

DUNEDIN CONSORT

The Dunedin Consort Guide to Opera



Creating an Opera – Part 2 (25 minutes)

Today we are going to write the basic outline of a libretto for our own opera!

Librettists from the time of Purcell would often use Greek and Roman mythological stories and legends as the basis of their operas. The plots of these myths and legends, like most good films, featured larger-than-life characters and were usually filled with drama, heroism and excitement.

They would usually lend themselves well to being dramatised on the stage, allowing audiences to escape into their imaginations. But they also offered the composers a chance to be experimental and elaborate, capturing the mood of these fantastical stories!

This gives us an opportunity to make our own heroic and fantastic story.

Most stories have a **beginning**, a **middle**, and an **end**. We are going to tease this out a little, and create **FOUR** action points.

- Place (**beginning**)
- Obstacle (**middle**)
- Action
- Resolution (**end**)

Warm-up exercise:

On the next page we are going to create a quick **scribble page**. This will help us put all our ideas in one place. Quickly write some descriptive words that characterise your story, along with some adjectives and verbs that you like or that describe the characters in your story. It's just a scribble page so it can be rough and ready! There are a few words there already to get you started... circle any you like, and add your own too.

heroic	love	exciting	sailing	beautiful
	magical	riding		scary
jumping		bewildered	old	wondrous
fiery	assertive		haggard	dramatic

Main exercise:

Imagine that you are writing a libretto about two characters going on a journey. (You may have already thought about your characters if you did the accompanying exercise for the first video in this series). What kind of journey are you going to give them? How did they get there? It can be as extraordinary as you want – let your imagination run wild!

Below are the four action points we previously mentioned. In the spaces, fill out the details for each one.

The **PLACE** is where the story takes place. Your place can be ANYWHERE! Real or imaginative. Let's assume your characters are mid-journey or at their destination. Here are some examples of where they might be....

enchanted forest

the sea

mountain range

troll's cave

dragon's lair

canyon

on a boat

Use your imagination to pick one place.

Where:

.....

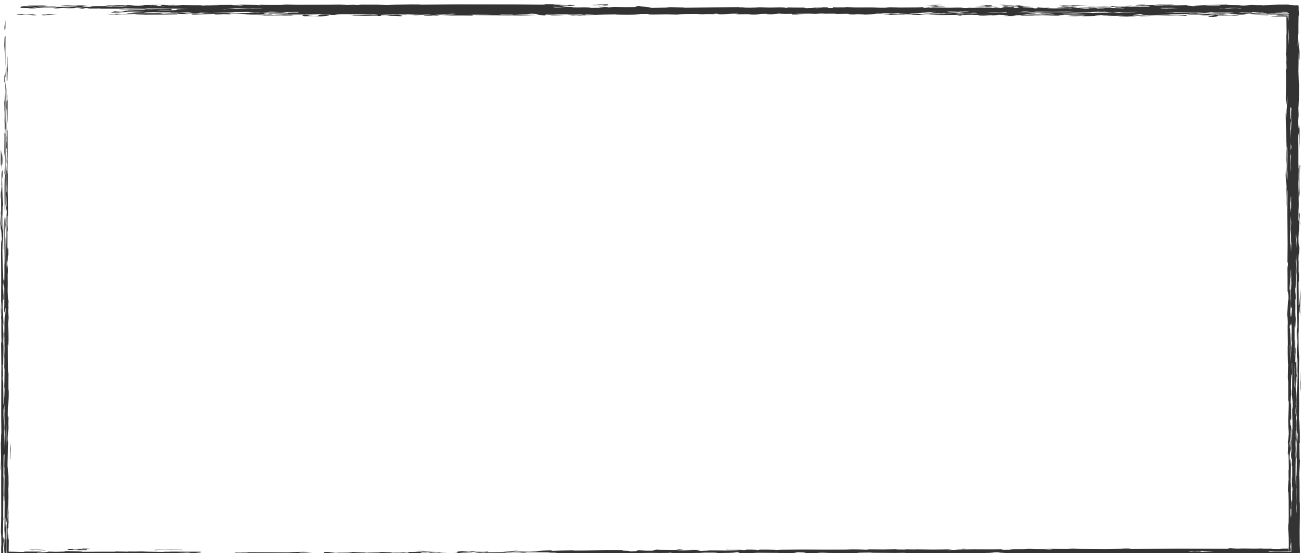
Description:

.....

.....

.....

Draw a simple picture of your place:



The **OBSTACLE** is the thing that gets in the way of your characters completing their journey, or is something that disrupts the journey. It can be an actual physical obstacle like...

- a treacherous sea
- a broken bridge
- a cliff edge
- an enormous magical wall
- quicksand
- a tornado or strong winds

Or it could be creature or a person.....

- dragon
- three-headed lion
- witch

It could even be something that happens to one of your characters, such as...

- an injury
- falling in love?

Use your imagination to pick an obstacle, and remember it only has to be **ONE** thing.

