



**KENTUCKY OPERA**

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## **A Brief History of Opera**

Opera has existed for more than four hundred years. Opera incorporates all varieties of other art forms; dance, visual arts, music, costumes, sets and make-up. The word "opera" meaning "a work" is essentially a story told to music. Operatic stories come from many sources; history, mythology, fairy tales, folk stories, literature and drama. What all of these stories have in common is that something about their musical and/or dramatic qualities inspired a composer to set it down in music.

Stories and story telling seem to tap into a basic human need and all cultures have story telling traditions. They teach us about life and death, love and hate, good and bad; in short, the human condition. Music is also found in every culture and when used in combination with a good story can clarify, define, elaborate on or even contradict the original story. It is this combination of music and story that makes opera and all forms of musical theater so powerful.

Opera has survived wars, collapsing monarchies, depressions, and plagues, to expand beyond all geographic and cultural boundaries to remain one of the most exciting and creative of all the performing arts. Since opera does not exist within a "bubble", included in this operatic history are also world events that helped to shape opera into the form we are familiar with today.

One could argue that opera actually had its beginnings during the height of ancient Greece when a chorus would be included as part of a dramatic performance, usually at the beginning or end of an act. However, most historians place the birth of opera at the end of the 16th century. This was the great flush of the Renaissance, when Shakespeare was at the height of his powers, Spain had launched another unsuccessful armada against England and most of Europe was either at war with each other, or bidding to colonize the Americas. The Roman Catholic Church had lost much of its hold on Europe, in particular Germany with Martin Luther and his Protestants, and the relative freedom of expression was in full swing. It was into this time of upheaval and great creativity that opera was born. A group called the Florentine Camarata, headed by Vincenzo Galilei (father of the famous astronomer), published a Dialogue about Ancient and Modern Music in 1581. In this book, Galilei stated that multiple vocal texts, melodies and rhythms could never clearly express the text and instead created a chaos of contradictory impressions. Therefore, the correct way to set words was to use a solo melody, "monody", which would enhance the natural speech inflections. Galilei did set some verses from Dante's Inferno for tenor solo with accompaniment, but the music was not preserved. The first example of a true opera DAFNE was written in 1597 by Peri, a singer who did not adhere to Galilei's theory, but did continue writing in the monodic style. However the best known operatic composer at this time was Claudio Monteverdi (1597-1643). Most of his operas were performed in Venice where opera mania became as great as Beatlemania in our own time. By the middle of the 17th century, opera was being heard all over Italy and had spread to France and Germany. Even two of the popes wrote operas and at its height, Venice had over 30 opera houses and premiered over 1,700 operas. Thus ends the Renaissance and begins the Baroque period.

The explosion of art and music throughout Europe was staggering with various monarchies and noblemen competing to see who could build the most opera houses and work with the most important artists of the day. The Baroque period (approximately 1600 - 1725) saw the paintings of Rembrandt van Rijn, writings of Descartes, Moliere and John Locke, the establishment of Boston by Puritans (1630), the building of the Taj Mahal (begun in 1653), the reign of Peter the Great in Russia, the Salem witchcraft trials (1692) and the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, Georg Friedrich Handel and Antonio Vivaldi. The Baroque Opera flourished throughout much of Europe with the Italian school prevailing in most of the opera houses and royal courts. This time period is often called the "Age of Enlightenment" and the operas which were written and performed during this period were clear, simple, rational, of universal appeal, and were used as purely entertainment. Handel was the most famous opera composer of his day and his operas were performed throughout Europe.

The 18th century brought opera to its baroque height with an incredible number of works being written and performed which then led to the classical period of Franz Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

and **Ludwig von Beethoven**. The **Classical period** (approximately 1725-1827) was a time marked by the toppling of monarchies and the exploration of our world. The French Revolution (1789-1794) reshaped its government and sunk its population even further into poverty, the American Colonies declared independence from England, George Washington became President, Napoleon began (and ended) his conquest of Europe, and Lewis and Clark began their expedition across the United States.

Opera continued to flourish throughout the Classical era, though it went through some changes of its own. Italian composers began to bring opera into harmony with changing ideals of music and drama, making the entire design more natural, more flexible in structure, deeper in content and more varied in other musical resources. The orchestra became more important for both its sake and for adding harmonic depth to accompaniments. The consummation of this new style of opera was in the work of **Christoph Gluck**. He began writing operas in the Italian style, but was deeply influenced by the reform in the 1750s. He collaborated with the poet Calzabigi to produce *ORFEO ED EURIDICE* (1762) and *ALCESTE* (1767). Other composers during this time period tried their hand at writing operas, Haydn wrote more than 75 for the Esterhaus family, and Mozart supported himself with several popular operas; *THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO*, *DON GIOVANNI* and *THE MAGIC FLUTE*.

During the 1820s, a new "class" who highly valued individual expression and freedom arose out of the ashes of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire - the middle class. Thus a new type of opera was needed to appeal to this relatively uncultured audience who thronged the theatres in search of excitement and entertainment. New operas that underscored the public's "new" interests were required and composers scrambled to find topics. Many found inspiration in the literature of the time and instead of using Greek mythology as a basis for the opera, composers were using Shakespeare, Goethe and Victor Hugo. This became Grand Opera which used all artistic elements such as ballets, choruses and crowd scenes, to appeal to its new audience.

