

# MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

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Amahl and the Night Visitors  
December 3-5, 2014

Dear teachers, parents and guardians,

Welcome to the Minnesota Orchestra's 2014-2015 season of Young People's Concerts!

Gian Carlo Menotti's one-act opera *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, will take center stage for the first time in ten years at the newly renovated Orchestra Hall.

This is a unique and beautiful production, originally developed by James Sewell Ballet. It unites the forces of the Minnesota Orchestra, James Sewell Ballet, vocal soloists and the Minnesota Chorale. The ballet choreography incorporates American Sign Language, adding depth and complexity to the production. Sets, costumes, and lighting enhance the beauty of the movement and music, making this a one of a kind concert experience.

Due to copyright considerations, we are not able to provide a downloadable audio recording of the entire opera. These materials (timings, etc.) will reference the original TV broadcast from December 24, 1951 available on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hxz-s46vjpY>

Watching this video, students may find it interesting to see what early television looked like. (In 1951, only 1/3 of American households had television.) Also of interest is the amazing performance of 12 year old Chet Allen as Amahl. The composer himself introduces the piece, relating it to his own childhood holiday memories.

I hope you and your students enjoy *Amahl and the Night Visitors*!



Jessica Leibfried  
Director of Education and Community Engagement  
Minnesota Orchestra

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## CONCERT PROGRAM

Minnesota Orchestra  
Mischa Santora, conductor  
James Sewell Ballet  
Minnesota Chorale  
Karin Wolverson, Soprano  
Brad Benoit, Tenor  
Jeffrey Madison, Baritone  
Seth Keeton, Bass-Baritone

**GIAN CARLO MENOTTI**

Amahl and the Night Visitors

## PERFORMERS

### THE MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA



Now in its second century and led by Music Director Osmo Vänskä, The Minnesota Orchestra ranks among America's top symphonic ensembles, with a distinguished history of acclaimed performances in its home state and around the world; award-winning recordings, radio broadcasts and community engagement programs; and a visionary commitment to building the orchestral repertoire of tomorrow.

Founded as the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, the ensemble gave its inaugural performance on November 5, 1903, shortly after baseball's first World Series and six weeks before the Wright brothers made their unprecedented airplane flight. The Orchestra played its first regional tour in 1907 and made its New York City debut in 1912 at Carnegie Hall, where it has performed regularly ever since. Outside the United States, the Orchestra has played concerts in Australia, Canada, Europe, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. Since 1968 it has been known as the Minnesota Orchestra. Today the ensemble presents nearly 175 programs each year, primarily at its home venue of Orchestra Hall in downtown Minneapolis, and its concerts are heard by live audiences of 350,000 annually.

The Orchestra's international tours have reaped significant praise, most recently in August 2010. During a critically lauded tour of European festivals, the Orchestra performed at the Edinburgh International Festival, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw and the BBC Proms in London—before stumping crowds totaling 12,000 for two concerts at Royal Albert Hall, one of which culminated in a performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Critic John Allison subsequently wrote in *The Sunday Telegraph*: "The Minnesotans are among the world's most cultivated bands. And under Vänskä...their Beethoven Ninth was everything one hopes for but seldom hears in this towering masterpiece."

## PERFORMERS

### MISCHA SANTORA, CONDUCTOR

Mischa Santora has conducted many of the leading orchestras in North and South America, Europe, Asia, and Australia. Highlights next season include performances with the Minnesota Orchestra, the Phoenix Symphony, the Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra, and the Teatro Del Lago Festival Orchestra on a national tour of Chile. He will perform several concerts with his newly founded, Twin Cities based ensemble, the Minneapolis Music Company, specializing in collaborative projects and new music. He just finished a critically acclaimed 14-year tenure as the Music Director of the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra.

Mr. Santora was the Associate Conductor of the Minnesota Orchestra between 2003 and 2009, where he conducted numerous subscription concerts and fully staged operatic performances. His career has been marked by strong advocacy of New Music. Under his artistic supervision of the New York Youth Symphony's award-winning First Music program (then chaired by John Corigliano) the Orchestra commissioned more than fifteen new works during his tenure, a tradition he continues in Cincinnati and Minneapolis. In Minnesota, he has conducted the Minnesota Orchestra's Composer Institute reading sessions in addition to serving on the panel of judges selecting the composers.

Born to Hungarian parents in the Netherlands, Mr. Santora moved with his family of musicians to Switzerland where he began to study violin with his father, a member of the Lucerne Symphony. After he received a diploma in violin and teaching from the Academy for School and Church Music in Lucerne, Mr. Santora continued his violin studies with Prof. Thomas Brandis, former concertmaster of the Berlin Philharmonic, at the Hochschule der Künste in Berlin. Mr. Santora subsequently undertook conducting studies with Otto-Werner Mueller at the Curtis Institute of Music.



## PERFORMERS

### JAMES SEWELL BALLET



James Sewell Ballet was founded in New York City by James Sewell and Sally Rouse and brought to Minnesota in 1993. Combining their expertise, vision and chutzpah they envisioned a close-knit company of dance artists willing to both challenge their physical limits and expand their notions about ballet. Nearly two decades later, critically acclaimed JSB performances move and delight audiences across the country. The embodiment of the original vision is a professional company of eight dancers performing innovative work that explores the technical boundaries of ballet.

Based in the Twin Cities, James Sewell Ballet studios are located at The Cowles Center for Dance & the Performing Arts in Downtown Minneapolis. Annual spring and fall JSB performances are currently presented at The Goodale Theater in The Cowles Center. JSB's annual cutting edge "Ballet Works Project", featuring new works by emerging and established choreographers, is presented at the Tek Box on the second floor of The Cowles Center.

### MINNESOTA CHORALE



Minnesota Chorale Founded in 1972, the Minnesota Chorale is Principal Chorus of the Minnesota Orchestra and ranks among the foremost professional choruses in the United States. Led by Kathy Saltzman Romey since 1995, the Chorale is best known for its work with the Twin Cities' two major orchestras, but is equally dedicated to fostering and deepening relationships through its award-winning Bridges community engagement initiatives, educational activities, and independent presentations of choral works. A seasoned artistic partner, the Chorale continues to explore new artistic directions and collaborative opportunities, while earning the highest critical acclaim for its work on the concert stage.

# MINNESOTA ACADEMIC STANDARDS IN MUSIC

This curriculum is designed to support the four cornerstones found in the state music standards: foundations, create, perform and respond. You'll find the standards for each cornerstone listed below.

To access the full document and find grade-level specific benchmarks, click here: <http://perpich.mn.gov/files/MNArtsStandards.pdf>

