also begins with a folk song, used this time to introduce us into the magical world of the forest with all that it comprises: animals, elves, angels, fairies and other living creatures.

Again, Gretel is the one who sings. The song is built like a riddle and has, from a rhythmic and melodic point of view, two identical stanzas.

Song 2

Gretel

Ein Männlein steht im Wal- de ganz still und stumm, es hat von lau-ter Pur- pur ein Mänt- lein um. Sagt, wer mag das

Männlein sein das da steht im Wald al-lein mit dem pur-pur- ro- ten Män- te - lein?

Gretel

Das Männlein steht im Wal- de auf ei- nen Bein und hat auf sei- nem Ko- pfe schwarz Käpp- lein klein. Sagt, wer mag das

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Männlein sein, das da steht auf einem Bein mit dem kleinen schwarzen Käp- pe- lein?

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Activities:

In the second act, we encounter more fairy tale characters, such as The Sandman ([Song 3](#)) and The Dew Fairy ([Song 4](#))

Discover the character in the riddle. Where else can you find it in the opera? Try to draw the character according to the description made by Gretel.

Discuss about the fantastic characters (elves, fairies) which appear in the opera in relation to other stories known by the children.

Sounds from nature

In order to create the atmosphere of the forest from act II and III Humperdinck uses in his opera different sounds or natural effects, taken from nature, which he transforms with the help of music: The cuckoo's song which is associated with strawberry eating, the bird's trills, which represent Gretel's yawning, the rooster's song which stands for Hänsel's waking up the wind blowing or the echo. ([Song 5](#), [Song 6](#), [Song 7](#))

With the aid of these elements, we can help the children to distinguish between the different timbres of sounds from the proximate environment and of the musical sounds, but also to discern between the different intensities of sounds from the proximate environment and of the musical sounds (the echo).

The hymn

We have mentioned before that Adelheid Wette altered the fairy tale a little, introducing a religious tinge in the text, and Humperdinck takes advantage of it when composing the music. This time he adopts the idea often used by Wagner in his operas in order to transmit a noble or pious message – the hymn that the children sing in the middle of the forest before falling asleep. [Song 8](#)

The Children's Prayer - Hänsel and Gretel

When at night I go to sleep,
Fourteen angels watch do keep,
Two my head are guarding,
Two my feet are guiding,
Two are on my right hand,

⁹ Act II, Scene 1, measure 1-19

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Two are on my left hand,
Two who warmly cover,
Two who o'er me hover,
Two to whom this given
To guide my steps to Heaven.

A-bends, will ich schlafen gehn vierzehn Engel um mich stehn: zwei zu meinen Häup-ten

A- bends, will ich schlafen gehn vierzehn Engel um mich stehn : zwei zu meinen Häup- ten

zwei zu meinen Fü-ßen zwei zu mei-ner Rech-ten zwei zu mei-ner Lin-ken zwei-e die mich

zwei zu meinen Fü- ßen zwei zu mei- ner Rech- ten zwei zu mei- ner Lin- ken

de-cken zwei-e, die mich we-cken zwei-e, die mich wei-sen zu Himmels Pa-ra-dei

zwei-e die mich de- cken zwei-e, die mich we- cken zwei-e, die zum Him- mel wei-

sen!

sen! 10

Activities:

As it could be observed, the hymn is composed in canon. The canon can be transformed into a game, into a musical „contest” for two teams. Singing in canon enhances the group solidarity, self-improvement, will to succeed, and from a musical point of view, it brings its contribution to the development of the musical sense of the children, in all its aspects: harmonically, polyphonically, melodically, rhythmical, etc.

¹⁰ Act II, Scene 2, measure 42-62

Program music

Music should not only be heard but also felt, that is why we should let the children move at their free will, as the music urges them. Among the kinds of didactical games for musical education, there are those that combine some extra musical elements: movements, descriptions, making of stories related to the content of a musical piece.