Opera comique, which was less pretentious than grand opera, flourished along side the grand opera. Opera comique required fewer singers and players, and was written in a much simpler musical idiom; its plots presented straightforward comedy or semiserious drama instead of the huge historical pageantry of grand opera. Opera bouffe emphasized smart, witty and satirical elements of comic opera and appeared in Paris in the 1860s. Other composers took note and began developing operettas in other countries; Gilbert & Sullivan in England composing *THE MIKADO*, *THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE* and *HMS PINAFORE*, Johann Strauss, Jr. in Vienna composing *DIE FLEDERMAUS*, and eventually Victor Herbert in the United States composing *BABES IN TOYLAND* and *NAUGHTY MARIETTA*. Another type of opera began to emerge called "lyric opera" which combined earlier opera comique with the current style of the grand opera, though on a much smaller scale. The landmark of lyric opera was *CARMEN*. Composed by Georges Bizet in 1875, *CARMEN* followed the traditional path of late 19th century Romantic opera; exotic locations, spare in texture and beautifully orchestrated.

There has been some "controversy" over the exact end of the Classical period and the beginning of the Romantic period. Most points agree that Beethoven was a pivotal figure in this transition in that his compositional early style was definitely rooted in the Classical tradition but his later works were trending towards a Romantic period style. For these reasons, this paper has listed the end of the Classical and beginning of the Romantic periods as 1827, the year that Beethoven died.

The **Romantic period** (approximately 1827-1900) touched off a second explosion of creativity throughout Europe, Russia and the United States. In the late 19th century art community, Edouard Manet, Edgar Degas, Claude Monet, Auguste Rodin and Renoir were the rage with **Impressionism**. In literary circles, the populations of Europe and the United States were reading Emerson, Thoreau, Melville, Whitman, Twain, Stevenson and many more. While in the musical community, composers such as Brahms, Berlioz, Tchaikovsky and Bruckner were changing the symphonic form and Wagner, Verdi, Rossini and Puccini were changing the opera.

Perhaps this explosion was due to the fact that throughout most of Europe, Russia and the United States, the last 40 years of the 19th century were relatively quiet. Aside from the Franco-Prussian war, most countries were enjoying a respite from conflict and many used the time to find ways of bettering mankind. Bell invented the telephone (1876), Edison invented the phonograph (1877) and the incandescent electric light (1879), Koch discovers the tuberculosis germ (1882) and Pasteur begins inoculating against rabies (1884). America gets the Statue of Liberty (1886), Wilhelm Roentgen discovers x-rays (1894), Queen Victoria is the longest reigning monarch in England's history (1837-1901) and Russia crowns its last tsar, Nicholas II (1894).

Some of the best known and loved operas were created during this time period. Italy had its own explosion of native composers such as **Rossini**, **Bellini** and **Donizetti** all of whom had a penchant for both the dramatic and comedic operas. Gioacchino Rossini's THE BARBER OF SEVILLE is perhaps the best example of Italian comic opera of the earlier 19th century with witty dialogue, unforgettable characters and beautifully crafted music. However, the most famous of all the Italian opera composers during the Romantic period was **Giuseppe Verdi** (1813-1901). With the exception of a few songs and a string quartet, all of Verdi's works were written for the stage. Verdi became so popular throughout Italy, that his name became a patriotic symbol and rallying cry "Viva Verdi!" Verdi viewed opera as human drama to be conveyed through the use of simple, direct, vocal solo melody. With the exception of one, all Verdi's operas deal with serious subject matter from Shakespeare's OTHELLO to Victor Hugo's RIGOLETTO. Bellini, Donizetti, Rossini and early Verdi all composed in the **BEL CANTO** style which was characterized by long, fluid, melodic lines throughout the opera.

This marriage between music and literature was one of the distinguishing marks of the 19th century opera and German composers in particular used this to their full advantage. The culmination of German opera came in the form of **Richard Wagner** who not only created a new genre of operatic theater, but whose influence was so profound, it is still being felt today. Wagner felt that the function of music was to serve the ends of dramatic expression, therefore his operatic scores vividly outlined what was happening on stage. **The Ring cycle**, consisting of four operas, is Wagner's masterpiece which uses Norse mythology as its story base. To keep consistency between all four operas, Wagner used the leitmotif. The leitmotif is a musical theme or motive associated with a particular person, thing, or idea in the drama. This idea is used today in movie scores. In the Star Wars series, written by John Williams, each main character has a theme, as does the idea of "the force" and "the empire". These themes are woven throughout the picture as characters and ideas appear, thus giving the score some musical cohesion.

The heir to Wagner was another German composer, **Richard Strauss**. Though he was influenced by Wagner, Strauss had even more lush orchestrations and often used dissonance or would completely abandon tonality to emphasize a particular scene in his operas. His most famous operatic works include SALOMÉ (1905), ELEKTRA (1909), DER ROSENKAVALIER (1911), ARIADNE AUF NAXOS (1912), and DIE FRAU OHNE SCHATTAN (The Woman without a Shadow) (1919). Strauss' symphonic works were equally stunning in their orchestration and scope, often including enormous numbers. His final tone poem, ALPINE SYMPHONY (EINE ALPENSINFONIE – 1915) included 123 players, a huge number for most orchestras who typically range between 60-75 players on average.

The end of the Romantic period brought about significant change to all musical forms. The idea of tonality was being stretched in France by **Claude Debussy** and **Maurice Ravel**, while in Italy, **Giacomo Puccini** was writing dramatic operas which used a new style called "**verismo**" which means realism or naturalism. Puccini would choose a libretto that presented everyday people in familiar situations acting violently under the impulse of primitive emotions and wrote in a musical style that was appropriate to such a libretto. The veristic opera was the grandfather of television and cinematic shock drama. It was typical of the post-Romantic period which used dissonance, hugeness and other musical devices to titillate the now jaded audience. LA BOHEME, TOSCA and MADAMA BUTTERFLY all had elements of the veristic opera.

The **20th century** was a turbulent time, both in the world and within the musical community. Much of this century has been spent at war, population increases, fighting disease, and developing medical miracles. Musically, opera continues to grow and expand beyond the traditional boundaries of Europe and Russia to include other countries such as Australia, Canada and South America. The great names of early modern opera include **Kurt Weill**, **Igor Stravinsky**, **Benjamin Britten**, **Paul Hindemith**, and **Anton Berg**, to name just a few. There had never been a more exciting age operatically, when every taste wanted to be satisfied and curiosity for the unfamiliar was constantly increased.

Early 20<sup>th</sup> century opera was moving from the veristic style of Puccini to a broader experimentation with sound, polytonality (the musical use of more than one key simultaneously) and tone clusters (a musical chord comprising of at least three consecutive tones in a scale). Opera composers were now experimenting with polytonality, minimalism and the blurring of the lines between musical theatre and opera. Noted composers of this period include **Claude Debussy** (*Pelléas et Mélisande* 1902), **Arnold Schoenberg** (*Erwartung* 1924), **Alban Berg** (*Wozzeck* 1925), **George Gershwin** (*Porgy and Bess* 1935), **Benjamin Britten** (*Peter Grimes* 1945), **Carlisle Floyd** (*Susanna* 195, *Of Mice and Men* 1970 and *Cold Sassy Tree* 2000), **Igor Stravinsky** (*The Rake's Progress* 1951), **Leonard Bernstein** (*Candide* 1956), **Philip Glass** (*Einstein on the Beach* 1976 and *Akhmaten* 1984), **Stephen Sondheim** (*Sweeney Todd* 1979), **John Adams** (*Nixon in China* 1987, *Death of Klinghoffer* 1991), **John Corigliano** (*The Ghosts of Versailles* 1991), **Mark Adamo** (*Little Women* 1998), **Tod Machover** (*Resurrection* 1999) and **William Bolcom** (*A View from the Bridge* 1999).

The 21<sup>st</sup> century appears to be just as exciting for new operatic compositions as previous centuries. Everything and anything is possible in terms of subject matter, technology in staging, and compositional styles. Noted composers include **Jake Heggie** (*Dead Man Walking* 2000, *The End of the Affair* 2004 and *Moby Dick* 2010), **John Adams** (*Doctor Atomic* 2005), **Mark Adamo** (*Lysistrata or The Nude Goddess* 2005), **Oswaldo Golijov** (*Ainadamar* 2005), **Tan Dun** (*The First Emperor* 2006) and **Paul Moravec** (*The Letter* 2009).

The most important thing to remember about the history of opera, as with art and music, is that it is a reflection of world events. Early opera combined a humanistic outlook with a blending of mythology and "every day" realism. It became the most important of all art forms during the Baroque period when it was spectacular, but not intellectually or spiritually challenging. The classical age of opera was linked to enlightenment and philosophers like Rousseau and Voltaire. The Romantic revolution turned opera in a new direction, away from ancient history to works of Shakespeare, Goethe, Schiller and Victor Hugo and it was often involved with national, revolutionary and political history. During the 20th century, opera became part of the era of Picasso, James Joyce, Freud and astonishing new worlds uncovered by science. And now into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, opera has no limits in terms of inspirations or aspirations.

Opera is truly a reflection of the human condition and whether the story is Shakespeare, Aesop or Hugo, it will continue to delight audiences of all ages and cultures, because on the most basic level, opera is telling the story of our lives.

# The Operatic Voice

Operatic singing, like operatic music, developed in Europe during the 17th century. The vocal demands are far greater on an opera singer than on any other singer, because unlike singers in most popular music fields, opera singers rarely use microphones. Therefore, their voices must be developed to make a sound that will project well—a voice that can be heard above an orchestra and that will carry throughout a large theater. An opera singer must use his or her own body as a natural source of amplification.

Through years of study and practice, the singer learns to make the diaphragm (a thin membrane that stretches across the chest cavity below the lungs and above the stomach) stretch so that the lungs completely fill with air. The singer regulates the amount of breath used by controlling the muscles of the diaphragm. By tightening the diaphragm, the singer can push out just the right amount of air to make the vocal cords vibrate. The speed at which they vibrate determines the pitch.

As the sound passes through the mouth, it resonates in the sinus cavities of the face and head. These cavities (hollow places in the bones) act as small echo chambers and help to amplify the sound. By shaping the mouth and through the placement of the tongue near the lips, the tone or word can be made more beautiful.

Below are listed the five major voice categories (three for men and three for women)

**WOMEN:** **Soprano**—the highest female voice. Similar to a flute in range and tone color. Sopranos usually play the heroine in an opera since a high, bright sound can easily suggest youth and innocence. The most famous soprano roles include Violetta (*La Traviata*), Gilda (*Rigoletto*), and Cio-Cio San (*Madama Butterfly*).

**Mezzo-soprano**—the middle female voice. Similar to an oboe in range and tone color. A mezzo (also called an alto in choral arrangements) can portray a wide variety of characters from gypsies to witches. Sometimes the mezzo can sing the parts of a young man (often called a “pants” role) including Hansel (*Hansel and Gretel*), Octavian (*Der Rosenkavalier*) and Cherubino (*Le Nozze di Figaro*).

**Contralto**—the lowest female voice. Similar to an English horn in range and tone color. Contraltos usually play unique roles in operas including fortune tellers, and older women. The most famous contralto role is Ulrica in *Un Ballo in Maschera*.

**MEN:** **Tenor**—the highest male voice. Similar to a trumpet in range, tone color and acoustical “ring”. Usually the hero or romantic lead in opera. The most famous tenor roles include Rudolpho (*La Boheme*), Alfredo (*La Traviata*) and Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*).

**Baritone**—the middle male voice. Similar to a French Horn in tone color. Often portrays the leader of mischief in comic opera or the villain in tragic opera. The most famous baritone roles include Don Giovanni (*Don Giovanni*), Figaro (*The Barber of Seville*) and Escamillo (*Carmen*).

**Bass**—the lowest male voice. Similar to a trombone or bassoon in tone color. Usually portrays old and wise men, or foolish, comic men. The most famous bass roles include Sparafucile (*Rigoletto*), Don Basilio (*The Barber of Seville*) and Mefistopheles (*Mefistopheles* and *Faust*).

In addition to the above vocal categories, the following terms can be used to describe special characteristics of voices in any range.

**Coloratura**—A high female voice which has the ability to sing many notes quickly, usually with an extended upper range.

**Lyric**—A light to medium weight voice capable of sustained, but not very forceful singing.

**Spinto**—A medium to heavy weight voice capable of sustained and forceful singing.

**Dramatic**—The heaviest voice, capable of sustained and forceful singing.

## Glossary of Opera Terms

(A more extensive version is available as a separate download)

**A capella.** [ah kah-peh-lah] (Italian) Literally, "in the chapel." Choral music sung without instrumental accompaniment.

**Act.** One of the main divisions of a drama, opera or ballet, usually completing a part of the action and often having a climax of its own.

**Adagio/Adagietto.** [ah-dah-jee-oh; ah dah-jee-eh-toh] (Italian) "Slowly." Indicates a slow tempo . Adagietto is also a slow tempo, but not as slow as adagio.

**Allegro/Allegretto.** [ah-lay-groh; ah-lay-greh-toh] (Italian) "Merry," "cheerful." Indicates a fast tempo . Allegretto is slightly slower than allegro and implies a lighter style.

**Andante/Andantino.** [ahn-dahn-tay; ahn-dahn-tee-noh] (Italian) From the verb andare, "to walk." Implies a moderate, "walking" tempo. Similarly, andantino (the diminutive of andante) could imply a tempo either faster or slower than andante.

**Aria.** [ah-ree-ah] A song sung by one person. In Italian, aria means "air", "style", "manner". The aria had a central place in early opera and throughout operatic history, arias have been used to highlight an emotional state of mind and accentuate the main characters.

**Baritone.** The most common category of the male voice; lower than a tenor, but higher than a bass. Baritones were more commonly used in during the Romantic opera era.

**Bel Canto.** "beautiful singing" in Italian. A very fluid singing style that was very popular in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Rossini and Verdi are the best known composers in this style.

**Bass.** The lowest male voice. Many bass roles are associated with characters of authority or comedy.

**Brava.** "Well done" in Italian. Audiences say this to a female artist to express their appreciation.

**Bravo.** "Well done" in Italian. Audiences say this to a male artist to express their appreciation.

**Bravi.** "Well done" in Italian. Audiences say this a group of performers to express their appreciation.

**Chorus.** A group of singers usually divided into sections based on vocal range. The chorus was originally an ancient Greek practice of underscoring portions of the drama through music. The chorus is often used for crowd scenes and to play minor characters.

**Composer.** The person who writes the vocal and/or orchestral music (score).

**Conductor.** The person in charge of all the musical aspects of an opera; both orchestrally and vocally.

**Costumes.** The clothing worn on stage by the performers. Costumes can be used to reflect the personality of a characters, the historical time period, country of origin or social ranking.

**Designers.** The people who create the sets, costumes, make-up, wigs and lighting for the opera performance.

**Dynamics.** The degrees of volume (loudness and softness) in music. Also the words, abbreviations, and symbols used to indicate degrees of volume. Piano (soft) and forte (loud) are most common.

**Duet.** Two people singing together.

**Finale.** The ending segment of an act or scene.

**Harmony.** Harmony is the chordal or vertical structure of a piece of music, as opposed to melody (and polyphony, or multiple melodies) which represents the horizontal structure. The succession of chords in a given piece is referred to as a chord progression.

**Leitmotif.** A theme or other musical idea that represents or symbolizes a person, object, place, idea, state of mind, supernatural force or some other ingredient in a dramatic work. An idea used widely throughout German opera, though associated with Richard Wagner in most of his operas.

**Librettist.** The person who writes the text (words) of the opera.

**Libretto.** [lih-breh-toh] The text of the opera. In Italian, it means "little book".

**Lyrics.** Words of an opera or of a song.

**Musical.** A staged story similar to opera, though most of the dialogue is spoken.

**Opera.** A staged musical work in which some or all of the parts are sung. In Italian, the word "opera" means a work which is derived as the plural of the Latin opus. Opera is a union of music, drama and spectacle.

**Orchestra.** A group of musicians led by the conductor who accompany the singers.

**Orchestra Pit.** A sunken area in front of the stage where the orchestra sits.

**Overture.** An orchestral introduction played before the action begins. The overture is often used to set the mood of the opera. Many composers used the overture to introduce themes or arias within the opera and sometimes the overture became more well known than the opera itself.

**Pants Role.** A young male character who is sung by a woman, usually a mezzo-soprano, meant to imitate the sound of a boy whose voice has not yet changed.

**Props.** The visual elements of a scene other than the set. Furniture is called "set props" and smaller items (anything held by the performer) are called "hand props".

**Quartet.** Four people singing together

**Recitative.** Dialogue which is "sing-speak". The recitative helps get through a lot of text quickly and moves the action along. Often precedes an aria or ensemble.

**Set.** The visual background on stage. The set shows the location of the action.

**Soprano.** The highest female voice. The soprano is commonly the lead female character.

**Tempo.** The speed of the music.

**Tenor.** The highest natural male voice. Often the lead male character within the opera.

**Trio.** Three people singing together

# The Diversity of Opera

The list below is provided to assist you in identifying themes in a variety of operas. Included will also be musicals that might be used as additional materials for the opera you are studying. The age level listed is to help you make an informed decision about the appropriateness of material you select for your classroom. **Please be sure to read both the libretto/story and listen to excerpts from the opera/musical you plan to use in your class prior to introducing it to your students.** Operas, operettas and musical theatre pieces will be identified with an "O", "Op" or "MT" after the listing.

## The East/Orient

|                                     |                      |   |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|---|
| Madama Butterfly (Puccini)          | Grade 3 and up       | O                                       |
| *Miss Saigon (Schonberg/Boublil)    | High School          | MT (*contains profanity & adult themes) |
| The Mikado (Gilbert & Sullivan)     | Any age              | Op                                      |
| Iris (Mascagni)                     | Middle & High School | O                                       |
| Pacific Overtures (Sondheim)        | High School          | MT                                      |
| Lakme (Delibes)                     | Middle & High School | O                                       |
| Turandot (Puccini)                  | Grade 5 and up       | O                                       |
| The First Emperor (Tan Dun)         | High School          | O                                       |
| Marco Polo (Tan Dun)                | High School          | O                                       |
| South Pacific (Rodgers/Hammerstein) | Middle & High School | O                                       |

## Africa or African Heritage

|                                  |                      |    |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|----|
| L' Africaine (Meyerbeer)         | Grade 5 and up       | O  |
| Otello (Verdi; Rossini)          | Middle & High School | O  |
| Aida (Verdi)                     | Grade 3 and up       | O  |
| Treemonisha (Joplin)             | Middle & High School | O  |
| Porgy & Bess (Gershwin)          | Middle & High School | O  |
| Passion of Jonathan Wade (Floyd) | High School          | O  |
| Ain't Misbehavin' (Waller)       | Grade 3 and up       | MT |

## Geographic Locations

|                               |                      |   |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|---|
| Madama Butterfly (Japan)      | Grade 3 and up       | O |
| The Barber of Seville (Spain) | Grade 3 and up       | O |
| Carmen (Spain)                | Middle & High School | O |
| Don Giovanni (Spain)          | Middle & High School | O |
| Hansel & Gretel (Germany)     | Any age              | O |
| Aida (Ethiopia/Egypt)         | Grade 3 and up       | O |
| La Boheme (France)            | Grade 3 and up       | O |
| Romeo et Juliette (Italy)     | Middle & High School | O |
| Boris Godunov (Russia)        | High School          | O |
| Albert Herring (England)      | Middle & High School | O |
| Marco Polo (Venice to China)  | High School          | O |

## Important Female Characters in Opera & Musical Theatre (real & fictitious)

|   |                      |    |
|---|----------------------|----|
| La Traviata—Violetta                                  | Grade 5 and up       | O  |
| La Boheme—Mimi  | Grade 3 and up       | O  |
| Tosca—Tosca   | Grade 5 and up       | O  |
| Carmen—Carmen   | Middle & High School | O  |
| Lucia di Lammermoor—Lucia                             | Grade 5 and up       | O  |
| Salome—Salome   | High School          | O  |
| Madama Butterfly—Cio Cio San                          | Grade 3 and up       | O  |
| The Ballad of Baby Doe—<br>Elizabeth "Baby" Doe Tabor | High School          | O  |
| The Unsinkable Molly Brown—<br>Margaret "Molly" Brown | High School          | MT |

### **American History, Literature and Lore**

|                                      |                      |    |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|----|
| The Ballad of Baby Doe (Moore)       | Grade 5 and up       | ○  |
| The Crucible (Ward)                  | Middle & High School | ○  |
| Of Mice and Men (Floyd)              | Middle & High School | ○  |
| Little Women (Adamo)                 | Middle & High School | ○  |
| The Passion of Jonathan Wade (Floyd) | High School          | ○  |
| La Fanciulla del West (Puccini)      | Middle & High School | ○  |
| The Tender Land (Copland)            | Grade 3 and up       | ○  |
| Nixon in China (Adams)               | High School          | ○  |
| Doctor Atomic (Adams)                | High School          | ○  |
| 1776 (Edwards)                       | Grade 3 and up       | MT |
| Paint Your Wagon (Lerner/Loewe)      | Grade 3 and up       | MT |
| Annie Get Your Gun (Berlin)          | Grade 3 and up       | MT |
| Big River (Miller)                   | Middle & High School | MT |

### **World History**

|                              |                      |   |
|------------------------------|----------------------|---|
| Montezuma (Sessions)         | Middle & High School | ○ |
| Nabucco (Verdi)              | Middle & High School | ○ |
| Andrea Chenier (Godano)      | Middle & High School | ○ |
| Don Carlo (Verdi)            | Middle & High School | ○ |
| Anna Bolena (Donizetti)      | Middle & High School | ○ |
| Un Ballo in Maschera (Verdi) | Middle & High School | ○ |
| Julius Caesar (Handel)       | High School          | ○ |
| The First Emperor (Tan Dun)  | High School          | ○ |