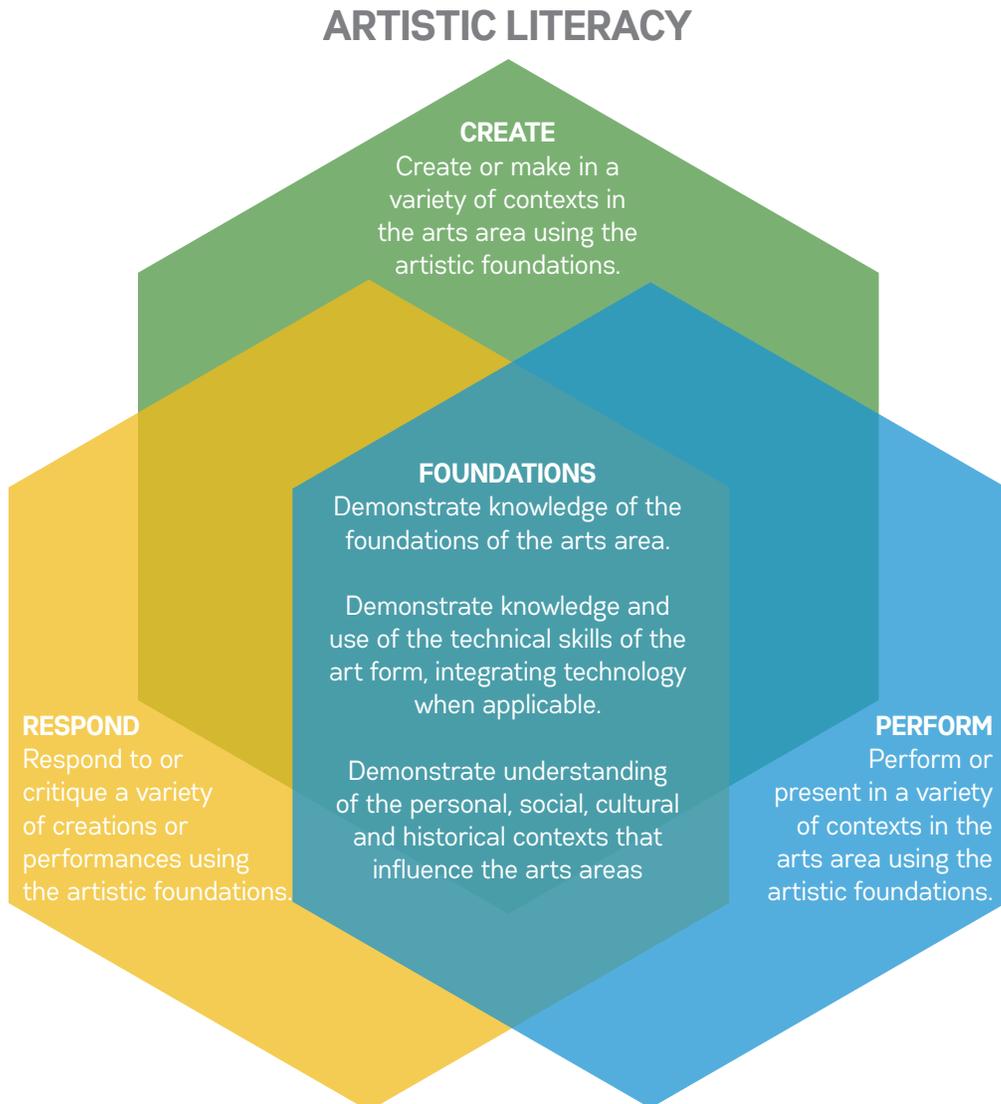
## OF INTEREST

Public Elementary Schools in MN must offer 3 and require 2 of the following: dance, music, theater, visual arts.

Districts may use state standards or locally developed standards.

## SUMMARY OF STANDARDS

Notice: Standards stay the same for grades K-12 but BENCHMARKS are specific to each grade band (K-2), (3-5), (6-8), (9-12).



## INTRODUCING THE MUSIC

There are many different ways to investigate music with a group of learners. One way to approach an introductory lesson is through the RESPOND cornerstone of the standards. To help your learners RESPOND to the music in a meaningful way, try using this Artful Tool called Descriptive Review!

### DESCRIPTIVE REVIEW: A TOOL FOR COLLABORATIVE INVESTIGATION

Descriptive Review is a reflective protocol that can help a group of learners make meaning out of a new piece of music. Important: collaborative inquiry about the music should be based in pure description without judgment. By leaving assumptions and judgments at the wayside, learners uncover new perspectives and information, ultimately developing a deeper understanding of the music. Learners use critical listening and thinking skills to describe what they hear, ask questions, and then make speculations on what's going on in the music.

Teachers act as facilitators; Learners act as investigators. Three questions are asked of the learners:

1. **(Describe)** *What do you notice?* ("I notice...")
2. **(Question)** *What questions do you have about the music?* ("I wonder...")
3. **(Speculate)** *What is the music about? What is the composer trying to tell us?*

### PROCESS:

- Do not reveal the title of the music, composer, or any context. Remember this is the introductory session for learners to inquire and uncover as much as they can!
- Show learners the three questions. Read through each one and make sure they understand what their job is as the listener. Have them focus on the first question and encourage each learner to remember and share one thing they noticed after they listen. (If you have time and materials, learners could record multiple ideas.)
- Play the music.
- Ask the first question. You may want to record learner responses.
- As learners respond, it's important for the facilitator to encourage pure description. If a student adds a judgment such as "I heard the violin play slowly and it was boring" ask "What did you hear that makes you say that?" to dig deeper.
- Try not to teach. Simply facilitate conversation.
- Ask subsequent questions and continue facilitating conversation void of judgment.
- After the DESCRIPTIVE REVIEW session, reveal title, composer and context and build off of learner responses!

### OF INTEREST

Descriptive Review allows artists, teachers, or students to assess their own work as well—and in a nonjudgmental way. Use this tool in your classroom when students are sharing individual compositions! Ask audience members to listen to their classmate's performance carefully and then ask them to describe, question and speculate. Focusing their attention in this way and asking for objective feedback void of judgement will help create a feeling of safety, trust and sharing in the classroom. The feedback helps the performer to make choices about what to change in their work for next time. All participants learn from each other new ways of looking at and thinking about the world.

Learn more about this tool here: [http://opd.mpls.k12.mn.us/descriptive\\_review2](http://opd.mpls.k12.mn.us/descriptive_review2)

## TEXT OF GIAN CARLO MENOTTI'S INTRODUCTION TO THE ORIGINAL TV PRODUCTION

Gian Carlo Menotti introduced the original TV production with these words:

*This is an opera for children because it tries to recapture my own childhood. You see, when I was a child I lived in Italy, and in Italy we have no Santa Claus. I suppose that Santa Claus is much too busy with American children to be able to handle Italian children as well. Our gifts were brought to us by the Three Kings, instead.*

*I actually never met the Three Kings—it didn't matter how hard my little brother and I tried to keep awake at night to catch a glimpse of the Three Royal Visitors, we would always fall asleep just before they arrived. But I do remember hearing them. I remember the weird cadence of their song in the dark distance; I remember the brittle sound of the camel's hooves crushing the frozen snow; and I remember the mysterious tinkling of their silver bridles.*

*My favorite king was King Melchior, because he was the oldest and had a long white beard. My brother's favorite was King Kaspar. He insisted that this king was a little crazy and quite deaf. I don't know why he was so positive about his being deaf. I suspect it was because dear King Kaspar never brought him all the gifts he requested. He was also rather puzzled by the fact that King Kaspar carried the myrrh, which appeared to him as a rather eccentric gift, for he never quite understood what the word meant.*

*To these Three Kings I mainly owe the happy Christmas seasons of my childhood and I should have remained very grateful to them. Instead, I came to America and soon forgot all about them, for here at Christmas time one sees so many Santa Clauses scattered all over town. Then there is the big Christmas tree in Rockefeller Plaza, the elaborate toy windows on Fifth Avenue, the one-hundred-voice choir in Grand Central Station, the innumerable Christmas carols on radio and television—and all these things made me forget the three dear old Kings of my old childhood.*

*But in 1951 I found myself in serious difficulty. I had been commissioned by the National Broadcasting Company to write an opera for television, with Christmas as deadline, and I simply didn't have one idea in my head. One November afternoon as I was walking rather gloomily through the rooms of the Metropolitan Museum, I chanced to stop in front of the Adoration of the Kings by Hieronymus Bosch, and as I was looking at it, suddenly I heard again, coming from the distant blue hills, the weird song of the Three Kings. I then realized they had come back to me and had brought me a gift.*

*I am often asked how I went about writing an opera for television, and what are the specific problems that I had to face in planning a work for such a medium. I must confess that in writing "Amahl and the Night Visitors," I hardly thought of television at all. As a matter of fact, all my operas are originally conceived for an ideal stage which has no equivalent in reality, and I believe that such is the case with most dramatic authors. —Gian-Carlo Menotti*

## AM AHL AND THE NIGHT VISITORS

- Gian Carlo Menotti, a Pulitzer Prize winning Italian-American composer, lived from 1911 to 2007. He created both the music and the libretto (words) for *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. *Amahl* was the first opera written especially for television. It premiered December 24, 1951 in a live TV broadcast, introduced by the composer.

Watch the original production, with introduction by the composer, at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hxz-s46vjpY>

- *Amahl and the Night Visitors* is a true opera, in that all words are sung. It was written in English, especially for children. It is in one act, approximately 45 minutes long. Like many full-length operas, it contains an overture, a ballet section, instrumental numbers, recitatives, arias and chorus numbers. There are parts that are very funny and other parts that are serious.

- The production you will see presents the music exactly as Menotti wrote it, but it will be staged in a unique way. This production, developed by James Sewell Ballet, places the singers at the rear of the stage, with the orchestra. Dancers, in front of the orchestra, dance the roles as the singers sing the text. American Sign Language is incorporated into the choreography. The sets and costumes were designed especially for this production, and are based on the colors of stained glass.

- The Minnesota Orchestra will be conducted by Mischa Santora, with dancers from James Sewell Ballet, vocal soloists, and a chorus from the Minnesota Chorale. For more information on all of the performers, see the Reference Section at the end of these materials.

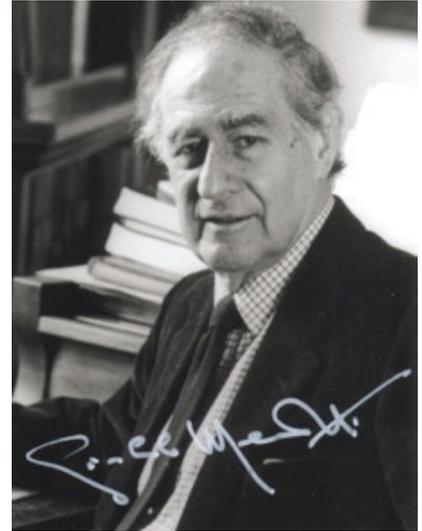


## AM AHL AND THE NIGHT VISITORS

**Gian Carlo Menotti** (1911-2007) was born in Cadegliano, Italy on July 7, 1911. At the age of 7, under the guidance of his mother, he began to compose songs. Four years later, he wrote the words and music of his first opera, *The Death of Pierrot*. He began his formal musical training in 1923 at the Verdi Conservatory in Milan. Following the death of his father, his mother took him to the United States, where he was enrolled at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music. Menotti's mother chose the Curtis Institute on the advice of the famed conductor Arturo Toscanini. Menotti said that leaving his mother for Curtis was similar to Amahl leaving his mother to travel with the Three Kings.

In 1984, Menotti was awarded the Kennedy Center Honor for lifetime achievement in the arts.

Menotti's best known work is *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. It was composed for NBC Television, and was first performed on Christmas Eve, 1951. It was the first opera composed for TV. *Amahl* was a holiday tradition on NBC TV for many years. Following its first stage performance in 1952, it has become part of the standard repertoire, with performances at opera houses, schools and churches. It is thought that *Amahl* has been seen by more people than any other opera.



### James Sewell Ballet's Production

In 1995, several Minnesota organizations teamed up to create a ballet version of *Amahl* that would incorporate American Sign Language as part of the choreography.

The partners included: James Sewell Ballet; Riverbend Institute for the Arts, located on the campus of the Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf in Faribault; the Wildwood Artist Series in Mahtomedi; and the school districts of Faribault and Mahtomedi, MN.

James Sewell Ballet presented its production for the first time November 16, 1995, in Faribault. In quick succession that year, it was also presented for the Learning Center for Homeless Families in Minneapolis; Eastern Michigan University; and Wildwood Artist Series in Mahtomedi.



In choreographing the *Amahl* story, James Sewell incorporated the visual-spacial movement of American Sign Language (ASL) with Classical Ballet. His interest in ASL was prompted, in part, by his realization that Western dance culture, particularly ballet, has not developed a movement vocabulary for the performer's hands.



Menotti's inspiration for *Amahl and the Night Visitors* was *The Adoration of the Magi* by Hieronymus Bosch, painted in the year 1510, and his own childhood traditions. >

## EXPLORE THE STORY OF AMAHL AND THE NIGHT VISITORS

### CHARACTERS:

Amahl: a crippled boy, about 12 years old

Amahl's mother

The three kings:

King Kaspar (slightly deaf)

King Melchior

King Balthazar

The Page (traveling with the kings)

Chorus of shepherds and villagers

### SETTING:

The story is set around the hills of Bethlehem, at the time of the first Christmas.

### THE STORY:

Amahl, a young, poor shepherd boy, lives with his widowed mother in a small hut. As the opera begins, Amahl tries to tell his mother about what he has seen in the night sky: an enormous star with a long tail! His mother, tired of his wild imagination and tall tales, grows angry. She is even angrier when Amahl tells her that a knock at the door is from three kings who have come to visit them. The kings enter and tell Amahl and his mother that they are following a large star in the sky, on their way to find a new-born king. The Three Kings show Amahl and his Mother the rich gifts they have brought for this king.

While Amahl's mother is out gathering wood for the fire, Amahl asks the kings questions, and explains that he used to be a shepherd, but his sheep were sold. One of the kings, Kaspar, shows Amahl his fancy box, full of magic stones, beads, and candy. Amahl goes out and gathers the neighbors, who are all shepherds. The shepherds greet each other and catch up on the local news. They present their gifts of special foods to the kings and perform a dance.

Later that night, Amahl's mother is tempted to steal some of the kings' gold since she and Amahl are very poor. She is caught, but the kings offer to let her keep the gold, explaining that the king they seek will need nothing but love to rule his kingdom. The mother declines their offer, returning the gold. Amahl then offers his crutch, which is his only possession, as an additional gift. Suddenly, he finds that he can walk. He leaves with the kings to pay homage to the child who has healed him.

### STORY ACTIVITIES:

Write the significant scenes of the story plot on cards. Use the Amahl and the Night Visitors children's book or the Story Card text below.

- Pass cards out to students and ask each to read their card. Then ask students to organize the events on the cards in chronological order.
- Mount a long strip of paper along the wall to form a story timeline. Place the story cards along the line in the sequence chosen by the students. Ask students to each choose one scene to illustrate and mount the pictures along the timeline. Listen to the opera and follow the picture sequence.

## EXPLORE THE STORY OF AMAHL AND THE NIGHT VISITORS

(continued from previous page)

### TEXT FOR STORY CARDS:

Amahl tells his mother he sees a huge star with a tail.

Mother tells Amahl to come to bed.

There is a knock on the door.

Amahl answers the door to find three kings outside.

Mother invites the kings in, but says she is very poor and has nothing to offer them.

The kings explain they are following the star to visit a newborn child.

Amahl tells the kings he used to have sheep, but they were sold for money to buy food. He and his mother are about to become beggars.

King Kaspar shows Amahl his fancy box, with jewels, beads, and candy inside.

The neighboring shepherds bring the kings gifts, and perform a dance.

The Mother is tempted to take some of the kings' gold since she and Amahl are so poor.

King Melchior offers to let the mother keep the gold, but she refuses.

Amahl offers his crutch to the kings as a gift for the child they seek.

Amahl's legs are healed.

Amahl leaves, joining the Three Kings for the rest of their journey.

### STORY THEATER:

Directions: Make six copies of the following script. Choose six actors and give each a number. Give each actor a copy of the entire script. Have them find their parts and highlight them. The actors should rehearse their reading before performing it for the class, and encourage them to use expressive voices and gestures as they read. Having the readers perform their parts in the random order as indicated makes for anticipation on the part of the listeners.

**READER 4:** Amahl, a crippled shepherd boy about 12 years old, lives with his mother in a small hut in the hills around Bethlehem, at the time of the first Christmas. Amahl and his mother are very poor.

**READER 1:** Amahl tries to tell his mother that there is a huge star in the night sky, and that it has a huge tail.

**READER 6:** Mother tells Amahl to stop telling lies, and to come to bed.

**READER 2:** The Mother is worried that she and Amahl will have to beg for food. Amahl says he will be a good beggar if he has to.

**READER 3:** After going to bed, Amahl gets up to answer a knock on the door. He tells his mother that there are three kings outside the door.

