



THE ATLANTA OPERA

# The Ugly Duckling



## Opera Guide

The Atlanta Opera Studio Tour • Spring 2010

*The Ugly Duckling*

An adaptation of the classic fairy tale

Music by Andrew Duncan • Libretto by Steven Malone

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# Welcome!

Spring 2010

Hello and thank you for inviting The Atlanta Opera into your school to perform for your students! We are so pleased to be traveling throughout the state this spring introducing thousands of students to opera and giving them a live performance experience in their school

The Atlanta Opera Studio was founded in 1980 in an effort to teach students throughout the state of Georgia about opera through live performances and workshops. Thousands of students have been introduced to the art form through the Atlanta Opera Studio Touring Production. The Studio Touring Production is designed to travel, and is a different kind of performance experience than attending an Atlanta Opera mainstage production.

The Atlanta Opera mainstage productions are presented at the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre, and feature a full cast, chorus, and Atlanta Opera Orchestra. The Atlanta Opera Costume Shop builds costumes, and there are many people working backstage to produce the large-scale performances. The Atlanta Opera Studio performances are generally performed by a small cast of singers accompanied by a pianist. Sets and props are minimal to accommodate travel and varying performance space. It is our intention for students to gain introductory knowledge of the entire art form through the performance experience and accompanying educational materials.

The guide has been developed to acquaint both you and your students with the opera *The Ugly Duckling*, as well as to familiarize students with the world of opera (vocabulary, history, etc.) Our goal is to provide you with an innovative, multidisciplinary approach to teaching required skills and curriculum, including Georgia Performance Standards. Where applicable, you will find the corresponding standard(s) in parenthesis at the end of each activity or lesson.

What you can expect from The Atlanta Opera's performance of *The Ugly Duckling*:

- We will be performing a 45-minute opera in English for your students.
- Our show requires attentive silence from the audience, but there is also opportunity for audience participation.
- The opera may take place in your school gymnasium or cafeteria rather than an auditorium, so students may be seated on the floor.
- You and your students will be invited to ask questions at the end of the performance.

Thank you again for allowing us to share this opera with you. We value your feedback and take this into account in planning future educational programs. We look forward to hearing from you, your students, administration, and/or parents following the performance.

Sincerely,

The Atlanta Opera Education Department

# Sponsors

The Atlanta Opera would like to thank the following organizations for their generous support of our education and outreach programs.

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# Preparing Your Students for the Performance

# *The Ugly Duckling* Cast

An operatic version of Hans Christian Andersen's classic fairy tale

Music by Andrew Duncan

Words and story adapted by Stephen Malone

## **Cast and Crew**

<i>The Ugly Duckling</i> .....	Kaitlyn Costello, mezzo-soprano
<i>Pig/Teen Duck</i> .....	Rebecca Kier, soprano
<i>Lamb/Teen Duck</i> .....	Wesley Morgan, tenor
<i>Cow/Wolf</i> .....	Wade Thomas, baritone
<i>Ducklings</i> .....	Selected Students
<i>Stage Director/Scenery Designer</i> .....	Richard Kagey
<i>Musical Director</i> .....	Valerie Pool
<i>Costume Designer</i> .....	Joanna Schmink
<i>Zurich General Director</i> .....	Dennis Hanthorn
<i>Director of Artistic Administration</i> .....	Eric Mitchko
<i>Education Manager</i> .....	Emmalee Iden

# *The Ugly Duckling* Plot Synopsis

## **Scene I: The Barnyard**

It was a lovely spring day and the pig, lamb, and cow are awaiting the arrival of a new group of ducklings. They hope the ducklings will be quiet, well behaved, and pretty as they don't like anything loud or crazy on their farm! The ducklings finally arrive, quacking and squawking. They are all downy and cute, except for the last one. She is certainly not like the rest. The Ugly Duckling is extremely excited to be free of her egg and wants to learn and explore all that the world has to offer. Time goes by and the seasons change. The ducklings grow and, the ugly duckling, try as she might, still doesn't fit in and never finds common ground or common pond!

## **Scene II: The Pond**

The Ugly Duckling is swimming in the pond with two of the cool ducks from school. The Ugly Duckling loves to read and learn, solve problems, and create new things. The other ducks think she is odd, ugly, and just plain weird! The girl duck at the pond is popular. She would rather sing high and loud than learn; it makes her head hurt. The boy duck at the pond is an athlete. He is the best swimmer and duck ball player in school. No matter what game they play, he is always the best! The Ugly Duckling is not deterred. She doesn't mind being different; in fact, she likes what makes her special. Before she can say anything else, she hears some ominous sounds. She hides behind some bushes. A shadowy figure appears, and it turns out to be a wolf! He is the biggest, baddest, hungriest wolf around. He is looking for something scrumptious to eat and won't rest until he gets his next meal. As the Wolf leaves, the Ugly Duckling emerges from the bushes. She has been reading up on wolves and sees that he is trying to weasel his way into another story, but she will not hear of that!

## **Scene III: The Barnyard**

The Ugly Duckling returns to the barnyard to share the news with her fellow ducklings. She explains that their lives are in danger. The teenagers think she has read too many books and believe they are safe on the farm. They quickly change their minds when they hear the howl of the big bad wolf! The Ugly Duckling explains that, as she has read in *The Three Little Pigs*, they must build a brick wall in order to protect themselves. The Wolf finally arrives only to discover the wall. He tries to blow the wall down and quickly discovers it is impossible. He must find some other way to get the ducks. From reading *Little Red Riding Hood*, the Ugly Duckling already knows what the wolf will try next. She explains that he will try to disguise himself as an old lady. Sure enough, the wolf returns claiming to be the ducks Aunt Edna and begs them to open the door so they can have dinner together. The Ugly Duckling has a plan: they will let in the Wolf but, once he is inside, they will hit him on the head with a brick. The ducks open the door and chaos ensues! The Ugly Duckling hits the Wolf with the brick, causing him to collapse. The other ducks immediately tie him up and cheer that they have beaten the Wolf. The Wolf's plans have been ruined by the Ugly Duckling, but wait! She is not a duckling at all. She has reappeared as a beautiful Swan!

## **Finale**

The Swan explains that she maybe different on the outside, but she is still the same on the inside. The ducks all realize that they not only stopped the wolf, but they also learned to love what makes them different and accept the differences in others.

# Audience Etiquette

Before your students see *The Ugly Duckling*, prepare them for the unique and special experience of attending a live performance. A key to getting the most from an opera performance is “give and take.” The audience and performers have an interactive relationship. When the audience is at its best, the performers will put on the best show possible.

## BASIC POINTS TO COVER IN CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

- When you are part of a live audience, there are some guidelines to follow. These rules set standards for considerate behavior so that everyone – you, your neighbor, the guy in the back row, the actors, the musicians – can get the most out of the performance. Can you think of some behaviors that would not be appropriate during a live show? Would it bother you if your neighbor did these things?
- The opera you will see today is a smaller production than The Atlanta Opera productions that take place at the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre. The performance today will be performed by four singers who are accompanied by a pianist. The mainstage productions The Atlanta Opera produces are performed on a big stage with full sets, costumes, lights, and orchestra.
- Attending an opera is not like watching TV. The actors on the stage can see (and hear!) you. Be respectful of all the hard work that has gone into the performance. Don't stand up, talk to your neighbor, or otherwise call extra attention to yourself. It's ok to laugh at the funny parts, but don't call out at the wrong time.
- It's okay to applaud and to laugh. In Italy, audience members say “Bravo!” to show that they are enjoying the performance.
- Sometimes going to the opera is a dress-up event. Do you expect others to act differently when they are dressed up?

### CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: **WHY DRESS UP?**

Using two sets of costumes, have one group of students dress in casual clothes (baseball caps, t-shirts, sneakers, etc) and another group dress in “opera-going” attire (coat and tie, fancy jewelry, etc. Overdo it! Have fun!) Arrange the students as if they were in the audience at an opera and have them act out the behavior that their costumes seem to indicate.

This could get a little rowdy but that is the idea! This activity is perfect for illustrating how “dressing up” calls for good manners and can demonstrate the good manners that are expected from an opera audience.



# Suggested Activities

Opera stereotypes can make the art form seem intimidating for some. Breaking down these stereotypes and preparing your students for the performance can make it a more enjoyable experience for everyone. Here are some suggestions of things that you can do before The Atlanta Opera comes to your school:

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- Lead a class discussion on opera. What other preconceptions about the opera do your students have? Are they fact or opinion? Document their perceptions so that you and your students can revisit them later to see how they've changed. (ELA3R3)
- Split the students into groups and have them act out a 1-minute scene that includes all their ideas of what they think opera is (fat ladies and all – make no restrictions here). Do the same activity after they have watched the performance. (TAES 3)
- Divide the bulletin board into two sections. On one half, have the students post descriptive words related to opera (don't limit them to "nice" words). After watching the performance, collect a second list and post these words on the other half. (MESGM.7-10, ELA2R3, ELA3R2, ELA4R3, ELA5R3, ELA2LSV1, ELA4LSV1, ELA5LSV1)
- Have the students draw pictures of what they think a typical opera singer looks like. Go to a few of the famous opera websites listed on page 27 look at their photographs. Get students' reactions to what opera stars really look like.
- Discuss how opera is like a play (they both have a story, characters, costumes, audiences and words) and how it is different (opera has singers, music throughout arias, duets, ensembles, etc). Similar comparisons can be made with movies, television, musical theater and ballet. (MESGM9)
- Discuss some characteristics of opera. (MESGM7, MESGM9-10, ELAKLSV1, ELA1LSV1, ELA2LSV1, ELA3LSV1, ELA4LSV1, ELA5LSV1) For example:
  - Sometimes it takes longer to express an idea since the words are sung instead of spoken
  - When several characters are singing at the same time (this is called an ensemble), they can each sing about different things. This wouldn't be possible if all the characters were speaking instead of singing.
  - The action often stops so that a character can express how he/she is feeling by singing an aria. Shakespeare did this with soliloquies ("To be or not to be...").
  - It's okay if you can't understand every word that is sung (i.e., if it's in a different language) because the music will help set the context of the story.
- Start with the story. In simple terms, an opera is just a story that is sung. Before the performance, read them the plot synopsis of *The Ugly Duckling* (pg. 7). Then brainstorm with the students: What would be a good topic for an opera? Think about movies, books, fairy tales, historical events, and everyday situations.

## Suggested Activities (cont.)

What kind of music would accompany different topics... fast/slow, loud/soft, smooth/jumpy?

(MESGM7, MESGM9-10, ELAKLSV1, ELA1LSV1, ELA2LSV1, ELA3LSV1, ELA4LSV1, ELA5LSV1, ELA2R4, ELA4R1, ELA1R6, ELA3R3)

- Ask the students who their favorite singers are. Discuss whether or not they sound like trained classical singers, explaining why or why not. See pg. 24 for a comparison of trained and untrained voices. (MESGM7-8)
- Talk about the people required to produce an opera. There are four groups of people necessary for an operatic performance to happen: creators, producers, performers and observers. Discuss the roles of each group using the “Working Together: Opera as a Collaboration” sheet on pg 29 and “Other jobs in the performing arts” on pg 33 as guides. Talk about what would happen if even one of these groups didn’t do their job. (MESGM9)
- Play an opera excerpt for the students. Discuss how changing certain elements of the music (tempo, instrumentation, vocal timber, text) would alter the overall effect of the song. Some suggested selections found on The Atlanta Opera website: “Una furtive lagrima”, “Chi mai dell’erebo”, “Di mia man riceve o duce”, and “Pa...Pa...Pa”. (ELA1LSV1, ELA2LSV1, ELA3LSV1, ELA4LSV1, ELA5LSV1, MESGM7-8)
- Put on a play. Go through the production process from start to finish. Hold auditions, post a cast list, create simple costumes, build a set, rehearse lines, stage the action, and perform!  
(TAESK-1.1-7, TAES2-3.1-7, TAES4-5.1-7)
- Determine the viewpoint from which the story is told. *The Ugly Duckling* is told in a way that gives the audience an overall view of the events in the story instead of a single character’s perspective. Divide students into groups, and have them write their own Duckling story from the perspective of one of the characters from the story. Allow students to perform their plays for one another. List the inconsistencies between each version and discuss how a situation can seem different when looked at from someone else’s perspective.  
(TAESK-5.1-10, TAES2-5.11, ELA5LSV1, ELA5W1, ELA5R1, ELA4R1, ELA4W1, ELA4LSV1, ELA3W1)
- Look at the importance of setting. Sometimes a director may take artistic license and decide s/he wants their production of an opera to be set in a non-traditional time and place. For example, s/he might set the fairy tale *Hansel and Gretel* in a modern-day high school. The Mom and Dad would be the children’s favorite teachers, while the witch might be an evil substitute. Instead of a forest, Hansel and Gretel could wander through the basement of the school. The setting of *The Ugly Duckling* is a farm in the country. Pick an unlikely time and place for the story like the Old West or the year 2100 on Mars. How would a time/location change affect the way the actors would portray their characters? Think about their speech patterns, the way they walk and carry themselves, their costumes and their interactions with one another. Discuss the differences. Have students pick their own location and sketch out their ideas for sets and costumes.  
(ELA5LSV1, ELA5W1, ELA5R1, ELA4R1, ELA4W1, ELA4LSV1, ELA3W1)

# Suggested Activities (cont.)

- Map out a storyboard. After reading the synopsis of *The Ugly Duckling*, have the students create a storyboard to illustrate the sequence of events and what they think the opera might look like. Have the students share their storyboards in small groups. (ELAKR1, ELAKR6, ELAKW1, ELAKW2, ELAKLSV1, ELA1R6, ELA1W2, ELA1LSV1, ELA2R4, ELA2W1, ELA2W2, ELA2LSV1)
- Design a poster to promote the opera. The Atlanta Opera marketing department designs all the printed materials for a production. Create posters or programs for the upcoming production of *The Ugly Duckling* that might represent the “look” of the show and draw people to attend. (VAKMC.3, VAKPR.6, VAKCO.12, VA1MC.2, VA1MC.3, VA1PR.6, VA1CO.12, VA2MC.3, VA2PR.6, VA2CO.12, VA3PR.6, VA3CO.12, VA4PR.6)

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# *All About Opera*

# Opera at a Glance

## WHAT IS OPERA?

Opera is a dramatic story told through song. It is considered by many to be the most complete art form, combining all of the elements of art, words, music, drama and dance. The earliest Italian operas were called several things, such as “favola in musica” (fable in music) and “dramma per musica” (drama by means of music). This last title is very close to the dictionary definition, and is the correct basis for any discussion about opera.

The unique thing in opera is the use of music to convey an entire story/plot. This is based on the feeling that music can communicate people’s reactions and emotions better than words (read or spoken) or pictures. Opera takes any type of dramatic story and tried to make it more exciting and more believable with the help of music. Many famous stories have been made into operas, including *Cinderella*, *Hansel and Gretel*, and *Romeo and Juliet*.

## HOW DID OPERA GET STARTED?

The concept of opera was developing many years before the first opera was written. Its beginning can be traced to the ancient Greeks. They fused poetry and music, creating plays that incorporate song, spoken language and dance, accompanied by string or wind instruments.



Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne*

In the 1100s the early Christian church set religious stories to music, a style known as liturgical drama. The first true opera, *Daphne*, was composed by Jacopo Peri (1561-1633). It told the story of a Greek myth. The first great composer of opera was Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643). Some of his operas are still performed today.

## HOW IS OPERA DIFFERENT AROUND THE WORLD?

Italy was the first country where opera became popular. It was the homeland of Jacopo Peri and Claudio Monteverdi. In time this exciting form of entertainment spread to the rest of Europe. France and Germany joined Italy as the principal opera producers. Eventually opera came to reflect the stories and musical styles of each of these countries.

The Italians have always been famous for their love of singing, and so in Italian Opera there has always been great emphasis placed on the singer and the beautiful sounds of the human voice. It wasn't until the late 19TH century and early 20TH century with the later works of Verdi and the operas of Puccini was a balance achieved between the role of the orchestra and that of the singer, and the combining of these two forces, to give a more effective presentation of the story.

The French have favored the pictorial side of drama, and this has led to a continuing emphasis on the visual spectacle, especially with dancing. An example of this: the Paris opera in the 19TH century would not accept a work for performance if it did not contain a major ballet. Verdi, an Italian composer, had to add ballets to all of his works to get them performed in Paris.



Giuseppe Verdi

# Opera at a Glance (cont.)

The Germans have always sought to extract from both the Italian and French traditions, and go beyond both in an attempt to present more than just a story. In fact, one of the greatest German opera composers, Richard Wagner, chose legends or myths for most of his opera plots so that he could communicate ideas as well as just a story.

## ELEMENTS OF OPERA

A **score** is the blueprint to an opera. It consists of the words, music, stage directions, and often performance notes for the entire show. An opera score is often divided into sections. It begins with the **overture**, followed by one to five **acts**, and one or more **intermissions**. Each act may be divided into scenes. The scenes are comprised of **recitatives**, **arias**, **duets**, larger **ensembles**, and **choruses**.

## OPERA

### Overture

Musical introduction played by the orchestra that often consists of excerpts from the opera.

### Act

A group of scenes with a common theme, such as a specific time or place. Most operas consist of 1-5 acts.

### Recitative

Speechlike singing that advances the plot & fills the spaces between arias and choruses.

### Chorus

A musical piece sung by a group of people. The chorus may sing on stage or off stage.

### Duet

A musical piece sung by 2 people.

### Trio

A musical piece sung by 3 people.

### Aria

A piece sung by one person. Arias allow singers to “show off” while reflecting on their emotions.

### Intermission

A break between acts. This allows the audience to stretch and the performers to rest. Singing is hard work!

Check out the excerpt of *The Ugly Duckling* score on the next page.

67

**Soprano** PIG

**Tenor** SHEEP Life is sim - ple here on the farm

**Baritone** COW Life is sim - ple here on the farm

**Piano**

**Piano**

69

Ne-ver cause for wor - ry nor a - larm. Life is slow and life is sun - ny

Ne-ver cause for wor - ry nor a - larm. Life is slow and life is sun - ny

# Opera at a Glance (cont.)

## DIFFERENT STYLES OF OPERA

### Bel Canto

This Italian phrase means “beautiful singing”. These operas grew from a style of singing emphasizing long phrases, breath control and flexibility in singing both loudly and softly. Because the voice is considered the most expressive element, the words are often secondary. Gaetano Donizetti composed in this style.



*Cinderella*

### Opera Buffa

Comic opera, always sung in Italian. The jokesters in these operas are always the working class, such as maids, peasants, or servants, who keep busy getting the best of their employers. Gioachino Rossini composed in this style.

### Opera Seria

Serious opera. These stories are often tragic, and typically involve heroes and kings or ancient myths and gods. Some of Handel’s operas are in this style.



*The Magic Flute*

### Singspiel

Singspiel evolved in German speaking countries out of the comic opera tradition. It includes elements of comic opera, spoken dialogue interjected among the sung phrases, and, often, an exotic or fanciful theme. Mozart’s *The Magic Flute* is an example of this style.

### Grand Opera

Spectacular opera. It is performed with elaborate sets and costumes. Many people are needed to make it happen. Grand opera involves royalty, heroism, an elaborate ballet scene, and is often long. Composer Giacomo Meyerbeer wrote opera in this style.

### Music Drama

A style of opera that is created by a single artist who writes both the text and the music to advance the drama. This style fuses many art forms, and makes each one as important as the others. Composer Richard Wagner defined this style.



# The Elements of an Opera

An opera is a musical work in which the actors sing most of the dialogue. The art form was developed in Italy at the end of the 16th century and is based on folktales, popular literature, dramas and comedies. Opera has remained a popular art form for centuries because of its unique ability to tell a story by combining music, drama, and spectacle.

## MUSIC

Music moves the action of a story, expresses emotions and moods, and deepens our understanding of the characters.

- *Orchestra*: In most cases, operas are accompanied by a group of musicians. Led by a conductor, an orchestra is an ensemble that is comprised of string, woodwind, brass and percussion instruments.
- *Score*: Musicians read from a score which is a notated piece of music showing each voice or instrumental part on its own staff.
- *Overture*: An overture is an orchestral piece that may be played at the very beginning of the opera before any action takes place on stage (not all operas have overtures).
- *Musical themes*: Musical themes are complete ideas that are crafted to be memorable to the listener. They are heard throughout operas and are associated with a particular character or characters, a situation, an idea, object or emotion.

Listed below are four types of musical forms composers use to help them describe how characters are feeling during the course of an opera.

- *Recitative*: Composed to sound like natural patterns of speech, a recitative is singing that has the rhythm of talking. It is used for conversation between characters or to move the plot of the story.
- *Aria*: A vocal solo expressing personal emotion or reflection.
- *Ensemble*: A piece that is sung by two or more characters at the same time (duet for two characters, trio for three characters, quartet for four characters, etc). Different melodies are sung simultaneously by each character involved in the ensemble.
- *Chorus*: Often providing background music for the above, a chorus is a group of people singing together in parts or in unison.

Each musical form is sung by singers in one of the six basic vocal categories which are listed below:

- *Soprano*: The highest female voice. In *The Ugly Duckling*, a SOPRANO sings the role of the Pig.
- *Tenor*: The highest male voice. In *The Ugly Duckling*, a TENOR sings the role of the Lamb.
- *Mezzo-Soprano*: The middle-range female voice. In *The Ugly Duckling*, a MEZZO-SOPRANO sings the role of the Ugly Duckling
- *Baritone*: The middle-range male voice. In *The Ugly Duckling*, a BARITONE sings the role of the Cow.
- *Contralto*: The lowest female voice.
- *Bass*: The lowest male voice.

# The Elements of an Opera (cont.)

## DRAMA

Operas unfold a dramatic or comic story involving a protagonist, antagonist, and/or a hero/heroine. Actors that portray these roles must be very good at both singing and acting.

Certain character tendencies often exist for each vocal category. They include the following:

- *Soprano*: most often the heroine of the opera
- *Mezzo-Soprano*: mothers, older women, villains, servants, women playing men (called “trouser roles”)
- *Contralto*: old women, witches, comic roles
- *Tenor*: most often the hero of the opera
- *Baritone*: helpful companions, villains, sometimes heroes
- *Bass*: kings, villains, priests

Operas usually feature primary and secondary characters who figure in the dramatic flow of the story.

- *Principals*: The primary roles of an opera. These may be heroes/heroines, villains or other strong characters. Principal roles are sung by the more experienced artists who have already made a name for themselves in smaller roles.
- *Comprimarios*: The secondary roles of an opera. Comprimario roles are often confidantes, maids, servants, messengers, or medical personnel. They are usually sung by younger or lesser known artists.

Similar to a play, opera tells a story that is divided into acts and scenes. Each scene is further divided into numbers, each representing a different musical form (i.e. aria, recit., chorus number, or ensemble). In contrast to plays, the text is written with the intention of being accompanied by music.

- *Libretto*: The text of an opera.
- *Librettist*: The artist who arranges the text of a story to fit the accompanying music.

## SPECTACLE

The spectacle of an opera encompasses sets, costumes, special effects, props and staging. These elements are combined to tell the story in a multi-dimensional manner.

- *Set*: The place where the action will occur on stage. Operas often have large, spectacular sets that reflect the time and place of the story being told.
- *Costumes*: The outfits worn by each actor to reflect the time and place of an opera as well as the personality of each character.
- *Props*: Items that may be carried onstage in an actor’s hands or that “dress” the set (such as furniture or decorative accessories).

During the course of an opera, it is not uncommon to have a large number of people on stage. Many of these people will be chorus while the others will appear as supernumeraries or extras.

- *Super/Supernumerary*: A performer who appears in a non-singing role; a “super” might have a solo walk-on to deliver a message, or might be included as part of a large procession, for example.

# The Elements of an Opera (cont.)

The stage director impacts how the action is conveyed by assigning various blocking.

- *Blocking*: The patterns of movement of the people onstage as the opera progresses.
- *Stage Right/Stage left*: The division of the stage from the performer's point of view; thus when a singer goes stage right, he moves to his/her right but to the audience's left.
- *Upstage/Downstage*: The position on stage farthest or nearest the audience; because of the raked stage which was so prevalent in early opera houses, the farther "back" a singer went on the stage, the "higher" he seemed to become in stature, thus the distinction of being "up"-stage. Downstage, then, would be lower and closer to the audience.

## **BRAVO!**

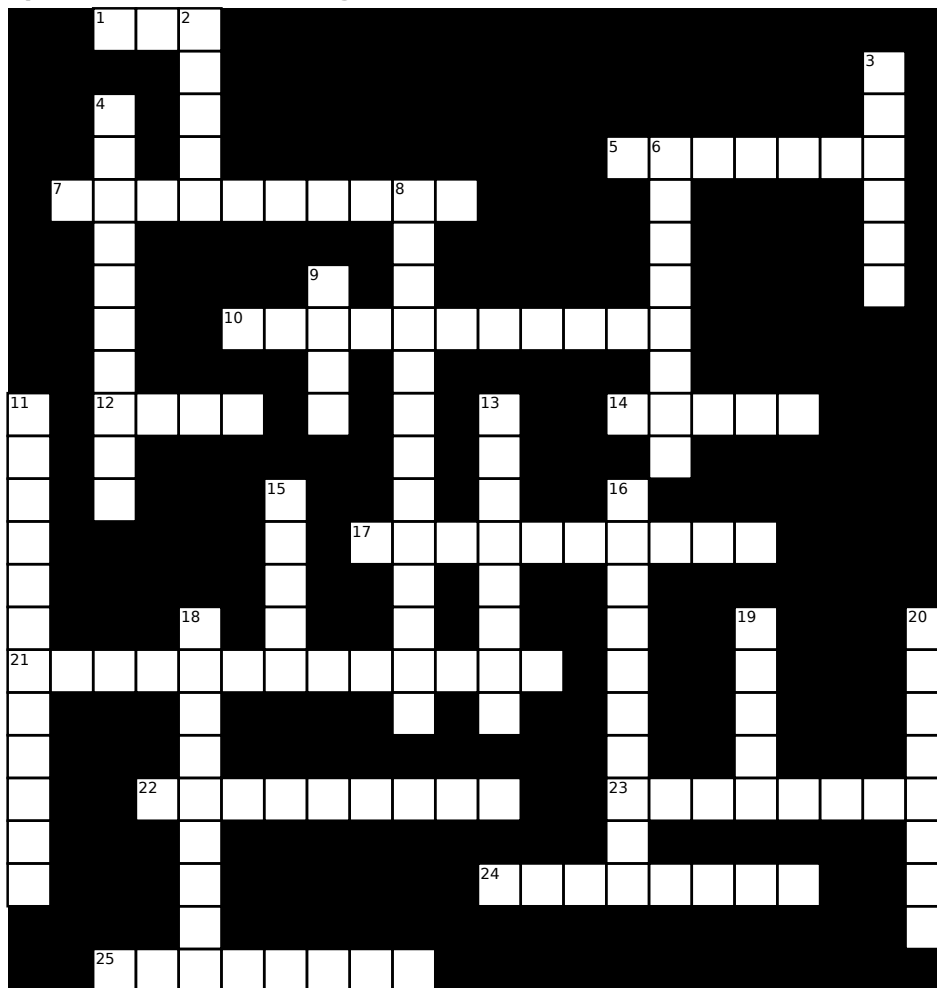
Audience members may shout this Italian word after an exciting aria, scene, act or performance. It is pronounced "brah-voh". A female performer would be accorded a "brava" (the feminine form of bravo).



*The Elixir of Love*

# The Elements of Opera

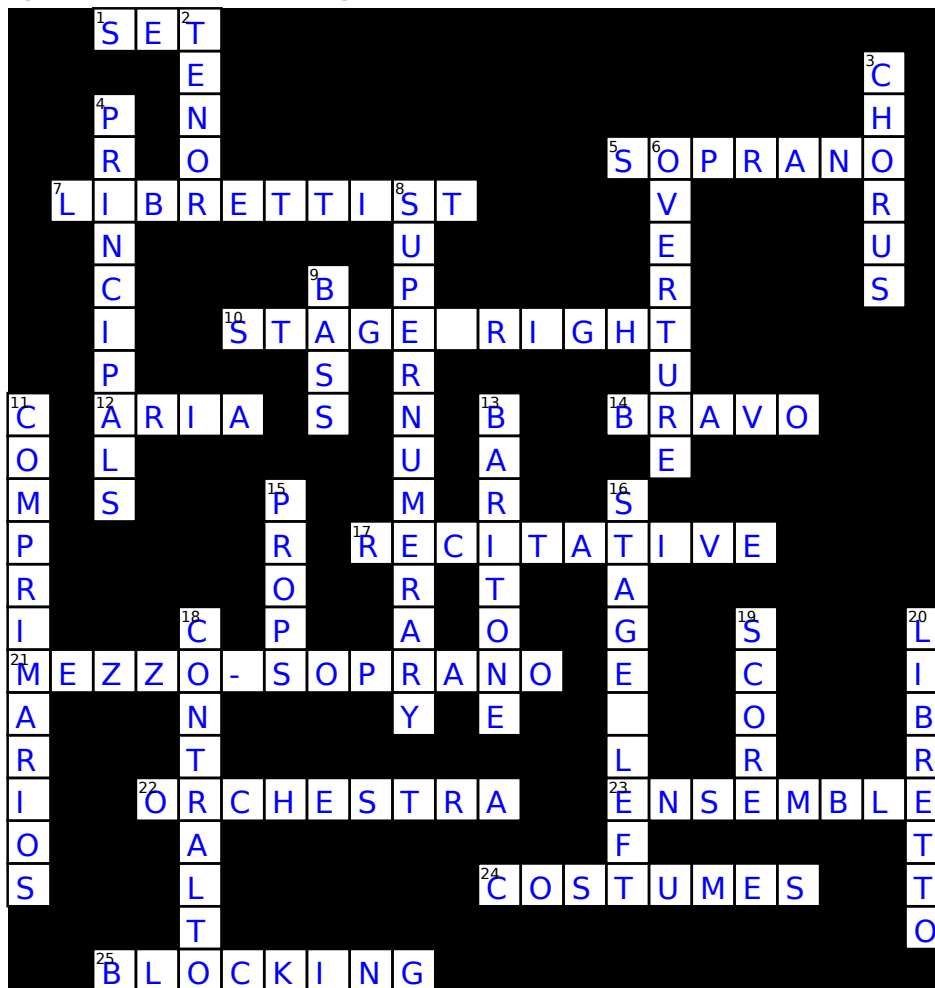
## Test Your Opera Knowledge!



- | Across   | Down  |
|--|---|
| 1 The place where the action will occur on stage.                | 2 The highest male voice.   |
| 5 The highest female voice; most often the heroine of the opera. | 3 A group of people singing together in parts or in unison.         |
| 7 The artist who arranges the text of a story to fit the         | 4 The primary roles of an opera; may be heroes/heroines.            |
| 10 The audience's left.  | 6 An orchestral piece that may be played at the very beginning      |
| 12 A vocal solo expressing personal emotion or reflection.       | 8 A performer who appears in a non-singing role                     |
| 14 An Italian word that people may shout after an exciting aria, | 9 The lowest male voice; often kings, priests, or villains.         |
| 17 A musical form that sounds like natural patterns of speech    | 11 The secondary roles of an opera.                                 |
| 21 The middle-range female voice; sometimes older women or       | 13 The middle-range male voice; often helpful companions,           |
| 22 A large group of musicians led by a conductor                 | 15 Items that may be carried onstage in an actor's hands or that    |
| 23 A piece that is sung by two or more characters at the same    | 16 The audience's right.  |
| 24 The outfits worn by each actor to reflect the time and place  | 18 The lowest female voice; often old women or witches.             |
| 25 The patterns of movement of the people onstage as the opera   | 19 A notated piece of music showing each voice or instrumental part |
|  | 20 The text of an opera.  |

# The Elements of Opera

## Test Your Opera Knowledge!



- | Across   | Down  |
|--|---|
| 1 The place where the action will occur on stage.                | 2 The highest male voice.   |
| 5 The highest female voice; most often the heroine of the opera. | 3 A group of people singing together in parts or in unison.         |
| 7 The artist who arranges the text of a story to fit the         | 4 The primary roles of an opera; may be heroes/heroines.            |
| 10 The audience's left.  | 6 An orchestral piece that may be played at the very beginning      |
| 12 A vocal solo expressing personal emotion or reflection.       | 8 A performer who appears in a non-singing role                     |
| 14 An Italian word that people may shout after an exciting aria, | 9 The lowest male voice; often kings, priests, or villains.         |
| 17 A musical form that sounds like natural patterns of speech    | 11 The secondary roles of an opera.                                 |
| 21 The middle-range female voice; sometimes older women or       | 13 The middle-range male voice; often helpful companions,           |
| 22 A large group of musicians led by a conductor                 | 15 Items that may be carried onstage in an actor's hands or that    |
| 23 A piece that is sung by two or more characters at the same    | 16 The audience's right.  |
| 24 The outfits worn by each actor to reflect the time and place  | 18 The lowest female voice; often old women or witches.             |
| 25 The patterns of movement of the people onstage as the opera   | 19 A notated piece of music showing each voice or instrumental part |
|  | 20 The text of an opera.  |

# Operatic Voices

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRAINED VOICE

Singing in Europe and America is now generally divided into two categories: classical and popular. What most people think of as operatic or classical singing developed in Europe hundreds of years ago. This style flourished during the seventeenth century as opera became a popular form of entertainment and operatic music increased in complexity. The most recognizable characteristics of a classically trained voice are:

- an extensive range (the ability to sing both high and low)
- varying degrees of volume (loud and soft)
- resonance in the chest and sinus cavities (produces a hooty, full or round sound)
- an ability to project or fill a large space without amplification

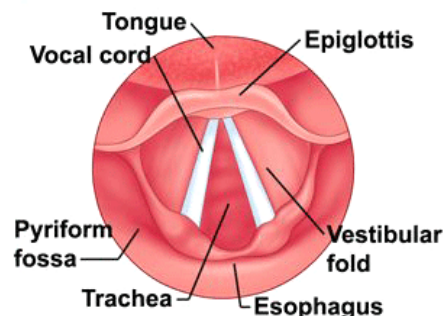
## TRAINING

Very few people are born with the capability to sing this way. Classical singers take voice lessons about once a week and practice every day for many years in order to develop a beautiful operatic sound. In fact, most trained voices are not mature enough to perform leading roles on a big stage until they're at least 28 years old. Compare that with the most popular singers on the radio today...Britney Spears was 15 when her first album was released!

## TWO TINY MUSCLES

Science tells us that all sound is made by two things vibrating together. The same concept applies when we talk or sing. The sounds we make are really just the vibration of two little muscles called the vocal chords. The vocal chords are held in the larynx, which is sometimes called the voicebox or (in boys) the Adam's Apple. These two little folds of tissue vary in length but are typically between 1 and 2 inches long. When you want to say something, your

brain tells your vocal chords to pull together until they're touching lightly. Then, air pushes through them, and the vocal chords begin to vibrate, opening and closing very quickly. This vibration creates



a sound. The pitches you sing are dependent on the speed at which the chords vibrate. A faster vibration creates a higher pitch. The length of the chords also affects the pitch of the voice. Longer chords equal a lower voice.

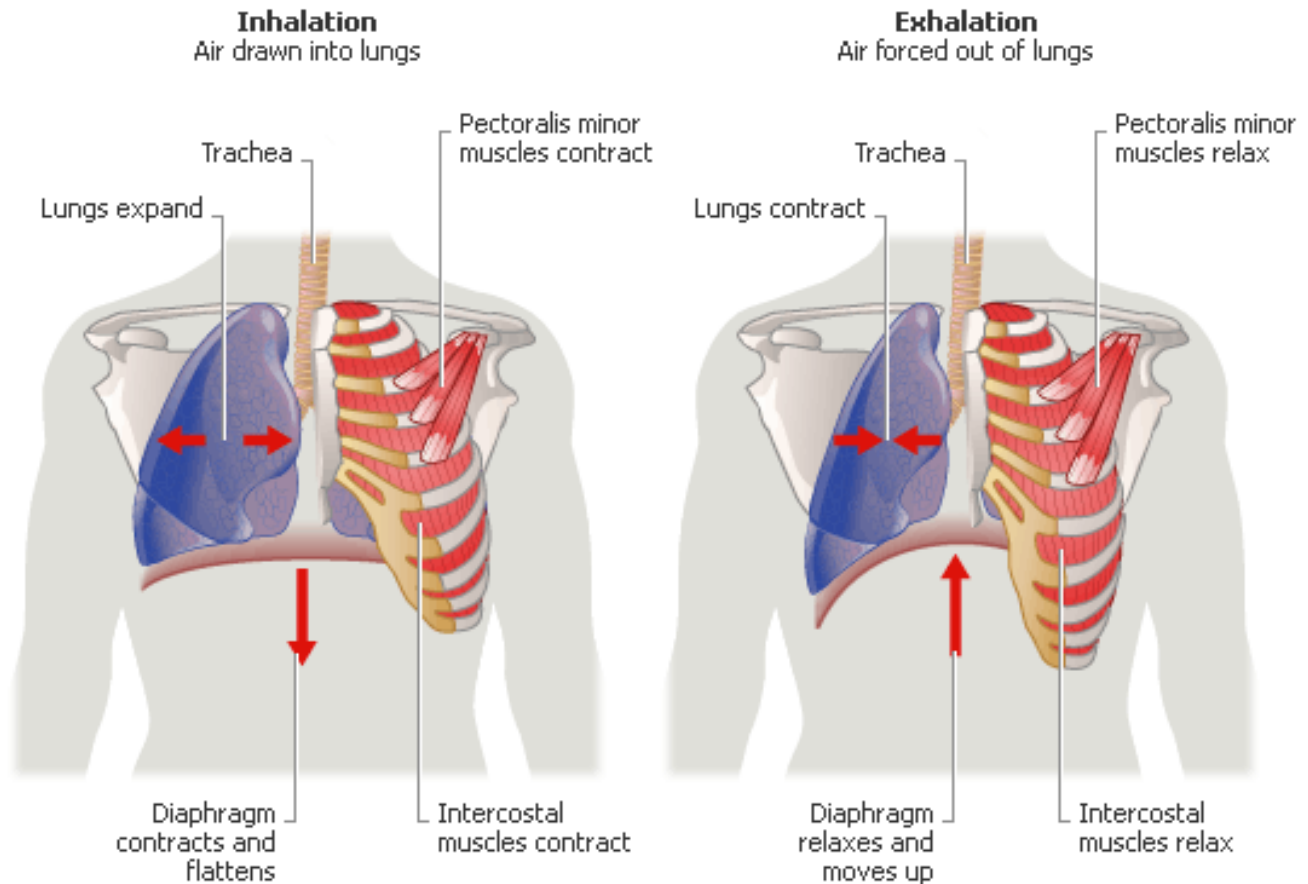
## THE REST OF THE BODY

The vocal chords are only a small component of a larger machine which creates a beautiful singing voice. That machine is the entire body, from the tip of the toes to the top of the head. In order to sing with ease, every muscle needs to be relaxed (but not lazy!). If even one muscle is tense, it can throw off the entire machine, which is immediately obvious in a singer's vocal quality.

