

VICTORIAN
OPERA

RICHARD STRAUSS

SALOME



EDUCATION RESOURCE





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ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource is designed for school students in Years 10-12. Activities can be used in the classroom alongside or separate to Victorian Opera's production of *Salome*.

The activities for Year 10 suggested in this resource align with the following Australian Curriculum Learning Areas:

- The Arts – Music, Drama and Visual Arts
- Languages – German

The table below outlines how the activities designed around each Learning Area align to the Australian Curriculum General Capabilities.

CAPABILITIES	Literacy	Numeracy	ICT	Critical and Creative Thinking	Personal and Social	Ethical Understanding	Intercultural Understanding
THE ARTS – MUSIC							
Activity 1	✓		✓	✓			✓
Activity 2	✓		✓	✓			✓
Activity 3	✓	✓		✓			
ENGLISH AND LITERATURE							
Activity 1	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
Activity 2	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
THE ARTS – DRAMA							
Activity 1	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Activity 2	✓			✓	✓		✓
THE ARTS – VISUAL ARTS							
Activity 1	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Activity 2	✓		✓	✓			✓
LANGUAGES – GERMAN							
Activity 1	✓			✓			✓
Activity 2	✓			✓	✓		✓

Activities devised for Years 11-12 have been done so in accordance with the Victorian Certificate of Education Study Design for:

- Performing Arts: Drama, Music Performance, Music Investigation and Music Style and Composition
- Visual Arts: Art, Studio Arts and Visual Communication Design
- English: Literature
- German
- Text and Traditions



GLOSSARY

Act – A component of the total work, consisting of its own partial dramatic arc.

Appoggiatura – A grace note which delays the next note of the melody, taking half or more of its written time value.

Aria – An elaborate composition for solo voice with instrumental accompaniment.

Arioso – An aria of a lyrical and expressive quality.

Banda – An onstage instrumental ensemble in an opera.

Bar – Also called a measure. The section between two bar lines containing the number of beats as indicated by the time signature.

Baritone – The male voice between the tenor and bass.

Bass – The lowest male voice.

Baton – A white stick used by conductors to conduct with, allowing the conductor greater visibility.

Beat – The regular pulse of the music.

Caricature – A ludicrous take on something, usually with a satirical tone.

Choreographer – The person who designs and creates the movement of the performance, usually in dance form.

Chorus – In opera or music theatre this refers to a large body of singers.

Chorus master – The person responsible for the rehearsal and preparation of the chorus prior to production.

Classical period – Spanning from mid-18th to mid-19th century, opera in the classical period is characterised by a lighter, clearer texture than baroque music.

Coloratura – A rapid passage, run, trill or other virtuoso-like feature used particularly in music of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Composer – The person who writes the music.

Concertmaster – The lead violinist of the orchestra.

Concerto – A musical composition that features one solo instrument accompanied by an orchestra.

Concerto Grosso – A musical composition for a group of solo instruments accompanied by an orchestra.

Conductor – The person who interprets and directs the orchestra or musical performance, coordinating the performers and keeping the time through the technique of hand movements.

Contralto – The lowest female voice.

Countertenor – The highest male voice.

Crescendo – A gradual increase in loudness.

Designer – The person who designs the overall look of the production, including the sets, costumes, props and lighting.

Director – The person who controls the artistic and dramatic aspects of the production, realising the conceptual and interpretation of the work.

Discords – A lack of harmony between notes, sometimes unresolved causing a work to sound unresolved and at times unpleasant.

Dress rehearsal – Often the final rehearsal of all the component parts of the production in full costume.

Duet – A composition for two performers of equal importance.

Ensemble – A group of people that perform together.

Excerpt – A short extract from a piece of music.

Finale – The last movement in a work of several movements.

Grand Opera – A large-scale serious opera without spoken dialogue.

Harmony – The chordal structure of a musical composition in contrast to the linear structure, which supports the melody line.

Hero / Heroine – In its modern form, the hero/heroine is a protagonist character who fulfils a task and restores balance to the community. They are a born leader, whether they know it or not, as well as a real survivor who has faith in good. Others are willing to believe in and follow this person.

Interlude – A section of music between acts.

Key – The tonal centre around which a composition is based, usually indicated by a key signature.

Libretto – The text of an opera or music theatre work.

Mezzo-soprano – The second highest female voice.

Opera – A staged drama set to music, comprised of vocal pieces with instrumental accompaniment and usually with orchestral overtures and interludes.

Opera buffa – Also known as ‘comic opera’, an opera with a large mixture of music, on a light subject with a happy ending, including comic elements.

Opera seria – Also known as ‘serious opera’, an opera with dramatic, serious content often with a tragic ending.

Operetta – A style of opera that is light hearted, shorter, and may include spoken dialogue.

Oratorio – A large musical composition that uses an orchestra, choir and soloists, each of which play a character in the overall work.

Orchestra – A large ensemble of instruments divided into four main sections: strings, woodwind, brass and percussion.

Orchestration – Utilisation of the instrumentation of an orchestra in the writing of a composition.

Overture – An instrumental composition intended as an introduction to an opera or other music theatre work.

Principal – One of the main characters.

Proscenium – A large rectangular arch that surrounds the stage and gives the appearance it is framed.

Pulse – The underlying beat of a piece of music.

Range – The range from the lowest to highest notes that are played or sung.

Recitative – A vocal (singing) style designed to imitate the natural inflections of speech, used in opera where dialogue might be used in other forms of music theatre.

Rehearsal – Where the performers and the Director establish and refine the dramatic and musical interpretation of the production.

Rhythm – The regular and irregular pattern of notes of different length in the music.

Repetiteur – A pianist who works as an accompanist and vocal coach for opera.

Scale model box – A scale miniature of the set design made from foam core and card.

Score – The document where all the parts of a work, both instrumental and vocal, are notated.

Season – The time in which a number of performances take place for a single production.

Solo – A piece of music performed by a single performer either alone or with accompaniment.

Soprano – The highest female voice.

Soubrette – A light operatic soprano.

Sound Designer – The person who designs the additional sound used in a production.

Stage Manager – The person who manages the running of rehearsals and performances, managing all

the components of the production during performance.

Surtitles – A translation of the words being sung on stage projected onto a screen above the stage.

Synopsis – A summary of the story.

Tempo – The speed of a composition.

Tenor – A high male voice.

Tessitura – The general range of vocal parts.

Time signature – A notation used to specify how many beats in a bar and the note value equivalent to the beat.

Tone – The interval of a major second or a sound of definite pitch and duration.

Tutti – A marking in a score that indicates the use of the whole orchestra and/or all the vocal parts.

Vibrato – A very slight fluctuation of pitch in rapid succession to create warmth in the sound.

Villain – Often the antagonist. In literature, this is the evil character in the story, the character who has a negative effect on the other characters.

Vocal range – The human voice falls into a range from the lowest to highest notes they can reach. The normal range is around two octaves and is traditionally broken into seven voice types, (from highest to lowest) soprano, mezzo-soprano, contralto, counter-tenor, tenor, baritone and bass.

Western music – A musical tradition derived from European cultures spanning the flourishing musical culture of ancient times to the present day.

Workshop – An exploration of a new work (production, text, music, design).



SALOME: ABOUT THE WORK

Composer – Richard Strauss

Librettist – Oscar Wilde translated by Hedwig Lachmann

CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor – Richard Mills

Director – Cameron Menzies

Set Designer – Christina Smith

Costume Designer – Anna Cordingley

Lighting Designer – Gavan Swift

Choreographer – Elizabeth Hill-Cooper

CHARACTERS AND CAST



IAN STOREY
Herodes
Tenor



LIANE KEEGAN
Herodias
Mezzo-soprano



VIDA MIKNEVIČIŪTĖ
Salome
Soprano



DANIEL SUMEGI
Jochanaan
Baritone



JAMES EGGLESTONE
Narraboth
Tenor



DIMITY SHEPHERD
Herodias's Page
Mezzo-soprano

Other roles

Five Jews, tenors and bass

Two Nazarenes, tenor and bass

Two soldiers, basses

One Cappadocian, bass

Salome's slave, soprano

SYNOPSIS

On the great terrace of Herod's palace, soldiers sit around talking, guarding the imprisoned Jochanaan. The captain Narraboth stands by the banquet hall, watching Salome. Herodias's page tries to pull Narraboth's attention away and warns him of the danger in his infatuation with Salome – he continues to ignore her. Jochanaan's voice is suddenly heard from the cistern and he proclaims the coming of a great Prophet.

Salome enters, escaping the banquet as well as the lingering eyes of her stepfather, Herod. The page again warns of danger. Jochanaan speaks once more from the cistern drawing Salome's attention to him and she recognises him as the one who has denounced her mother for marrying her husband's brother. Salome is summoned back into the banquet hall by Herod but she refuses to go and requests to speak directly to Jochanaan. Narraboth denies her request as Herod has ordered no one be permitted to speak to the Prophet, but Salome seduces Narraboth into opening the cistern and allowing Jochanaan to be brought out.

As he emerges he begins to denounce Herod and Herodias before turning on Salome as the daughter of her sinful mother. Salome begins to lust after Jochanaan and describes her desire for first his body, then his hair and finally his mouth. Unable to stand the way Salome is addressing Jochanaan, Narraboth kills himself which she does not even notice. Jochanaan rejects her with each of her attempts to seduce him, instructing her to seek forgiveness from the one who is coming. She ignores him and again expresses her desire to kiss his mouth. Realising that his words are not getting through, he curses her and goes back into the cistern.

Herod comes out onto the terrace looking for Salome and appears to be in a maddened state, claiming to be able to hear wind moving around his head. Once he spots Salome, he asks her to drink wine from a goblet so that he can place his lips in the same place she put hers, and then invites her to eat some fruit so that he can eat what she has left. Salome refuses each of his offers and Herodias, who has followed him out, berates him for paying so much attention to her daughter. The voice of Jochanaan interrupts them and Herodias, who has taken offence at his words, asks Herod to hand the prisoner over to the Jews.

At this request the Jews and Nazarenes, who have by now joined Herod and Herodias on the terrace, begin a theological debate concerning the prophet Elijah, who Jochanaan really is and the power of God. One of the Nazarenes mentions that the Messiah has come and is performing miracles everywhere, raising the dead. Upon hearing this Herod is filled with fear and orders that no one should be raised from the dead. Jochanaan interrupts their conversation and predicts the death of the daughter of Babylon.