**READER 1:** The Mother doesn't believe Amahl. When she looks for herself, she is very surprised to find that there really are three kings outside their door. She invites them in.

**READER 5:** The Kings explain they are following a large star on their way to find a new-born child. They have many gifts to bring this child king, including gold. Amahl's mother hurries out to gather firewood.

**READER 2:** While his mother is gone, Amahl asks the Kings about their lives. One of the Kings, Kaspar, shows Amahl his fancy box with three drawers. The drawers contain magic stones, beads and candy.

## EXPLORE THE STORY OF AMAHL AND THE NIGHT VISITORS

(continued from previous page)

**READER 6:** Amahl gathers the neighbors, who are also shepherds. The shepherds present the Kings with gifts of many foods and spices from their farms and gardens. They also perform a dance.

**READER 5:** The Kings thank the shepherds, but explain that they must get some sleep before resuming their journey.

**READER 3:** While the Kings sleep, Amahl's mother is tempted to take some of the gold they are carrying. She wonders if it wouldn't be better to use it for her own crippled child. As she reaches to touch the gold, the Page catches her.

**READER 2:** Amahl tries to get the Page to release his mother, and the Kings tell her she can keep the gold. They explain the king they seek will need nothing but love to rule his kingdom. Amahl's mother returns the gold anyway.

**READER 6:** Amahl offers his crutch to the Kings, saying he would like them to give it to the child. The crutch is Amahl's only possession.

**READER 1:** As soon as he offers his crutch, Amahl is healed!

**READER 5:** The Kings ask if Amahl can join them on their journey. Amahl's mother agrees, and the Kings leave with Amahl, promising to return him home safely.

### ART PROJECT:

#### Building a shoebox theater:

Students may wish to build a shoebox theater, creating a miniature set for Amahl and the Night Visitors. A shoebox theater may be fairly simple, or quite elaborate. Use construction paper to make background, sets and characters. The stage directions from Menotti's score make a good description of the set for students to follow:

It is night. The crystal-clear winter sky is dotted with stars. The Eastern Star, with its flaming tail, floods both the sky and earth with glowing radiance. Outside the cottage, not far from the door, Amahl, wrapped in an oversized cloak, sits on a stone, playing his shepherd's pipe. His crudely made crutch lies on the ground beside him. Within, the Mother works at household chores. The room is lighted only by the dying low flame of a tiny oil lamp.

Directions to build a shoebox theater can be found here: [http://www.californiapapergoods.com/shoe\\_box.shtml](http://www.californiapapergoods.com/shoe_box.shtml)

### WRITING PROJECT:

#### Continue the story of Amahl and the Night Visitors:

As Amahl and the Night Visitors ends, Amahl leaves with the Three Kings. The kings promise Amahl's mother that they will "bring him back on a camel's back."

What will Amahl tell his mother about his trip with the kings? What happens to Amahl and his mother after he returns? Do they become beggars as she feared? Encourage students to write their own ending to the Amahl story. This may work especially well as a post concert activity.

## TEACHING THE MUSIC OF AMAHL AND THE NIGHT VISITORS

Explore the music of *Amahl* by focusing on the various elements of opera that are part of the piece. Timings are based on the original TV broadcast, available on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hzx-s46vjpY>

**#1-OVERTURE.** Like many operas, *Amahl and the Night Visitors* begins with an overture.

### What is an Overture? By Joanna Cortright

The term “overture” means “opening piece.” It is the music that introduces an opera, ballet, play, musical or oratorio. Opera overtures are played by instruments.

400 years ago, when opera was a new idea, the overture was a short fanfare played to get the audience’s attention and to let them know the opera was about to begin. Going to the opera was, and still is, a social occasion. Meeting people and talking with them that was part of the experience. Something had to be done to quiet everyone down!

Over time, the overture grew in length and importance. As more composers created operas, the music of the overture was more often linked to the themes, emotions, mood, characters and the story of the opera.

### OVERTURE ACTIVITY #1:

Play the overture for students before telling them the story of *Amahl*. Ask them, based on the music, what kind of story they think this opera will be. (Happy, sad, important, tragic?). Encourage students to take into consideration that the overture has two parts, each with a different style of music.

On the board, start a list of words or phrases that describe each of the two sections:

#### FIRST SECTION (4:34)

Strings, harp  
Slow  
Sad, melancholy  
Others...?

#### SECOND SECTION (5:30)

Oboes play the melody  
Faster  
Happy  
Others...?

Continue the two lists with suggestions from students. How do their descriptions of the music support their ideas about what the opera might be about?

### OVERTURE ACTIVITY #2:

Sing or use classroom instruments to play the pipe melodies from the overture:

#### Melody 1:

Note the “call and response” aspect of this melody. Perhaps the melody represents two shepherds calling back and forth across the hills:

Violin

The image shows a musical score for a violin part. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a dynamic marking of *f* (forte) and later changes to *p* (piano). The second staff starts with *mf* (mezzo-forte) and ends with *pp* (pianissimo). The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests and a clear call-and-response structure in the first two staves.

## TEACHING THE MUSIC OF AMAHL AND THE NIGHT VISITORS

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### Melody 2:

May be appropriate for student recorder players.



### Melody 3:

May be appropriate for student recorder players.



### OVERTURE ACTIVITY #3:

Help students follow the music of the overture throughout the rest of the opera.

- The music of the first section of the overture is heard when Amahl and the kings go to sleep following the Shepherd's Dance (35.20). It is also heard when King Melchior offers the gold to Amahl's mother (41.45). Opera composers often assign a particular melody to a particular character, emotion or concept.

This music might represent: Night, Sleeping, Giving, Forgiveness.

- The shepherd's pipe section in the overture continues as the characters enter. The oboe melody is also heard as the Shepherd's Dance begins (32.07). The music from this section of the overture also closes the opera, as Amahl joins the Three Kings on their journey.

This music might represent: Amahl, Shepherds, Hope

## TEACHING THE MUSIC OF AMAHL AND THE NIGHT VISITORS

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### #2-RECITATIVE

Opera composers through the years have used a musical style called **“recitative” (reh-chit-a-TIVE)**. Our English word “recite” has the same roots. When a singer sings a recitative, the style could be described as half speaking and half singing. Traditionally, the characters in the opera advance the plot in a recitative, and then sing an “aria” based on the action. An aria could also be called a “song”.

Often, the opera composer indicates that the singer may sing at his/her own tempo (speed) during the recitative section. In Amahl, Menotti often uses the musical term “*liberamente*” in these sections. (This means “freely”, without a strict beat.)

#### Examples of Recitative sections:

7:00: “How long must I shout to make you obey?” “I’m sorry mother.” “Hurry in! It’s time to go to bed.”

7:27: “There won’t be any moon tonight. But there will be a weeping child very soon if he doesn’t hurry up and obey his mother.” “Oh, very well.”

16:45: “What shall I do with this boy, what shall I do, what shall I do? If you don’t learn to tell the truth, I’ll have to spank you! Go back and see who it is and ask them what they want.”

35:19: “Thank you, good friends, for your dances and your gifts. But now we must bid you good night. We have little time for sleep and a long journey ahead.”

36:16: “Excuse me sir, amongst your magic stones is there...is there one that could cure a crippled boy?”

Ask student to speak each of these lines as if they are on stage, exaggerating the accented syllables. Students may find several especially dramatic ways to say each of these. As they are comfortable, ask them to start on a given pitch, and change pitch for emphasis as they think the words indicate. With older students, ask them to notate their versions on staff paper.

Finally, listen to each of these as Menotti set them in Amahl.

### #3-AM AHL’S ARIA “DON’T CRY MOTHER DEAR”

One of the first arias in the opera is sung by Amahl, “Don’t Cry, Mother Dear” (11:30). “Aria” is the operatic word for “song”.

The Mother is crying, worrying that she and Amahl will have to resort to begging. Amahl comforts her, saying that if they need to beg, he will be a good beggar.

