

## Enriching the Humanities Through Opera

**Title:** Exploring Story Adaptation

**Grade Level:** 9-12<sup>th</sup>

**Length:** 45 minutes

**Literary Work:** *Knock Out!: The True Story of Emile Griffith* (Reinhard Kleist)

**Opera:** *Champion: An Opera in Jazz* (Terence Blanchard, composer; Michael Cristofer, librettist)

**Content Warning:** While the selected scene excerpts from *Champion* contain minimal inappropriate language, please be aware that the full work includes themes of adult content and language. Please review the material and provide appropriate context to ensure it aligns with the needs and maturity of students.

**Inquiry Question:** What is story adaptation? How is it relevant to opera?

**Lesson Focus:** Students will use critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration while exploring the concept of story adaptation and how it relates to opera stories.

**Prior Knowledge:** Students have read *Knock Out!: The True Story of Emile Griffith*, have analyzed characters and can name the Who, What, When, Where, Story arc (Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, and Resolution Ripple effects).

**Materials:** Copies of *Knock Out! The True Story of Emile Griffith* by Reinhard Kleist, presentation slides (includes *Champion* short opera synopsis with photography and video examples), libretto excerpts of key scenes, opera synopsis handout, opera adaptation pitch worksheet, student laptops/tablets, interactive board, paper, and pens/pencils.

**Key Vocabulary:** Opera, composer, librettist, libretto, adaptation, historical fiction, key scene, and pitch.

### Definitions

- **Opera:** A dramatic work set to music, with singers performing entire roles accompanied by an orchestra. It typically includes arias, duets, and ensembles, and is known for its elaborate costumes, sets, and vocal prowess.
- **Composer:** The person who writes the music for an opera, symphony, movie score, etc.
- **Librettist:** The person who writes the text of an opera.
- **Libretto:** The words or text of an opera.
- **Adaptation:** A creative work, such as a film, television show, play, or book, that is based on an existing story, such as a novel, short story, or historical event, and has been modified or reimagined to fit a different medium or audience.

Adaptations often involve changes to the characters, setting, or other elements of the original story to make it more suitable for the new format.

- **Historical Fiction:** A literary genre where the story takes place in the past and is characterized by an imaginative reconstruction of actual historical events and people.
- **Key Scene:** A pivotal moment in a story, play, or film that significantly impacts the narrative and characters. It is often a turning point that advances the plot, reveals important information, or changes the direction of the story.
- **Pitch:** A compelling summary of a proposed story idea that typically includes an overview of the plot, characters, setting, and themes of the story, as well as any unique or marketable aspects that make it stand out. The goal of a story pitch is to persuade the recipient to greenlight the project or take further action.

**Objective(s):** At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Analyze an opera synopsis based on a literary work.
- Compare a literary work with the opera adaptation synopsis.
- Define historical fiction and name one or more methods a creator can take creative license when creating a piece of historical fiction.
- Identify elements of adaptation across multiple versions of the same key scene present in the literary source and opera.
- Collaboratively brainstorm a pitch for an opera adaptation of the literary work.

**Assessment:** Groups present their opera pitches following the guidelines for adaptation.

Adaptation Guidelines:

- Who: character/character identity  
*Note: character identity can be adapted, but students may not eliminate or add characters.*
- What: key scene, action in the story - what is happening?
- When: time period, time of day, year, etc.
- Where: location and setting

Assessment Rubric:

4: Presentation is thorough and comprehensive, providing detailed and specific information on the Who, What, When, and Where. Pitch is highly detailed, insightful, and well-supported, demonstrating a deep understanding of the literary work and creative approach to the adaptation guidelines.

3: Presentation includes detailed information on the Who, What, When, and Where. Pitch is clear and well-developed, showing a strong understanding of the adaptation guidelines.

2: Presentation provides some detail on the Who, What, When, and Where. Pitch is somewhat clear but lacks depth and specificity. Basic knowledge of the literary work is present.

1: Presentation lacks specific and clear information on the Who, What, When, and Where. Pitch provided is vague, lacking depth, and knowledge of the literary work.

### **Learning Standards:**

#### Common Core State Standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.5: Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7: Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment (e.g., Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts" and Breughel's Landscape with the Fall of Icarus).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.RL.9-10.3: Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3: Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.5: Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5: Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.9: Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.RH.9-10.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.RH.9-10.3: Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.RH.9-10.6: Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.RH.11-12.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.RH.11-12.3: Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.RH.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visual, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

### National Core Arts Standards

TH:Cr2-I.a. Explore the function of history and culture in the development of a dramatic concept through a critical analysis of original ideas in a drama/theatre work.

