ELIXIR OF LOVE

The Florentine Opera

Opera Resource Guide

A Note to Students

Dear Students,

Hi and welcome! Thanks so much for choosing us to be a part of your school year! Whether this is your first time at the opera or your hundredth, we know that you will find our program, Donizetti's **Elixir of Love**, to be engaging and fulfilling! This guide will help you prepare for watching the show with some insider information about the Florentine's production of *Elixir of Love* as well as some extra activities and resources to boost your general opera knowledge.

After your experience at the theater, please **fill out the student feedback form**. Your input is very important! It helps us make sure that our future education programs continue to serve those that matter most - you, the students!

For more information about the Florentine, check out our website at www.florentineopera.org. Talk to your teacher about our upcoming shows and how to have opera visit you in your school!

Thanks again and we look forward to seeing you this year!

Renata Herrera
Education & Community Engagement Manager

The
**Florentine
Opera**

Some quick facts about *Elixir of Love* to get you started:

The opera is by Gaetano Donizetti and is sung in Italian! (The Italian title for the opera is *L'elisir d'amore.* [lay-LEE-zeer dah-MOR-ay])

The opera premiered in 1832 in Milan and was written in 6 weeks!

The Florentine's performance will be 2 hours 35 min long. (Pretty standard for a night at the opera.)

Elixir of Love 2023 Student Feedback Form

Students, we want to make these experiences the best that we possibly can. Please take a few minutes to share your feedback. You can [click here to access the form](#).

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The Story of Elixir of Love

Elixir of Love was one of the fastest operas ever composed. Early in 1832 the Teatro della Canobbiana in Milan commissioned, or asked, Gaetano Donizetti to compose a new opera for them to premiere in the spring. In only 6 weeks, he completed *Elixir of Love*! *Elixir* is also one of the most popular operas to be performed. In the 2018/19 season, *Elixir of Love* was #13 most performed in the U.S. and Canada.

Donizetti originally set the opera in an Italian vineyard. The Florentine Opera's retelling of *Elixir of Love* is set in Napa Valley, a region in California famous for their excellent wine!

The libretto for Donizetti's *Elixir of Love* was written by Felice Romani and was based off of another opera titled *Le philtre* by Daniel Auber and Eugène Scribe. In the 19th century, *Le philtre* was the more popular opera but in the 20th century, *Elixir of Love* overtook it and *Le philtre* is now rarely performed. Why do you think one version of the same story might have more success than the other?

Elixir of Love: **Donizetti's opera in two acts**
Content Advisory: Alcohol consumption
Run time: 2 hours 35 minutes

ACT 1
A poor young man named Nemorino is in love with Adina, a beautiful and unobtainable landowner. Nemorino listens to Adina as she reads aloud to her workers the story of Tristan and Isolde. Tristan won Isolde's affection with a magic potion.

The pompous Sergeant Belcore appears with his regiment of soldiers and immediately asks Adina to marry him. Adina refuses but promises to think over the offer. Left alone with Adina, Nemorino finds the courage to declare his love for her. Adina tells him that his time would be better spent in town, looking after his sick uncle, than hoping to win her love. The traveling quack doctor, Dulcamara, arrives, with a supply of medicine for sale. Nemorino asks Dulcamara if he stocks the potion described in Adina's book. Dulcamara's claims he does and sells a bottle of the "elixir" – in reality only cheap red wine – to Nemorino. Nemorino, who has never touched alcohol before, proceeds to drink the entire bottle. Nemorino begins to feel the

effect of the "elixir" (in fact, drunk), and believes he will certainly win Adina's love. Nemorino is so over-confident that he begins to treat Adina as if he doesn't care about her. Surprised and hurt, Adina flirts with Belcore. When orders arrive for Belcore to report to duty, Adina agrees to marry him at once. Nemorino is horrified; by the time the love potion works its magic, Adina will be married.