After listening to the aria, ask students how it is different from a recitative. Suggest that there is a regular beat, and an identifiable melody. It is all singing, instead of half singing, half speaking.

Discuss the ways that Amahl says they will beg. How does his imagination come into play? (*He imagines dressing up as a gypsy and a clown, eating roast goose and almonds, and that their singing will attract a king who will throw them gold.*)

Discuss how the music changes at these points in the aria:

When Amahl says he will play his pipe (12:30)

When a king rides by (12:45)

## TEACHING THE MUSIC OF AMAHL AND THE NIGHT VISITORS

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### #4-THE THREE KINGS ARRIVE

The voices of the Three Kings are first heard from a distance (13.45), singing a short ensemble piece, which is a piece for more than one singer.

Discuss with students how the orchestra part in this section helps communicate the story to the audience. The orchestra plays a slow march. It is easy to hear the left-right-left-right motion. The slow, low, deliberate quality of the music matches the mood of the Kings, who are cold, tired, and unsure of how much farther they have to travel. This is a good example of how the orchestra can support the story in an opera.

In the stage directions for this section of the opera, Menotti writes that at first, the Kings are to be heard from offstage. Later, the stage directions indicate "In the distance among the hills, we see a tiny twinkling light from a lantern, then the small figures of the Three Kings and the Page, wending their way along the mountain road." Menotti suggests that this effect can be created by using either puppets or small children, costumed exactly like the adult figures that will enter shortly after.

Ask students how they would stage this section if they were in charge.

The "going to the door" and "coming back" music (16.00) is a favorite part of the opera for many people.

### #5-THE MARCH OF THE KINGS

As the three Kings and the page enter the hut of Amahl and his Mother, the orchestra plays the March of the Kings (19.35). This is an example of a purely instrumental section in opera. The stage directions indicate that as each king enters the house, the Page must scurry back and forth to carry their trains. After entering the house, each king takes a seat on the wooden bench.

#### Marching like kings:

Have students form three groups, and assign a leader for each. Each group will take the part of one of the Three Kings. Students should assume a very regal stance. As the music begins, the first group begins its march, led by their lead king. Students in each group should follow the gestures of their lead king. Find spots in the music for each king to nod to Amahl and his mother, and music appropriate for sitting down on the bench.

Menotti indicates in the score that each step in the March should fall on the first and third beats of the measure. (Every other beat.) This will make for a very slow, regal march, since Kings never need to hurry!

Consider finding some pieces of gorgeous fabric which might be suitable for a king's robe. Students may enjoy seeing and feeling these.

### #6-AM AHL'S ARIA "I WAS A SHEPHERD..."

In this very short aria, Amahl explains to the kings that he used to have sheep but they were sold, and that he used to have a goat but it died of old age. (21.47)

Listen to this section, and ask students if they were one of the three kings, how they would react to Amahl's sad story. Discuss how this music is different from Amahl's other music so far.

Discuss the difference between Amahl's sad story about the sheep and the goat, and his exchange with Kaspar about the parrot (22.28) shortly after. This is an example of how an opera can have both very sad and very funny moments.

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### #7-KASPAR'S ARIA, "THIS IS MY BOX."

King Kaspar describes to Amahl the contents of his fancy box. (23:11)

Have students draw, or decorate a small cardboard box to create their own version of Kaspar's box.

### #8-"HAVE YOU SEEN..."

King Melchior and the Mother sing a duet. (25:45)

King Melchior is describing the child that he and the other two kings are seeking. The Mother is singing about Amahl.

Years after Amahl was written, Gian Carlo Menotti said he thinks this section is too long for children. Do you agree?

The main melody that King Melchior and the Mother sings, is a descending scale.

#### Melchior's pitches:

C Bflat Aflat G F E Dflat

#### Mother's pitches

F eflat dflat c bflat a g flat

This is a scale that is neither major or minor. Sing this scale with your students, or learn on classroom instruments or piano. Discuss the sound of the scale. Does it sound happy, or sad, or does it have some other quality?

### #9-SHEPHERD'S CHORUS

Many operas include a section for a chorus of singers. In Amahl, the chorus is made up of shepherds who are neighbors of Amahl and his mother. In the production you will see at Orchestra Hall, the "chorus" will be a group of dancers.

As is the case with opera overtures, sometimes the chorus sections from an opera are performed separately, without the rest of the opera. The Shepherd's Chorus from Amahl is often performed by itself, especially around holiday time. (29:49)

#### The Shepherd's Chorus is in two parts.

In the first part, the shepherds greet each other by name, and ask about each other's children and sheep. They also comment on the weather. Ask students if children and weather are topics that their parents and neighbors discuss. Lead your class in singing Menotti's melody from this section using names of students from your class. Menotti uses two rhythmic patterns as he sets names to music:

1) A three syllable name, repeated, followed by a two syllable name and finally a four syllable name:

(Em-i-ly, Em-i-ly, Mi-chael, Bar-thol-o-mew)

2) A three syllable name, repeated, followed by two more three syllable names.

(Jo-seph-ine, Jo-seph-ine, An-ge-la, Jer-e-my)

In the second part, the shepherds describe gifts they have brought for the three visiting Kings, all things they have raised on their gardens or farms.

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### The gifts from the shepherds include:

Olives	Garlic	Apples	Qunices
Mint	Raisins	Nutmeg	Thyme
Cinnamon	Myrtle	Honeycombs	Laurel
Medlars	Mignonettes	Chestnuts	Lemons
Citrons	Musk	Pomegranates	Figs
Goat Cheese	Walnuts	Cucumber	Camomile
Hazelnuts			

One area teacher has her students re-write Menotti's libretto (text) using foods they are familiar with, that might be part of a neighborhood gathering in our area: "Grilled cheese and Jell-o, Green Beans and Sweet Corn."

Ask students to research any foods that are unfamiliar. Homeschool families may enjoy a scavenger hunt at a local supermarket, to see how many of these are available!

### #10-SHEPHERD'S DANCE

The Shepherd's Dance is an instrumental piece during which the shepherds dance for the visiting kings. (32:07)

Many operas have ballet sections as part of the production. Oftentimes, the music from opera ballet is performed separately, and the Shepherd's Dance from Amahl is no exception. The Shepherd's Dance is a very popular excerpt from this opera.

The Shepherd's Dance offers teachers the opportunity to explore the music using movement.

Consider the following strategy for students to create movements for the Shepherd's Dance. For younger students, teachers may want to use simple motions that move with the flow and contour of the music, contrasting the two sections:

1st section: 32.07

2nd section: 33.30

1. Within each group, ask students to brainstorm ideas, based on the music, that they would like to communicate with their dance. Create word lists such as the examples below:

- Feelings: joy, sadness, excitement, nervousness, etc.
- Attitudes: helpfulness, generosity, sharing, etc
- Activities: playing pipes, herding sheep, etc
- Ideas: solitude, togetherness, etc.

2. Once each group has brainstormed word lists in these or other categories, they should select five or more words they think work best for their portion of the Shepherd's Dance. For each word, have each student create a web of related words, images, symbols, and movement words. Encourage students to add as many of these words, symbols, images or movements as they can for each word selected. These groups of related words are called webs.

3. Have each student present their web to the group. As a group, have students select one or two webs that contain the most promising ideas for creating a dance or series of movements that will enhance or support the mood or expressive quality of the music.

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4. Once each group is satisfied with their web, each should conference with the teacher. Students should be able to explain:
  - a. The main purpose of the dance or series of movements.
  - b. What the dance or series of movements are about.
5. The teacher and student should develop a Statement of Purpose, which describes clearly and briefly, the intended effect of the dance, the feeling, mood and/or expressive quality the movements should reflect or represent.

*Teachers may wish to simplify this process, and simply lead a class discussion on the above topics.*

### EXPLORING MOVEMENT:

Asking and answering the questions: *Who?*, *What?*, *Where?*, *When?*, *How?*, is one way to start thinking about the kinds of movements that will best convey the purpose and intent of the dance you are creating. Each group should use these questions to get started planning their dance:

- **WHAT** is the dance about? What happens in the dance? What messages will be carried by the dance? What kinds of movements are needed to communicate these messages?
- **WHO** is the dance about? (In this case, it is about the shepherds and the kings).
- **WHERE** is the action taking place? (In this case, in Amahl's hut.)
- **WHEN** are the various actions of the dance happening? What time elements are in the dance?
- **HOW** do the dancers move? What actions would the body take? Is there tension or force involved?

Students should try out movements as they answer these questions. Consider the movements in relationship to the music.

### Combining and sequencing movements to create dance:

1. Each group must decide the combination and sequence of movements for each dancer in the scene.
2. Use the movements to create a dance in three parts: beginning, middle and end. Experiment with different combinations of movements as students create the structure of the dance. Use the next section to help through this process.

### Simple guiding questions for creating dance:

- **Beginning:** How will the dance begin? What is the first thing that the dancer's body must do? What is the first thing you want the audience to notice about the dancer's body, movements and space? What might the audience think the moment the dance begins? What ideas might they be forming about the dancer, the mood, theme and expressive quality of the movements?
- **Middle:** What will happen as the dance moves along? How will the movements develop the theme or story? What must the dancer's body do? What are the patterns of actions the audience will see? What patterns must be repeated to best convey the purpose of the dance?
- **End:** How will the dance end? How is the action resolved? What makes it clear that the dance is over? What must the dancer's body do? What image will be left with the audience at the end of the dance?

**Refining the dance:** Develop and practice a first draft of the dance. Begin a cycle of practicing the dance, performing for other groups, getting feedback, making refinements and performing another draft.

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### #11-“ALL THAT GOLD...”

The music from the opening of the opera returns (37.00) as Amahl, his mother, and the Kings lie down to sleep. The mother sings about the gold the kings have brought on their journey. She is tempted to take the gold for her own child.

This scene could be the basis for a class discussion about stealing. Since her own son is crippled and very poor, is this a good reason for her to take some of the king's gold?

How does the music in this aria help us understand the story? Does the music reflect the mother's sadness about being so poor, or her being tempted to take the gold?

Following this scene, the Page catches the mother as she reaches for the gold. Amahl attacks the Page, demanding the he release his mother.

As King Melchior tells the Mother that she can keep the gold, ask students if they recognize the music that was first heard at the beginning of the overture. As this music is heard, does this change or affirm any of their earlier responses about the character of this music?

Was the king right to forgive the mother for trying to steal the gold? Was she right to give it back?

Discuss what each of the characters give and receive in the story:

**Amahl:** offers his crutch, receives healing

**Mother:** refuses the gold, gives permission for Amahl to join the kings

**Kings:** carry gifts to give to the child king, and offer to give their gold, and forgiveness to Amahl's mother

**The Shepherds:** give gifts of food, and perform a dance for the kings

## TEXT OF AMAHL AND THE NIGHT VISITORS

By Gian Carlo Menotti

A child sits outside a poor shack of a house gazing earnestly at the sky. His mother calls from within: "Amahl! Amahl!"

The son replies absently, "Oh!"

The woman's voice again comes from somewhere inside, "Time to go to bed."

Her son answers, "coming..." however his words belie his actions. He gazes all the more quizzically at the stars above him.

A third time, the mother calls, her voice a bit terser: "Amahl!"

Again, the boy replies, "coming..." but otherwise he seems not to have heard.

The mother storms out of the house, "How long must I shout to make you obey?"

Son: "I'm sorry, Mother."

Mother: "Hurry in! It's time to go to bed."

Amahl pleads with his mother: "But Mother - let me stay a little longer."

Mother: "The wind is cold."

Son: "But my cloak is warm; let me stay a little longer!"

Mother: "The night is dark."

Son: "But the sky is light, let me stay a little longer!"

Mother: "The time is late."

Son: "But the moon hasn't risen yet, let me stay a little..."

His mother cuts him off curtly: "There won't be any moon tonight. But there will be a weeping child very soon, if he doesn't hurry up and obey his mother."

Amahl sighs and gives in, "...oh very well..."

(The two go inside.)

Mother: What was keeping you outside?

The son replies excitedly: "Oh Mother! You should go out and see! There's never been such a sky. Damp clouds have shined it, and soft winds have swept it, as if to make it ready for a king's ball. All its lanterns are lit, all its torches are burning, and its dark floor is shining like crystal. Hanging over our roof, there is a star as large as a window; and the star has a tail, and it moves across the sky like a chariot on fire."

Mother: "Oh Amahl! When will you stop telling lies? All day long you wander about in a dream. Here we are with nothing to eat - not a stick of wood on the fire, not a drop of oil in the jug, and all you do is to worry your mother with fairy tales. Oh Amahl... have you forgotten your promise never never to lie to your mother again?"

Son: "Mother darling, I'm not lying. Please do believe me... please do believe me. Come outside and let me show you. See for yourself... see for yourself."

The mother bursts into poetry, despite herself, as she reprimands Amahl:

"Stop bothering me!

Why should I believe you?

You come with a new one every day!

First it was a leopard with a woman's head.

Then it was a tree branch that shrieked and bled.

Then it was a fish as big as a boat, with whiskers like a cat, and wings like a bat, and horns like a goat

and now it is a star as big as a window (or was it a carriage)?

And if that weren't enough, the star has a tail and the tail is of fire..."

Son: "But there is a star... and it has a tail... this long. Well, maybe only this long... But it's there!"

Mother: "Amahl!"

Amahl insists: "Cross my heart and hope to die..."

The mother throws up her hands: "Hunger has gone to your head. Dear God, what is a poor widow to do, when her cupboards and pockets are empty and everything sold? Unless we go begging how shall we live through tomorrow? My little son, a beggar!"

Amahl, hating to see his mother distressed, has a story he is used to telling for this occasion:

"Don't cry Mother dear; don't worry for me.

If we must go begging, a good beggar I'll be.

I know sweet tunes to set people dancing.

We'll walk and walk from village to town - you dressed as a gypsy, and I as a clown.

We'll walk and walk from village to town.

At noon, we shall eat roast goose and sweet almonds.

At night we shall sleep with the sheep and the stars.

I'll play my pipes, you'll sing and you'll shout.

The windows will open and people lean out.

The king will ride by and hear your loud voice and throw us some gold to stop all the noise.

At noon we shall eat roast goose and sweet almonds;

at night we shall sleep with the sheep and the stars."

Mother: "Kiss me good night."

The mother and son to each other: "Good night."

(They turn in to bed.)

---

Three kings stroll through the shadows of the night, and as they go they comfort themselves with a quiet song:

"From far away we come and farther we must go.

How far... how far... my crystal star?

The shepherd dreams inside the fold.

Cold are the sands by the silent sea.

Frozen the incense in our frozen hands, heavy the gold.

How far... how far... my crystal star?

By silence-sunken lakes, the antelope leaps.

In paper-painted oasis, the drunken gypsy weeps.

The hungry lion wanders, the cobra sleeps.

How far... how far... my crystal star?"

---

(the kings knock at the door)

Mother: "Amahl!"

Son: "Yes, Mother?"

Mother: "Go and see who's knocking at the door."

(Amahl goes over to the door)

Amahl returns excited, "Mother... Mother... come with me! I want to be sure that you see what I see. "

His mother has no patience for his son's energy this late at night, "What is the matter with you now? What is all this fuss about? Who is it then?"

Amahl is unsure how to report the events, and so he hesitates, "Mother.. outside the door... there is... there is a king with a crown!"

Mother is exasperated, "What shall I do with this boy? What shall I do... what shall I do? If you don't learn to tell the truth, I'll have to spank you! Go back and see who it is and ask them what they want..."

After checking the door again, Amahl returns, insistent, "Mother! Mother! Mother, come with me! I want to be sure that you see what I see."

Mother: "What is the matter with you now what is all this fuss about?"

Amahl hangs his head quietly, "Mother, I didn't tell the truth before."

Mother: "That's a good boy."

Son: "There is not a king outside."