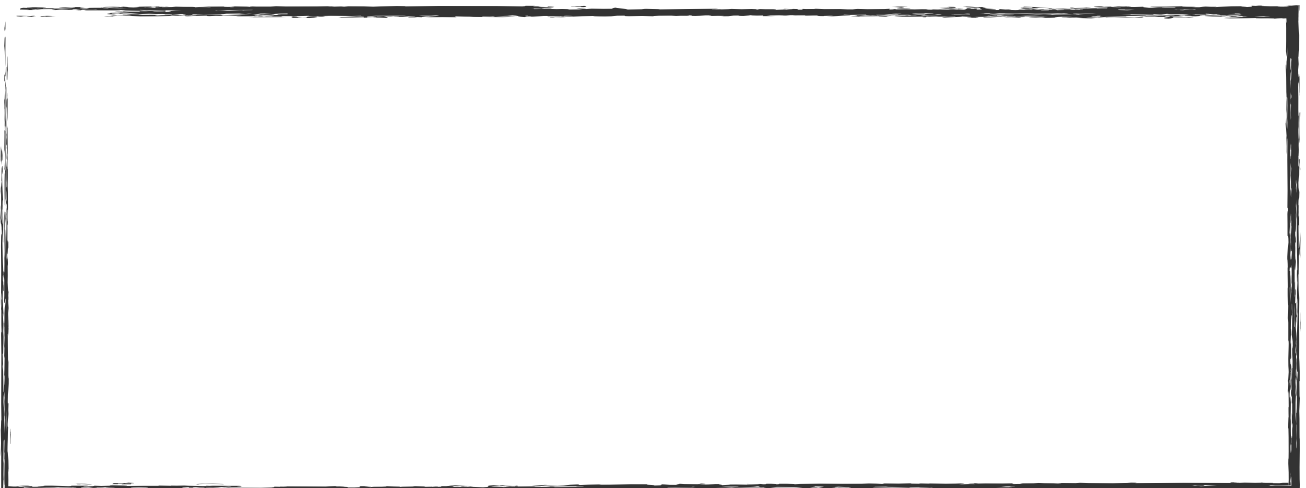
Obstacle:

.....

How does the obstacle get in the way of the journey?

.....
.....
.....

Draw a simple picture of your obstacle:



The **ACTION** is how your characters overcome the obstacle. Does it require cunning, heroism or strength? Maybe your characters need to find something to undo a spell or make the obstacle disappear. If so, how do they find it? Or maybe the obstacle is a trial or task that they need to do.

Use your imagination to pick the action your characters will do to overcome your obstacle.

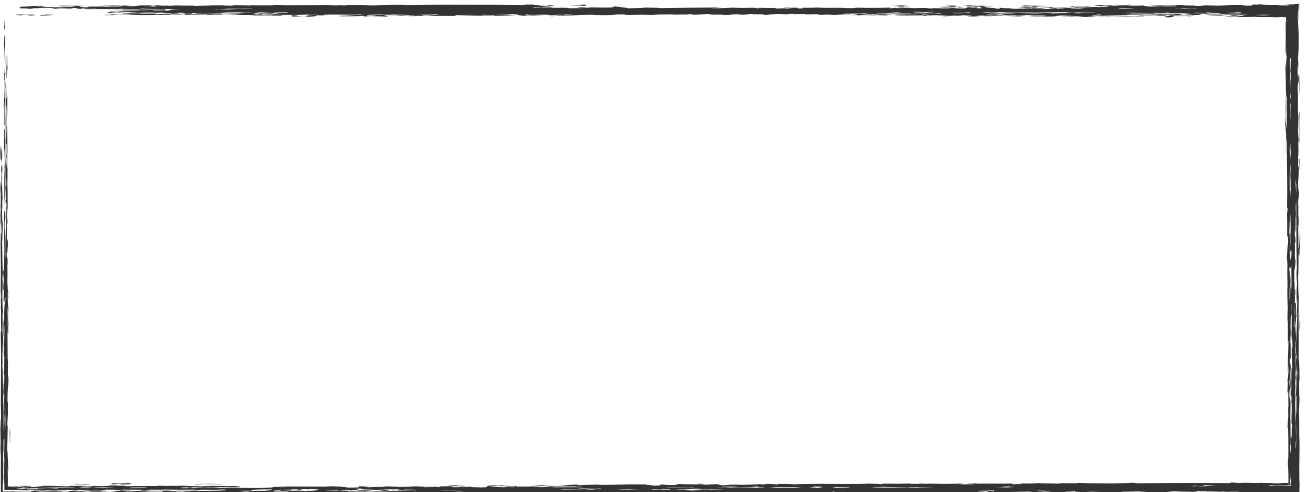
Action:

.....

Description:

.....
.....
.....

Draw a simple picture of your **action** 'in action':



Lastly, is your **Resolution** (or end). This is when the **obstacle** has been removed/ destroyed/overcome, and explains how the characters respond and can carry on afterwards. Maybe they all...

rejoice

relax

fall to the ground

celebrate

leave

Is your ending a happy ending or a sad ending? Use your imagination to decide on and describe the ending of your opera.

Resolution:

.....

Description:

.....
.....
.....

Draw a simple picture of the ending of your opera:

