

The Snow Queen

Sheet 1: Introduction – Roles – The Story

Composer Marius Felix Lange was commissioned the opera *Die Schneekönigin* (“The Snow Queen”) by the cooperation “Junge Oper Rhein-Ruhr”. The opera is based on the fairy tale of the world-famous Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen, an adventure story for children that has multiple layers of meaning. In *Die Schneekönigin*, an enchanted splinter hits Kay in the heart and he forgets everything he once considered good. His beloved Gerda does not give up on him and sets out on an adventurous quest for her boyfriend, who is prisoner of the Snow Queen in her ice palace.

The music by Lange and text by Andersen provide an ideal opportunity for introducing pupils and youngsters to the world of opera. The composer’s figurative musical language, his soundscapes, enthralling rhythms and incisive motifs, enable even very young pupils to grapple with contemporary music and opera.

The individual exercises and activity suggestions refer to different age groups and target groups. The activities can be simplified or combined depending on the children’s skills, level of knowledge and interest.

Roles

The Snow Queen	High Soprano
Kay	Baritone
Gerda	Soprano
Grandmother	Mezzosoprano
Clumsy troll	Soprano
Silly troll	Tenor
Devil troll	Bass- baritone
Flower Girl	Mezzosoprano
Crow	(Character) Tenor
Prince	Tenor
Princess	Soprano
Bandit girl	Mezzosoprano
Reindeer	Bass
Finnish woman	Contralto
Chorus of Mimosas, Elders, and Snowdrops	



The Story

1st story: The Devil's Mirror

The mighty Devil Troll has created a magic mirror that makes everything that is good and beautiful appear ugly. His two apprentices, Clumsy Troll and Silly Troll, are told to hold this mirror up to the world to show how ugly it looks. However, while the two trolls are taking the vast mirror up towards heaven, it starts wobbling and eventually falls. The mirror smashes into a thousand pieces that scatter all over the Earth.

The trolls fall down into the Kingdom of the Snow Queen and now have to obey all her commands.

2nd story: Gerda and Kay

While there is a hail shower outside, Kay and Gerda sit inside their grandmother's warm room. She tells them about the Queen of the Snowflakes, who will sometimes look in through the window during the winter. Kay laughs at her and threatens to put the Snow Queen in the stove if she comes near him.

When the rain stops, the children go outside and sing their rose song together. Suddenly a tiny splinter of the Devil's mirror ends up in Kay's eye and then, shortly afterwards, in his heart. It seems as if he has suddenly changed and now he no longer wants to play with his friend Gerda.

Winter arrives and Kay is playing with his sledge in the great square. The two young trolls, disguised as children, tempt him into the Snow Queen's large sleigh. The Snow Queen enchants Kay by kissing him: he can no longer feel how cold it is and forgets all about his friend Gerda. The Snow Queen takes him to her castle. There he must help her solve a riddle.

3rd story: The Flower Woman

Now it is spring. Nobody knows what has happened to Kay so Gerda sets off alone to search for her friend. On the way she passes a wonderful flower garden and is welcomed warmly by a flower woman. She bewitches the little girl with a comb that combs away her memory. The flowers in the garden tell her stories but it is not until



Gerda hears the roses singing that she remembers her friend Kay again and continues on her way.

4th story: The Prince and Princess

Along the way Gerda passes a rook who thinks that the princess just recently married a young man. She suspects that this is Kay and will take Gerda to him.

But before Gerda can reach the prince and princess she falls asleep and dreams of the Snow Queen's glittering kingdom. Here she sees her friend Kay: he is half frozen to death and busy trying to solve the Queen's riddle.

When Gerda and the crow reach the palace, the prince and princess are still in their beds. When Gerda realizes the prince is not Kay, she starts crying. The prince and princess take pity on her and give her warm clothing and a golden carriage for the rest of her journey.

5th story: The Girl Bandit

The two young trolls have disguised themselves as coachmen and hijack Gerda's carriage. But when they are driving through a wood, they are frightened by a girl bandit and hide.

The bandit girl wants to keep Gerda as a friend to play with and takes her to a cave. Here there are many animals in cages. The doves tell Gerda that they have seen Kay with the Snow Queen. Gerda wants to leave in order to free Kay. The bandit girl takes pity on her and sends Gerda to the far north in the direction of Lapland on her reindeer.

6th story: The Finnish Sami Woman

The reindeer takes Gerda to an old Sami woman who is sitting in her sauna. She listens to the little girl's story and the reindeer asks this wise woman to grant Gerda enough power to be able to reach the Snow Queen. But the old Finnish woman cannot help Gerda because the greatest power is already there in Gerda's loving heart. So Gerda sets off alone and fights her way through the deep snow.

7th story: In the Snow Queen's Castle



Kay is desperately trying to arrange the Snow Queen's ice fragments into the correct shape. He is supposed to spell the word "eternity": only then will the Snow Queen release him again. When Gerda finds her friend she reminds him of the secret of the roses and sings him the rose song. Then, as Kay hears his friend singing, the splinters from the Devil's mirror are loosened from his heart and his eye and he is able to recognize Gerda. Together they manage to spell the word and he is free. When they hear the Snow Queen coming, they run quickly and escape from the palace.

The Snow Queen finds the word "eternity". But before she can understand what has happened, Tölpeltroll and Trottelroll rush in, stumble over the fragments of ice and destroy the word. The Snow Queen is unable to put it back together.

Kay and Gerda walk home hand in hand and are delighted that it is now summer again.