Mother: "I should say not."

Son: "There are two kings."

Mother is about to lose her patience altogether, if she ever had any, "What shall I do with this boy? what shall I do? what shall I do?" She admonishes her son, "Hurry back and see who it is, and don't you dare make up tales..."

Amahl returns to his mother from the door... but this time he is worried, "Mother! Mother! Mother come with me; if I tell you the truth, I know you won't believe me..."

Mother: "Try it for a change."

Son: "But you won't believe me."

Mother: "I'll believe you, if you tell me the truth..."

Son: "Sure enough, there are not two kings outside."

Mother: "That is surprising."

Son: "The kings are three, and one of them is black."

Now mother is angry, "Oh what shall I do with this boy. If you were stronger I'd like to whip you."

Son: "I knew it"

Mother pulls herself out of bed, "I'm going to the door myself. And then young man, you'll have to reckon with me!"

The kings and their page greet the woman when she opens the door, "Good evening.. good evening..."

The mother gasps quietly.

Amahl behind her, feels a need to remind her, "What did I tell you?"

Mother pushes her son back: "Shhhh...!" and then addresses these apparent nobles who are at her doorstep, "Noble sires..." She is bemused, however, and not sure exactly what to say.

The kings rescue her from the awkward silence: "May we rest awhile in your house and warm ourselves by your fireplace?"

To this, the mother replies, "I am a poor widow. A cold fireplace and a bed straw are all I have to offer you. To these, you are welcome."

Kaspar: "What did she say?"

Balthazar: "That we are welcome."

Kaspar: "Oh thank, you thank, you thank you!"

The mother: "Come in... come in..."

(Everybody traipses into the small house.)

Melchior: "It is nice, here."

the Mother: "I shall go and gather wood for the fire. I've nothing in the house."

Kings: "We can only stay a little while. We must not lose sight of our star."

the Mother: "...your star?"

Again, Amahl feels obliged to remind her, "What did I tell you?" But his mother shushes him.

Kings: "We still have a long way to go."

Mother announces that she will be going out to gather some firewood, "I shall be right back.. and Amahl... don't be a nuisance." Amahl assures her, "No, Mother..."

Mother exits the small creaking doorway into the night air. Amahl, meanwhile, realizes that he must entertain their guests.

Amahl: "Are you a real king?" Balthazar replies, "yes."

Amahl: "Have you regal blood?" And Balthazar again responds, "yes."

Amahl: "Can I see it?" Balthazar sighs, and says, "it is just like yours."

Amahl: "What's the use of having it then?" Balthazar looks at Amahl quizzically and says simply, "No use."

Amahl: "Where is your house?"

To which Balthazar replies: "I live in a black marble palace full of black panthers and white doves. And you little boy, what do you do?"

Amahl: "I had a flock of sheep. But my mother sold them... sold them! Now there are no sheep left. I had a black goat who gave me warm sweet milk. But she died of old age... old age. Now there is no goat left. But Mother says that now we shall both go begging from door to door. Won't it be fun?"

Balthazar, eyeing the boy closely, says "It has its points."

Next, Amahl turns his attention to Kaspar. "Are you a real king, too?" Kaspar, being hard of hearing, has to ask Amahl to repeat himself, and Amahl obliges in a loud voice. Finally hearing the boy, Kaspar says jovially, "Oh truly truly... truly... yes I am a real king..." He then turns to his friend for assurance, and asks "Am I not?"

Balthazar says: "Yes, Kaspar."

Amahl spots a small animal which Kaspar is carrying in a cage. "What is that?" he asks. Kaspar, as he is wont to do, asks the boy to speak up, "eh?" Amahl repeats his question, and in response, Kaspar lets him know it's a parrot. Amahl asks, "Does it talk?" This question somehow takes Kaspar by surprise, "How do I know?" he replies. But there is one last thing which Amahl has to know, "Does it bite?" The old king answers with only one short word, "yes."

Amahl points to a decorated wooden box which Kaspar is carrying. "And what is this?"

Kaspar:

"This is my box, this is my box... I never travel without my box.

In the first drawer I keep my magic stones.

One carnelian against all evil and envy.

One moonstone to make you sleep.

One red coral to heal your wounds.

One lapis lazuli against quartern fever.

One small jasper to help you find water.

One small topaz to soothe your eyes.

One red ruby to protect you from lightning"

"This is my box. this is my box I never travel without my box

In the second drawer, I keep all my beads. Oh! How I love to play with beads ...all kinds of beads!

This is my box... this is my box... I never travel without my box."

"In the third drawer... in the third drawer..." Kaspar looks at Amahl with a gleam in his eye, "Oh little boy.. oh little boy..." He then looks around at his friends a bit sheepishly, "In the third drawer I keep..." Although he himself isn't aware of it, Amahl's mouth has dropped open in anticipation about this surprise which Kaspar is going to reveal to him. The old king finally blurts it out, "Licorice! Licorice! Black sweet licorice... black sweet licorice! Have some."

A draft fills the house as Amahl's mother opens the door. She has found what she needed outside. Seeing how Amahl has become the center of attention, she admonishes him, "Amahl, I told you not to be a nuisance!"

Amahl replies plaintively, "But it isn't my fault; they kept asking me questions."

Mother announces that she has a mission for Amahl, "I want you to go and call the other shepherds. Tell them about our visitors, and ask them to bring whatever they have in the house, as we have nothing to offer them. Hurry on!"

Amahl decides to cooperate, and heads for the door, "Yes, Mother."

The mother remarks on the packages the kings have been carrying, "Oh these beautiful things, and all that gold!"

Melchior tells her, "These are the gifts to the child."

the Mother: "Hmmm the child... which child?"

Melchior: "We don't know . But the star will guide us to him."

the Mother: "But perhaps I know him... what does he look like?"

Melchior:

Have you seen a child the color of wheat... the color of dawn?

His eyes are mild; his hands are those of a king - as king he was born.

Incense, myrrh, and gold we bring to his side; and the eastern star is our guide.

the Mother:

Yes, I know a child the color of wheat.... the color of dawn.

His eyes are mild; his hands are those of a king as king he was born.

But no one will bring him incense or good... though sick and poor and hungry and cold.

He is my child my son, my darling my own.

Melchior:

Have you seen a child the color of earth... the color of thorn?

His eyes are sad; his hands are those of the poor as poor he was born.

Incense, myrrh, and gold we bring to his side, and the eastern star is our guide.

the Mother:

Yes, I know a child the color of earth... the color of thorn.

His eyes are sad; his hands are those of the poor, as poor he was born.

But no one will bring him incense or gold... though sick and poor and and hungry and cold.

He is my child, my son, my darling... my own.

Melchior:

The child we seek holds the seas and the winds on his palm.

The child we seek has the moon and the stars at his feet.

Before him, the eagle is gentle the lion is meek.

All the kings join in a chorus:

Choirs of angels hover over his roof and sing him to sleep.

He's warmed by breath.

He's fed by mother who is both virgin and queen.

Incense, myrrh, and gold we bring to his side, and the eastern star is our guide.

And at the same time, the mother sings about her own son:

The child I know on his palm holds my heart.

The child I know at his feet has my life.

He is my child, my son, my darling, my own...

And his name is Amahl.

The mother peers out the door, "The shepherds are coming..."

Melchior: "Wake up, Kaspar."

The shepherds greet each other as they stroll towards each other on the prairie.

"Emily... Emily, Michael, Bartholomew - how are your children and how are your sheep?"

Dorothy... Dorothy, Peter, Evangeline - give me your hand come along with me.

All the children have mumps. All the flocks are asleep. We are going with Amahl... bringing gifts to the kings.

Benjamin... Benjamin, Lucas, Elizabeth - how are your children and how are your sheep?"

Carolyn Carolyn Mathew Veronica give me your hand come along with me.

Brrr... how cold is the night! Brr... how icy the wind! Hold me very very very tight. Oh how warm is your cloak!

Katherine... Katherine Christopher Babila - how are your children and how are your sheep?