### **Science**

|                                |                |   |
|--------------------------------|----------------|---|
| Voyage to the Moon (Offenbach) | Grade 5 and up | ○ |
| The World of the Moon (Haydn)  | Grade 5 and up | ○ |
| Doctor Atomic (Adams)          | High School    | ○ |

### **Mythology**

#### **Greek**

|                                       |                      |   |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|---|
| Orfeo (Monteverdi)                    | Grade 5 and up       | ○ |
| Orfeo ed Euridice (Gluck)             | High School          | ○ |
| Orpheus in the Underworld (Offenbach) | Middle & High School | ○ |
| Calisto (Cavalli)                     | High School          | ○ |
| Castor et Pollux (Rameau)             | High School          | ○ |
| Dido and Aeneas (Purcell)             | High School          | ○ |
| Elektra (Strauss)                     | High School          | ○ |
| Idomeneo (Mozart)                     | Middle & High School | ○ |
| Pelleas et Melisande (Debussy)        | High School          | ○ |

#### **Norse**

|                          |             |   |
|--------------------------|-------------|---|
| Das Rheingold (Wagner)   | High School | ○ |
| Die Walkure (Wagner)     | High School | ○ |
| Siegfried (Wagner)       | High School | ○ |
| Gotterdammerung (Wagner) | High School | ○ |

### **Legends & Heroes**

|                                |                      |    |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|----|
| Lohengrin (Wagner)             | Middle & High School | O  |
| Parsifal (Wagner)              | High School          | O  |
| Tannhauser (Wagner)            | High School          | O  |
| Samson & Delilah (Saint-Saens) | High School          | O  |
| Nabucco (Verdi)                | High School          | O  |
| William Tell (Rossini)         | Middle & High School | O  |
| King Arthur (Purcell)          | Middle & High School | O  |
| Camelot (Lerner & Loewe)       | Any age              | MT |

### **Opera/Musicals based on Literature**

|  |                      |      |
|--|----------------------|------|
| Macbeth (Verdi)                            | Middle & High School | O    |
| Romeo & Juliet (Bellini, Gounod. Zandonai) | Middle & High School | O    |
| West Side Story (Bernstein/Sondheim)       | Middle & High School | MT   |
| Otello (Verdi, Rossini)                    | Middle & High School | O    |
| Hamlet (Thomas)                            | High School          | O    |
| War and Peace (Prokofiev)                  | High School          | O    |
| Rigoletto (Verdi)                          | Grade 3 and up       | O    |
| La Traviata (Verdi)                        | Grade 5 and up       | O    |
| Falstaff (Verdi, Nicolai)                  | Middle & High School | O    |
| Faust/Mephistopheles (Gounod, Boito)       | Middle & High School | O    |
| Candide (Bernstein)                        | High School          | O/MT |
| Of Mice and Men (Floyd)                    | Middle & High School | O    |
| Cold Sassy Tree (Floyd)                    | Middle & High School | O    |
| Dead Man Walking (Heggie)                  | High School          | O    |
| The End of the Affair (Heggie)             | High School          | O    |
| Moby Dick (Heggie)                         | High School          | O    |
| A Midsummer Night's Dream (Britten)        | High School          | O    |
| The Turn of the Screw (Britten)            | High School          | O    |
| Eugene Onegin (Tchaikovsky)                | Middle & High School | O    |
| Streetcar Named Desire (Previn)            | High School          | O    |
| A View from the Bridge (Bolcom)            | High School          | O    |
| Elmer Gantry (Aldridge/Garfein)            | High School          | O    |
| Les Misérables (Schonberg/Boublil)         | Middle & High School | MT   |
| The Phantom of the Opera (Webber)          | Grade 3 and up       | MT   |
| The Secret Garden (Simon)                  | Any age              | MT   |
| Big River (Miller)                         | Any age              | MT   |
| The King & I (Rodgers/Hammerstein)         | Any age              | MT   |
| Camelot (Lerner/Loewe)                     | Any age              | MT   |
| My Fair Lady (Lerner/Loewe)                | Any age              | MT   |
| Peter Pan (Charlap/Styne)                  | Any age              | MT   |

### **Fairy Tales**

|   |                      |    |
|---|----------------------|----|
| La Cenerentola (Cinderella) (Rossini)       | Any age              | O  |
| Cendrillon (Cinderella) (Massenet)          | Grade 3 and up       | O  |
| Hansel & Gretel (Humperdinck)               | Any age              | O  |
| Le Rossignol (The Nightingale) (Stravinsky) | Middle & High School | O  |
| The Child & the Enchantments (Ravel)        | Any age              | O  |
| Rusalka (Dvorak)                            | Grade 5 and up       | O  |
| Bluebeard's Castle (Bartok)                 | High School          | O  |
| The Magic Flute (Mozart)                    | Any age              | O  |
| Turandot (Puccini)                          | Grade 5 and up       | O  |
| The Snow Maiden (Rimsky-Korsakov)           | Middle & High School | O  |
| Into the Woods (Sondheim)                   | High School          | MT |



**More movement!** Using strips of fabric or scarves, have children move to different types of music holding the fabric/scarf in each hand. Before they begin moving, ask them how the different music makes them feel, then ask them to move the way they feel. Any Phyllis Weikart album has appropriate and diverse music, or using Irish dance music really gets kids moving! Also fun are different types of dance music; polka, rumba, waltz, ballet, etc. Also introduce non-melodic music including African and Native American chant/drum music.

### **STORY ANALYSIS**

A very simplified version of story analysis:

What happened in this story?

Who were the characters?