## BREATHING/SUPPORT

In order to sing long phrases with a lot of volume and a good tone, singers must breathe in a specific manner, making use of the whole torso area (lungs, ribs, diaphragm and viscera). As they breathe in, each part of this network does its job: the lungs fill up, which forces the ribs to expand and the diaphragm (a flat muscle below the lungs) to move down. As the diaphragm descends, the viscera (stomach, intestines and other organs) are forced down and out. Singers describe this feeling as fatness

# Operatic Voices (cont.)

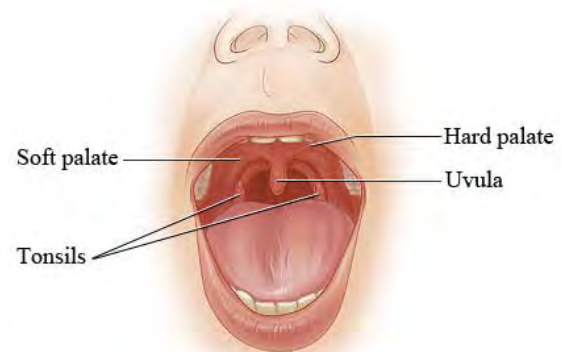


in the low stomach or filling an inner-tube around their waist. Expelling the air, or singing, is essentially a slow and controlled movement of those muscles. If all of the air escapes from the lungs quickly, the tone of the voice will sound breathy and will lack intensity. Successful opera singers must be able to isolate the diaphragm and ribs, controlling the rate at which they return to their original positions. This allows for a consistent stream of air that travels from the lungs, through the larynx and out of the mouth.

## RESONANCE

One of the most obvious characteristics of an operatic voice is a full, resonant tone. Singers achieve this by lifting their soft palate. This is a part of the mouth that most people don't ever think about and it can be difficult to isolate. Here are some simple

exercises to feel where it is and hear the resonance in your voice when you lift it: Start to yawn. Feel that lifting sensation in the back of your mouth? That is the soft palate going up. With a relaxed mouth, slide your tongue along the roof of your mouth, from your teeth back toward your throat. You should feel your tongue go up, then down



# Operatic Voices (cont.)

(that's your hard palate), then back up again. That soft, fleshy area at the very back is your soft palate. Say the word "who" like you would say it in normal conversation. Now, say "hoooo" like a hoot owl. Can you hear the difference?

Say the sentence "How do you do?" as if you were an old British woman. Lifting the soft palate is the foundation for the resonance in a singer's voice.

With a lot of practice, a singer can lift his or her palate as soon as they begin to sing, without even thinking about it.

## VIBRATO

Proper breathing and full resonance are essential for producing a clear vocal tone with an even vibrato (the Italian word meaning to vibrate). Vibrato can be described as a wiggle in the voice or, technically, a consistent variation in the pitch of a tone. While many pop singers try to remove this element of singing for the sake of style, vibrato in an opera singer's voice is a must. It increases the warmth and resonance of the tone and also allows for accurate tuning.

## REGISTERS OF THE VOICE

### Head voice

Without getting too technical, the head voice is the higher register, which is achieved by tapping into the resonance in the sinus cavities. It's called the head voice because you literally feel like your voice is coming out of your head rather than your throat or chest.

### Chest voice

This is where the natural speaking voice falls. If you put your hand on your chest and yell "Hey!" you can feel that this register resonates in the chest rather than the head. Broadway and pop singers use it almost exclusively, but female opera singers generally avoid it unless they are singing really low notes. Even then, it must have the same fullness as the head voice. Men sing mostly in this voice.

### Falsetto

This register applies to male voices only. Falsetto happens when the vocal chords do not vibrate fully, which creates a high, feminine sound. It is frequently used by male characters when they are imitating females.

## A COMPARISON: TRAINED VS. UNTRAINED

Since we've already covered the characteristics of a trained voice, it may be interesting to see how they differ from those of an untrained voice. (Remember, it's important to be able to compare the differences between two things without implying that one is superior to the other; an operatic voice is great for opera, but would sound silly in a pop song where an untrained voice is more appropriate.) Singers of pop music, rock and roll, R&B, folk and country are often referred to as commercial. While their styles vary considerably, the way they use their voices seems to be relatively consistent.

### Training

First of all, commercial singers don't historically train like classical singers do. Many of the most successful non-classical singers of today are known more for their unique style, natural talent and personality than for their technical mastery of the voice.

### Breathing / Support

Unlike classical singers, commercial singers usually breathe just as they would when they're speaking normally. A long phrase might warrant a big breath, but studying the placement and movement of one's internal organs is not usually done by pop singers.

### Resonance

Most commercial singers are not concerned with creating a resonant tone. In fact, a pop song sung with a lot of resonance would probably sound pretty silly to most people.

### Projection / Volume

Essentially all commercial singers depend upon mi-



# Operatic Voices (cont.)

crophones to be heard in a large performance space. This enables the singers to deliver their message in either a loud, dramatic style, or in an intimate, conversational style, with little physical effort. Opera singers, however, depend on the acoustics of the performance space and their ability to project their voices naturally to be heard. Microphones are rarely used in operatic performances.

## Voice Types

All classical singers fall into one of the categories listed below. A singer cannot choose his/her voice-type it is something they are born with. Composers usually assign a voice type to a character based on his/her personality or age. Read these descriptions for specific examples.

## FEMALE VOICES

### Soprano

This is the highest female voice and has a range similar to a violin. In opera, the soprano most often plays the young girl or the heroine (sometimes called the Prima Donna), since a high bright voice traditionally suggests femininity, virtue and innocence. The normal range of a soprano is two octaves up from middle C, sometimes with extra top notes. Most women are sopranos.

### Mezzo-Soprano

Also called a *mezzo*, this is the middle female voice and has a range similar to an oboe. A *mezzo's* sound is often darker and warmer than a soprano's. In opera, composers generally use a *mezzo* to portray older women, villainesses, seductive heroines, and sometimes even young boys (like Hansel). This is a special operatic convention called a trouser role or a pants role. The *mezzo's* normal range is from the A below middle C to the A two octaves above it.

### Contralto

This is the lowest female voice and has a range similar to a clarinet. Contraltos usually sing the roles

of older females or special character parts such as witches and old gypsies. The range is two octaves from F below middle C to the top line of the treble clef. A true contralto is very rare, some believe they don't exist at all!

## MALE VOICES

### Countertenor

This is the highest male voice, which was mainly used in very early opera and oratorio (a genre of classical vocal music similar to opera but generally based on a religious topic and accompanied by a choir). The voice of a countertenor sounds very much like a mezzo-soprano's voice and they often sing the same repertoire. Like the contralto, true countertenors are very rare.

### Tenor

This is usually the highest male voice in an opera. It is similar to a trumpet in range, tone, color, and acoustical ring. The tenor typically plays the hero or the love interest in an opera. His voice ranges from the C below middle C to the C above.

### Baritone

This is the middle male voice and is close to a French horn in range and tone color. In opera buffa (comedy opera), the baritone is often the ring-leader of the comedy, but in opera seria (serious or tragic opera), he is usually the villain. The range is from the G that is an octave and a half below middle C to G above.

### Bass

This is the lowest male voice and is similar to a trombone or bassoon in range and color.

Low voices usually suggest age and wisdom in serious opera. In comic opera they are generally used for old characters who are foolish or laughable. The range is roughly two octaves down from the F above middle C.

# Operatic Voices (cont.)

## VOICE TYPES BASED ON SIZE AND QUALITY

Voices are also categorized according to size and quality. There are small, medium, medium-large and large voices in opera. The quality of a voice can be defined using the following terms:

### Soubrette

A soprano of very light vocal weight, comparatively small range, and has the looks of a young girl. Soubrette roles are often flirtatious and witty, and outsmart the rich and powerful by the end of the opera. Many soubrette roles have names that end in -ina: Despina (Mozart's *Così fan tutte*), Adina (Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love*), and Zerlina (Mozart's *Don Giovanni*) are soubrettes.

### Character

Singers with an exceedingly unique and not always beautiful sound can make a fine living singing character roles. While they don't get the biggest paycheck, they do tend to get all the laughs. This classification is reserved for the lower voices (*mezzo*, tenor, baritone, and bass). Examples are the Witch (Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*) and the stuttering lawyer Don Curzio (Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*).

### Coloratura

Female singers described as coloraturas have great vocal agility, stunning high notes, and the ability to sing complicated vocal ornamentation. The Queen of the Night (Mozart's *The Magic Flute*) is a coloratura soprano. Rosina (Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*) was written for a coloratura *mezzo*.

### Lyric

The word lyric generally describes a singer who specializes in long phrases and a beautiful tone. They can be broken down further into light-lyric, full-lyric and just plain old lyric. These titles can precede the general voice type of soprano, tenor and so on. While there are no hard and fast rules, there are a few widely accepted distinctions, which are outlined below.

- A light-lyric soprano like Pamina (Mozart's *The Magic Flute*) should have a bigger voice than a

soubrette but still possess a youthful quality. A full-lyric soprano (Mimi in Puccini's *La Bohème*) has a more mature sound and can be heard over a bigger orchestra. Full-lyric sopranos are typically the highest paid of all the voice types.

- A light-lyric *mezzo* is the equivalent of the soubrette and generally plays young boys like Hansel (Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*). The long phrases mentioned above are traded for agility and charm. A lyric *mezzo* (no full distinction here) is usually an old woman or a temptress (Bizet's *Carmen* is the quintessential lyric *mezzo*).
- Most tenors fall into the lyric category and don't call themselves light or full. However, operatic roles for tenors are separated further. Tamino (Mozart's *The Magic Flute*) must be sung by a youthful tenor with a light voice, thus earning the distinction of a light-lyric tenor role. Puccini's Cavaradossi (*Tosca*) is decidedly heavier than Tamino but is still considered lyric by most people.
- There are light baritones, but they fall into the lyric pot with the rest of the bunch. Baritones are baritones, unless they're really loud.