Herod turns his attention back to Salome, asking her to dance for him. She rejects his first two requests and only agrees to dance for him on his third invitation after he swears an oath to give her anything she desires. Salome performs the Dance of the Seven Veils, completely captivating Herod with her movements as she removes each veil that covers her body. After the dance ends, Herod asks her what she desires and she requests the head of Jochanaan on a silver platter. Herod is shocked and tries to instead offer her precious stones, the rare white peacocks that roam his gardens, the mantle of the High Priest and finally the Veil of the Temple. She refuses all of his offers and continues to ask for the head of Jochanaan on a silver platter. Reluctantly, Herod gives in and tells her she can have what she wants. Herodias, who was instantly pleased with her daughter's request, takes the Ring of Death from Herod's finger and gives it to the First Soldier. He gives the order to the Executioner who goes into the cistern. Salome listens intently, but cannot hear anything. She worries that the Executioner has not gone through with the task and, just as she begins to order the soldiers to go down into the cistern and bring her what she was promised, the Executioner reappears with the head of Jochanaan on a silver platter.

Salome takes the head in her hands and, overwhelmed by her desire for him, addresses it as if it were still alive. She caresses the head and kisses the lips of the severed head. Herod, disgusted by what he is seeing, orders his guards to kill Salome and they crush her beneath their shields.

THE ARTS – MUSIC

WHAT IS OPERA?

Opera is a European art form that has been in existence since the 1600s and became especially popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Today there are many styles of opera performance, but they all have one thing in common – an opera is a play that is sung.

The four main languages of opera are Italian, French, German and English.

The main difference between opera and music theatre is amplification. Music theatre is usually amplified while opera is not. In addition, music theatre usually includes spoken dialogue as well as music and dance. Opera, on the other hand, generally uses recitative, a singing style designed to imitate natural speech; however, there are exceptions.

WHERE DID OPERA COME FROM?

The roots of opera can be traced back to the Ancient Greeks who lived over 2,000 years ago. The advances in society that this sophisticated civilisation developed included the invention of a city-state (*polis*) and a golden age in culture, music, art, poetry and drama. This included beautiful sculpture, remarkable architecture and the creation of classical poetry, such as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer. This ancient civilisation had a profound influence on the discovery and advancement of science, physics, maths, astronomy and geometry, and produced the influential philosophers Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Cicero, who approached the big questions of life often in a genuine scientific way, daring to question and challenge traditional conventions and prejudices of their age. The Ancient Greeks also loved the theatre, with the works of playwrights including Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides informing the future dramatic structures of playwriting.

In the following thousand years, after the height of the Greek civilisation, much of the knowledge and skills they had established were lost, particularly in the sciences and arts. While the art from what we refer to as the Middle Ages was very beautiful, it had lost some of the scientific application that made it so lifelike. In Italy, from about the 1300s, scholars set out to rediscover many of the Ancient Greeks' innovations. This period was called the Renaissance, which translates literally as “rebirth”. Founded in Florence, it marked a period of enlightenment and the rediscovery and study of culture, philosophy, art, architecture and science. Highly influential artists such as Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Botticelli, Raphael and Donatello, philosophers, writers and mathematicians including Galileo, Shakespeare, Erasmus and Copernicus contributed a wealth of knowledge during this era.

One art form the Renaissance scholars were particularly interested in was Greek theatre. The texts had survived time, but the performance practice indications were lost. Scholars knew from writings by philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato that the plays were accompanied by music and this helped raise the emotional moral tone of the works. But how? What did the music do? How were the lines sung?

A group of thinkers and musicians from Florence called the Florentine Camerata met regularly to determine how the musical accompaniment might have sounded and supported the text. They invented a new art form in which the dialogue in a play would be sung. They decided to call the new art form “Opera”, which simply means “a work”. The first truly successful opera was called *L'Orfeo*. It was composed by Claudio Monteverdi and is still performed regularly today.

Following the great success of this work, opera became popular all over Europe and then the world. The style of opera and the way it was performed developed over the centuries to reflect the culture of the time. At its height in the 1800s, opera was performed regularly in theatres in every major city.

VOICE TYPES AND SINGING STYLES

There are seven voice types in opera, each of which is defined by the range of notes they can sing and their vocal quality.

There are three female operatic voice types, although most operas only have soprano and mezzo-soprano roles.

- Soprano – the highest sounding female voice with a vocal range from middle C up to the C two octaves above.
- Mezzo-Soprano – slightly lower than the soprano with a vocal range from the G below middle C to the A two octaves above.
- Contralto – the lowest sounding female voice and rarely used in opera today. The vocal range for this voice type is from the F below middle C to a high F one octave above.

There are four male voice types, although the countertenor voice is most often used in operas from the Baroque period (1600-1750).

- Countertenor – the highest sounding male voice with almost the same vocal range as a mezzo-soprano; the G below middle C to a high F one octave above.
- Tenor – a high sounding male voice that usually takes the leading male role. The vocal range for this type is roughly from the C below middle C to the C above.
- Baritone – the middle sounding male voice with a vocal range from the second G below middle C up to the G above.
- Bass – the lowest sounding male voice which has a vocal range from the E above middle C to the E two octaves below, however some bass singers can go even lower.

There are further categories of voice defining the kind of quality and the type of music they can sing. The composer will consider voice types to highlight the different characters – for example, to differentiate between a King and a Servant or a Princess and a Witch.

A few of these are:

- Coloratura – a very high range with the ability to sing complicated parts with agility.
- Dramatic – a heavy sounding, powerful voice.
- Lyric – an average sized voice with the ability to sing long, beautiful phrases.
- Heldentenor – The ‘heroic tenor’, a very big role that requires a powerful sound.

Follow the links below to hear examples of what these voices sound like:

Classical Female Voices – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIPFAww8X-U>

Classical Male Voices – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gRL7shs23Wc>

ABOUT THE COMPOSER – RICHARD STRAUSS

Richard Strauss (1864-1949) was a German composer and conductor of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to which he contributed a large number of works across diverse compositional styles.

Strauss started composing music when he was six years old and by the time he finished school, he had composed more than 140 works. At this time, Strauss's father, who was regarded as one of Germany's leading virtuoso French horn musicians, introduced him to a number of high profile musicians, one of which was the conductor of the Meiningen Orchestra, Hans von Bülow. Bülow commissioned Strauss to write his *Suite for 13 Winds* and invited the young composer to conduct the work in its first performance. The performance was very well received and Bülow offered Strauss the position of assistant conductor, marking the beginning of his conducting career. Strauss would go on to hold many conducting posts throughout his life, including third conductor of the Munich Opera, director of the Weimar Court Orchestra, second and then chief conductor in Munich, conductor and later director of the Royal Court Opera in Berlin, and musical co-director of the Vienna State Opera.

His skill as a composer evolved once he began to work within the symphonic poem genre. The symphonic or tone poem was a style of composition popular with composers of the Romantic period. It was a piece of orchestral music, usually written in one movement, that would depict or evoke the content of a poem, short story, novel, painting or landscape. The style differed from traditional symphonic forms, such as the sonata form, as its purpose was to inspire the audience to imagine the scene, image or mood that the composer was trying to convey. With the symphonic poem, Strauss strengthened his melodic lines and use of rich harmonisation. He also mastered the use of certain instrumental sounds and colours that clearly described the scene or mood that he aimed to convey. The symphonic poem allowed him to write more objective music that conveyed everyday life and sensuous emotions, rather than examine subjects of spiritual torment or death that occupied the works of other composers.

Strauss was drawn to writing for the voice from a young age and it wasn't long before he began to compose opera. His first opera, *Guntram* (1894) was written very much in the style of Wagner, who he admired from youth, however the opera was unsuccessful. It wasn't until his third opera, *Salome* (1903-05), that he achieved success with the public, despite its unpopularity with critics and various opera houses who refused to stage the work. The poet and playwright Hugo von Hofmannsthal, who Strauss began to collaborate with in 1909, fulfilled Strauss's desire for libretti with a fundamental dramatic quality which he could then match in his music. Over the next twenty years they would write operas together, including *Elektra* (1909) and *Der Rosenkavalier* (1911). Their collaboration ended with Hofmannsthal's death in 1929 and Strauss failed to find another collaboration as fruitful as that he had with Hofmannsthal.

With the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime, Strauss used his influence as Germany's greatest living composer to protect his family – his daughter-in-law and two grandchildren were Jewish. Between 1933-1935, he was employed by the Third Reich as the president of Germany's *Reichsmusikkammer* (Chamber of State Music) but soon fell afoul with Hitler. Strauss spent the remainder of the war in the mountain resort of Garmisch. When he learnt of the destruction the war left on many of Germany's opera houses and concert halls, he wrote *Metamorphosen*, a study for 23 solo violins, as an elegy for German culture.

Strauss did not conform to the new compositional styles that emerged after the first world war, but rather continued to develop and refine his own personal style. His orchestral works were composed for a smaller orchestra as the use of large orchestras had gone out of trend as the neoclassical style became popular.



INTERVIEW WITH MUSIC DIRECTOR RICHARD MILLS

In the interview below, Victorian Opera's Artistic Director Richard Mills discusses the power of *Salome* to shock its audiences and the work's musical score.

What was it about Oscar Wilde's play that prompted Strauss to compose an opera based on it?

You'd have to ask Strauss! But what I would guess was its capacity to take us to regions of human interaction that are not normal and that are on a heightened plane, like for example Greek tragedy. The power of tragedy in Ancient Greece was to cleanse by pity and terror. The dramaturgical term for that was catharsis. That and also the outrageous poetry of the subject matter, particularly Salome's infatuation with Jochanaan, created powerful imageries that could certainly fire a composer's imagination.

Do you think that the point of tragedy as you said, to cleanse by pity and terror, is something that the play or even the opera of *Salome* does today?

I think it does by its sheer outrageousness, I mean it's a deeply shocking image. An image of a severed head being kissed in a very outrageous way by this young girl. It's a deeply disturbing piece.

Would it have been a comment on society or was it just an expression of sorts?

I don't think it's a comment on society so much. It's very bourgeois, pre-World War One, a kind of very settled time in many ways. I mean, they were all undercurrents but the things that led to World War One were not yet in evidence. I think it's a much more poetic impulse. It's a perfect subject for opera in that it's got a great soprano role and very strong supporting characters. Strauss was a very practical man of the theatre and I think that that would not have escaped him. The subject matter is outrageous which is an important element throughout. It's outrageously theatrical and that of course appealed to Strauss as an opera composer. There's an element in it of *épater la bourgeoisie*, to shock the bourgeoisie. The dramatic material is disturbing!

Is that why this opera was so popular when it premiered?

I guess so. I mean there was something of the scandal in it.

Turning to the music, how important is the use of leitmotifs in the work?