Did they like each other? Dislike each other? Have disagreements/conflicts?

### **GRADES 3 THROUGH 6**

#### **SETS AND COSTUMES**

Have students draw some sample sets and costumes for the opera they attended. Then take a different story they are familiar with and have them draw sets, costumes and do a character analysis on the main characters. Also have them decide where they might have a song, what would the song be about, how would it reflect the mood of the characters, etc.

#### **WORKSHEETS**

These are included to help reinforce learning about the opera and opera terminology. This includes the Define Me, Fill in the Blank, Word Search, Journey into Music, and Write your own opera.

### **GRADES 7 THROUGH 12**

#### **WORKSHEETS**

As above

### **CREATE YOUR OWN OPERA COMPANY**

Create an opera company within your class. Check out Kentucky Opera's Look-in to see what the jobs are behind-the-scenes (including technical director, set designers, lighting designers, sound engineers, costume designers, costumers, make-up artists, set crew, musical and dramatic directors, conductor, orchestra, chorus, principal singers, supers, etc). Other opera administrative jobs include areas in management, education, development, finance, marketing, public relations, box office and production.

#### **UPDATE A STORY OR PLAY**

The next step in creating the company is making the decision on what opera to produce. One of the simplest way to create an opera is to take a novel or play and update it. For example, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* has been made into both an opera and a musical (*Romeo et Juliette* by Gounod and *West Side Story* by Bernstein/Sondheim). Another way to create cross-curricular learning would be to take a novel or play being studied in English and create a libretto out of the story line (examples would be *Of Mice and Men*, *Hamlet*, *Huckleberry Finn*).

#### **ROLE PLAY WITH YOUR NEW OPERA**

Now that the company has been created and a story chosen, a libretto needs to be created. This works well with small groups of students working on individual scenes (rather than everyone trying to work on the whole thing). Ideally, the libretto should be written with the idea that each word will be sung rather than spoken. If this is overwhelming, writing one aria (song) that might summarize the high points of the scene would be sufficient.

Have the students act out their scene with music (if possible) and include all the aspects of production mentioned in Create Your Own Opera Company.

This is a terrific semester long project that will give students not only the opportunity to participate in a performing arts environment but also an appreciation of what goes into creating any live theater production.

# Improvisation exercises for opera/musical theater

## Freedom, Concentration and Ensemble

- 1) **Breathing** (freedom): Group stands in a circle, arms down at sides. Slowly lift arms over head and back down; 4 count up and 4 count down.

**Purpose:** to quiet and center group and become aware of self.

- 2) **Facial flex** (freedom): Move facial muscles in as many different positions as possible including making faces, sighs and neck (rolling the neck can be problematic so just have them move their necks side to side and front to back)

**Purpose:** to relax and free facial muscles.

- 3) **Extreme masks** (freedom): Body assumes posture and expression of some extreme emotions (i.e. fear, joy, sadness, anxiety, etc.), then quickly switch to another emotion.

**Purpose:** to be able to shift quickly from one type of emotional expression to another

- 4) **Emotion and Gesture Cards:** Have a series of cards with emotion words or gestures. While a student is singing a prepared song, randomly pick either a word or gesture card. Student must act out the word on the card while singing (even if the emotion/gesture conflicts with the sentiment of the song).

**Purpose:** awareness of how emotions and gestures play a role in presentation

- 5) **Machines** (ensemble/concentration): Write down different types of machines on pieces of paper and place them in a hat. Divide students into groups of 4-5 and have them pick a machine. They have 3 minutes to break down the functions of the machine into 4-5 different motions. Each student picks a motion and then it is put into an order. It is performed 5 times. After a successful silent machine, the students can also add sound. Further machines can be improvised—a made up machine with movement and sound.

**Purpose:** to encourage imaginative use of physical and vocalized skills. Timing and concentration required to initiate and continue the patterned response, encourages cooperation.

- 6) **Skits** (ensemble): Group is divided into smaller groups of 3 to 5. Each group is given 2 minutes to set up a scene. To make this easier, write down different scenarios and put into a hat for groups to draw. Scenes can include a subject, an emotional attitude and whether or not vocalized sounds can be used. The scene must develop and should not be fully worked out in advance. Suggestions for skits include animals, inanimate objects, waiting at the bus stop, going to a rock concert, etc.

**Purpose:** to encourage imaginative use of physical and vocalized skills. Encourages cooperation and exploration of performance possibilities. Stretches character development to include human, non-human, animal and imaginary possibilities.

### MOVING ACTIVITIES THAT ENHANCE MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

#### Exercise One: Walking on a Beat

Students choose a spot in the room. Tell the students you are going to clap 16 counts. Students are to step on every beat. Students can leave their spot but must return by count 16. Clap 16 counts at a walking pace and count out loud so students know how many claps have occurred. Repeat the exercise with 4,8,12 counts. Change tempos. Ask students to vary their steps; walking low, on tiptoes, backwards, sideways, etc. They may not touch each other or talk!

**Purpose:** Focus, concentration, beginning of rhythmic awareness

### **Exercise Two: Moving like animals**

Have children spread out in the room. Tell them to choose an animal and move around the room like that animal. For the first time, no sound with the movement. Ask questions like: Is the animals big or small? Heavy or light? Quick or slow? Do they fly? Creep? What is unique to each animal? The movements the children do should correspond to movements their animal can do (in other words, a zebra shouldn't be flying). After the group explores their animals, you can have them choose an animal from a hat and individually perform with the group having to guess the animal. You can also add sounds and eventually add imaginary animals.