ACT 2

Adina is annoyed because Nemorino is not at her pre-wedding feast. She doesn't want to sign the marriage contract until he appears. Nemorino begs Dulcamara for a more powerful, faster-acting elixir. In order to obtain the money to pay for the elixir, Nemorino joins the army, as he'll receive funds on the spot. What Nemorino does not know is that he has just inherited a fortune, thanks to the death of his uncle. All at once, Nemorino has become the most eligible bachelor in the area. Initially bewildered, he attributes his sudden popularity with the ladies to the effects of the elixir. Adina feels responsible for Nemorino's enlistment, but her concern turns to jealousy when she sees him with the other women. Dulcamara boasts about the power of his elixir and offers to sell Adina some, but she is determined to win Nemorino all on her own.

Nemorino now feels sure that Adina cares for him: He noticed a tear on her cheek when she saw him with the other women. Adina returns to tell Nemorino that she has bought back his enlistment papers. When he again feigns indifference, she finally confesses that she loves him. Belcore finds the two embracing and redirects his affections to Giannetta, Adina's friend, declaring that thousands of women await him elsewhere. Dulcamara brags to the crowd that his miraculous potion can make people fall in love and even turn poor peasants into millionaires.

Sets that Trick the Eye!

Set designer for *Elixir of Love*, Lis Schlenker, was inspired by the art term of *trompe-l'oeil* [tromp-LOY], meaning "deceive the eye". This term was coined by French artists who created highly realistic optical illusions of 3-D space and objects on a 2-D surface.

One of Lis' biggest challenges was having to create the illusion of a vast countryside and rustic farm with only a few flat panels. Take a look at Lis' set design below:
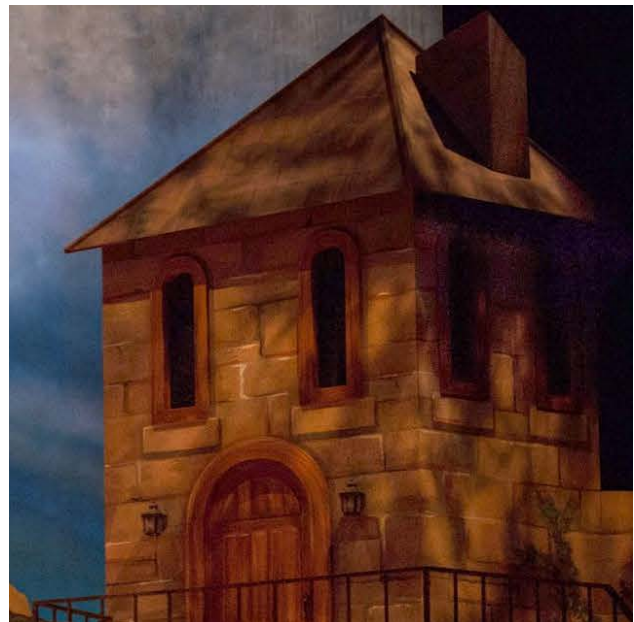

Can you tell which texture is real and which is painted?

You might be able to tell that the mountains and sky are painted...

...But did you know that the texture and shadows on the house are painted, too?

Try your hand at your own *trompe-l'oeil*, or optical illusion using the step-by-step guide on the next page.