It's not Wagnerian but it's nevertheless highly organised. Put it this way, it's like an elaborately rendered quilt and there are recurring harmonic and melodic patterns which underplay the action. I would not say it's an opera that uses leitmotifs *per se*, but it's sort of most like Wagner in the sense that Jochanaan is associated with one kind of harmonic colour, for example very dignified triadic chords. With the rest of them, the harmony is very deliquescent, it shifts and it melts, but it still has a very tonal underlying structure which is why it's so effective and strong. There is also great use of the appoggiatura, a non-chord tone that resolves into a chord, and sometimes these are extended for a long period until the final harmony is revealed. There's a lot of use of modally inflected scales, octatonic scales we call them.

What are they?

Major and minor scales but without end notes to give very suggestive colours. This implies a vague notion of exoticism because it's set in the Middle East.

Is the notion of exoticism more apparent in the 'Dance of the Seven Veils'?

Yes, but it's also there from the very first bar with the clarinet scale.

Does the key or the tonality that Strauss assigns to *Salome* adapt throughout the work to reflect her own transition or development?

Certainly. For example, when she first appears and talks to Jochanaan. The intensity of her feelings for him start as a curiosity, a kind of piquant or girlish curiosity, and grow into full blown attraction later on and of course the music changes as well.

Repetition is an important characteristic of the text, used not only as a symbolist technique but it also builds the growing sense of doom as the action moves towards the beheading of Jochanaan.

What compositional techniques if any, does Strauss employ to match this structure in the score?

I would say it's a technique of gesture and he finds gestures which underpin this notion. For example, when Salome's talking about the dungeon or the cistern, her range is very low, it's unnaturally low for a soprano, and the orchestration is very extreme. What is interesting is the very original use of the orchestra to paint these colours. That's without getting very, very technical about it.

Does Strauss use any other compositional techniques to recreate the symbolist nature of the play?

Well, the musical language is highly evolved and it's constantly shifting. It's not stable. It has a great tonal instability. To come back to that analogy of the quilt, the patterns and phrases are constantly shifting and transforming and I think that's quite a useful analogy. There are very unexpected relationships between tonalities all the time. It's curious learning it because the choice of tones is often very surprising, it's not what you expect, there's always something strange about it.

Going back to the 'Dance of the Seven Veils', compared to the music scored for the rest of the work, this number appears to be stylistically different. Was there any reason for that?

It's a set number and again this whole notion of exoticism comes in. Edward Said in his book on Exoticism, discusses the West's view of the East, which is again a very stylised, not necessarily clichéd thing, but it's got this sense of strangeness.

Do you mean that it's an idea of what exists rather than a true representation?

Yes, of course. This is a kind of perfumed exoticism that Strauss is clearly fascinated by, and of course there are the symbols like the moon for example, which is very important, and the different shades of light. The anomaly of it. There are these people eating all the time, and then Salome's eventual awakening and then relentless appetite. There's also Herodias who is thoroughly unpleasant and manipulates the whole thing because Jochanaan calls her out on her behaviour.

The other thing is of course, the 'Dance of the Seven Veils' is not sung. It's an instrumental piece. It's very contained. The opera is in one act, quite short and the dance is the only instrumental number in the opera apart from the music for the scene change, which are not that long. I guess it does have the cliché of the exotic dance about it. But even then, there are the Salome motives which come into the dance and again this use of these exotically inflected scales as well.

Turning to the instrumentation and orchestration of the score, how does Strauss employ various instruments to create different colours throughout the work?

One of things that's interesting is the use of low sonorous elements, like the use of the C string on the double bass or the contrabassoon to create that sense of doom and darkness. The other thing is the whole instrumental range in the use of high harmonics, for example the high writing for the strings. So, it's a language of extremes and it's also a language of colour that paints this picture of an exotic and a sensual world.

As the conductor, is there anything in particular about this work that makes it an interesting piece to study?

Even though Strauss is extremely well written for the voice, the challenge is the balance of pacing, like all operas. It demands very fine singers, singers who understand the style and the language. You have to work out how the dramatic thread grows and changes through the piece and respond to it as a conductor.

ORCHESTRATION

Strauss was known for orchestrating his works for a large orchestra. In fact, his tone poem *Eine Alpensinfonie* (*An Alpine Symphony*) uses an orchestra of more than 150 musicians.

While the orchestra for *Salome* is not as large, it does still require over 100 musicians playing the instruments listed in the table below. Victorian Opera's production, however, will feature a slightly smaller orchestra of 75 musicians.

Family	Instrument
Strings	Violins Violas Cellos Double basses Harps
Woodwinds	Piccolo Flutes Oboes Cor Anglais Heckelphone Eb Clarinet Bb Clarinets Clarinets in A Bass Clarinet Bassoons Contrabassoon
Brass	French horns Trumpets Trombones Tuba
Percussion	Timpani Snare drum Bass drum Cymbals Triangle Tam-tam Tambourine Castanets Glockenspiel Xylophone
Keyboards	Celesta Harmonium (offstage) Organ (offstage)



MUSIC – ACTIVITIES

YEAR 10

ACTIVITY ONE: RESEARCH ESSAY

Choose one of the topics listed below and write a 1,000 word essay using at least five resources to support your research.

- Explore Romanticism in Germany and the changes that occurred in the music being composed at the time. In your analysis, draw examples from major composers of the period and the way in which their works shaped the development of music.
- Research the symphonic poem and how Strauss developed the style then undertake a deeper analyse on one of his symphonic poems. Consider developments in instrumental colour or orchestral techniques, form and structure, subject matter, etc.
- What impact did World War Two have on the way music was composed in Germany?

ACTIVITY TWO: A FAMILY HISTORY

Create an instrumental family tree, of the instrument you play or one from the table on page 15 of this resource. In your tree, map out any major developments of the instrument and its family. Include information around:

- the year in which any developments were made;
- reasons why the developments occurred;
- who the musician or instrument maker was that developed the instrument; and,
- the positive and negative effects the developments had on playing the instrument.

YEARS 10-12

ACTIVITY THREE: RHYTHMIC AND MELODIC TRANSCRIPTION

Complete a rhythmic transcription of the rhythm from the below melody sung by the Page in the opening scene of *Salome*.



Complete a melodic transcription of the below melody sung by Herod in the fourth scene of *Salome*.



YEARS 11-12

ACTIVITY FOUR: COMPOSE A LEITMOTIF

Read a copy of the libretto from *Salome*.

Choose three of the characters listed below and compose a sixteen-bar leitmotif or theme, for the character. Your leitmotif must be written for an eight-piece ensemble, however you can use any instrumentation you see fit.

- Salome
- Herod
- Herodias
- Jochanaan
- Narraboth

Visit <https://www.chandos.net/chanimages/Booklets/CH3157.pdf> for an English version of the libretto. The libretto begins on page 94 of the booklet.

ACTIVITY FIVE: LISTENING AND ANALYSIS

Listen to the different recordings, listed below, of “Es ist kein Laut zu vernehmen”, sung by Salome in scene four of *Salome*. Read the corresponding part of the libretto in order to understand the context surrounding this aria.

Visit <https://www.chandos.net/chanimages/Booklets/CH3157.pdf> for an English version of the libretto. The text for this scene begins on page 114 of the booklet and is marked number 5.

For a copy of the vocal score, visit [http://conquest.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/1/1a/IMSLP56161-PMLP03532-Strauss_-_Salome_\(vocal_score\).pdf](http://conquest.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/1/1a/IMSLP56161-PMLP03532-Strauss_-_Salome_(vocal_score).pdf). You will find the excerpt on pages 173 to 181.

As you listen to the different recordings, think about the following and write a 400-500 word essay that analyses the stylistic differences that occur.

- Do the singers sing their parts differently?
- Does the orchestra play its part differently?
- Is there a difference in tempo, colour, voice types, etc.?
- Do you think the differences in interpretation change the expression of the same piece?
- Which is your favourite interpretation and why?

Version 1:

Salome – Camilla Nylund

Orchestra – Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra

Conductor – Hannu Lintu

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Cq-u8YQxMM> – Excerpt finishes at 2:40.

Version 2:

Salome – Jessye Norman

Orchestra – Staatskapelle Dresden

Conductor – Seiji Ozawa

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-gj7KxZerHs>

Version 3:

Salome – Deborah Voigt

Orchestra – Symphonieorchester der Bayerischen Rundfunks

Conductor – Sir Richard Armstrong

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=faUDK42lrtc> – Excerpt finishes at 2:18.

ENGLISH AND LITERATURE

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT – OSCAR WILDE

Oscar Fingal O’Flahertie Wilde was an Anglo-Irish playwright, novelist, poet and critic. His parents were both writers in one form or another; his father was an eye surgeon who wrote books on archaeology and folklore, and his mother was a revolutionary poet – writing under the penname Speranza – who also wrote literature on Celtic myth and folklore.

Wilde received scholarships to complete his studies at both Trinity College in Dublin and Magdalen College in Oxford. It was during these eight years (1871-1878) that he developed his writing style and encountered the writings of John Ruskin and Walter Pater who would set him on the path of advocating for the Aesthetic movement prominent in England in the late nineteenth century.



Photo print of Oscar Wilde in 1882, taken by Napoleon Sarony. Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_Wilde_time_3.jpg

The Aesthetic movement began out of a revolt against the utilitarian social philosophies of the nineteenth century and the loss of culture brought about by industrialism. Artists of the movement believed that art should exist for beauty’s sake rather than serving moral, political or social purposes. Rather than dealing with subjects that would test their moral compass, the protagonists of the works of aesthete poets, writers and artists were mainly concerned with the pursuit of beauty and the elevation of taste. Wilde lived his life according to these principals and explored the ideals central to Aestheticism in a number of his prose works and essays.

Wilde’s literary output consisted of nine plays – the most popular were *Lady Windermere’s Fan*, *A Woman of No Importance*, *An Ideal Husband*, and *The Importance of Being Earnest* – one novel – *The Picture of Dorian Grey* – as well as numerous poems, short stories and essays. Although Wilde was married and had two sons, he formed a close relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas in 1891, which would ultimately lead to a criminal conviction against his name and jail time served. Wilde was released from prison in 1897, after which he travelled around Europe staying with friends or living in cheap hotels. He eventually settled in Paris, France where he died a short time after, in 1900, of cerebral meningitis.

At the end of his life, Wilde’s reputation had disintegrated and his writing output had heavily reduced. He would nonetheless become regarded as one of the greatest playwrights of the Victorian era and many of his works continue to be read and performed today.

SALOME: THE PLAY BY OSCAR WILDE

The subject of *Salome*, which can be traced back to a number of sources in historical and biblical literature (see page 41 of this resource) was a strong source of inspiration for many writers, artists and musicians of the nineteenth century. Oscar Wilde developed the story further still in his play, *Salome*, twisting biblical and historical accounts to their extreme.

