



P R E S E N T S

THE ATLANTA OPERA LA CENERENTOLA



Photo by Brett Croomer/Houston Grand Opera.

2019-2020
FIELD TRIP EDUCATOR GUIDE

WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE OPERA

Many people have preconceived ideas about the opera. Read the truth behind some of the most popular opera myths and see if they answer some of your questions about the opera as well.

MYTH #1: Opera is boring and stuffy.

Not true! Operas tell some of the most interesting, scandalous, and beautiful stories of all time. It's not unusual to find love triangles, murders, fatal illnesses, and messages from beyond the grave.

MYTH #2: Opera is sung in a foreign language so I won't understand the story.

We can help! It is true that many operas, like *La Cenerentola*, are sung in languages other than English. This Atlanta Opera production will be sung in Italian. Since most people in our audience do not speak Italian, we project English translations called "supertitles" on the screen above the stage. This way, you can follow along even if you do not understand the language. You also can read the synopsis of the opera before you arrive. Knowing the story will also help you follow along.

MYTH #3: I need to wear a tuxedo or a ball gown to the opera.

Some people like to dress up when they go to an opera performance, but there is no dress code to attend an opera. You will see people wearing everything from jeans to ball gowns. Dressing up can be a part of the fun of attending an opera performance but you should wear whatever makes you comfortable. The opera is a place for everyone.



Photo by Raftermen



If you like what you have seen and heard, let the performers know! It is okay to applaud at the end of songs, called arias, and at the end of a scene. If you really liked what you heard, call out "bravo" (to the men on stage), "brava" (to the women) and "bravi" (for all on stage). And of course, a standing ovation is always welcome!

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

LA CENERENTOLA

Composer: **Gioachino Rossini**
Librettist: **Jacopo Ferretti**

Premiere Date:
Jan 25, 1817, Teatro Valle, Rome

SYNOPSIS

ACT ONE

In a hall of Don Magnifico's castle, his vain and demanding daughters Clorinda and Tisbe are busy primping. Their stepsister, Angelina (known as Cenerentola), consoles herself with a song about a king who chose a kind-hearted bride rather than a rich one. A beggar (actually Prince Ramiro's tutor Alidoro) comes in; Angelina gives him some coffee and bread, angering the stepsisters. The prince's courtiers enter, announcing the imminent arrival of the prince himself — that evening at a palace ball, he will choose the most beautiful woman among the guests as his wife. The ensuing excitement generates great confusion. The knights leave and so does the "beggar," foretelling that Angelina will be happy the next day.

Quarreling for the privilege of telling their father the good news, Clorinda and Tisbe accidentally awaken him. Don Magnifico interprets a dream he was just having as a prediction of his fortune: the impoverished baron's vision of himself as grandfather of kings is apparently confirmed by his daughters' announcement.

Prince Ramiro, having decided to explore the situation incognito, has exchanged clothing with his servant, Dandini. Alidoro has advised him that kindness, truth and virtue can be found in this home. When the disguised prince enters the house, he and Angelina instantly fall in love. Dandini arrives, awkwardly playing the prince, and Clorinda and Tisbe are introduced to him. Angelina begs her stepfather to take her to the ball, but Magnifico orders her to stay at home. Alidoro, with a list of the unmarried women in the city, asks Don Magnifico about a third daughter, but Magnifico quickly covers his tracks, stating that she is dead. After everyone has left, Alidoro returns in finer apparel and invites Angelina to the ball, alluding to a change in her fortunes. He supplies an elegant dress and jewelry so that she may be appropriately attired.

At the palace Dandini, still disguised as the prince, appoints Magnifico his wine steward if he can successfully taste all the wines in the cellar and still remain sober. Magnifico rises to the challenge and proclaims new drinking laws: wine shall no longer be mixed with water. Clorinda and Tisbe each vie for the prince's attention — Clorinda is the eldest, therefore, more suitable for marriage, but Tisbe counters that she, as the younger one, shall not age as quickly. Ramiro confers with Dandini — Alidoro said that a daughter of Magnifico would be the one, yet both girls are equally repellent. Dandini further tests them — he shall select one sister to be his queen, the other shall marry his valet (that is, Ramiro). Both Clorinda and Tisbe are disgusted by the mere suggestion of marrying beneath their station, should they not win the prince, and rebuke the offer. All are enchanted by the sudden arrival of a mysterious lady. When she unveils herself, they are struck by her uncanny resemblance to someone very familiar.