In opera, besides the fairy tale characters we also encounter religious ones, such as the angels who watch over the children's sleep. The angels appear in a dream, realized under the shape of a pantomime. [Song 9](#)

Activities:

Taking advantage of the fact that the composer wrote in the score some movement indications, a little sketch can be performed with the following distribution:

- Hänsel and Gretel, who sing the prayer;
- 14 angels:
 - 2 at their head
 - 2 at their feet
 - 2 at their right side
 - 2 at their left side
 - 2 who cover the children
 - 2 who wake them up
 - 2 who show them the way to paradise

Stage directions

*All of a sudden, a light ray pierces the mist, which gathers and takes the shape of a ladder that goes down by the centre of the stage: 14 angels, the little ones in front and the taller ones in the back walk two-by-two; the light becomes stronger. The angels descend the steps and stop, according to the order from the prayer, around the children, the first pair at their head, the second at their feet, the third to the right side, the fourth to the left side, then the fifth and the sixth pairs places themselves among the other angels so as to form a closed circle. Afterwards, the last two angels walk in circle and settle themselves like "guarding angels" on one side and the other of children while the others are holding hands, dancing in circle around the group and forming a picturesque end image.*¹¹

At the end of act I, Humperdinck inserts another instrumental fragment, which he titles *Hexenritt* (Witches' dance) and which forebodes the danger lurking in the woods. [Song 10](#)

¹¹ Act II, scene 3; part of the play. Written by the composer.

Activities:

Observe how the music brings its contribution to the creation of this sober atmosphere, anticipating the witch’s apparition that will be characterized by the same rhythmic and melodic motives.

Discuss about the different types of witches that appear in stories.

Gretel

Mit den Füßchen tapp tapp tapp mit den Händchen klapp klapp klapp, einmal hin, einmal her, rund he-um, es ist nicht schwer!

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Musical plays

Like most children, Hänsel and Gretel love to play and dance.

Musical games realize a combination, a merging of game with music. They gratify the children’s interest for music on one hand, and their need of movement, of being active on the other hand, contributing greatly to the development of their rhythmic sense. Rhythm is the musical element that gives life to music. It is expressed by the children – Hänsel and Gretel – through different body movements or gestures: arms-hands and toes-feet, head, and through the rhythmic walking, as can be seen in the following example:

Song 11

Gretel

Brüderchen, komm, tanz mit mir, bei-de Händchen reich' ich dir ein-mal hin, ein-mal her, rund her-um, es ist nicht schwer!

Hänsel

Tanzen soll ich armer Wicht, Schwesterc-hen, und kann es nicht. Da- rum zeig mir, wie es Brauch, daß ich tan- zen ler- ne auch!

¹² Act I, scene 1 measure 201-208

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Mit den Füßchen tapp tapp tapp mit den Händchen klapp klapp klapp, einmal hin, einmal her, rund he-rum, es ist nicht schwer!



Mit den Füßchen tapp tapp tapp mit den Händchen klapp klapp klapp, ein-mal hin, ein-mal her 'rum es ist nicht schwer!

13

Hänsel's and Gretel's Dance

Gretel: Brother dance a step or two
Both my hands I offer you,
Right foot first, Left foot then,
Round about and back again!

Hänsel: I would dance, but don't know how,
When to turn or when to bow,
Show me what I ought to do
So that I may dance like you.

Gretel: With your foot you tap, tap, tap.
With your and you clap, clap, clap.
Right foot first, Left foot then,
Round about and back again!

Hänsel: (repeat) I would dance, but don't know how,
When to turn or when to bow,
Show me what I ought to do
So that I may dance like you.

Activities:

Have the students clap the beat or pulse of the "Hänsel and Gretel Dance" and then the rhythm of the melodic line. Discuss the difference between the two. Ask students to imagine how German children might have danced 100 years ago. Assist them in making up original choreography based on the words and the music of Hänsel and Gretel's "Dance".