Although Oscar Wilde considered himself as a writer of the Aesthetic movement (see page 19 of this resource), this work also demonstrates characteristics of the traditions of the Symbolist and Decadent movements. While all three movements had overlapping features, their underlying philosophies differed. Aesthetes focused on being beautiful rather than having a moral or political purpose; Symbolists aimed to represent absolute truths indirectly using images or objects endowed with a symbolic meaning; Decadents aimed to shock and scandalise their audiences by experimenting with how far they could take a decline in standards, morals, dignity, honour and discipline reflecting the decline that people felt was happening in society.

As the play unfolds, three major symbols are introduced aligning the work to the Symbolist movement. The moon is the most important and a number of characters comment on it and how it reflects their desires, self-perceptions and apprehensions. In the moon the Page can sense the violence and death that will occur, and Salome finds it an escape from the eyes of Herod and Narraboth. The act of looking or gazing is another key symbol of the work. Salome is taunted by Herod's gaze and later Narraboth's. She then insists on looking at Jochanaan. It is not until Jochanaan comments on the way Salome is looking at him that she understands why Herod looks at her in that way and the play becomes more Decadent than Symbolic.

In *Salome*, characteristics of the Decadent movement are observed as the character of Salome continues to decline and her morals and dignity are put aside in her pursuit of Jochanaan. She takes pleasure in the way Jochanaan's words instil fear and hatred into Herod and Herodias, respectively. She willingly sacrifices her dignity and honour when she understands her sexual power in getting what she wants. This is evident in the way she easily seduces Narraboth into releasing Jochanaan from the cistern so that she can look at him and in the way she submits and dances for Herod when she is certain that she will get what she most desires. The character's decline reaches its extreme when she caresses and kisses the head of Jochanaan as if it were still alive.



ENGLISH AND LITERATURE – ACTIVITIES

YEAR 10

ACTIVITY ONE: ESSAY WRITING

Write a 1,000 word essay on one of the below topics. You must use at least three primary and secondary references.

1. Explore some of the differences and similarities of the Symbolist, Aesthetic and Decadent movements of the nineteenth century.
2. Identify who the leading figures of the Symbolist, Aesthetic and Decadent movements were and explain their role in the development and/or decline of the movement they were part of.
3. How do the works of Oscar Wilde and other Aesthetes remain relevant in today's society, if at all?

ACTIVITY TWO: COMPOSE YOUR OWN SALOME

Read Oscar Wilde's *Salome* then write your own short story based on the same subject.

Write a paragraph that explains the reasons behind the style of language that you use to depict the horrific events of the play and whether you drew from present day issues that would relate to a modern-day audience.

Visit <https://www.wilde-online.info/salome.html> for a copy of the play.

YEARS 11-12

ACTIVITY THREE: DEBATE

Divide your class into groups of three and assign each group as for or against one of the below topics.

1. Wilde's play *Salome*, was written as a commentary on the declining social and moral values held by society at the time.
2. *Salome* remains a relevant topic in today's world, with its themes of power, corruption, and violence against women.
3. Salome's request for Jochanaan's head is a just reward for the treatment she receives from Jochanaan, Narraboth and Herod.

Each student can speak for up to five minutes and must present arguments that are evidence-based. Students who are watching can decide on the winning team.

ACTIVITY FOUR: ANALYSIS

In a 1,000 word essay, analyse the symbolic nature of the moon and the way each character is affected by it throughout *Salome*. Incorporate examples from the text to support your analysis.

THE ARTS – DRAMA



INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR CAMERON MENZIES

In the interview below, Director Cameron Menzies explores Strauss's *Salome* and shares how he plans to develop and stage this production.

Have you ever staged a production of *Salome* before?

This is the first time that I will have staged a production of *Salome*. Very exciting!

If not, what are you most excited about when it comes to working with this opera?

There are so many amazing elements to this opera. Firstly, it is so dense and action packed and it all happens within one act of around ninety minutes. There really is no dead space anywhere in this piece and it moves very fast and intensely. All of these things combined make this piece a very interesting project. It is also a huge honour to be able to create a new production of this very iconic work and show my ideas behind it.

What is your concept for this production?

When I was working through my ideas on *Salome* and looking at the symbolic nature of this work as well as the modernist approach to the music, my head was full of many varied approaches to Strauss's opera. I went into my initial meetings with the set designer Christina Smith, and the costume designer Anna Cordingley, with a huge amount of reference materials and ideas swirling around in my head. It became evident quite quickly that we were looking into a sinful and diseased world waiting for its Messiah. What did this mean and what might this look like? We wanted to explore the diseases of corruption, fear, the appropriation of power and also the disease of a crown that sits on a ruler's head. We also wanted to examine the dismissal, silencing, violence and eventual murder of a woman, mental instability of a leader (not that of *Salome*'s) and the denial and fear of the prophecies of the future powers coming. It's very important to us to present a world that was once beautiful and cultured as now broken, where sin is the imposed life or rule that exists in this region and poses an impending threat on its original inhabitants.

Our concept for this production encompasses the grotesque to the innocent, from the known to the unknown, from being asleep to wide awake, from painted artifice to stark naked realness, and from lust to obsession to death. We are presenting a world where the dismissive nature of the ruling class will be its undoing and will poison itself from the inside, while it waits for the great Messiah to come and cleanse the world.

What has inspired your approach to this production?

This is a very hard question to answer as my inspirations can come from some of the strangest places. When I was first asked to direct *Salome*, I started with the world of the grotesque Aubrey Beardsley illustrations and his work with the then scandalous *The Yellow Book* – a quarterly literary periodical. These contained the famous *Salome* illustrations and much of Beardsley's other work. I then went to the Bible and the history of Judea and the Roman Rule, then to the life and times of Oscar Wilde, before finally arriving to the world of early cinema in America. Here I explored designers such as Natacha Rambova, the Russian theatre of Vakhtangova, film star and director Alla Nazimova, and Oscar Whitbread's television production for the ABC from the early 1960's. From there my research and inspiration takes a life of its own. The thread that seems to run through my inspiration is that of the heightened and enlarged. Even though this work is one act and short, it needs to be set and formed in an epic way and in an epic surrounding.

Oscar Wilde's *Salome* falls within the Symbolist movement and many of the symbols depicted in the play have carried into the opera libretto. As the director, how will you depict the symbolic nature of the work?

Generally, the idea of Symbolism was to present ideas through form and colour, and through signs which are universally comprehensible. Following on from this, it also set out to “objectify the subjective” or to make the invisible world visible. We have taken great steps within the design of the set and costumes with this general definition of Symbolism in mind. We use very recognisable symbols across all characters to help tell you what they are like and maybe something about their lives. The set has also been designed to allow for the moon symbols to enter the space and open to the elements, which I feel is very symbolic in nature. As the director, I will then shape characters’ movement and intentions to what I feel each moment symbolises or is trying to say to the audience at any given time.

Which characters are you most intrigued by and why?

It really is very hard to pick out one character to be intrigued with the most. I have to look at the piece as a whole and make sure that all the characters are working within our concept and remain a potent influence in the opera. They each have their moments of intrigue. I find Herod intriguing as he has ultimate power as the Tetrarch, but he seems to have an unnerving fear of Jochanaan. Through utter survival, Herodias’s character has so many twists and turns and she is full of contradictions. The Page seems to be able to sense the impending doom and almost at times, seems other worldly or possessing a sixth sense about things. They are all very interesting and at times they have great moments of clarity and then in the next moment utterly confuse you.

How important is the language of a work like this and how much time will be spent exploring the meaning behind the text in the rehearsal room?

Text is ultimately the most important governing factor when it comes to any piece. It’s where I start first and before going to the music. The German language in this text is very much translated from the original play written by Oscar Wilde. It is quite direct and conversational, and very rarely poetic in nature. There is a lot of talk of imagery such as the moon, birds and the elements. We will do a lot of talking about the text and we will also do a lot of talking about the images that everyone sees. For example, at any point throughout the work, each character has their own interpretation of the moon and what it means: is it foretelling the coming of doom, or is it a white dove landing on the black floor? These moments are very open to our own interpretation and this is where we can build some very interesting ideas around the text.

The ‘Dance of the Seven Veils’ is a pivotal moment of the *Salome* story. How do you plan to stage this scene?

There is a lot of intrigue around this section of the opera. You will all just have to come along to see what happens in our production.

In your opinion, how is *Salome* relevant to a modern-day audience?

There are so many relevant threads in the story of *Salome* that will resonate with a modern-day audience. Some of the narrative elements deal with issues such as an implanted foreign power over a region to rule its displaced indigenous tribes, or a world on the brink of destruction and devastation, full of “sin” waiting for its Messiah to come and save it. There are also elements of the ruling class, that is Herod as Tetrarch, dismissing and silencing the younger generation, Salome, and ultimately delivering the final dismissal: death. I also think that audiences will be in awe of how modern the music sounds in the present day. There are elements that are still very musically shocking in this piece, which serve to keep *Salome* exciting.

How do you want audiences to feel after experiencing this production?

I think it is very dangerous to try and govern what you want an audience to feel at the end of a work. However, presenting *Salome* in the manner in which I have chosen to do so, I would like the audience to leave feeling uncomfortable and hopefully somewhat reflective about themselves and the world in its current state.

What are some of the challenges you’re anticipating when it comes to staging this work?

There are a lot of challenges in staging a work of this epic nature. Because there is so much written

and created about the real and the legend of *Salome*, there is a huge amount of history associated with this story and many, many incarnations of this opera. It's important to look at as much of it as possible, then try and ignore it all as you begin to read and think about the opera yourself. This is a challenge in itself.

Structurally, the piece has its challenges as well. Being a piece in one act means that you have to make sure the pacing is right and that you phrase until the end of the opera. Things happen pretty fast and furiously in this piece and to make this clear, the staging also needs to be precise and clean.

The 'Dance of the Seven Veils' is a huge part of *Salome* as well. It's almost like an act of its own and to get the narrative correct in this scene is also a challenge. That's why we intend to build this dance slowly over many dedicated sessions during the full rehearsal period.

What are three pieces of advice you can offer senior students studying drama or theatre studies who might be tasked with staging a work with complicated subject matter?

Find what you want to say about the piece or subject. Read very broadly about all subjects and look at where something fits historically, even if you have no intention of setting it in the period from which it was originally created. Make sure that all your staging and ideas can both be dramatically justified back to the text of the piece and musically justified to the composition.



DRAMA – ACTIVITIES

YEAR 10

ACTIVITY ONE: DIRECTOR'S CONCEPT

Read Oscar Wilde's *Salome*.

Step into the role of a Director and develop a concept of a theatrical production of *Salome* to present to your classmates.

In your presentation, explain the research you undertook, the reference images you drew from, and how you might imagine the set and costumes to look.