### Dramatic

This describes the heaviest voices in any category except for bass. Dramatic singers are capable of sustained declamation and a great deal of power, even over the largest operatic orchestra of about 80 instruments. Puccini's *Turandot* is sung by a dramatic soprano. Most of Verdi's lead characters require a dramatic voice (e.g., *Otello*). It can be dangerous to stand too close to one of these singers.

### Helden

A German prefix meaning heroic, applied to a large voice capable of performing the most demanding roles, usually used in reference to roles written by Richard Wagner. Brünnhilde (the character most often associated with braids and a horned helmet) is a *helden-soprano* role.



# Operatic Voices (cont.)

## FAMOUS OPERA SINGERS

Listed with each singer is an example of one album in case you would like to build your library. Some of their websites are included too.

### Sopranos

*Renée Fleming*, American full-lyric. Formerly a jazz singer. Won a Grammy award for *The Beautiful Voice* Decca label. [www.renee-fleming.com](http://www.renee-fleming.com)

*Deborah Voigt*, American dramatic. Obsessions: Wagner and Strauss Arias and Scenes EMI Classics label. [www.deborahvoigt.com](http://www.deborahvoigt.com)

*Natalie Dessay*, French coloratura. Vocalises EMI Classics label. <http://www.emiclassics.com/artists/biogs/dessay.html>

*Maria Callas*, Greek opera singer, impossible to categorize. Sang both soprano and mezzo roles. *Maria Callas: The Voice of the Century* EMI Classics label. [www.callas.it](http://www.callas.it)

Other sopranos to consider: *Renata Scottò*, *Diana Soviero*, *Anna Netrebko*, *Mirella Freni*, *Birgit Nilsson*, *Angela Gheorghiu*, *Joan Sutherland*, *Kiri TeKanawa*.

### Mezzo-Sopranos

*Susan Graham*, American light-lyric. Il tenero momento: Mozart and Gluck Arias Erato label. [www.susangraham.com](http://www.susangraham.com)

*Olga Borodina* [bor o dée nuh], Russian dramatic. *Olga Borodina: Arias* Philips label. [www.deccaclassics.com/artists/borodina](http://www.deccaclassics.com/artists/borodina)

*Marilyn Horne*, American singer also difficult to categorize. *Rossini Heroes and Heroines* Decca label. [www.marilynhornefdn.org](http://www.marilynhornefdn.org)

*Dolora Zajick*, American dramatic mezzo. *The Art of the Dramatic Mezzo-Soprano* - Telarc label. [www.dolorazajick.com](http://www.dolorazajick.com)

Other mezzo-sopranos to consider: *Frederica von Stade*, *Denyce Graves*, *Lorraine Hunt Lieberson*, *Ewa Podles*, *Cecila Bartoli*

### Contraltos

*Marian Anderson*, American contralto. Made history in 1955 as the first African-American female to sing at the Met. Also sang on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in 1939 for an integrated audience of 75,000. *Marian Anderson* RCA Victor label. [www.mariananderson.org](http://www.mariananderson.org)

### Countertenors

*Andreas Scholl*, English. *Andreas Scholl: Heroes* Decca label. [www.andreasschollsociety.org](http://www.andreasschollsociety.org)

*David Daniels*, American. *Handel Operatic Arias* Veritas label. [www.danielssings.com](http://www.danielssings.com)

*Derek Lee Ragin*, American. *Handel Cantatas and Sonatas* Channel Classics label. [www.colbertartists.com/ArtistBio.asp?ID=9](http://www.colbertartists.com/ArtistBio.asp?ID=9)

Other counter-tenors to consider: *Brian Asawa*, *David Walker*, *Bejun Mehta*

### Tenors

*Luciano Pavarotti*, Italian. *The Pavarotti Edition: Vols 1-10* Decca label. [www.lucianopavarotti.com](http://www.lucianopavarotti.com)

*Franco Corelli*, Spanish. *The Very Best of Franco Corelli* EMI Classics label.

*Rolando Villazon*, Spanish. *Anna Netrebko & Rolando Villazón Duets* Deutsche Grammophone label. [www.rolandovillazon](http://www.rolandovillazon)

*Juan Diego Florez*, Argentinean. *Great Tenor Arias* Decca label. [www.deccaclassics.com/artists/florez/](http://www.deccaclassics.com/artists/florez/)

Other tenors to consider: *Fritz Wunderlich*, *Enrico Caruso*, *Plácido Domingo*, *Roberto Alagna*, *Mario del Monaco*, *Jose Carreras*

### Baritones

*Bryn Terfel* [tûr fuhl], Welsh bass-baritone. *Opera Arias* Deutsche Grammophone label. [www.deutschegrammophon.com/artistmicrosite/?ART\\_ID=TERBR](http://www.deutschegrammophon.com/artistmicrosite/?ART_ID=TERBR)

# Operatic Voices (cont.)

*Dmitri Hvorostovsky* [vor oh stáhv skee], Russian lyric. Verdi Arias Delos label.

[www.hvorostovsky.com](http://www.hvorostovsky.com) (fan site)

*Thomas Hampson*, American lyric. The Very Best of Thomas Hampson EMI Classics label.

[www.hampsong.com](http://www.hampsong.com)

Other baritones to consider: *Dietrich Fischer-*

*Dieskau*, *Rodney Gilfry*, *Thomas Quastoff*,

*Thomas Allen*, *Robert Merrill*, *Sherrill Milnes*

## Basses

*Samuel Ramey*, American. A Date with the Devil.

Naxos label. [www.samuelramey.com](http://www.samuelramey.com)

*Nicolai Ghiaurov*, Bulgarian. Great Scenes from Verdi

Operas Decca label. <http://www.deccaclassics.com/artists/ghiaurov/biog.html>

<http://www.deccaclassics.com/artists/ghiaurov/biog.html>

**James Morris**, American.

Opera Arias Capitol Records label.

<http://www.ffaire.com/wagner/morris.html>

Other basses to consider: *Kurt Moll*, *Robert Milne*,

*Rene Pape*, *Ezio Pinza*

## CREDITS: TEXT

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## CREDITS: IMAGES

<http://www.streetmusician.co.uk/Assets/Vocal%20chords%20diagram.gif>

[http://encarta.msn.com/media\\_461517091/Diaphragm\\_and\\_Respiration.html](http://encarta.msn.com/media_461517091/Diaphragm_and_Respiration.html)

[http://64.143.176.9/library/healthguidelen-us/images/medial/medical/hw/hwkb17\\_073\\_003.jpg](http://64.143.176.9/library/healthguidelen-us/images/medial/medical/hw/hwkb17_073_003.jpg)

[http://www.gifs.net/Animation11/Jobs\\_and\\_People/Musicians\\_and\\_Singers/Opera\\_lady.gif](http://www.gifs.net/Animation11/Jobs_and_People/Musicians_and_Singers/Opera_lady.gif)

# Working Together: Opera as Collaboration

There are four groups of people that are necessary for the successful production of an opera. Without any one of these groups, the opera can't exist. Here's who they are and what they do in the opera world. More in-depth definitions of these terms are included in Elements of Opera on p.17.

## GROUP 1: CREATORS

### Tasks Opera Lingo

Writing the words (also called the libretto) .....	Librettist
Writing the music (also called the score).....	Composer

## GROUP 2: PRODUCERS

### Tasks Opera Lingo

Designing scenery (also called the set) .....	Set Designer
Designing/making costumes.....	Costume Designer
Choosing the performers .....	Audition
Directing the show .....	Stage Director
Making the singers look like their characters .....	Wig and Make-up Artists
Creating lighting effects.....	Lighting Designer, Electricians
Building the set .....	Carpenters
Creating props.....	Props Master
Changing scenery / Arranging props.....	Stagehands
Making sure everything runs smoothly.....	Stage Manager

## GROUP 3: PERFORMERS

### Tasks Opera Lingo

Performing lead roles.....	Principals
Performing secondary roles.....	Comprimario
Singing in a big group to support the action.....	Chorus
Performing non-speaking roles in crowd scenes .....	Supernumeraries (Supers)
Preparing and playing the instrumental music.....	Conductor, Orchestra, Pianist
Practicing the singing and action.....	Rehearsal