The witch's dance in the third act ([Song 12](#)) is a good example of underlining the rhythm from the melody with the use of some supplementary elements, such as the broom, the rhythmic walking or even the wand ([Song 13](#))

¹³ Act I, scene 1, measure 179-216

The Spell

Witch: Hocus pocus, witches' charm!
You are captured with my arm!
Back or forward do not try,
You are in the evil eye!
Head on shoulders fixed awry!
Hocus pocus, now comes jocus:
Children, watch the magic head,
Eyes are staring, dull as lead!
Now you angel, off to bed!
Hocus pocus, onus jocus,
Malus locus, bocus pocus!
Bonus jocus...
Malus locus!
Hocus...pocus...
Bonus jocus...
Malus locus...
Hocus...pocus!

Musical lotto

In the following musical examples, two of the songs from Hänsel and Gretel have been separated into fragments, which are not in the correct order

Put the fragments in the right order and find out the songs!



Su- se, lie-be Su-se, was ra-schelt im Stroh?



drum kann er den Gänslein auch machen kein' Schuh'!

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ein- mal hin, ein- mal her, rund her-um, es ist nicht schwer!

14

Gretel



Brüderchen, komm, tanz mit mir, bei- de Händchen reich' ich dir

Gretel



Mit den Füßchen tapp tapp tapp mit den Händchen klapp klapp klapp, einmal hin, einmal her, rund he-rum, es ist nicht schwer!

i



Da- rum zeig mir, wie es Brauch, daß ich tan- zen ler- ne auch!



Der Schuster hat's Le-der, kein' Lei- sten da- zu,


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Hänsel



Tanzen soll ich armer Wicht, Schwesterc-hen, und kann es nicht. Da- rum zeig mir, wie es Brauch, daß ich tan- zen ler- ne auch!

Hänsel



Tanzen soll ich armer Wicht, Schwesterc-hen, und kann es nicht.



Die Gän- se gehen barfuß und ha-ben kein' Schuh'!

3. Conclusions

The cultivation and the development of the aesthetic taste of children should begin at an early age, in the first class of primary school. It is indicated for the musical activities not to be limited to the actual music lessons, provided by the curriculum, but to also include some extra-school activities like concerts.

The opera is, as already mentioned on the previous pages, a very complex musical genre. We are advised to decipher its special codes before entering the concert room. If the teacher wants to make the opera a memorable and understandable experience for the pupils, he is advised to familiarize them with the main elements of the opera before the spectacle. The main elements of the opera are: *aria* (the formal song), *the duet* (singing together), the game (pantomime), the play with song, the song accompanied by dances and moves, etc.

Besides the properly called audition that forms and develops the conscious listening of children and their capacity of understanding musical messages, the opera also represents a musical genre through which the teacher can structure he's activities in a way, in which he can realize to discuss all the objectives mentioned in the curriculum, by using only one genre.

E. Humperdinck's opera Hänsel and Gretel is one of the best examples in this sense, even if we discuss only the components mentioned on the previous pages:

- *Folksongs*

Aims:

- the intuitive recognition of folksongs, respectively classical music, during the auditions.
- the reproduction of a repertoire of songs, by respecting the requirements of a correct emission, intonation and diction
- the differentiation of the qualities of the musical note, during listening and while singing (height, intensity, duration and timber)
- the improvisation of short songs
- the usage of the proper agility and power, when interpreting songs from the repertoire, by correlating them with the ideas of the song.

- *Sounds from nature*

Aims:

- reproduction of literary characters and natural phenomena by using onomatopoeic words or musical sounds.

- *The hymn*

Aims:

- Unisone and harmonic polyphonic singing

- *Program music*

Aims:

- association of ideas and impressions suggested by the material that has been read and by visual imagery with the heard music
- diversification of the moves through which they (meaning the pupils) highlight the elements of musical language, that they have come across in the songs
- identification of the elements of musical language (timber, rhythm, melody) after listening to the song

- *Musical plays*

Aims:

- the rhythmic and metric accompaniment of songs
- the marking of different elements of musical language through movement

And now...

„Let's play..."

„Let's pretend we were..."

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Photos: Source as footnote.

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