Visit <https://www.wilde-online.info/salome.html> for a copy of the play.

ACTIVITY TWO: CHARACTER MONOLOGUE

Choose from one of the characters below and write and perform a 10-minute monologue.

- Salome
- Herod
- Herodias
- Jochanaan
- The Page
- Narraboth

Throughout your performance, consider the following:

- What do you want your character to say?
- Will this differ to how you want your audience to perceive your character?
- How will your character develop throughout your monologue?

Keep a journal of the research you undertake and outline the types of dramatic elements that you have worked into your monologue, such as voice, movement, space, etc., and how these have developed throughout the rehearsal process.

Visit <https://www.wilde-online.info/salome.html> for a copy of the play.

YEARS 11-12

ACTIVITY THREE: PERFORM A SCENE FROM SALOME

Divide your class into groups of three and assign each person to the characters of Salome, Herod and Herodias.

Ask each group to devise a performance of the scene in which Salome asks Herod for the head of Jochanaan on a silver platter.

After each performance, groups should be interviewed about the elements of drama they considered during the rehearsal process, such as role and character, voice, movement, space, etc.

Visit <https://www.wilde-online.info/salome.html> for a copy of the play. This scene begins with Herod immediately after Salome dances the 'Dance of the Seven Veils' on page 17 and ends where Herodias passes the ring of death to a soldier.



INTERVIEW WITH SET DESIGNER CHRISTINA SMITH

In her interview below, Christina Smith discusses the inspiration and design decisions made when developing the concept behind the set design of *Salome*. She also discusses the process behind creating a severed head and how she has incorporated the Symbolism present in the text into her design.

What can audiences expect from your designs for the set of *Salome*?

We've aimed to present a world in decay. One of the main concept's that Cameron Menzies and I talked about was the idea of the disease of the crown, where power corrupts. What we wanted to present was a space that was at one time beautiful and revered and a space where art was made. But what might happen to that space when art and beauty aren't valued, when power has corrupted it and decayed it and destroyed it? We took a lot of inspiration from photos of Saddam Hussein's palace post-war, where we see something that was beautiful, well, it could be debatable about whether it was beautiful or not, but it was certainly luxurious and ornate. There seemed to be a very poignant image in how that was destroyed and lying in rubble, which really got us thinking about this particular space.

The idea [with *Salome*] is that there's a party going on but we're not in the party, the action of the opera has always got to be out to the side and we imagine that elsewhere in this palace they've possibly renovated parts of the space. You have to remember that Herod is not the traditional king of this land, he's been placed in power by the Romans, so it's not his land and he's not of that place. Therefore, you can imagine that they've improved the areas of the palace which they value or that they use, where they would have parties or Herod's throne room, but actually, something that would have been the palace theatre has been left to decay and ruin. We think the party is happening in a renovated area but the destroyed remains of the palace are where Herod keeps his prisoners. They're discarded, they're off to the side. So, the action of *Salome* is set in the place off to the side.

What type of research is involved when it comes to designing a set? What sort of research did you do?

As I mentioned, we looked at imagery of Saddam Hussein's palace, which is probably one of the most striking bits of imagery that we looked at: that is, opulence lying in rubble. I also looked a lot at decayed theatres. There are several artists, one of which is Hiroshi Sugimoto (<https://www.sugimotohiroshi.com/artworks>), who have done a photographic series of empty theatre spaces, many of which were abandoned theatre spaces, some in a great deal of decay. The monochromatic nature of that was really interesting. A lot of theatres that he was looking at were from the 1920s, which is the period that the Palais Theatre is from. There's another publication called *Stages of Decay*, which again, is a photographer that's gone through and photographed, primarily in the United States, all of the old picture houses that have gone into decay. Again, they're beautiful and they're opulent but they've been left to rot, and there's something about that, that for us that was very poignant. I guess what's drawn us to theatres versus palaces as well is the idea of façades and that this theatre has this crumbling façade. That's been a theme that's run through it quite heavily.

Is there a symbolic element to your design that reflects the Symbolism present in the work?

Yes, certainly. I mean, it is a great Symbolist work in terms of the opera and also the Oscar Wilde play. What struck me about reading the libretto, is that there was so much imagery about colour and also, the moon. We were very adamant that we didn't want to put a physical moon on stage. Each of the characters mention the moon and talk about the moon, but they talk about it in a very different way and it looks very different to each character. We felt that to try and physically represent that would

limit the imagination. We want the audience to be able to imagine what the moon looks like. I did however, want to reference the shape of the moon, so again, looking at the Palais where it has these beautiful enormous domes, we looked at the idea of what if that dome had caved in or been removed and the shape of that dome then creates the shape of the moon. I guess we've got the moon present but in a far more abstract, architectural way versus trying to represent it.

The other thing in terms of the Symbolism is the colours. The colours that the characters talk about quite explicitly are black, white, red and silver. So, using that as the starting point and this idea that there's no colour in the set was very strong. When I painted the set model I just used shades of grey, silver and black. The only thing that's red on the model is the theatre curtain and it's actually a very dirty red, it's the colour of dried blood. Gavan Swift, the lighting designer, will be able to activate that into a brighter red and the red that symbolises the blood.

This production might have one of the trickiest props for an opera in the severed head of the character of Jochanaan. Can you explain the design and production process behind making this work? How involved will the singer cast in the Jochanaan role have to be?

The head's a really difficult prop because it has to be very real. The fact that the character of Salome holds it and uses it and works with it, means that it's going to get a lot of focus. It's also a tricky problem in that it obviously has to match our performer, our Jochanaan, exactly. The thing that also makes it really difficult is that, and I hate to get graphic here, not a lot of people have seen a severed head. I think there is an idea in your mind about what a severed head is going to look like, which may not be necessarily what a severed head looks like. When we're talking about it, obviously we're talking about the process with how to get it to look exactly like our performer, but there's also this idea of what might it look like, what colour would it be? It's not skin coloured probably, because skin is the colour it is because of blood. I've done a show before with severed limbs and the research for it was really harrowing and to be honest, not something I ever want to do again. The reference images that you can find are quite horrific, so actually for this one, the reference imagery I've been looking at is classical paintings. There's a great tradition of severed heads in classical paintings. Cameron was looking at Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio but I was looking at Artemisia Gentileschi, specifically her painting, *Judith with the head of Holofernes*. She did a whole series of these images of severed heads. For me, that's been the visual research, rather than trying to look up the photographs, which can be quite harrowing.

The biggest issue with it as well is replicating its look with the costume designs, so I have to work pretty closely with the costume designer, Anna Cordingley, to get this right. We need to know what that look is fairly swiftly, and we can't really know that until we get the performer here. It's a process you'd like to have done and ready in advance but we do really need the performer as we need to lock in how he's going to look and then reconstruct that on the head. The head has also got to be able to do all sorts of practical things. The singer cast as Salome has got to be able to hold the head by the hair and we've got to weight it appropriately so it looks heavy enough but is light enough for her to use. There's going to be blood on the head so we've got to work on the blood formula to make sure that it doesn't stain because she will get covered in the blood. We also need to look at how much blood comes from the head. As you can see, there are a lot of very practical and aesthetic requirements that are spread across multiple departments. Those props are always very, very difficult and of course, there's also the wait of expectation, everyone's waiting for the head.

In regards to the blood, when you're designing your set knowing that it is such a big element of the production, do you design the set in a certain way?

Well, it's interesting because we know we wanted the set to be dark as we wanted Salome to shine on the set in comparison and have her be quite pale. But interestingly, in my discussions with Cameron, he started to talk about blood on the set and I pointed out that we're not actually going to see a great deal of blood on the set because it is so dark. Rather, we're going to see the blood on Salome. So, in a way working with blood on the set, it's not going to be as visible, we're hoping it will be much more visible on the performer than on the set. There is again a lot of practical considerations such as

staining, and of course, the slippage factor. The Palais works on a rake which means that the floor surface isn't wonderful, so to speak, so, there are a few things to consider.

You've spoken about how you've worked closely with Anna and Cameron. What does your relationship with Gavan look like during the design process?

I've had meetings with him at the white card process, which is where we present a preliminary version of the set, to be able to get his input into where he'd like to have positions from how he imagines he would light it. Those meetings are also for me to relay the concept to him and the intention. Sadly, he hasn't seen the final design yet because we had to take it out to Ballarat to the workshop, but he's seen photos of it. Sets are nothing without lighting, they're just nothing. So, I need to work fairly closely with him to ensure that he's got the positions that he needs and really also working with the workshop with lighting in mind to make sure he's got enough texture to work with. I usually consult him with materials and colours to make sure that I'm on the right track in terms of how things may light or not light. There'll also be some set electrics and lighting instruments on the stage so working with what they're going to be and incorporating that information into the build is quite important.

Once the production goes into the rehearsal room, what does your role look like?

I like to keep reasonably close contact with the rehearsal room because things will come up during rehearsals, as they always do. A lot is created in rehearsal rooms so I need to make sure that I'm available to respond to that, to make sure that I can come up with solutions and answers to things that arise. Throughout the rehearsals, quite often I'll have a prop in the rehearsal room and just through simply using it in rehearsal, the requirements of the prop might change and therefore, the floor might have to change. I guess my job during rehearsals is to respond to that but also, I see myself as kind of a keeper of the design in a way, in that, I need to understand and be very clear about what the design priorities are of this show. For example, if the director or stage management team come up to me and say, "We're going to need a table", my understanding of the world of the play will help me come up with the answer fairly quickly about what that table might be. I have to respond quickly because we don't have a lot of time and people will need time to find and locate things. It's making sure that it is all heading in the right direction. I also visit the workshop, I keep an eye on scenic painting, I talk a lot with the assistant stage manager in terms of props, I touch base with the director in terms of how he's using the space, how it's working and, of course, the head. It's all about the head.

How long have you been a set and costume designer for and how did you get into it?

I graduated in 1995 so I've been working as a set and costume designer for 24 years now, quite a long time. I did recently do a count of the number of shows I've done and it's around one hundred professional productions of set and/or costume design. I studied set and costume design at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA), but I guess I got into it through good teachers. I had three great Drama teachers. I had a great interest in live performance and wanted to be involved, and I also had an aptitude for art so I naturally fell into doing sets, props and costumes for school productions. It hadn't really occurred to me that this was a career option until a teacher said, "You know you can do this for a job, don't you?" and so that got me thinking.

Then another Drama teacher took us on an excursion to see a production of *The Tempest* at Belvoir Street Theatre. I had really good seats and I was very, very close to John Bell who was playing Prospero. I was completely hooked because there was a wonderful conceit in the design where Prospero conjured up a storm using a bucket of water, a staff and a model boat that I found so incredible. I thought, that's amazing, that you can tell a whole story through the use of design and sets and props and costumes, so that sealed the deal. I guess I was in Year 11 at school when I knew this might be the path I wanted to follow but I didn't really know it until probably the end of Year 12. It's the teachers, it's having good teachers.

