



Instructions:

In your group, using Web and print resources, research the genres of opera and operetta. Your research should address the following issues:

- What social, political, economic, and cultural changes in America had occurred in the last half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century that would create a climate for expanded development of performance entertainment? (possible themes to explore: growth of wealth; advent of electricity; new and extended modes of transportation; enhanced sense of nationhood; New York, Chicago, San Francisco, etc. as “metropolitan” cities catering to increasingly “cosmopolitan” tastes, etc.)
- Note: You may wish to explore the background of the musical production, *Excelsior*, the first production to use electric lighting effects, with the lighting supervised by Thomas A. Edison.
- Discuss the development of the New York Metropolitan Opera House, the Chicago Opera House, and the San Francisco Opera House, giving particular attention to the dates they opened. (Note: Edith Wharton’s novel, *The Age of Innocence*, provides excellent insight into the social and cultural implications of the New York Metropolitan Opera House)
- What operas and operettas were popular in America in the 19th and early 20th centuries? (John Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera*, Gilbert and Sullivan’s comic operas, Victor Herbert’s, *Babes in Toyland*, Rudolf Frimel’s *The Firefly*, Frank Lehar’s *The Merry Widow*, Sigmund Romberg’s *Blossom Time*)
- Compare the librettos and performance modes of operas and operettas, giving particular attention to the nature of the musical scores of the two genres, the basic tone qualities, and the methods of release of the narrative.