**Purpose:** To explore movement qualities

### **MUSIC/RHYTHM ACTIVITIES**

#### **Exercise One: Listening**

Students sit on the floor (or at their desks) with closed eyes. Students listen to all the sounds they can hear for 30-60 seconds. Students open eyes and share what they heard.

**Purpose:** Focus, concentration, attention to environment

#### **Exercise Two: Clapping on a Beat**

Students count and clap 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8 all together out loud. Repeat until all are clapping in unison and eventually counting silently. Students continue to count silently while they:

- a. Clap on all the odd beats
- b. Clap on all the even beats
- c. Clap two beats and rest two beats
- d. Rest two beats and clap two beats

Divide the class in half. Half the class claps on odd beats while the other half claps on the even beats (a and b). Then half the class claps two then rests two while the other half rests two then claps two (c and d). You can also use rhythm instruments in addition to clapping. Experiment with combining a, b, c, and d.

**Purpose:** Focus and concentration

### **OTHER RHYTHM ACTIVITIES**

#### **Exploring sounds around you:**

Ask students to move around the classroom or playground to discover objects that can be played. Explore different ways in which the object can be played (beating, scraping, shaking) using hands, pencils, rules, etc.

How does the sound quality of an object change when played or struck with different implements? Or when the object has been altered (full trashcan versus empty, tin can filled with pencils versus filled with erasers).

**Purpose:** Exploring the aural environment, how quality of sound can change

### **VOCAL ACTIVITIES**

- 1) Inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth
- 2) Sing "meow" going up and down a scale (both major and minor)
- 3) Sing "me-may-mah-moe-moo" going from loud to soft, moving up and down the scale
- 4) Spend a day in which all communication within the classroom is sung
- 5) Sing different vowel sounds up and down the scale



## More Information

Read all about it!

Opera Look-in program

Final Dress Rehearsals

Opera History timeline

(line up each section to make a giant historical look at opera as well as classical music, world history, art and literature—this is a separate download from the teacher study guide)

# READ ALL ABOUT IT!!!

There are literally thousands of books written about opera, opera singers, musical theatre, stories, librettos, etc. Here is a collection of the "best of" books.

Opera on Video: The Essential Guide  
by Alan Blyth

Opera on CD: Best Recordings of 100 Operas  
by Alan Blyth

Opera 101 by Fred Plotkin

Opera for Dummies by David Pogue & Scott Speck

Who's Afraid of Opera?  
by Michael Walsh

Great Operatic Disasters  
by Hugh Vickers (introduction by Peter Ustinov)

Stories of the Great Operas - Volumes I and II  
by John Freeman with a foreward by James Levine (Met music director) and introduction by Peter Allan (host of the Texaco radio broadcasts)

The New Kobbe's Complete Opera Book  
by The Earl of Harewood

A History of Western Music (5<sup>th</sup> Edition)  
by Donald Jay Grout

The Opera Libretto Library  
published by Avenel Books

Opera Offstage  
by Milton Brener

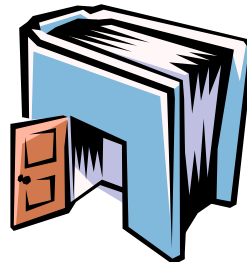
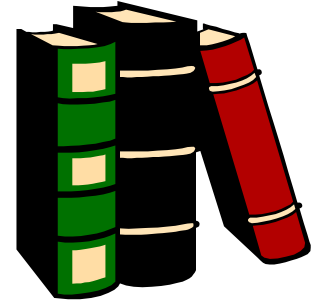
The Oxford History of Opera  
edited by Roger Parker

The New Grove Book of Opera  
edited by Stanley Sadie

The Random House Book of Opera Stories  
by Adele Geras

Aida  
retold by Leontyne Price

Show by Show (5th edition)  
By Stanley Green



# Opera Look-in program

The Opera Look-in is a program designed to share with our audience the behind-the-scenes magic of opera theater. This free program takes place in the Brown Theatre and is appropriate for any age .

We'll talk about what is opera, all the components that go into creating and producing opera including the singers, orchestra, conductor and chorus. We'll also show you the sets, talk about how they're put together, how they move and we may even move a few of the pieces around, or fly things in and out from the ceiling! We'll share with you the effect that lighting and sound can have on a production as well as showing you that we can create a thunder and lightening storm inside the theater. We'll introduce one or more of our principal singers in their normal clothes and then we'll turn them into their opera characters through costume, make-up and wigs. Finally, you'll hear a little bit of the opera and we'll finish with a small reception.

We do require reservations for this event. The total time involved is approximately 1 hour. Again, there is no fee for this program. For reservations call (502) 561-7938.

# Final Dress Rehearsals

For many years, Kentucky Opera has provided students with the opportunity to attend the final dress rehearsals held at the Brown Theatre on the Wednesday evening prior to our opening night.

We are continuing the tradition with every final dress rehearsal being available to students and teachers. Tickets are \$5 and may be purchased ahead of time or at the door (although it's highly recommended that tickets be purchased in advance as some shows sell out). Study guides are available on-line as are registration materials at [www.kyopera.org](http://www.kyopera.org).

For additional information contact our Education Director at (502) 561-7938. Students should be in third grade and up to attend dress rehearsals.

For the 2009-10 Brown-Forman Fall season, our dress rehearsals are;

|                   |                                      |               |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| La Traviata       | Wednesday, September 23rd at 7:00 pm | Brown Theatre |
| Of Mice and Men   | Wednesday, October 28th at 7:00 pm   | Brown Theatre |
| Hansel and Gretel | Wednesday, November 20th at 7:00 pm  | Brown Theatre |