

CALGARY OPERA



INSIDER'S GUIDE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Land Acknowledgment.....	2
Characters.....	3
The Story.....	4
About the Composer.....	5
(Re)telling Little Red.....	6
Create an Alternate Ending.....	8
Reflection Questions & Suggested Lesson Plans.....	9
About Calgary Opera.....	10
Discovering Opera.....	11
What to Expect at the Theatre.....	12
Photo Credits.....	14

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge that we live, work and play on the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani), the Tsuut'ina, the Iyârhe Nakoda Nations, the Otipemisiwak Métis Government of the Métis Nation within Alberta Districts 5 & 6, and all people who make their homes in the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta.

CHARACTERS

CHARACTER	VOICE TYPE	ABOUT
Little Red Riding Hood A young girl who learns an important lesson while travelling through the woods	soprano or mezzo-soprano	Affectionately known as Little Red Riding Hood for the red cloak and hood that she wears, this young girl is brave and trusting—maybe too trusting. She also bright, however, and thinks quickly to help get herself and others out of dangerous situations.
The Wolf A very hungry Gray Wolf with a sensitive stomach	baritone	The Wolf, although a little reluctant to play the part of the Villain in the story, is nevertheless motivated by an overwhelming appetite—which doesn't include sweets!
Mother Little Red's mother	soprano or mezzo-soprano	Mother warns Little Red not to stray in the woods or talk to strangers
Grandma Little Red's grandmother	soprano or mezzo-soprano	Like Little Red, Grandma is trusting of those who come to her door
The Woodsman A strong huntsman working nearby in the woods	baritone	The Woodsman answers the calls for help of others

Calgary Opera attracts world class talent to perform for our audience, including local singers and the McPhee Artists who apprentice at Calgary Opera who are featured in **Little Red Riding Hood**. For more information about the performers who bring these characters to life, please visit us [here](#).

THE STORY

Mother warns Little Red Riding Hood not to stray in the woods on her way to Grandma's house, but the cunning Wolf has other plans.

He tries to trick Little Red, but at one mention of the treats in her basket, the Wolf's stomach begins to sour: his sensitive digestive tract cannot handle any sweets!

Embarrassed and angry that Little Red has ruined his appetite, the Wolf rushes off to Grandma, whom he plans to eat for dinner with Little Red for dessert!

Will help arrive in time or can Little Red outwit the Wolf herself?

SPOILER ALERT: Read further for the rest of the story

Grandma unknowingly lets the Wolf into her home, thinking it is her granddaughter. When Grandma realizes her mistake, she quickly locks herself in the closet as the Wolf dresses up in her nightgown and bonnet.

When Little Red arrives, she notices something is off and asks "Grandma" why all of a sudden her eyes have changed colour, her ears are covered with fur, and her teeth are pointy!

The Wolf reveals himself and attempts to eat Little Red and Grandma, but at an accidental mention of some sweets, he quickly loses his appetite and the two women are able to drive him out of the house.

Grandma and Little Red call to a nearby Woodsman for help, and with the quick chop of an axe, the Wolf is no longer.

Little Red, Grandma, and the Woodsman celebrate together and reflect on the lessons they have learned through their unexpected adventure in the woods!

ABOUT THE COMPOSER & LIBRETTIST

The composer writes the music of an opera and the librettist writes the words (dialogue and song lyrics).

- **Seymour Barab** was an American cellist and composer, best known for his light-hearted one-act operas for children, including *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Cinderella*, and *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*.
- Seymour Barab was born on January 9, 1921 in Chicago, Illinois to first-generation American parents.
- Barab began his studies early on in piano and cello, and quickly realized he had a passion for **performing the unplayed work of talented contemporary composers**.
- As a musician, he was gifted with intuitively understanding others composers' thought process and emotional intentions—and **could play the music from the composer's point of view** and not just by reading the notes on a page.
- Barab was an important member of the new music scene in New York: he was always ready to learn and perform other composers' works, as well as to write his own.
- Barab's first opera, *Chanticleer*, was about a wily fox that outwits a rooster. He continued to write tuneful operas that were **pleasing to audiences, with a sense of playfulness and humour**.
- His opera *Little Red Riding Hood* is his most popular, and **one of the most frequently performed operas by an American composer**, thanks to school touring productions and the lasting enjoyment of fairy tales brought to life as musical stories for young audiences.



Seymour Barab

(RE)TELLING LITTLE RED

Like many folk tales, Little Red Riding Hood can be told in different ways, depending on who is telling the story.

- **Charles Perrault** (pronounced SHARL peh-ROH) was a French writer who collected folk tales, including *Little Red Riding Hood*. He helped develop the literary genre of the fairy tale.
- His collection of stories subtitled **Tales of Mother Goose** was very popular in France and continues to be read around the world. It included *Puss in Boots*, *Cinderella*, *Bluebeard*, and *Sleeping Beauty*. Perrault lived from 1628-1703.
- Perrault's version of *Little Red Riding Hood* ends rather grimly: after gobbling up Grandma, the Wolf disguises himself in her clothing and then devours Little Red Riding Hood afterward.
- **The moral of the story focuses on the not falling prey to dangerous individuals** with malevolent intentions, regardless of their outward appearance or charming behaviour.