What's the best piece of advice you've ever received in your career that you would pass onto students pursuing a career in design?

I've had lots of great pieces of advice. Probably the best one, or the one that sticks in my head, was from the designer Hugh Colman. He was very kind to me when I first moved to Melbourne and had me round for a cup of tea and talked about what it was like to be a designer. He said the one thing you must remember is that it's not brain surgery. That is, not to say it's not difficult, but the thing is no one will die if I have not chosen the correct chalice for Herod. By that piece of advice, he meant to take the work seriously but don't take it personally. It's very easy when you do these shows and you're working with extreme deadlines with a lot of other people that obviously things can snowball into great importance and you can carry and wear a lot of the stress. You must understand though, that at the end of the day, and it's very *clichéd*, the show will go on. You will make mistakes that may not be rectified for your show, but you will learn from them and then you will go and do another show. It was a great piece of advice because it immediately provided perspective. It is important, it is serious, but at the same time it's not the end of the world. When I train designers now it's a piece of advice I like to pass on when things look like they're getting a little fraught. You go, well, it's okay, you're going to figure this out.



INTERVIEW WITH COSTUME DESIGNER ANNA CORDINGLEY

Anna Cordingley discusses how she got into design and what her work as a set, costume and exhibition designer entails in the interview below. She also explains the design process behind her costumes for *Salome* and her role throughout the production process.

How long have you been a designer for and how did you get into it?

Well now, I began my VCA design degree when I was seventeen and have designed sets, costumes and installations – and more recently I’ve lectured in design – ever since. My father trained in classical singing and although he never pursued a career on stage, his best friends did. They would perform for Opera Australia and Victorian Opera, and so I was taken to see stacks of performances. Our shelves were lined with VHS recordings of *Aida* and *Don Giovanni*. As kids, we would watch these videos as often as we’d watch *Anne of Green Gables* or *The Wind in the Willows*. When I was eight, Dad and I were off to see a *Figaro* for Victorian Opera and there was an error with our complimentary tickets – we were seated separately. This memory is profound for me; sitting in the front row of the circle of Arts Centre Melbourne’s Playhouse Theatre, a packed audience but essentially, I was alone, on the edge of my seat, loving the performance I was watching but conflating that love with this new feeling of self-confidence, competence and independence. And the set – the set was hilarious. And witty. Full of metaphor and sarcasm. Then and there I decided to become a set designer. Years later I researched that opera, staged back in 1990, which had been pivotal for me. It had been directed by Barrie Kosky and designed by Stephen Curtis, artists who had become my heroes for other reasons in the interim, and I was all the gladder to discover it was they who provided such inspiration.

Can you tell us a little bit about your designs for this production of *Salome*?

Salome’s world is an obscure one; stark and brutal and rich and disturbing. From the very first dreaming days, where anything is possible and everything is on the table, Cameron Menzies, Christina Smith and I resolved that the uniting feature of Salome’s entourage should be that they live out their days in a dilapidated old theatre as a motley performance troupe. Their costumes reference themes from Music Hall, Vaudeville and early Circus Side-Show cultures; a little grotesque, a little dark and a lot of imagination.

What type of research has gone into your designs for this work?

Research processes and methods are different for every designer, and mine is very much led by one particular nineteenth century Art Historian. His approach traverses epochs and disciplines identifying a ‘Dionysian’ spirit and draws on social memory and pathos to find meaning in artworks. I try to approximate that method to arrive at my own world. In the case of *Salome*, Cameron, Christina and I spent considerable time looking at the photographs of August Sander and Diane Arbus, plus the evocative contexts of Hiroshi Sugimoto. Thematic links then spiral from there, alongside the more traditional text-based research into Strauss, Wilde and the genesis of the tale.

Is there anyone or anything that you’ve drawn inspiration from with your designs for this work?

If I had to identify a single influential image or artwork for these designs for *Salome*, I would say Diane Arbus photographing the *Doppelgänger Twins* by Sally Stockhold, 2012 (<http://www.sallystockholdphotography.com/large-multi-view/myselfportraits---ode-to-icons-and-other-absurdities/1538641-1-17356/myselfportraits---ode-to-icons-and-other-absurdities.html>). In her photographs, Stockhold stands in for all the characters as well as creating her own sets, painting her own backdrops et cetera. I love the post-modern repetition and quotation in her art. In this photograph, she is imitating and appropriating Arbus whilst imposing her own gestures and palette. It’s a sensibility I’ve lent on for Salome’s world.

What’s your involvement look like after you’ve completed the designs? Are you also involved in creating the costumes?

Immediately following the ‘presentation’ whereby I hand my drawings off to the company, I sit with the head of wardrobe – in this case the brilliant Melissa Serjeant – and we do working drawings together, look through fabric samples, trawl through racks of old jackets and shelves of boots, and we decide upon a direction to take for ‘realising’ each character design. Then she sets to work full time on making it happen and I dip in and out each day advising on fabrics, attending fittings, sending links to purchasable items etc. When rehearsals begin, I watch as much as possible to ensure nothing I have designed will hinder movement or action and as we draw closer to production week, I bring Cameron into our fittings to confirm that his vision and mine still align. I rarely sew... potentially in that last week if we’re running behind... but I am very likely to hand-paint in the workroom and ‘break-down’ my own costumes (simulate aging on each garment).

Salome’s costume comes into contact with fake blood during this production. Does this contact effect your costume designs for her and the types of materials that will be used?

Absolutely. Fake blood and natural fibres don’t mix, as a rule. The fibres are too delicate and fake blood can require extreme laundering! Designers dealing with blood need to befriend polyester. Either that, or they dedicate significant budget to making multiple garments to last the season!

Are there things that you have to keep in mind when designing for an opera compared to designing for a different art form?

One thing to be very mindful about when designing for opera is keeping the neck and jaw clear. High necklines, firm collars, chokers, neck jewellery et cetera can all be uncomfortable for the singers and are best avoided or negotiated. In other performance styles, this is less of an issue. Similarly, the wearing of corsets can impact the way in which a singer uses their abdomen and lungs. Some singers love to work in a corset, others absolutely do not. In all cases, I will categorically defer to the singer. There is always an alternative costume approach, whereas there is not an alternative way to sing!

Which character’s costume did you enjoy designing the most and why?

I adore Herodias. She is a play on optics, which is something echoed in Christina’s set design too. Her ‘Russian Doll’ design includes a tutu and corset which repeat again in neck-ruff and make-up and then again in her millinery... you really have to see it to comprehend what I’m talking about! It’s ambitious... fingers crossed we can pull it off!

As well as being a set and costume designer, you’re also an exhibition designer. What does an exhibition designer do?

Whereas a set and costume designer collaborates with a director and a production team to create a world for a text (or other provocation), an exhibition designer collaborates with a curator and an installation team to create a world for a group of artworks or objects. I love designing exhibitions because I love diving into the history and context of each object within the museum or gallery’s line-up. I love nutting through ways in which we could present those objects whilst telling the most exciting story to the broadest possible public.

If you had to choose one, would you prefer to design the set of a work, the costumes or an exhibition?

I couldn’t choose. During an exhibition contract, I miss the late nights and intensity of the theatre. During the late nights of a theatre or opera production week, I miss the calmness and reverence of an exhibition install (where the white gloves are on and all works are precious; working slowly and carefully is vital). Essentially, I need to do all on repeat to be satisfied in my life!

What would be the best next step for secondary students who are interested in pursuing a design path?

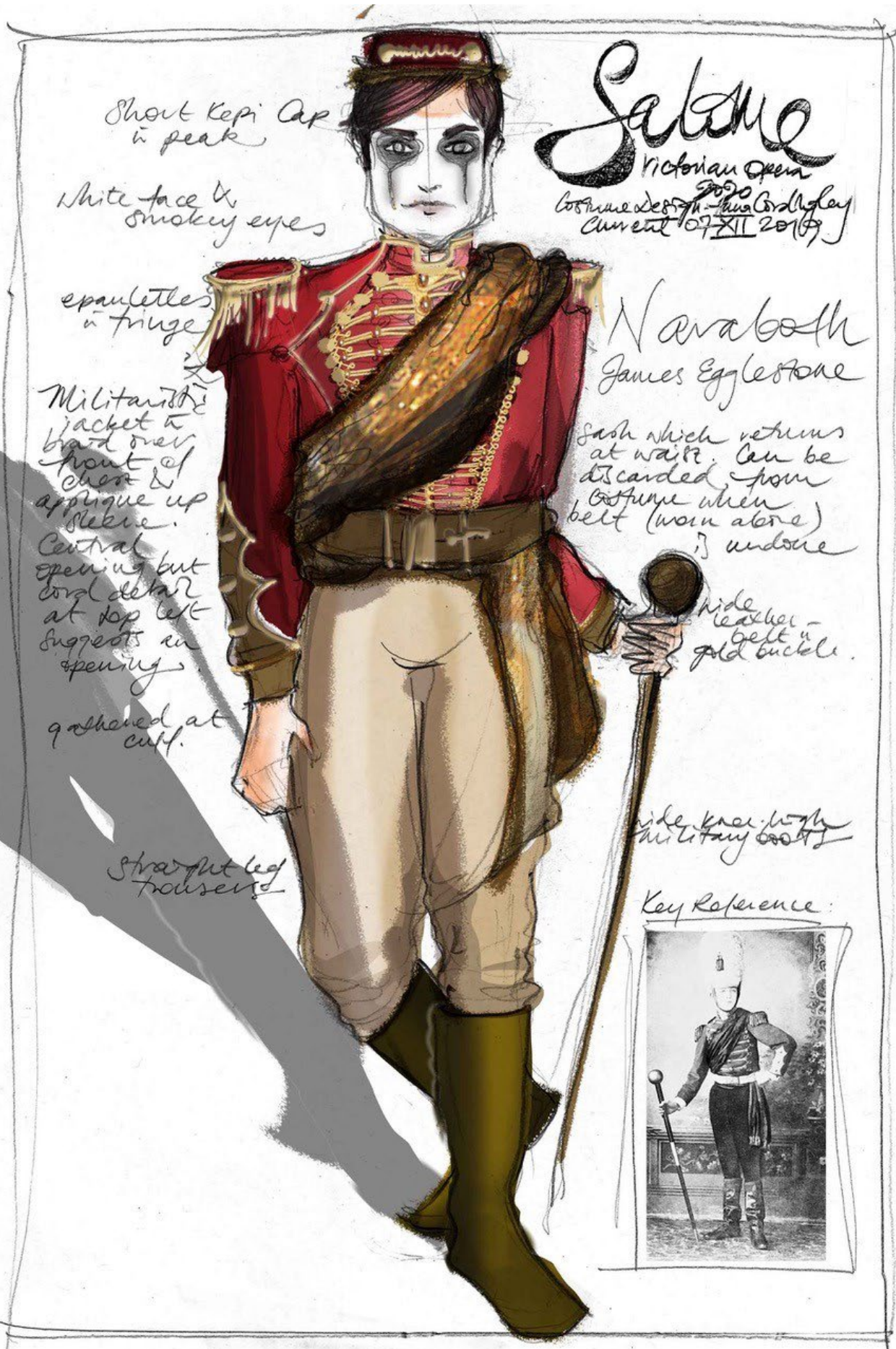
There are so many avenues to study set and costume design. At the University of Melbourne alone, there is the design specialisation that I coordinate in VCA’s Production department, as well as an entire bachelor course for Design based at Parkville. But in the short-term, getting involved with school productions and in punchy local theatre companies (such as St Martins Youth Theatre or The National Theatre in St Kilda) is a great way to cut teeth!