Photos by Brett Croomer/Houston Grand Opera.

LA CENERENTOLA

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE *(continued)*

ACT TWO

From a discreet distance the courtiers laugh at the sisters' distress. Magnifico imagines himself in the privileged position as the prince's father-in-law, making money in exchange for granting favors. Angelina enters, with Dandini in an amorous pursuit. Hiding nearby Ramiro overhears her refusal of the poseur's attentions because she loves his valet. Overjoyed, Ramiro asks her to be his, but departing, she gives him one of her bracelets, stating that if he can find her wearing its twin, she will marry him. Ramiro reassumes his princely role, and gathering his courtiers, determines to look for Angelina at once. Dandini encourages Magnifico's fantasies, and then reveals his real identity, much to the baron's ire. He blusters out of the room.

Returning home, the sisters find Angelina by the fire and berate her incessantly for looking like the beautiful lady at the ball. Alidoro arranges an accident for the prince's carriage, which overturns in front of the house during rather serendipitously inclement weather. Angelina and Ramiro recognize one another, and he matches the bracelet to its mate, proclaiming her as his bride. Angelina goes to embrace her awestruck family but is rebuked. Angered, Ramiro whisks Angelina away, while Alidoro convinces the sisters to ask forgiveness to avoid ruin. Tisbe is the first to see reason.

At the wedding banquet, Angelina intercedes with the prince for Magnifico and her stepsisters, offering as her "vendetta" their pardon. She revels in her newly found happiness.

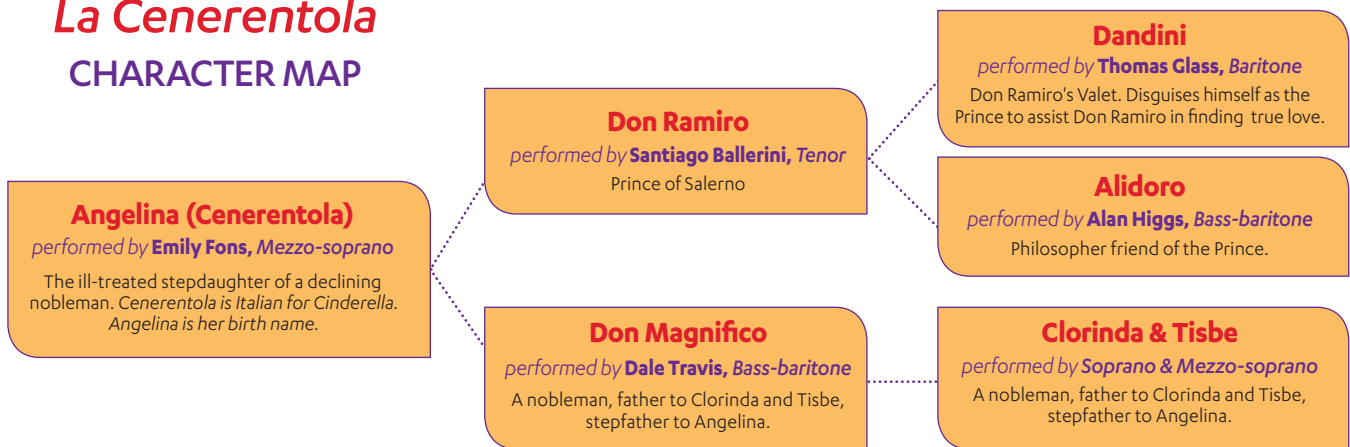
Courtesy of Minnesota Opera



Photos by Brett Croomer/Houston Grand Opera.

La Cenerentola

CHARACTER MAP



ABOUT THE COMPOSER GIOACHINO ROSSINI

(FEBRUARY 29, 1792 – NOVEMBER 13, 1868)

EARLY YEARS

The composer of *La Cenerentola* was born in Pesaro, Italy, on February 29, 1792 (a leap year). For a time, his parents earned a living traveling from one small opera house to another—his mother as a singer and his father as a horn player in the orchestra. Gioachino was occasionally left behind with his grandmother and his aunt in Pesaro. He had only a little education in reading, writing, grammar and arithmetic. Much of the time he ran wild.