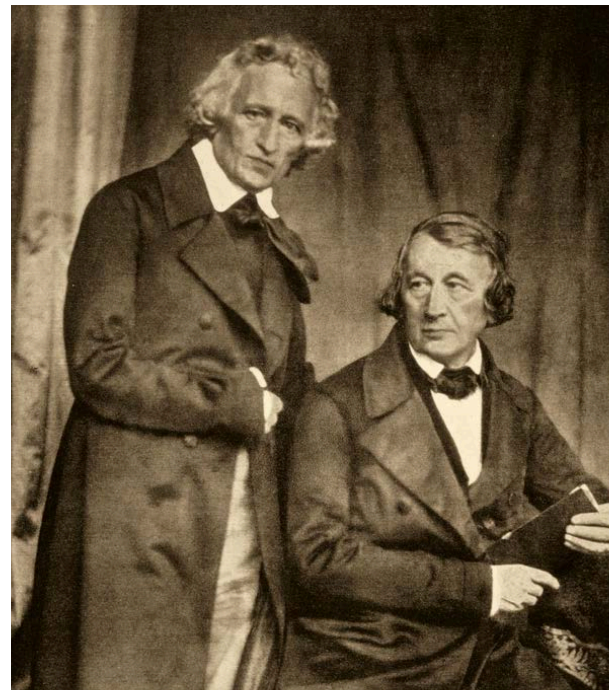


Charles Perrault



Engraving by Gustave Doré of Little Red Riding Hood, 1860

- **Another version of the story was captured and shared by the Brothers Grimm. Jacob** (pronounced YAH-kob) (1785–1863) and **Wilhelm** (pronounced VIL-helm) (1786–1859) were two brothers whose tellings of familiar folktales included *Hansel and Gretel*, *Rapunzel*, *Rumpelstiltskin*, *Snow White*, and *Cinderella*.
- Although they lived roughly 150 years after Perrault, the Brothers Grimm shared a curiosity for folklore and helped establish a methodology for collecting and recording folk stories that became the basis for folklore studies.
- In the version of *Little Red Riding Hood* captured by the Brothers Grimm, Little Red and Grandma are eaten whole by the Wolf but later **saved by a Huntsman who slices up the Wolf and releases his captives**. Little Red fills the Wolf's belly with stones, and he dies.
- **An important difference between the two stories is the question of whether Little Red was warned in advance or not:** in the Perrault version, Little Red does not know that it is dangerous to speak to wolves, whereas in the Brothers Grimm version, Mother warns her but she does not listen. Advanced readers may be interested to learn more about academic interpretations of these differences [here](#).
- In the activity on the following page, consider an alternate ending of the story for yourself!



Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm



Perrin Doniger, Smithsonian

CREATE AN ALTERNATE ENDING

Work independently or as a group to imagine what might have happened if:

- Little Red Riding Hood had decided not to talk to the Wolf in the woods
- Grandma had known self-defense
- The Woodsman had not heard Little Red and Grandma's cries
- or another scenario that is different from the opera!

In 6-8 phrases, you can create an alternate ending to the opera with drama, excitement, and humour.

As a class or with other friends, take turns deciding:

- What would happen next
 - Which character would speak and what they might say
 - How they might sing those words (create a melody for simple phrases)
 - What the accompaniment might be to those melodies
-
- Incorporate improvised accompaniments or other incidental music from your favourite operas, symphonies, or musical examples to underscore the stage action.

Some of our favourites include:

- Rossini's Overture to *The Barber of Seville*
 - Bizet's Overture to *Carmen*
 - Grieg's *In the Hall of the Mountain King*
 - Verdi's Overture to *Macbeth*
-
- Keep track of your ideas, allow multiple students to try out the parts as you rehearse, and then act and sing them with your biggest operatic energy!



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Use discussion and class activities to explore the questions the opera *Little Red Riding Hood* poses to listeners of all ages:

What did you notice in this opera? Use prompts like these to share your thoughts with others:

- I was most intrigued by...
- I wondered about...
- I really loved...
- I wish I had...

Fairy tales and folk tales like *Little Red Riding Hood* have important life lessons embedded in the stories. Which stood out to you?

- What should Little Red Riding Hood have done differently if she wanted to keep herself and Grandma safe?
- Were there any important warning signs that Little Red missed?
- Review and listen to what the Huntsman has to say to Grandma: what other suggestions did he have for her specifically?

Consider the perspective of the Wolf:

- Why do you think he behaves the way he does?
- Is there another option for how he could behave that would satisfy his hunger while not harming others like Little Red and Grandma?