COSTUME DESIGNS: SALOME

Across the next few pages are Anna's designs for some of the characters in *Salome*. Pay particular attention to the level of detail in each, not only in the actual costume designs, but also in the descriptive text she includes.

SALOME – SCENE 7







INTERVIEW WITH LIGHTING DESIGNER GAVAN SWIFT

As Christina mentioned in her interview on pages 26-29 of this resource, the set is nothing without lighting. Gavan Swift describes the work of a lighting designer in the interview below, and the role the lighting designer plays when the concept of a production is being developed.

To begin, can you please explain what a lighting designer does and how you got into this line of work?

The lighting designer, at the most basic level, provides illumination for the stage. Extrapolate this further and the lighting designer works with the director and set designer to focus the audiences' attention, create location and time, and provide atmosphere and emotion to support and advance the story and support the performers.

I developed an interest in stage lighting in high school and subsequently graduated from the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) with a Bachelor of Dramatic Art (Technical Production). Since graduating 25 years ago I have been fortunate to have a rewarding and long career in lighting design.

How does the design process for lighting differ to that of a set or costume design?

One of the major differences in lighting design as opposed to set or costume design is that my craft is entirely theoretical until we stage the production in the theatre. With scenery and costume there are scale models and costume drawings to illustrate what the production will look like; these are physically tangible items than can be viewed or touched. With lighting it is possible to provide some three-dimensional renderings of what the lighting may look like, however these are only impressions and the reality of how the show will eventually look can only be realised in the theatre.

Are you involved in the design process from the conceptual stage or do you come in once the set and costume designs have been finalised and approved?

This depends on the production and my relationship with the creative team. I usually won't have any input to the costume designs unless it involves the interaction of light and fabric. However, I can have a large degree of input regarding the set design but this is dependent on how integral lighting is to the set design. There are no firm rules regarding my involvement in the scenic design, however I do like to be involved and believe it results in better outcomes to be involved early and continuously as the process evolves.

A set or costume designer might get their inspiration from certain artists or designers. As a lighting designer, where or who do you draw inspiration from for your designs?

My initial inspiration is always from the text and music of the piece. With opera in particular, the drama in the music and the libretto is hugely illustrative. Beyond this response to the work, the concept of the stage presentation will result in a body of reference material that will inspire my vision for the production. This reference material may be images from paintings, photographs or nature itself. I will then look at how lighting is illustrated in the reference materials and use this enquiry to help me place lights in the theatre to arrive at the finished result.

Have you started designing the lighting for *Salome*? If so, can you explain your designs?

I have only just started on my lighting design for *Salome*. At this stage most of my work is around breaking down the scenery drawings and looking at angles and the lighting possibilities that entails.

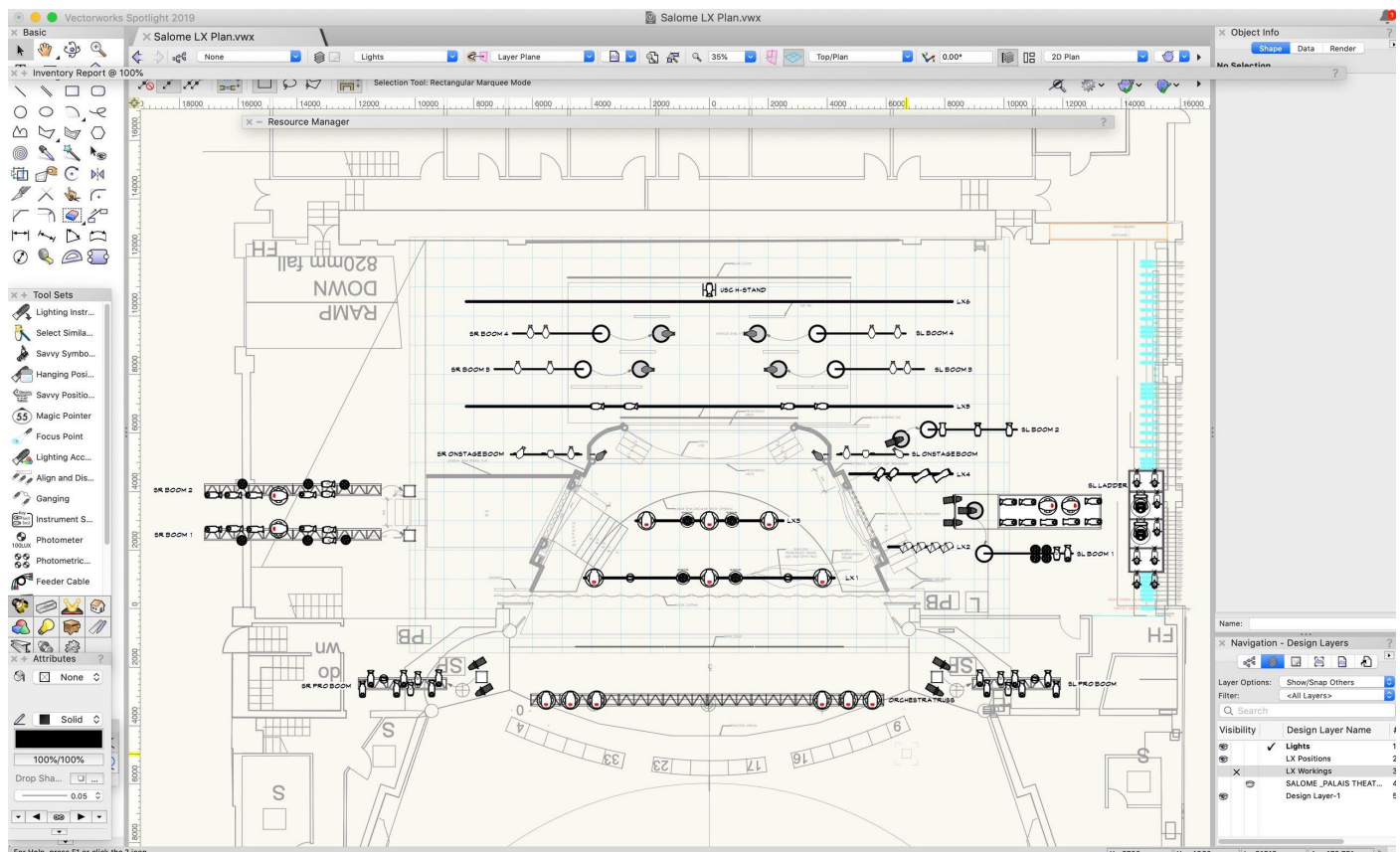
Have you looked at or will you look at past productions of *Salome* when creating your design for this production of the work?

I haven't looked at past productions of *Salome* and I most likely won't. I prefer my design to be influenced by the design concept, the staging and my own ideas.

What do you use to develop your designs?

From a practical sense, I use Vectorworks Spotlight as my CAD software. It has a full suite of tools

and symbols to ease the process of translating my ideas into a plan for the theatre. I also use Lightwright for my lighting paperwork. This application works with Vectorworks, managing all the lighting data ensuring the paperwork and the plan match.



A screenshot of Gavan Swift's lighting plans in Vectorworks Spotlight.

What advice would you give any young people who were interested in pursuing a career as a lighting designer?

I would encourage young people who are interested in a career in lighting to think carefully about what they would like to do. If they would like to work more on the technical side (and we need more of these people) then I would suggest a full-time lighting course or applying for an internship with a lighting supplier. If they are looking to work more in lighting design then I would suggest a more broad-based technical theatre or theatre design course. Lighting design doesn't exist in isolation. To be a good lighting designer, in addition to having skill and creativity, I think you need to have a good understanding of all the elements involved in creating stage productions. You need to know about set design, costume design, directing, acting, scenery, props, and the roles the people backstage play to get a show on every night. If a tertiary course isn't possible then I would encourage any young person aiming for a career in lighting to get involved in as many productions as you can. The amateur scene is a good training ground, but the independent and co-op theatre scene will often expose young people to professional theatre makers and those contacts will be vital in gaining professional work.

Are there any designers you would recommend students to look at?

There are some excellent designers here in Australia. I would suggest students look at the work of Nick Schlieper, Nigel Levings, Paul Jackson and Verity Hampson to begin with. Overseas lighting designers who I would recommend students look at would be Don Holder, Neil Austin, Howell Binkley, Ken Billington and Natasha Katz. These designers regularly have productions here in Australia.



VISUAL ARTS – ACTIVITIES

YEAR 10

ACTIVITY ONE: VISUAL ANALYSIS

Look up Sally Stockhold's *Diane Arbus photographing the Doppelgänger Twins*, then:

1. Write a 500 word analysis, in which you consider the style, subject and perspective of the image. In your analysis, try and determine what reaction or response might be expected from anyone who views the photo.
2. Show the image to five different people and notate their reactions and thoughts about the work.
3. Compare the five responses with each other, before comparing them with the response you predicted in your analysis from step one of this activity.

ACTIVITY TWO: SALOME – THE ORIGINAL DESIGN

Research the costume and set designs for the original theatrical and operatic productions of *Salome*. In a 600 word essay, consider:

- The original designers and any styles they were known for;
- Whether the culture in which the original productions took place had an influence on the designs; and,
- Any similarities or differences between the theatrical and operatic productions.

YEARS 11-12

ACTIVITY THREE: SET DESIGN

Design the set for an operatic production of *Salome* then create a model scale box to present your design.

Consider the symbolist nature of the opera, as discussed by Christina Smith in her interview on pages 26-29 of this resource, and how you will incorporate the symbols into your set design.

Think about the lighting design and how you might want elements of your design illuminated.