## GROUP 4: OBSERVERS

### Tasks Opera Lingo

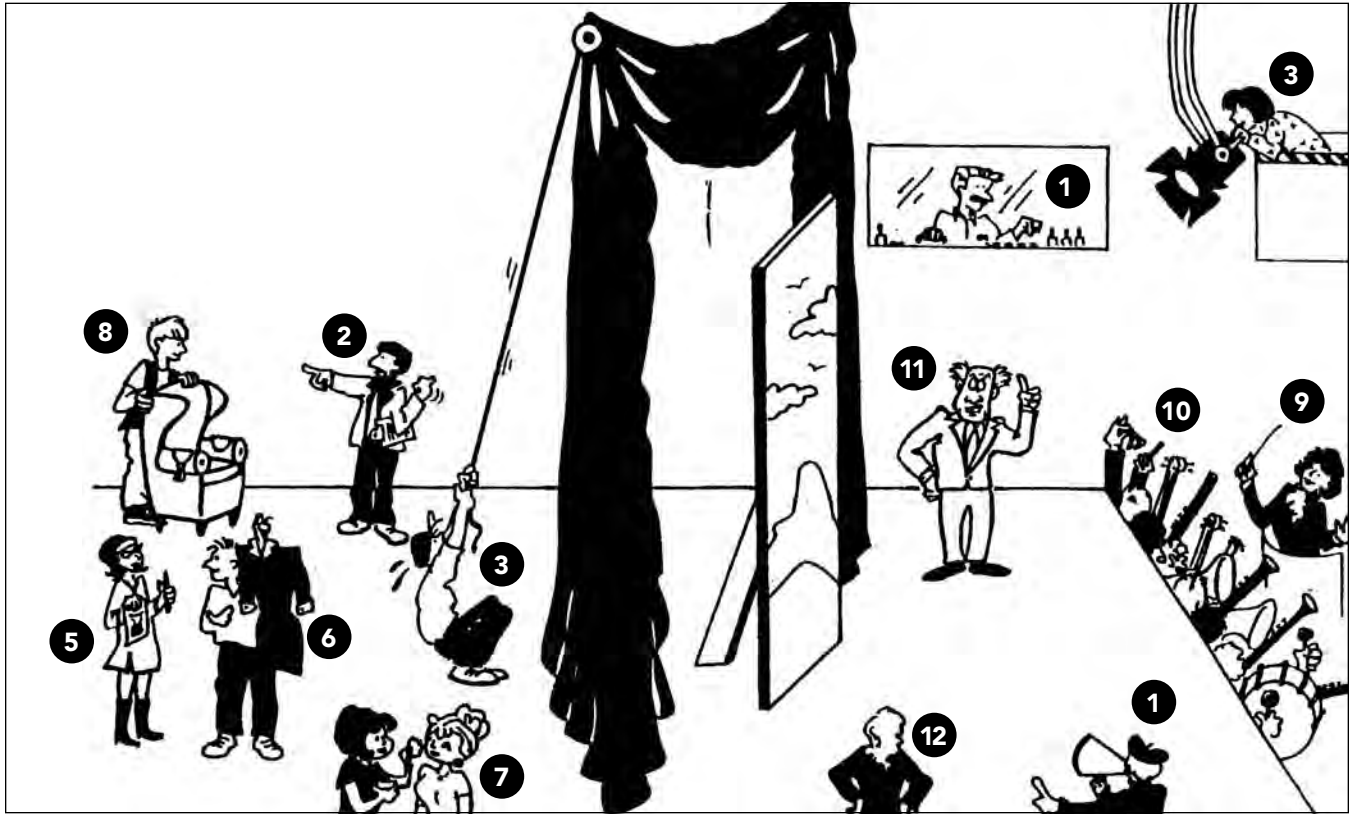
Listen, enjoy, appreciate, learn.....	Audience
Critique, review.....	Critic

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# How Do You Put On An Opera?

## DIRECTIONS

Many people work together to present an opera performance. Look at the illustration and definitions to see some of the different jobs on an opera set.



## WHO'S BACKSTAGE?

*Artistic Director:* the head of the opera; makes all the final decisions

*Stage Director:* handles the acting portion; helps the singers become actors; shows actors how to move and gesture **1**

*Music Director:* instructs singers on singing and musical style; leads music rehearsals

*Production Manager:* coordinates between the artistic and business aspects of production; insures that everything happens on time **12**

*Technical Director:* coordinates the lighting, set, costumes, and the crews that handle those things **4**

*Stage Manager:* assists singers and technical staff during rehearsals and performances **2**

*Set Designer:* plans or designs the sets and scenery; supervises set construction

*Lighting Designer:* plans or designs the color, intensity, and frequency of the light onstage **3**

*Costume Designer:* plans or designs the costumes and supervises their construction

# How Do You Put On An Opera? (cont.)

*Wardrobe Mistress:* assists with the costumes, how to take care of them, and how they are to be worn **6**

*Dresser:* helps performers dress in their costumes properly

*Wigs and Makeup Designer:* designs and oversees hairstyles, wigs, and makeup **7**

*Properties Manager:* designs and oversees all moveable objects that are not part of the set or costumes (props) **8**

*Choreographer:* invents dances and movements and teaches them to the dancers and/or cast members

*Crew or Stagehands:* assist in construction, installation, and changes of the set, costumes, lights, and props **13**

## WHO'S ON STAGE? 11

*Cast:* all singers and actors who appear onstage

*Actors:* performers who have dialogue but do not sing

*Principal:* a singer who performs a large role in the opera

*Comprimario:* a singer who specializes in the small character roles of the opera, from the Italian meaning “next to the first”

*Supernumeraries or Supers:* actors who participate in the actions but do not sing or speak

*Dancers:* performers who dance or move to present movement

*Chorus:* a group of singers who mostly sing together, sometimes containing actors and dancers who do not sing, but who are part of the group as a whole

## WHO'S IN THE PIT?

*Conductor:* interprets the composer's score and makes sure both the singer and the orchestra are together at all times **9**

*Orchestra:* the musicians who play the musical instruments **10**

# The Life Cycle of a Production

Each season, The Atlanta Opera presents four mainstage productions at the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre. The Atlanta Opera season runs similarly to an academic calendar, opening in the fall and closing in the spring. This 2009-2010 season, The Atlanta Opera will present *The Elixir of Love*, *Orfeo & Euridice*, *Aida*, and *The Magic Flute*.

The Atlanta Opera presents four **performances** of each of these **productions**. We also present special matinee performances just for students.

Each production is led by a director, and a conductor. The **director** is in charge of the staging for the production, and directs the acting of the singers. The **conductor** works closely with the singers and coach in rehearsals, and also prepares the **orchestra**. He or she conducts the orchestra in the pit and soloists and chorus on stage during performances. The **coach** and **chorus master** prepare and rehearse with the singers before they sing with the whole orchestra. The chorus begins rehearsing several months before the production. Most of The Atlanta Opera chorus members live in the Atlanta area and have other jobs in addition to performing with the Opera. The principal singers, director, and conductor, come from all over the world. They come to Atlanta about three weeks before the first performance to begin rehearsing. Most of the rehearsals are held in our rehearsal hall, and not the actual theatre.

The conductor begins orchestra rehearsals about a week and half before opening night. They have four rehearsals with the conductor, and then the singers are added into the mix. The size of the orchestra will vary with each production, depending on what the composer has written for. Many of the orchestra members live in the metro Atlanta area and have other jobs playing or teaching, or something non-music related at all. Some of the orchestra members travel to Atlanta from other parts of the country specifically to play in the orchestra for our productions.

The Atlanta Opera owns some sets, but many of the set we use are rented from other opera companies. Other opera companies also rent the sets that we own. Many of the costumes that you see on stage have also been rented from other opera companies. The Atlanta Opera Costume Shop alters the costumes to fit our singers. Sometimes they do have to make costumes if there aren't enough, or if there is nothing that fits, etc. Once the sets are in place, the cast begins rehearsing at the theatre. The Opera production staff works with staff at the theatre to get all of the lighting and technical aspects of the production together. The orchestra comes together with the singers in a special rehearsal called sitzprobe. There are no costumes during the sitzprobe, this is mainly to hear the voices with the orchestra. There is a piano dress rehearsal, when the singers rehearse in full costume for the first time so they can get used to wearing them. Finally, all of the pieces are put together for two full dress rehearsals leading up to opening night. The production is performed four times over a period of a week and half before everything is broken down, the singers and artistic staff move on to their next job, and the sets and costumes move on to the next city.



# Other jobs in the performing arts: An overview of The Atlanta Opera

It takes many people working together to create opera productions like these described. The Atlanta Opera is managed by one General Director who works with several different departments to run the company.

## **PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT**

### **Director of Artistic Administration**

The Director of Artistic Administration works very closely with the General Director. Together, they decide which operas the company will present, which sets and costumes they want to use, which singers should sing each role, etc. They watch operas all over the United States and sometimes in other countries, to hear singers and see the work of different opera companies. The Director of Artistic Administration and General Director also hold auditions for singers several times each year. The Director of Artistic Administration oversees all aspects of the production, including stage crew, musicians, conductor, director, etc.

### **Production Manager**

The Production Manager is in charge of all of the technical aspects of the production including lights, sound equipment, video, supertitles, etc. He works very closely with the staff at the theatre. In the off season, the Production Manager plans carefully for each production for the following seasons.

### **Company Manager**

The Company Manager takes care of travel and housing arrangements for all of the singers, seasonal production crew, etc. Many times the Company Manager works with the artist's agents to make arrangements, and is the main contact for the artists when they are in Atlanta. The Company Manager also organizes orchestra and chorus auditions and manages contracts for the orchestra and chorus.

### **Principal Coach and Accompanist**

The Principal Coach and Accompanist works with singers cast in principal roles and musicians in the orchestra to prepare them for rehearsals with the conductor and the ultimate performances. This person accompanies and coaches singers, and also performs with the orchestra. The Principal Coach and Accompanist accompanies singers during all rehearsals prior to the orchestra's arrival. The orchestra begins rehearsing about two weeks prior to the first performance.

There are many other people that work seasonally in production department to make performances happen: Costume Shop Staff, Chorus Master, Stage Managers, Props Masters, Stage Director and Assistant Director, etc.

## **DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

The Development Department staff works hard to raise money for the company. Revenue from ticket sales account for less than half of The Atlanta Opera expenses, the rest of the income for the company is donated by individual donors, corporations, foundations, and sources of public funding. The development department staff works together to fundraise for the company. They also plan special events to thank donors and cultivate relationships. Fundraising is done through one-on-one visits with individuals, hosting parties and special events, attending meetings with business people, and writing grants. The Development Department for The Atlanta Opera is led by a **Director of Development** who works with business and other community organizations to get funding. There are several people who manage gifts from individuals including the **Annual Fund Manager** and **Major Gifts Officers**. The **Foundation & Grants Manager** writes grants and proposals, and the all of the department works together to organize special events, parties and receptions.