Josephine... Josephine, Angela, Jeremy - come along with me!"

The shepherds arrive at the door of the cottage. They peer inside, being struck with awe, "Oh look, oh look!"

the Mother: "Come in, come in... what are you afraid of? Don't be bashful silly girl, don't be bashful silly boy. They won't eat you. Show what you brought them."

The shepherds stumble over each other, as they try to force their way in the door all at once. "Go on...! No, you go on!"

The shepherds tell of what they've brought:

"Olives and quinces, apples and raisins, nutmeg and myrtle, medlars and chestnuts. This is all we shepherds can offer you."

"Citrons and lemon, musk and pomegranates, goat cheese and walnuts, figs and cucumbers. This is all we shepherds can offer you."

"Hazelnuts and camomile, mignonettes and laurel, honeycombs and cinnamon, thyme, mint and garlic. This is all we shepherds can offer you."

The kings express earnest appreciation as the shepherds recite the list of their gifts.

The shepherds eagerly press the gifts into the kings' arms "Take them, take them... you are welcome. Take them... eat them... you are welcome, too."

All of a sudden, a squirrely little girl makes a break for the door... and a little boy gets up, also thinking through how he will negotiate his way through the mass of bodies. Some of the young men pull the two children back. After much nudging, the children return into the middle of the one-room cottage, somewhat red faced and embarrassed.

The shepherds scold the children using the same words with which the householder mother scolded them earlier: "Don't be bashful silly girl Don't be bashful silly boy! They won't eat you."

After an interlude of dancing, Balthazar announces: "Thank you good friends, for your dances and your gifts. But now, we must bid you good night. We have little time for sleep, and a long journey ahead."

The shepherds agree, and move towards the door: "Good night, my good Kings, good night and farewell. The pale stars foretell that dawn is in sight. Good night, my good kings. Good night and farewell. The night wind foretells the day will be bright."

As the shepherds exeunt, Amahl seizes the opportunity in the shuffle to ask Kaspar a question. "Excuse me, sir... amongst your magic stones, is there... is there one that could cure a crippled boy?" Unfortunately, again, Kaspar's hearing fails him, "Eh?" Amahl looks down dejectedly, "Never mind.. good night," and shuffles off to his corner of the room to his bed.

Outside, the shepherds can still be heard as they disperse to their own houses and fields: "Good night, good night... the dawn is in sight... good night, farewell... good night... good night..." Amahl listens intently as these folks bid each other good night throughout the small streets of his village.

After the mother tucks her son into bed... she turns to see that the kings have ceased their bedtime mumbling, and at least one has begun to snore.

She thinks to herself:

"All that gold! All that gold!

I wonder if rich people know what to do with their gold?

Do they know how a child could be fed? Do rich people know?

Do they know that a house can be kept warm all day with burning logs? Do rich people know?

Do they know how to roast sweet corn on the fire?

Do they know do they know how to fill a courtyard with doves? Do they know... do they know?

Do they know how to milk a clover fed goat? Do they know?

Do they know how to spice hot wine on cold winter nights? Do they know... do they know?

All that gold... all that gold! Oh what I could do for my child with that gold!

Why should it all go to a child they don't even know?

They are asleep. Do I dare? If I take some, they'll never miss it..."

She prods herself on as her hand moves towards the boxes of gold... "...for my child for my child... for my child... for my child..." she thinks.

The page stirs, because he has seen a shadow moving over the pile of gifts, "Thief! Thief!" One of the kings stirs, "What is it?" The page shouts, "I've seen her steal some of the gold. She's a thief! Don't let her go! She's stolen the gold." The kings join the hubbub with loud voices: "Shame shame!"

page: "Give it back, or I'll tear it out of you! Give it back, or I'll tear it out of you. Give it back...give it back."

Amahl has, by this time, been awoken by the ruckus - and is peering over towards the argument in the center of the room. Then, seeing his mother involved in a struggle, he leaps out of bed and tries to intervene. This is a side of Amahl the kings haven't seen yet:

"Don't you dare, ugly man hurt my mother!

I'll smash in your face; I'll knock out your teeth.

Dont you dare! Don't you dare! Don't you dare... ugly man... hurt my mother!

Oh Mr. King, don't let him hurt my mother. My mother is good. She cannot do anything wrong. I'm the one who lies; I'm the one who steals.

Don't you dare...

I'll break all your bones; I'll bash in your head.

Don't you dare... ugly man... hurt my mother."

Melchior, seeing what has erupted:

"Oh woman, you may keep the gold.

The child we seek doesn't need our gold.

On love, on love alone he will build his kingdom.

His pierced hand will hold no scepter.

His haloed head will wear no crown.

His might will not be built on your toil.

Swifter than lightning, he will soon walk among us.

He will bring us new life, and receive our death, and the keys to his city belong to the poor.

Let us leave, my friends."

the Mother: "Oh no wait! Take back your gold! For such a king I've waited all my life... and if I weren't so poor I would send a gift of my own to such a child."

Amahl pipes up: "But Mother, let me send him my crutch. Who knows, he may need one, and this, I made myself." His mother draws in a breath sharply, "But that you can't, you can't!"

But then a wondrous thing happens. "I walk, Mother. I walk Mother," Amahl announces.

Kings: "He walks! It is a sign from the holy child. We must give praise to the newborn king. We must praise him. This is a sign from God. Truly he can dance, he can jump, he can run! Ah!"

The mother admonishes Amahl, "Please my darling, be careful now. You must take care not to hurt yourself."

Something has crystallized in the kings' minds as they have watched this whole event play out. They realize that they must admonish the mother to treat her child differently. "Oh good woman, you must not be afraid, for he is loved by the son of God."

Playing along with the boy's ruse, the kings ask: "Oh blessed child, may I touch you?"

Amahl seems betwixt and between. Peering over at Melchior with a sharp gaze, "Well, I don't know if I'm going to let you touch me..." His mother says sharply, "Amahl!" And so Amahl thinks better of his reticence. "Oh all right... but just once."

Amahl goes on to announce in song, "Look Mother, I can fight, I can work, I can play. Oh Mother, let me go with the kings. I want to take the crutch to the child, myself."

The kings eagerly entreat the mother, "Yes, good woman let him come with us. We'll take good care of him. We'll bring him back on a camel's back."

The mother asks: "Do you really want to go?" Amahl replies: "Yes, Mother."

Mother: "Are you sure sure sure?"

Son: "I'm sure."

The mother pauses a moment, reflecting. Then she concedes: "Yes, I think you should go... and bring thanks to the child yourself.

Amahl parrots her query, "Are you sure sure sure?"

Mother: "Go on... get ready."

Kaspar, wanting to be kept abreast of all the events, asks, "What did she say?" Balthazar bends over and speaks loudly in Kaspar's ear, "She said he can come."

Kaspar can't contain his enthusiasm, "Oh lovely lovely lo..." Balthazar cuts him off, curtly, "Kaspar!"

Mother and son prepare Amahl for his journey. She asks, "What to do with your crutch?" And Amahl suggests, "You can tie it to my back."

Amahl and his mother then say their goodbyes to each other:

Mother: "Don't forget to wear your hat!"

Son: "I shall always wear my hat."

together: "So, my darling goodbye! I shall miss you very much."

Mother: "Wash your ears."

Son: "Yes, I promise."

Mother: "Don't tell lies."

Son: "No, I promise."

together: "I shall miss you very much."

Son: "Feed my bird."

Mother: "Yes, I promise."

Son: "Watch the cat."

Mother: "Yes I promise."

together: "I shall miss you very much."

Amahl finishes his preparations. Noticing that things seem to be winding down, Melchior asks Amahl: "Are you ready?"

Amahl: "Yes, I'm ready."

Melchior: "Let's go then."

Amahl and his newfound friends set out across the darkened prairies. And as they trek, they hear the sounds of the shepherds singing the songs of the morning in their fields and homes:

"Shepherds arise!

Come, oh shepherds, come outside!

All the stars have left the sky.

Sweet dawn - oh dawn of peace"