Finally, contemplate the music of the opera and note how and in what way, if at all, this has influenced your design.

For a copy of the libretto, visit <https://www.chandos.net/chanimages/Booklets/CH3157.pdf>.

For an audio recording of *Salome*, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViLcRFqtTpk>.

ACTIVITY FOUR: COSTUME DESIGN

Choose three characters from the list below and design a costume for each of them.

- Salome
- Herod
- Herodias
- Narraboth
- Jochanaan
- The Page
- The Jews
- The Nazarenes
- Herodias's slave
- Herod's soldiers

If you choose Salome, consider how her costume might change during the 'Dance of the Seven Veils'.

In your design portfolio, research the materials you want to use and provide fabric samples for each of them.

For a copy of the libretto, visit <https://www.chandos.net/chanimages/Booklets/CH3157.pdf>.

For an audio recording of *Salome*, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViLcRFqtTpk>.

GERMAN

THE GERMAN TRANSLATION

Oscar Wilde's *Salome* was originally written in French then translated into English by Lord Alfred Douglas. The German translation was done by Hedwig Lachmann in 1903 and was successfully performed in a production by Max Reinhardt at the Schall und Rauch Theatre, a literary cabaret in Berlin.

Lachmann's translation of *Salome* was praised by reviewers for its poetry and some critics even claimed that it improved Wilde's original play. Strauss based his libretto on this translation, but cut almost one-third of the text, eliminating the elements that took away from the main narrative line, such as minor characters and parts of the text that portrayed ambience, deepened characterisation and provided historical context. Shortening the text also allowed Strauss to develop melodic lines and orchestral passages that would illustrate the range of human emotion that is explored in this work across a variety of characters.

HEDWIG LACHMANN

Hedwig Lachmann was a poet and translator from Stolp, Pomerania. She passed her language teaching examination at the age of 15, demonstrating a gift for languages. She worked as a governess in England, Dresden, Budapest and Berlin, and picked up occasional work as a journalist. In addition to translating literature, among which include Edgar Allan Poe's poems and Oscar Wilde's *Salome* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, she also composed her own poetry which was published in a journal founded by her husband.



An image of Hedwig Lachmann from 1885. Author unknown. Retrieved from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hedwig_Lachmann#/media/File:Hedwig_Lachmann_-_1865-1918.jpg



YEAR 10

ACTIVITY ONE: TRANSLATION

Translate the below dialogue from the opening scene of *Salome* into English.

NARRABOTH: Wie schön ist die Prinzessin Salome heute nacht!

PAGE: Sieh die Mondscheibe, wie sie seltsam aussieht. Wie eine Frau, die aufsteigt aus dem Grab.

NARRABOTH: Sie ist sehr seltsam. Wie eine kleine Prinzessin, deren Füße weiße Tauben sind. Man könnte meinen, sie tanzt.

PAGE: Wie eine Frau, die tot ist. Sie gleitet langsam dahin.

ERSTER SOLDAT: Was für ein Aufruhr! Was sind das für wilde Tiere, die da heulen?

ZWEITER SOLDAT: Die Juden. Trocken. Sie sind immer so. Sie streiten über ihre Religion.

ERSTER SOLDAT: Ich finde es lächerlich, über solche Dinge zu streiten.

NARRABOTH: Wie schön ist die Prinzessin Salome heute abend!

PAGE: Du siehst sie immer an. Du siehst sie zuviel an. Es ist gefährlich, Menschen auf diese Art anzusehn. Schreckliches kann geschehn.

NARRABOTH: Sie ist sehr schön heute abend.

ERSTER SOLDAT: Der Tetrarch sieht finster drein.

ZWEITER SOLDAT: Ja, er sieht finster drein.

ERSTER SOLDAT: Auf wen blickt er?

ZWEITER SOLDAT: Ich weiß nicht.

NARRABOTH: Wie blaß die Prinzessin ist. Niemals habe ich sie so blaß gesehn. Sie ist wie der Schatten einer weißen Rose in einem silbernen Spiegel.

PAGE: Du mußt sie nicht ansehen. Du siehst sie zuviel an. Schreckliches kann geschehn.

DIE STIMME DES JOCHANAN: Nach mir wird Einer kommen, der ist stärker als ich. Ich bin nicht wert, ihm zu lösen den Riemen an seinen Schuh'n. Wenn er kommt, werden die verödeten Stätten frohlocken. Wenn er kommt, werden die Augen der Blinden den Tag sehn. Wenn er kommt, die Ohren der Tauben geöffnet.

ACTIVITY TWO: POST-SHOW CONVERSATION

In groups of two, have a conversation in German around one of the following topics:

1. What did you like and dislike about this opera?
2. What are some of the themes of this work?
3. Describe where you think Salome's downfall begins.

YEARS 11-12

ACTIVITY THREE: WRITING PRACTICE

Complete one of the topics listed below in German.

1. Write a 1000 word essay on the life and works of Richard Strauss and his contribution to the development of music and culture in Germany.
2. Read Oscar Wilde's *Salome* and write a one page diary entry from the perspective of Salome that reflects her feelings towards Jochanaan. Your entry should echo the characteristics of Salome as presented in Wilde's play.

Visit <https://www.wilde-online.info/salome.html> for a copy of the play.

3. Write a 400 word newspaper article reviewing Victorian Opera's production of *Salome*.

ACTIVITY FOUR: CONVERSATION PRACTICE

Choose one of the characters listed below and in groups of four, have a conversation in German that analyses the character you have chosen. Then write down a list of the character's traits that lead to their final state in the opera.

- Salome
- Jochanaan
- Herod
- Herodias
- Narraboth

ACTIVITY FIVE: TRANSLATION

Translate one of the below excerpts from the third scene of *Salome*'s libretto into English.

Salome describing Jochanaan's body

Jochanaan! Ich bin verliebt in deinen Leib, Jochanaan! Dein Leib ist weiß wie die Lilien auf einem Felde, von der Sichel nie berührt. Dein Leib ist weiß wie der Schnee auf den Bergen Judäas. Die Rosen im Garten von Arabiens Königin sind nicht so weiß wie dein Leib, nicht die Rosen im Garten der Königin, nicht die Füße der Dämmerung auf den Blättern, nicht die Brüste des Mondes auf dem Meere, nichts in der Welt ist so weiß wie dein Leib. Laß mich ihn berühren, deinen Leib!

Salome describing Jochanaan's hair

In dein Haar bin ich verliebt, Jochanaan. Dein Haar ist wie Weintrauben, wie Büschel Schwarzer Trauben, an den Weinstöcken Edoms. Dein Haar ist wie die Cedern, die großen Cedern vom Libanon, die den Löwen und Räubern Schatten spenden. Die langen schwarzen Nächte, wenn der Mond sich verbirgt, wenn die Sterne bängen, sind nicht so schwarz wie dein Haar. Des Waldes Schweigen. ... Nichts in der Welt ist so schwarz wie dein Haar. Laß mich es berühren, dein Haar!

Salome describing Jochanaan's mouth

Deinen Mund begehre ich, Jochanaan. Dein Mund ist wie ein Scharlachband an einem Turm von Elfenbein. Er ist wie ein Granatapfel, von einem Silbermesser zerteilt. Die Granatapfelblüten in den Gärten von Tyrus, glüh'nder als Rosen, sind nicht so rot. Die roten Fanfaren der Trompeten, die das Nah'n von Kön'gen künden und vor denen der Feind erzittert, sind nicht so rot, wie dein roter Mund. Dein Mund ist röter als die Füße der Männer, die den Wein stampfen in der Kelter. Er ist röter als die Füße der Tauben, die in den Tempeln wohnen. Dein Mund ist wie ein Korallenzweig in der Dämm'ung des Meer's, wie der Purpur in den Gruben von Moab, der Purpur der Könige. Außer sich. Nichts in der Welt ist so rot wie dein Mund. Laß mich ihn küssen, deinen Mund.

TEXT AND TRADITIONS

FROM THE BIBLE TO OSCAR WILDE'S SALOME

The Tetrarch Herod Antipas's beheading of John the Baptist at the request of Salome appears in the Gospels of Matthew (14:1-12), Mark (6:14-29) and Luke (9:7-9) in the Bible. While there are clear differences between these passages and Oscar Wilde's play, it is clear that herein lies the foundation on which Wilde created his own version of the work.

The most striking difference between the bible passages mentioned above and the play by Wilde, is that while Herodias's daughter does dance for Herod and his guests, the request to behead John the Baptist comes from Herodias, via her daughter, rather than from her daughter directly. Furthermore, the name of Herodias's daughter is not given in any of the bible passages.

In his *Antiquities*, the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus was the first to mention the name of Herodias's daughter as Salome in his accounts of the Herodian dynasty. She was the royal daughter of Herodias and Herod Phillip I, the half-brother of Herod Antipas. However, while Josephus acknowledges Salome as the step-daughter of Herod Antipas, he does not connect Salome with John the Baptist. There is also no mention of Salome dancing for Herod in public, as this would have been forbidden for respectable women in ancient Jewish custom.

In addition to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, parallels can be drawn between the Song of Solomon and the words and phrases Wilde has chosen for use throughout the play. For example, Salome expresses her love for Jochanaan by describing different parts of his body, first with ardour, then with hatred. References of these body parts, such as Jochanaan's lips and hair, and the words Salome uses, such as ivory, "clusters of grapes" and "tower of ivory", appear throughout the Song of Solomon. Comparisons can also be made in some of the text assigned to Herod when he is offering Salome half his kingdom or the rare white peacocks that roam his garden, and in Narraboth's loving description of Salome where he likens her to the moon.



TEXT AND TRADITIONS – ACTIVITIES

UNITS 1 AND 2

ACTIVITY ONE: TEXT ANALYSIS – GOSPELS OF MATTHEW, MARK AND LUKE

Create a table that compares the passages from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, with the text from Oscar Wilde's play, *Salome*.

Then, in a 1,000 word essay, analyse the similarities and differences and discuss the ways in which Wilde has adapted the biblical passages to his play.

ACTIVITY TWO: CHARACTER AND TEXT ANALYSIS

After watching Victorian Opera's performance of *Salome*, compare the depiction of Salome, Herod and Herodias in the opera by Richard Strauss to the way they are presented in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew.

ACTIVITY THREE: TEXT ANALYSIS – SONG OF SOLOMON

Read the Song of Solomon and Oscar Wilde's *Salome* then create a list of words, phrases and subjects that appear in both.

In any instances where there is a strong link between the two texts, can it be argued that Oscar Wilde was attempting to convey his own interpretations of these passages in his play? Write a 500 word essay that outlines your view.

For a copy of Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, visit <https://www.wilde-online.info/salome.html>.

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