TH:Cr2-II.b. Cooperate as a creative team to make interpretive choices for a drama/theatre work.

TH:Cr1.1.I.c. Use script analysis to generate ideas about a character that is believable and authentic in a drama/theatre work.

TH:Cr2-I.a. Explore the function of history and culture in the development of a dramatic concept through a critical analysis of original ideas in a drama/theatre work.

TH:Cr2-II.b. Cooperate as a creative team to make interpretive choices for a drama/theatre work.

TH:Re7.1.I.a. Respond to what is seen, felt, and heard in a drama/theatre work to develop criteria for artistic choices.

TH:Re7.1.II.a. Demonstrate an understanding of multiple interpretations of artistic criteria and how each might be used to influence future artistic choices of a drama/theatre work.

### **Procedure:**

Introduction/Hook (5 minutes):

- Begin with a word association exercise to spark students' interest and creativity.
  - Words: “opera,” “Emile Griffith,” and “adaptation.”
    - Ask students to write down the first word that comes to mind.
      - Students share their answers while the instructor writes down their responses on the board. Keep in mind any repeated words.
  - OR
  - Create a live Word Cloud with [Mentimeter](#).
    - Students can add their responses via their phones/computers/tablets (repeated words will increase in size.)
  - Discuss findings.
  - Define opera.
  - Introduce the concept of adaptation and discuss its relevance in literature. Discuss: Why do we retell and adapt stories? How does changing a story add relevance and enhance connection for a new audience?

Main Narrative/Sequence (20 minutes):

- Create a timeline of major events in Emile Griffith's life based on his autobiography, highlighting the important people in his life.
  - Suggested major events in Emile Griffith's life:
    - 1938: Emile Griffith was born in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands.
    - 1950s: Moved to New York City and began working at a hat factory. His boss noticed his physique and introduced him to boxing.
    - 1958: Made professional boxing debut, defeating Joe Parham.

- 1961: Won the welterweight title by defeating Benny "Kid" Paret in a 13th-round TKO.
  - 1961: Lost the title to Benny Paret in their rematch.
  - 1962: Defeated Paret in their infamous third fight, regaining the welterweight title. Paret fell into a coma and died on April 3, 1962, 10 days later.
  - 1962-1977: Competed across multiple weight classes, becoming a six-time world champion in welterweight and middleweight divisions.
  - 1977: Retired with a professional record of 85 wins, 24 losses, and 2 draws.
  - 1992: Brutally attacked in New York City, an incident speculated to be a hate crime, leaving him with significant injuries and worsening health issues.
  - 2005: Came out publicly as bisexual in an interview and began advocating for LGBTQIA+ inclusion in sports.
  - 2013: Died at the age of 75 in Hempstead, New York, due to complications from dementia.
- Read through the full synopsis (see below) of the opera *Champion* as a class and discuss the fundamental elements of the story.
  - Conduct a “Turn and Talk” activity. (Students chat in pairs, or small groups)
    - Students compare the story structure of the opera with the original literary work.
      - Ask students to discuss how the opera plot compares with their timeline of Emile Griffith’s life, and the corresponding literary work. (What events did the librettist choose to include and what did they leave out?)
- The instructor chooses one of three provided key scenes in the opera, sharing photo and video examples to enhance understanding.

Scene Selections (see below for summaries, libretto excerpts, and viewing options):

- Key Scene #1: Act I, Scene 8: Hey Mr. Albert
  - Key Scene #2: Act I, Scene 22-23: Don’t listen, Emile. Don’t think–In my head it happens fast
  - Key Scene #3: Act II, Scene 20: What is it you want from me? (I’m sorry)
- Define historical fiction and discuss how a librettist, author, and/or screenwriter can take creative liberties to breathe new life into historical events and make them more relevant for their audiences. Ask and discuss questions such as, “why do we adapt stories?” “How does storytelling add relevance for an audience?”
    - Discuss the adaptation process for the chosen key scene, outlining guidelines for adaptation and pivotal considerations. Discuss the ripple effects of making these changes and the importance of making adaptation choices that stay true to the essence of who Emile Griffith was and what he accomplished. Questions to consider:

- How could you retell the story of Emile Griffith?
- Can Emile Griffith’s story be set in the present? Is his story still relevant today? Why or why not?
  - Consider the key themes of his story that are conveyed, how can those connect to a current audience well?
- Can adaptation work for historical events and figures? Why or why not?
- Guidelines for adaptation:
  - Consider the form? Must include music but could be play, film, animation, dance, installation etc.
  - Consider the Who, What, When, and Where.
    - Who: character/character identity
      - *Note: character identity can be adapted, but students may not eliminate or add characters.*
      - *If students choose to change elements of Emile Griffith’s identity, they should justify why and how they’ve chosen to keep the core essence in that change.*
    - What: key scene, action in the story - what is happening?
    - When: time period, time of day, year, etc.
    - Where: location and setting
  - Students may use their prior knowledge of literary work and opera synopsis/libretto excerpts as resources.
- Together as a class, guide students through the adaptation process for the chosen key scene.