# Other jobs in the performing arts: An overview of The Atlanta Opera (cont.)

## MARKETING DEPARTMENT

The Marketing Department is responsible for selling tickets and season subscriptions to the opera. The **Marketing Director** works closely with the **Marketing Manager** to identify creative ways to attract people to the opera and move ticket sales. The **Creative Services Manager** is a graphic designer and designs all the printed material for the company. This includes brochures, ads, posters, the ARIA program book, invitations, education guides, etc. These three individuals also manage the company's website, [www.atlantaopera.org](http://www.atlantaopera.org). The **Director of Communications** works closely with the media to communicate the message of The Atlanta Opera. She schedules and conducts interviews, photo shoots, television ads, and all things public relations. The **Box Office Staff** sells tickets for the Opera. They sell tickets over the phone, in person at the Box Office, and online.

## EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

The Education Department designs programs to teach kids and adults about opera. The Atlanta Opera has education programs for families and young children, in-school programs, field trips, programs in the community, as well as programs for training and professional development. The **Education Manager** works closely with the marketing and production departments to make sure people have the opportunity to learn about opera and the performing arts. The Education Manager writes education guides, designs and schedules programs, and works to develop new opera audiences.

## FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT

The **Director of Finance** manages all the finances for the company. This person works with the **Accounting Manager** to track all income and expenses. The **Data Operations Manager** also works in this department managing the company's huge database of ticket buyers and donors. Together, this team also manages the administrative operations of the company including human resources, facilities, etc.

# Suggested Follow-up Activities

# Uncovering the Plot

*Every story has a plot. The events that happen in a story must go in a particular order to make sense.*

## DIRECTIONS

Draw a picture for each of the plot scenes described below. Then cut out each square and arrange them in the proper order to tell the plot of *The Ugly Duckling*. You may wish to glue the squares onto another piece of paper to create your own comic strip.

<p>A Big Bad Wolf appears while the Ugly Duckling is hiding behind the bushes.</p>	<p>The Ugly Duckling appears as a beautiful swan.</p>
<p>The ducks capture the Wolf and tie him up.</p>	<p>The new ducklings arrive on the farm. They are all downy and cute, except for the last one.</p>



# Become an Opera Critic

You are the opera critic. Think about the performance you just saw of *The Ugly Duckling* and write your thoughts like you might see in the newspaper or an online review. Remember that a critic reports both the positive and negative features of a production. You might want to focus on one part of the opera that you particularly liked or disliked. Keep in mind that reviews express the opinions of the person who writes the review and different people will often have different ideas about the same performance! Below are some tips to get you started.

## FOUR TIPS FOR WRITING A REVIEW

1. **Create a catchy first sentence.** You want to get the readers' attention, so the opening, or "lead" sentence, is very important. This can be a difficult part of writing a review. Ask yourself: How can I sum up my opinion in one sentence? What would catch my attention if I were reading this review?
2. **Clearly state what performance you saw.** Tell who gave the performance, the name of the opera, where the performance took place, and the date of the performances. Ask yourself: What if people want to come see this performance? What details do the readers need?
3. **Tell why the performance was wonderful, all right, or bad.** Be sure to say WHY you feel the performance was good. It is easy to say what you think. It is more difficult to say why you think it. For most beginning reviewers, the "why step" is the most difficult. Ask yourself: What did I like/not like about the performance? How was the singing? Were the costumes nice? Was it too loud? Too soft? How did the instrumentalist(s) sound? Readers like to know the reasons for your opinions. Don't forget to tell them how you developed your opinions about the performance.
4. **Talk about individual performances.** Toward the end of the review, you may write about the details of singers' performances. Ask yourself: Did Lisa sing well? Did Frank play his character convincingly? Whose performance stood out?

## EXPANDING SENTENCES

A critic needs to write sentences that really describe how she feels about a performance. Practice writing descriptive, interesting sentences on this page. All English sentences have two basic parts: a **subject** and a **predicate**. The subject is the noun that is the "doer" in the sentence. The predicate is the verb that tells what the subject is doing. For example:

**Margo is playing.**

"Margo" is the doer of the sentence, so she is the subject. "Playing" is the predicate because it tells Margo (the subject) is doing. This sentence gives some information but it could give more details.

Ask yourself: Where is she playing? What is she playing? How is she playing? What other details can I give?

Then change the sentence to answer the questions:

**Even though it is raining heavily, Margo is skillfully playing soccer on the wet, muddy field.**

Adding details and descriptions gives the reader more information. It also creates a more interesting sentence.

# Become an Opera Critic (cont.)

**You try it!** Change the following sentences so that they give more information. Use details and descriptions to make them more interesting.

**The costume glittered.** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**She sang a song.** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**The boy danced on the stage.** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**The audience cheered.** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Share your critique with us! The Atlanta Opera wants to know what you thought of our performance. If you would like to share your review with us, please send it on!

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# The Science of Sound

## Your Sense of Sound: Energy and Equipment

Sound is important to human beings because it helps us to communicate with each other. Your sense of sound also helps you to enjoy music like opera. Musicians use sounds to communicate thoughts or feelings. But what is sound exactly? How do we hear it?

## THE ENERGY: HOW SOUND IS MADE

Sound is vibrating air. Sounds can vibrate in different patterns. These patterns are called sound waves. The different patterns change the sound we hear. Listen to traffic on a busy street. Noise like this is disorganized sound. Now listen to a piece of music. Music is sound and silence that is organized into patterns.

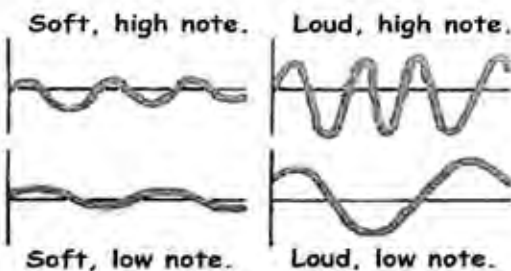
### Think about it!

How are the sounds of traffic and music different? How does each sound make you feel? Can traffic sound like music? Can music sound like traffic?

Sound waves can vibrate many times in one second. The number of times a sound wave vibrates in one second is called its frequency. The frequency tells how high or low the sound will be. This is called pitch. High-pitched notes vibrate at a fast rate, so they have a fast frequency. Low-pitched notes have a slow frequency. In opera, the highest pitches are usually sung by women. Very low pitches are sung by men.

Just as the speed of the sound wave determines the pitch, the shape of the wave determines how loud or soft the sound will be. This is called volume.

### This is what sound waves look like.



### Try this!

Stretch a rubber band between your thumb and forefinger on one hand. Pluck it a few times. Can you see and feel the vibrations? What happens if you pluck the rubber band harder? Softer? Change the shape of the rubber band by making it longer and thinner. What do you hear?

## The Equipment: How Sound is Heard

Now that we understand how sounds are created, you want to know how you hear those sounds, right? Your ear has an important job. It collects sounds, interprets sounds, and sends the sound signals to your brain. Human beings, like most mammals, have two ears to do all this work.

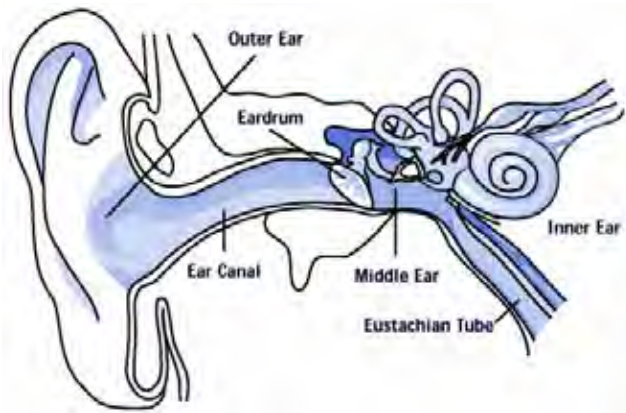
Your ear has three different sections:

- 1). Outer ear
- 2). Middle ear
- 3). Inner ear

Each of these sections has a different role to play in collecting and interpreting sound.



# The Science of Sound (cont.)



## The Outer Ear

This is the only part of your ear that you can see. Your outer ear has two jobs: to collect the sound and protect the rest of the ear. Invisible sound waves travel through the air and enter the outer ear through the canal. The canal is the opening in your ear. The outer ear also makes earwax.

Did you know? Earwax (they yellowish stuff that forms in your ears) is your friend! It protects the rest of the parts of your ear from getting dirt in them.

## The Middle Ear

After sound waves travel through the canal, they reach your middle ear. The middle ear turns the sound waves into vibrations before it sends them to the inner ear. Sound passes through your eardrum and three tiny bones called ossicles. Each ossicle has a name. They are the hammer, the anvil, and the stirrup. The eardrum is a thin piece of skin attached to the hammer. The hammer is attached to the anvil and the anvil is attached to the stirrup. When these three tiny bones vibrate, sound is passed on to the inner ear.

Did you know? The ossicles are the three smallest bones in your body. The stirrup is the tiniest of all!

## The Inner Ear

Once vibrations enter your inner ear, they travel to the cochlea. The cochlea is a small, curled tube. It is shaped like a snail's shell. It is filled with liquid and lined with millions of tiny hairs. Vibrations cause the liquid and the hairs to move. Then the hairs change the sound into nerve signals for your brain. The brain interprets the nerve signals and tells you what sound you are hearing.

## The Balancing Act

Your ears do more than just hear... they also help keep you standing upright! Three small loops are located directly above the cochlea. The loops are called the semi-circular canals. They help us maintain our balance. The semi-circular canals tell your brain the position of your head – is it looking up? Turned to the left? Your brain determines where your head is and then keeps the rest of your body in line.

Try this! Fill a cup halfway with water. Move the cup around a bit, then stop. Notice how the water keeps swishing around even after the cup is still. Sometimes this happens in your semi-circular canals when you spin around very fast. The fluid that continues to move around in your ear is what makes you feel dizzy!

<b>Title:</b>	The Science of Sound
<b>Grade Levels:</b>	2-5
<b>Georgia Performance Standard:</b>	S1CS1, S1CS4, S1PI, S2CS1, S2CS4, S3CS1, S3CS4, S4CS1, S4CS4, S4P, S5CS1, S5CS4