When Gioachino was 12, his parents ended their travels and settled in Bologna. As a boy he studied music with a talented priest. He also began to play the violin and viola and to compose sonatas and other pieces. Because of his beautiful singing voice, he was often invited to sing in churches in Bologna, and he was soon able to earn extra money playing harpsichord for opera companies in and around Bologna.

At 14, he began more formal music studies at the Conservatory. At the end of his first year, he was chosen to write a cantata that was performed in public. Unfortunately, he had to leave the Conservatory after four years in order to earn money for his family. All his life he was to regret the fact that he did not receive more musical training.

SUCCESS

Rossini's first paid composition was a one-act comic opera for a theatre in Venice. *La cambiale di matrimonio* (*The Marriage Contract*), written in less than a week, earned him one hundred dollars—an enormous sum for the 19-year-old Gioachino! The opera was a success, and he kept writing. His first major success came in 1812 with *The Touchtone*, which used musical pieces from his earlier opera. This comic opera was performed over 50 times in its first season alone. As a result of its success, he was paid to write three more operas for Venice. Speed was one of Rossini's most notable characteristics as a composer; he had written five operas in that one year! Rossini's first serious opera, *Tancredi* (its overture borrowed from *The Touchtone*) opened in Venice in 1813, and became popular throughout Italy, Europe, and North and South America. With his comic opera *L'italiana in Algeri*, (*The Italian Girl in Algiers*), the 21-year-old Rossini became the hit of Venice. *Imperatore Aureliano a Palmyra* (*Emperor Aurelian in Palmyra*), and *Il turco in Italia* (*The Turk in Italy*) followed.

Rossini gave his name to many recipes, including a very famous dish called *Tournedos Rossini*. Great chefs dedicated dishes to him, such as Poached Eggs alia Rossini, Chicken alia Rossini, and Filet of Sole alia Rossini. A dessert dedicated to *Guillaume Tell* (*William Tell*) was a tart served on the opera's 1829 Paris opening night. Of course, it was an apple tart decorated with an apple pierced by a sugar arrow alongside a sugar crossbow. Active in social and cultural affairs, Rossini remained in his later years as a Viennese newspaper had earlier described him as highly accomplished, of agreeable manner and pleasant appearance, full of wit and fun, cheerful, obliges, courteous, and most accessible. He is much in society, and charms everyone by his simple unassuming style.

A GREAT LOSS

After a final illness, Rossini died in his summer home in Passy, outside Paris, in 1868. He was buried in Paris at a magnificent funeral attended by many admirers and dignitaries. Later, at the request of the Italian government, his body was moved to the Church of Santa Croce in Florence. After providing for his wife, he left most of his wealth to start a conservatory of music at Pesaro, his birthplace in Italy.



Rossini gave his name to many recipes, including a very famous dish called **Tournedos Rossini**.



ABOUT THE LIBRETTIST JACOPO FERRETTI

(JULY 16, 1784 – MARCH 7, 1852)

Jacopo Ferretti was an Italian librettist and poet. A classical education and knowledge of modern languages contributed to his facility for improvising verses, and this won him a reputation at the Arcadian Academy. In the same year he began his work in opera, producing anonymous libretti and revisions of libretti for the Teatro Valle. His first signed libretto was *Baldovino* (Zingarelli, 1811) an early product of his long association with the Teatro Argentina. Ferretti wrote over 50 opera libretti and 11 sacred dramas. He collaborated perceptively and intelligently with many of the leading composers of his time including Donizetti, Graziolo, P.C. Guglielmi, Mercadante, Pacini, the brother Ricci, and Zingarelli. His most successful and enduring work was *La Cenerentola* (Rome, 1817).

