

Fairytales Opera Theater

Hänsel and Gretel Opera Information Page for Teachers

Engelbert Humperdinck (September 1, 1854 – September 27, 1921) was a German composer. His chief reputation rests on his opera *Hänsel und Gretel*, which was produced at Weimar, 1893. Humperdinck was greatly influenced by Richard Wagner, and worked as his assistant.

Hänsel und Gretel is an opera by Engelbert Humperdinck (Humperdinck himself described it as a *fairy opera*.) The libretto was written by Adelheid Wette (Humperdinck's sister), based on the Grimms' *Hänsel and Gretel*. It was first performed in Weimar on December 23, 1893.

The idea for the opera was proposed to Humperdinck by his sister, who approached him about writing music for songs that she had written for her children for Christmas based on "Hänsel and Gretel." After several revisions, the musical sketches and the songs were turned into a full-scale opera.

Hänsel und Gretel has been associated with Christmas since its earliest performances, and it is often performed at Christmas time. It is much admired for its folk music-inspired themes, one of the most famous being the prayer from act II.

Characters

Hänsel, a little boy (Mezzo-Soprano)

Gretel, his sister (Soprano)

Peter, broom-maker and father of Hänsel and Gretel (Baritone)

Gertrud, Peter's wife (Mezzo-soprano)

The Gingerbread witch (Mezzo-soprano or Tenor)

Sandman (Soprano)

Dewman (Soprano)

Chorus of echoes (Three sopranos, two altos), and chorus of children.



Engelbert Humperdinck