If you want to learn more about the artists that inspired the sets of *Elixir of Love*, Lis recommends checking out these artists:
- For color inspiration – Suzanne Scheuer, Helen Bruton, New Deal/WPA Art, and San Francisco murals.
- For contemporary *trompe-l'oeil* – M. C. Escher, Banksy, Edgar Mueller, and Julian Beever.
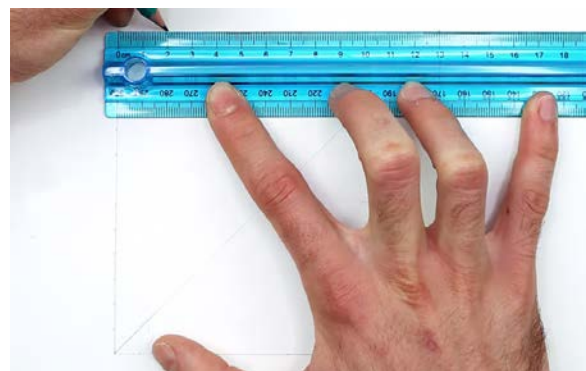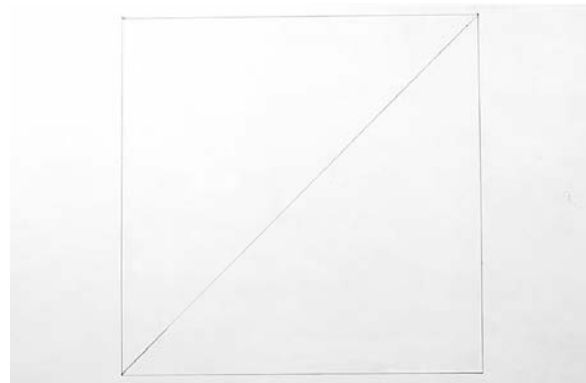
ACTIVITY: How to Draw a Distorted Chessboard
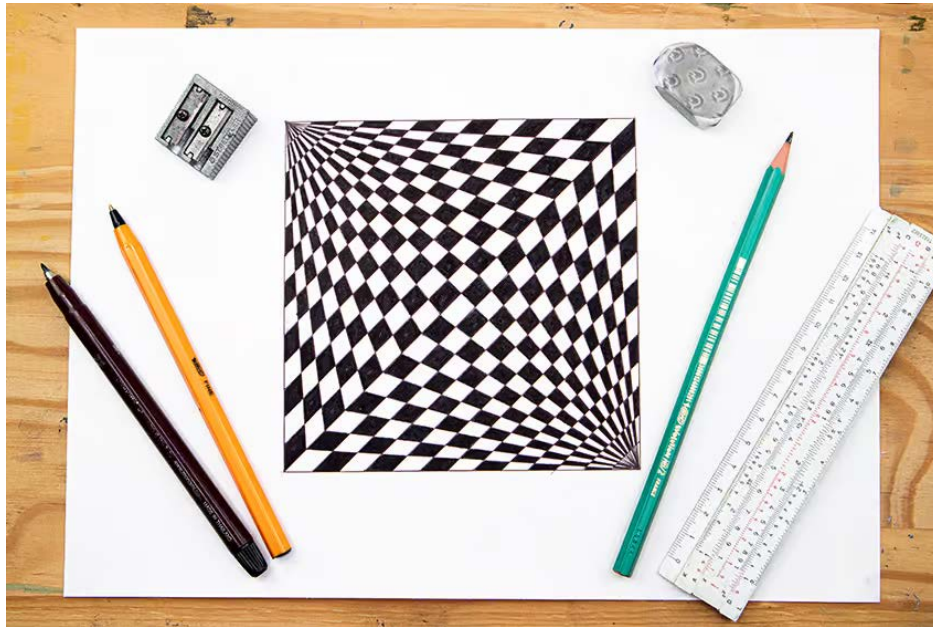
Step 1: Drawing the Square

Draw an even square that is whatever size you like. Make sure that it is even in length and width. Then, draw a diagonal line connecting the opposite corners in the square.

Then, add evenly measured increments all along the sides of the square and along the diagonal line within the square. Add a little dot of evenly measured increments that correlate with the size of the square.

(This means that if your square is 16cm, use a set of 1- or 2-cm increments along the edges of the box. This way, once you start drawing the lines, they will connect seamlessly in the square.)
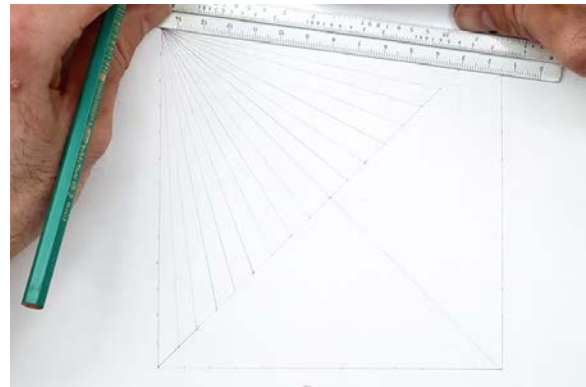
Step 2: Adding in Lines

From each corner of your square on either side of the diagonal line, you will connect a straight line from each corner to each measured increment along the diagonal line.
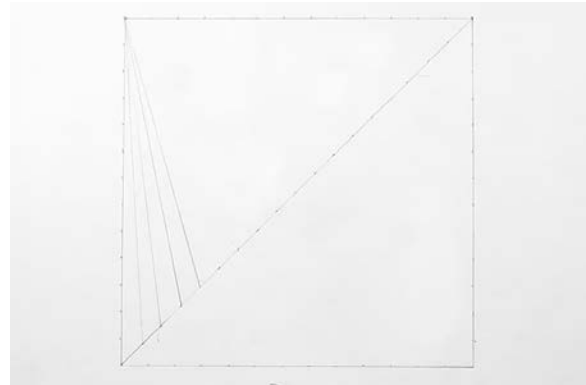
Take your time using a ruler to connect lines from the corners of the square to the dots along the diagonal line within the square.

Then proceed to do the same on the other side of the diagonal line, connecting a straight line from the corner of the square to the dots along the diagonal line of the square.
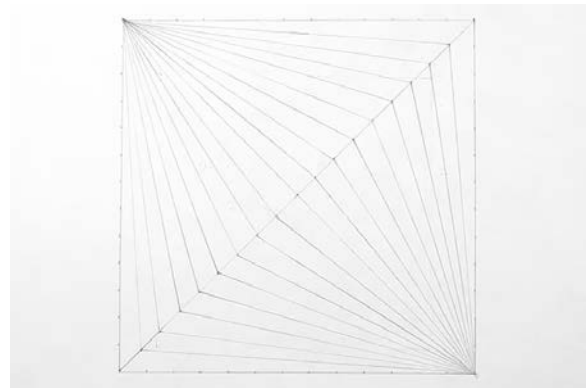
From there, connect the dots with straight lines that run parallel with the diagonal line. Do this on either side of the diagonal lines, resulting in a set of lines that cross over perpendicularly to the others that flow from the corners of the square.

Step 3: Outlining the Square with Ballpoint Pen
To make the process of filling in the chessboard optical illusion much easier, go over the lines with a ballpoint pen. Now you have more distinct lines to color within.

Make sure you use your ruler and slowly go over all the lines. Make sure every line is emboldened with a pen.

You want to make sure you take your time so there aren't any silly mistakes made with your pen.
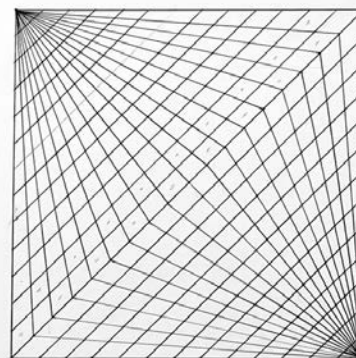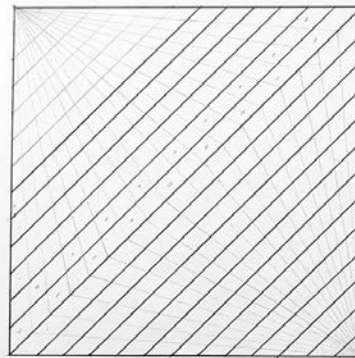
Step 4: Filling in the Chessboard
Using a marker, start on one side and fill in the squares with the chessboard sequence. Go row by row, first just marking which square is to be filled in.

Once you have done so, work from the small corners to the middle of the chessboard. Take your time, making sure you don't color in the white squares.