Additional Lesson Plans & Resources:

- The Young Patroness Little Red Riding Hood [Study Guide](#)
- Articles about Seymour Barab [here](#) and [here](#)
- Little Red Riding Hood: [Folk Tale Lesson Plans](#)

For more information, contact:

Stephania Romaniuk, Director of Learning & Engagement
(403) 802-3404 | sromaniuk@calgaryopera.com

ABOUT CALGARY OPERA

Founded in 1972, Calgary Opera is one of Canada's most innovative and ambitious professional opera companies. With over 50 events during the 2024-25 season, curious listeners of all ages can experience the wonder of opera all throughout the school year, whether as grand events at the Jubilee Auditorium or in diverse community experiences throughout our city and beyond.

Since 2007, we've offered an annual school tour production, performing for young audiences around Southern Alberta.

For over 25 years, we've offered the in-school music program Let's Create an Opera, reaching over 60,000 students.

This season, we are thrilled to partner with Elder Saa'kokoto and the teachers and students of Sundance School for Let's Create an Opera, which will culminate in an original children's opera performed in English, French, and Blackfoot.



Throughout its 53-year history, Calgary Opera has championed new works and Canadian artists and stories. We have produced:

- 8 new works, including the internationally acclaimed opera "Filumena"
- 27 new productions (new versions of existing operas), and
- 8 Canadian premieres.

Calgary Opera's mission is to serve its entire community with innovative and inspiring stories told through the bold medium of opera. We're thrilled you'll be joining us!

To stay connected and learn more, sign up for our newsletter [here](#).

DISCOVERING OPERA

Opera is a vibrant and ever-changing artform that combines the dramatic intensity of the theatre, heightened through music and singing.

- Operas can be long or short, with any number of people involved.
- Operas can be sung in any language.
- Operas can tell stories about any time, place, person, or issue.
- Operas are still being written today.

Operas are created by the cast, crew, and artistic production team including:

- composers, who write the music
- librettists, who write the words or “libretto”
- directors
- conductors
- singers
- instrumentalists
- dancers
- set, lighting, special effects designers
- costume and makeup designers
- choreographers
- stage managers and technical crew
- and the audience



We understand music on its own terms by making music! By singing its melodies and harmonies, playing it and especially by improvising, we bring the music into our ears, bodies, and spirits.

To increase our musical understanding, we begin by learning by heart the melodies and rhythms we encounter. As the music of more artists becomes familiar, we begin to encounter unfamiliar music with more musical understanding.

Whether you’ve heard an opera once or a hundred times, there’s always more to discover.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE SHOW

Whether you're brand new, or have been a subscriber for years, you're welcome at the opera. Here's how you can get the most out of your visit:

WHAT TIME SHOULD I ARRIVE?

The lobby opens for **Little Red Riding Hood** 60 minutes before show start time.

During this time, come and check out:

- a storytime corner with opera books for children,
- arts and crafts, including felt art-making that is added to the opera set,
- a photo zone with try-on costumes,
- a chance to learn the audience song for the show, and
- snacks and beverages for purchase

WHERE IS THE THEATRE?

Visit our [Getting Here](#) page for more information about our venues.

WHERE DO I PARK?

Visit our [Getting Here](#) page for more information about parking at our various venues.

ARE FOOD AND DRINKS ALLOWED INTO THE THEATRE?

At the Mamdani Opera Centre, food and drinks are allowed in the theatre.



WHAT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE AT THE THEATRE?

Regretfully, the Mamdani Opera Centre is a historic building that has not yet been made wheelchair-accessible.

WHAT DO I WEAR?

For **Little Red Riding Hood**, children are welcome to dress up in any costume of their choosing! For attendees of all ages, any attire is appropriate for the opera.



HOW WILL I KNOW WHAT THEY'RE SAYING?

This opera is sung in English, and the singers in this 150-seat theatre space sing near the audience. Also, the opera sits in a vocal range that allows for clear understanding of the text.

DO OPERA SINGERS USE MICROPHONES?

In almost all operas, microphones are not needed. Instead, opera singers use their voices and bodies to naturally amplify the resonance of their vocal folds.

To learn more, visit calgaryopera.com/faq.

PHOTO CREDITS

Page 5 Portrait of composer Seymour Barab. Stone Studio. New York Times.

Page 6 *Left:* Portrait of Charles Perrault by Charles Le Brun, c.1670. *Right:* Engraving by Gustave Doré of Little Red Riding Hood, 1860.

Page 7 *Right:* Dageurreotype of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, 1847. *Bottom:* Illustration by Perrin Doniger, accessed on the Smithsonian.

Page 8 Back of Little Red in the woods, Canva artwork.

Page 10 *Upper right:* Calgary Opera's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*
Lower left: Students participate in Calgary Opera's Let's Create an Opera.

Page 11 Lucia Cesaroni and Talise Trevigne in Calgary Opera's *The Marriage of Figaro*. HarderLee Photography. 2023.

Page 12 Young audience members attend Calgary Opera's *The Witty Squirrel*. HarderLee Photography. 2024.

Page 13 McPhee Artists perform in Calgary Opera's *The Witty Squirrel*. HarderLee Photography. 2024.

For more information, contact:

Stephania Romaniuk, Director of Learning & Engagement
(403) 802-3404 | sromaniuk@calgaryopera.com