**Activity/Practice (10 minutes):**

- Students will work together to decide how they are going to adapt the opera, and brainstorm ideas for those changes based on the provided guidelines for adaptation: Who, What, When and Where. Each group will fill out an opera adaptation pitch worksheet.
  - Have students break out into groups and either adapt the same key scene viewed as a class or choose another key scene from the opera to brainstorm for an adaptation pitch.

**Present/Share (8 minutes):**

- Each group will present their pitch for an adaptation to the class, explaining their creative decisions and rationale.
- Encourage feedback and discussion from peers.

**Reflection (2 minutes):**

- Conclude the lesson with a recap of learnings about adaptation.
- Invite students to reflect on their collaborative work and share their thoughts on the adaptation process. Ask and discuss:
  - “How did your understanding of the story change as you adapted it?”
  - “Were there any new insights or perspectives that emerged?”

**Extension/Follow-up/Next steps:**

- Ask and discuss:

- “Can this story of Emile Griffith be set in the present? Is it still relevant today? Why or why not?”
- “Should we even adapt Emile Griffith’s story? Why or why not? What might be the benefits to adaptation? What do we lose in adapting the story?”
- “How does the element of music help the adaptation of the story? Particularly both genres of opera and jazz?”
- “Can adaptation work for historical events and figures? Why or why not?”
- Critical analysis of film adaptations compared with literary work and opera.

## ***Champion: An Opera in Jazz* (2013)**

Terence Blanchard, composer; Michael Cristofer, librettist

*Champion* is an opera by composer Terence Blanchard, with a libretto by Michael Cristofer. Premiering in 2013 at the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, it is a contemporary opera that combines elements of jazz and classical music, which reflects Blanchard's background as a jazz musician and composer.

The opera is based on the life of boxer Emile Griffith, a six-time world champion who became famous in the 1960s and 70s. The central theme of *Champion* is Griffith's internal struggle with his identity and the consequences of a tragic incident in the ring. In 1962, Griffith accidentally caused the death of his opponent, Benny "The Kid" Paret, during a championship fight. This event haunted Griffith for the rest of his life, and the opera explores his emotional turmoil, guilt, and the complexities of his personal life, including his relationships with family, friends, and his own sexuality.

The music in *Champion* blends Blanchard's jazz influences with traditional opera elements, creating a distinctive and powerful soundscape that enhances the emotional depth of the story. The opera's libretto examines issues of masculinity, identity, and the consequences of violence, both within and outside the boxing ring.

Blanchard, along with librettist Michael Cristofer, drew inspiration from various sources to shape the narrative and emotional depth of the opera, and Kleist's graphic novel was one of the key texts that helped inform their understanding of Emile Griffith's life, with its combination of vivid imagery and poignant storytelling, offered valuable insight into Griffith's complex character and the psychological aftermath of the tragic Paret incident, themes that are central to *Champion*. While Blanchard did not directly adapt Kleist's graphic novel into the opera, the book's exploration of Griffith's identity, guilt, and emotional turmoil played an important role in the opera's development, particularly in portraying Griffith's personal and psychological journey.

The work was praised for its bold approach to opera and its exploration of contemporary themes, blending elements of American history, culture, and the challenges of the human condition. It has been hailed as an important contribution to modern opera and a reflection of Blanchard's vision as a composer.

### **Short Synopsis**

The powerful and deeply personal story of Emile Griffith, a six-time world champion boxer, whose life was shaped by triumph and tragedy. Griffith rose from a hat factory worker to a boxing legend, culminating in his infamous 1962 fight with Benny "Kid" Paret, which resulted in Paret's death. Haunted by this event and grappling with his identity, Griffith seeks forgiveness and reconciliation in his later years.



**CHAMPION: AN OPERA IN JAZZ OPERA SYNOPSIS**  
(Terence Blanchard, composer; Michael Cristofer, librettist)

**ACT I**

In his apartment on Long Island in the present day, Emile Griffith struggles to dress himself, suffering from dementia and confused. Luis, his adopted son, and caretaker, helps him get ready for an important meeting, and Emile's memories intensify...