The more patient you are, the more likely you are to not make any silly mistakes. Make sure you use a ruler to keep the edges of each square clean.
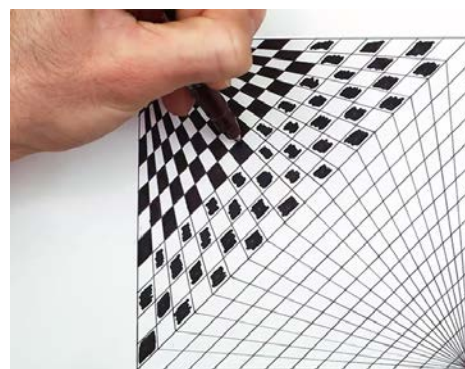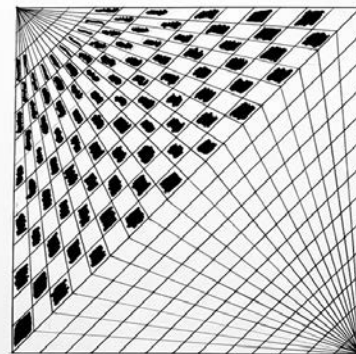
Make sure you don't smudge any ink as you fill in the correct blocks of the chess pattern. A good suggestion would be to use a piece of paper under your hand as you draw.

And there you have it! Once you have completed filling in the correct blocks, you will have an obscure chess board optical illusion drawing.
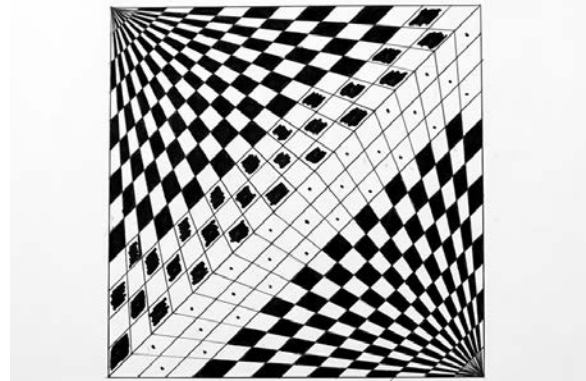
LISTENING GUIDE

Here's a guide to some of the most famous opera moments in *Elixir of Love!*

Quanto e bella (How beautiful she is)
Nemorino watches Adina and thinks of how much he loves her.

Della crudele Isotta (Of the cruel Isolde)
Adina reads the story of Tristan and Isolde.

Come Paride vezzoso (Like charming Paris)
Sergeant Belcore introduces himself.

Chiedi all'aura lusinghiera (Ask the flattering aura)
Nemorino finds the courage to tell Adina that he loves her. Adina does not feel the same way.

Udite, udite, o rustici (Listen, listen, oh peasants)
Dulcamara introduces himself and describes his medicines.

Esulti pur la Barbara (Rejoice cruel one)
Nemorino begins to feel the effects of the "elixir" and becomes over-confident.

Io son ricco e tu sei bella (I am rich and you are beautiful)
Dulcamara and Adina sing a song together at her pre-wedding party.

Venti scudi (Twenty shields)
Sergeant Belcore convinces Nemorino to join the army in order to earn money on the spot.

Quanto amore ed io spietata (How much love and I am ruthless)
Dulcamara boasts about the power of his elixir and offers to sell Adina some, but she is determined to win Nemorino all on her own.

Una furtiva lagrima (A single secret tear)
Nemorino now feels sure that Adina cares for him: He noticed a tear on her cheek when she saw him with the other women.

Prendi per me sei libero (Take it, because of me you are free)
Adina and Nemorino reconcile.

Meet the Cast

We asked the big questions you wanted to know about the cast of *Elixir of Love!*

Marie-Eve Munger (she/her): Adina
Where are you from? Chicoutimi, Quebec, Canada
Where have you sung/performed? Chicago Lyric, La Scala (Milan), La Monnaie (Brussels), Liceu (Barcelona), Minnesota Opera, Paris Opera Comique, Aix-en-Provence Festival
What's your favorite food? Fresh tomatoes from my garden with homemade pesto
What do you do for fun? Gardening, sailing, dancing
Do you play any instruments? I was the worst piano student for 10 years, but I still kind of can play, and I play flute, guitar, and ukulele for fun.
Do you have any pets? I would love to, but no, for now. We travel too much.
Interesting fact about yourself? I was a pop singer for 10 years (started professionally when I was 14), singing in big musical reviews until I discovered opera and fell in love with it!

Darren Drone (he/him): Sergeant Belcore
Where are you from? Sherwood, Arkansas
Where have you sung/performed? I've sung at Seattle Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Opera San José, Santa Fe Opera, and Portland Opera.
What's your favorite food? Thai crab fried rice!
What do you do for fun? I love to read, watch MMA, and read some more!
Do you play any instruments? I play the euphonium and trombone.
Do you have any pets? A new puppy, Count Basie. Ha!
Interesting fact about yourself? I love horror movies more than any other genre of movie!

Zak Nelson (he/him): Dulcamara
Where are you from? Annapolis, MD
Where have you sung/performed? Lyric Opera of Chicago, Santa Fe Opera, Dresden Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera
What's your favorite food? Hot Dogs and Hi-Chews
What do you do for fun? Enjoy the outdoors
Do you play any instruments? Piano
Do you have any pets? Yes. 2 Dogs: Ladybird and Cricket. They are monsters.
Interesting fact about yourself? I hiked 1500 miles total last year.

Laura McCauley (she/her): Gianetta
Where are you from? Tashkent, Uzbekistan but I grew up in Philadelphia, PA
Where have you sung/performed? Philly, Arizona, Chicago/Illinois, California, New York, Virginia
What's your favorite food? Popcorn and sushi
What do you do for fun? Go to spin class, watch football, and snuggle with my pets!
Do you play any instruments? Flute and cello
Do you have any pets? Molly- dog and Kipling- cat.
Interesting fact about yourself? I once had a tortoise named Speckles.

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About The Florentine Opera

Our Mission:
The Florentine Opera Company is driven to produce the full range of operatic works reflecting the highest musical and theatrical standards, and to support community and education programs that foster the current and next generation of opera audiences and practitioners.

The Florentine Opera Company is Wisconsin's oldest fully professional performing arts organization and the sixth-oldest opera company in the United States. The company presents three operatic productions per season at the Marcus Center in downtown Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In addition, the Florentine performs at our home in Milwaukee's Riverwest Neighborhood.

The Florentine Opera was founded in 1933 by John-David Anello. At that time, the group was called the Italian Opera Chorus, and it met at the Jackson Street Social Center. In 1942, the group became The Florentine Opera Chorus, remaining under the direction of John D. Anello. He explained that the change in name "was to honor the birthplace of opera as we know it. The craft originated in the Italian city of Florence, which has been known as a bustling center for the arts for many centuries." By this time, the chorus had grown to a group of 100 members of many nationalities, with a waiting list of over 100 more. In the program of the first "Opera Album" after the name change is written the Florentine Opera Chorus motto: "If our song has stopped one heart from aching, we have not lived in vain."

In 1950, the Florentine Opera Chorus extended its efforts from operatic choral performances to the production of complete operas and the company became a private venture, changing its name one final time to the Florentine Opera Company. The Florentine Opera Company is a member of Opera America. Our performances range from Baroque gems with period instruments to world premieres.

Florentine Opera's Education Program
Florentine Opera Company education programs reach a broad spectrum of individuals throughout Metro Milwaukee, southeastern Wisconsin and beyond. Each year the Florentine Opera is committed to serving the Greater Milwaukee area with arts programming. Historically, nearly 15,000 students and individuals benefit from Florentine Opera programs. These programs provide a vital addition to local arts education—both in the classroom and on the stage. Our in-school programs introduce elementary, middle and high school students to the fundamentals of opera and the opportunities that exist within the field of opera.

The Florentine Opera Company Education department is committed to providing educators with opportunities to use opera to meet educational standards, as well as to enhance learning for all students.

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