In the 1950s on the island of St. Thomas, Emile is a young man who dreams of reuniting with his mother, Emelda, and becoming a hat maker. He moves to New York City and finds her, and though she doesn't recognize him, she is overjoyed to reunite with one of the children she left behind. She brings him to meet Howie Albert, a hat manufacturer, hoping to find Emile work. Howie sizes up Emile and immediately recognizes his potential as a boxer. He offers to train him as a welterweight, and Emile quickly develops his natural talent and physique, as Emelda urges him to give up his other dreams. But Emile is lonely and struggles with his identity. He goes to a gay bar in Manhattan and meets Kathy, the owner, who welcomes him into an exciting but scary new community. Emile opens up to Kathy about his childhood and the cruelty he experienced from a fundamentalist relative.

In 1962, Emile is set to fight Benny "Kid" Paret in a high-profile match. When they face off at weigh-in, Paret taunts Emile, calling him "maricon," a Spanish slur for homosexuals. Emile is furious, and they nearly come to blows right there. Howie pulls him away, but when Emile begins to explain why the insult hit so close to home, Howie refuses to have the conversation, telling him that the boxing world is not a place where he can be open about his sexuality. Alone, Emile wrestles with his sense of manhood and self. The fight begins and quickly becomes heated. Paret continues to mock him, and as the fight escalates, Emile delivers seventeen blows in seven seconds. Paret collapses, falls into a coma, and later dies.

**ACT II**

Back in the present day, lost in his memories, Emile thinks that he sees Paret and speaks with him. Luis reorients him and reminds him that today, they will go to meet Paret's son.

As the 1960s continue, Emile amasses more wins, more fame, and more notoriety, but internally, he is haunted by memories of Paret and grapples with his identity. He marries a woman named Sadie, going against the advice of Howie and Emelda. In the 1970s, however, his luck changes. He is on a losing streak and starting to show signs of "boxer's brain" due to chronic traumatic brain injury. Emile rejects the support of his family and Howie, returning to Kathy's bar, where he is brutally beaten by a group of bigots.

In the present, overcome with memories of the attack, Emile becomes agitated and confused; Luis calms him, reminding him all of that is in the past. They go to meet Kid Paret's son, Benny Paret, Jr., and Luis tells Benny about Emile's condition. Emile expresses regret and asks Benny for his forgiveness, as voices from Emile's past intensify and crescendo in his mind.

Luis takes Emile back home. Alone once more, Emile's memories recede and hush.

*Synopsis courtesy of Boston Lyric Opera.*

## Key Scenes in Blanchard's *Champion: An Opera in Jazz*

Video excerpts and timestamps are pulled from the Metropolitan Opera on Demand.  
Performance Date: Apr. 29, 2023

**Content Warning:** While the selected scene excerpts from *Champion* contain minimal inappropriate language, please be aware that the full work includes themes of adult content and language. Please review the material and provide appropriate context to ensure it aligns with the needs and maturity of students.

### KEY SCENE #1: Act I, Scene 8: Hey Mr. Albert

Met Opera on Demand: Track #12. ACT I: Hey Mr. Albert  
00:00 – 3:43

Emile relocates to New York from the U.S. Virgin Islands in search of his mother, Emelda. When he finally finds her. Determined to help Emile find work, she introduces him to Howie Albert, a hat manufacturer. Howie quickly notices Emile's athletic build and, seeing potential, decides to train him as a boxer.

#### Libretto Excerpt

EMELDA  
Hey, Mr. Albert,  
Look what this boy can, Mr. Albert.

HOWIE  
You telling me  
You made this hat, kid?

YOUNG EMILE  
Oh, yeah. I make hats all the time.

EMELDA  
Hey, Mr. Albert,  
You give this boy a job, Mr. Albert.

HOWIE  
You telling me  
This is a boy, lady?  
This ain't no body, lady.  
Where'd you get a body like that, kid?

YOUNG EMILE  
Cinder blocks.

HOWIE

You telling me  
Cinder blocks, kid.  
What does that mean, cinder blocks?  
What do you mean saying cinder blocks, kid?

EMELDA

Hey, Mr. Albert,  
Never mind what he means, Mr. Albert.  
This boy with the body  
He needs a job, Mr. Albert.

HOWIE

You're telling me  
A kid with a body like that,  
Built like a brick shithouse,  
You're telling me  
This kid wants to fiddle with felt  
And lace and little fake flowers,  
You telling me  
That's what this kid wants?

EMELDA

Hey, Mr. Albert  
If that's the job you got, Mr. Albert,  
This boy with the body  
Will take that job, Mr. Albert.

*Then SPOKEN....*

HOWIE

Let me change the subject for a minute.  
Let me as you this.  
You ever done any boxing, kid?

YOUNG EMILE

Sure. I make them hats and then I  
put them in a box. Like that.  
You need a boxer?  
I can box a hate like nobody's business.

HOWIE

Yeah. But can you box a man?

YOUNG EMILE

I can box a man, too,  
if you got a big enough box.

*Howie laughs.*

*Then SINGING again....*

HOWIE

What I got is a big enough idea.  
And what you got is a killer smile.  
But do you got the killer instinct,  
The will to get the job done right?  
Cause I'm sick of making hats, boy,  
And I'm telling you now that's  
What it takes to win a fight.

YOUNG EMILE

I ain't no killer, Mr. Howie.

HOWIE

Do you have the killer instinct?  
Do you have the killer rage?

YOUNG EMILE

I ain't no killer, no way.

*Howie smacks Young Emile in the face. Young Emile doesn't respond. Howie smacks him again. And again. And again. Finally Emile blocks one of the swings. Howie swings again. Young Emile blocks Howie's arm and swings back at Howie. Howie ducks. And smiles.*

HOWIE

Well...that's a start.

EMELDA

You teach him, Mr. Albert.  
And you be a smart boy and learn the ropes  
Like Tarzan on the vine.

**KEY SCENE #2: Act I, Scene 22-23: Don't listen, Emile. Don't think—In my head it happens fast**

Met Opera on Demand: Track #27. ACT I: Don't listen, Emile. Don't think—In my head it happens fast

04:56 – 07:03

During the weigh-in, Benny “Kid” Paret taunts Emile about his sexual orientation, provoking tension between the two fighters. Once in the ring, Paret continues to antagonize Emile. In a burst of fury, further encouraged by Howie’s coaching, Emile delivers seventeen blows in less than seven seconds, knocking Paret into a coma.

Libretto Excerpt

YOUNG EMILE AND EMILE

There is no sound.  
There are no people I could see.  
In my head, the place is empty  
And there is no one there but me.

HOWIE, EMELDA AND CHORUS

There is nothing else to hear,  
Nothing in your ear  
But the sound of the bell.  
There is no one else to see  
But one man in the ring, facing you.  
Only you, only me.  
No one else in the world.  
Nothing you can hear.  
Nothing in your ear...  
But the sound of the bell, now!  
There's the bell.  
Close your eyes, close your ears  
Close your mind, and send him to hell! Now!

*Round 7 bell rings. Fight resumes up until round 12. Benny “Kid” Paret is knocked out by Emile.*

RING ANNOUNCER

Medic!

*Young Emile is declared winner of the match as Benny “Kid” Paret lays in the ring lifeless. Medics run over to Paret. Action slows to a freeze with Young Emile realizing what has happened. Emile watches from above as if he is reliving the moment.*

CHORUS

Seventeen blows in less than seven seconds, etc.

EMILE

In my head, it happens fast.

Something good turns into something that don't last.

Something good turns into something bad so fast.

In my head, it comes and goes.

One day when you have everything

One day when everything you have is gone.

Hold on to everything that's good.

Don't let it go. Don't let it disappear.

Don't let it turn around...turn around...turn around bad.

In my head...

*Bell rings. Blackout.*

**KEY SCENE #3: Act II, Scene 20: What is it you want from me? (I'm sorry)**

Met Opera on Demand: Track #47. ACT II: What is it you want from me?

00:00 – 03:02

Emile, suffering from brain trauma from his boxing career and haunted by his past, faces Benny Paret Jr. seeking forgiveness for the fatal fight that took the now young man's father.

Libretto Excerpt

BENNY PARET JR.

What is it you want from me?

Why did you want to see me, Emile?

EMILE

They never let me in to see him

To say I'm sorry, Benny.

I want to say I'm sorry.

BENNY PARET JR.

What is it you want from me?

Why did you want to see me, Emile?

EMILE

I never wanted harm to come to no one.

No, no, no.

I never wanted harm to you.

BENNY PARET JR.

Not me, Emile. Not me.

EMILE

To ask you to forgive me, Benny.

BENNY PARET JR.

Not me, Emile. Not me.

EMILE

Forgive me, Lord.

And take me to Your kingdom.

Like this, I pray.

Every day, I pray.

Every day, I went to see you

And pray, every day, I pray.

BENNY PARET JR.

Not me, Emile. Look at me.

It's not for me to say—

EMILE

To say, “forgive.”

BENNY PARET JR.

It's not for me to say, Emile.

Only you can say, “forgive.”

*They embrace. Emile playfully fake boxes with Benny Paret Jr.*

*Libretto excerpts courtesy of Boston Lyric Opera.*