Expert in the patterns of opera buffa tradition, Ferretti put them across ironically, without sentimentality, and endowed them with lively social comment translated into a colorful theatrical realism. The language was enlivened by a natural freshness of imagery and the concrete and rhythmic use of the word in term of pure sound. It was thus eminently suitable for Rossini's rhythmic élan or Donizetti's alternation of the comic and the sentimental. Ferretti sometimes introduced verses of higher literacy pretensions into his work, echoing popular poems by Felice Romani or passages from Manzoni and Pindemonte. His lecture *Sulla storia della poesia melodrammatica romana* (1834) was edited by Alberto Cametti (Pesaro 1896) .

Source: *The New Grove Dictionary of Music & Musicians*



La Cenerentola
premiered on
January 25, 1817,
at the **Teatro Valle**
in **Rome**



Photo by Brett Croomer/Houston Grand Opera.

TIMELINE

THE WORLD IN ROSSINI'S TIME

History is much more than just a class we have to take in school. Everyone has a personal history that is affected by the time in which he or she lives. For example, great changes were occurring in the world during Rossini's time. Look over the timeline. How might these changes have affected the people of Rossini's time? The questions will help guide you.



ACTIVITY

Make Your Own Timeline!

Draw a vertical line on a piece of paper. Write your birth year at the top and the current year at the bottom. Then, write or draw five important world events that have happened during your lifetime.

Answer these questions:

- How have the world events during your lifetime affected the way you live?
- How have the events affected the lives of others?
- How do world events affect your life differently than they affected the lives of your parents? Your grandparents? Rossini?

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION: A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

THE TIMELESSNESS OF LA CENERENTOLA

The basis for *La Cenerentola* is a tale by Charles Perrault in 1697. This tale has become a classic and tells a universal story - that of a girl who is mistreated by her own family and, thanks to a fairy's magic, can see her dream come true: being the love object of a prince who will take her out of her poverty and servitude and crown her as princess and queen.

We have wanted to take a new look at the tale's dramatic narration and to accentuate the concept of timelessness. This isn't something that happened purely in the past: it is still valid today and is not the legacy of a single culture but of all humanity. We all dream of escaping poverty and misery, of living full and happy lives, and it is better if love brings about or acts as a catalyst for this change. But this love arrives from the outside as if by magic, and it's from another social class: the highest.

That's why the story is set in an empty, clean space, and it's here where the transformations are experienced. In our interpretation everything is a dream, the space is constantly changing, and the transformation of each situation in the story is through light. Moreover, there is no specific architecture (not in a defined or temporal sense), but rather, there's room for everything. Our aim has been to preserve the basic concept of the original tale as well as respecting the opera version, where Rossini's music adds a real dimension to the feelings, sensations and emotions of the work.

This composer takes us along different paths: the comic path with characters and situations distorted from the "real" characters; the romantic path when there are love scenes between the couple, because this is a proper love with passion and desire, and it's eager to be revealed; and the clash of the characters' contradictory feelings and the conflictive narrative between the plot and the characters, creating different musical moments of great beauty and complexity. The characters are created under the gaze of a Mediterranean light with pure, highly exaggerated colors, a deformation that accentuates the personalities of each of the singers-actors and how they evolve within the tale.

A constant metamorphosis occurs in this apparently simple and empty space and one that follows the plot since, in our interpretation, it's all a story imagined by the main character in order to escape from her dramatic situation. We enter a world of dreams-reality-fiction imagination, combined in such a way that we're not sure where or when we are actually living. Spatial concepts appear within this empty world to bring the scenes to life, from the home of Don Magnifico to the palace, the gardens and the cellar, with the appearance of symbolic elements, essential for giving meaning to the dramatic evolution of the opera: the coaches, the tables laid with food, the throne, the costumes. And so, each of the settings, situations and actions of this voyage gradually transmute, going from the particular true reality of the beginning to another new reality, of which we have always dreamed, and which might be as real as the authentic reality.

Rossini is a great artist and a versatile composer with a playful sense of art, of creation as well as of the meaning of life. I am particularly interested in the concept of game in both his music, with a vibrant beauty and complexity; and his stories, which are tremendously contemporary and valid these days. Rossini never loses this ironic and absurd sense in his perspective; he places a mirror in front of the audience so that they can see their own reality in a distorted yet augmented way. He plays with our passions, doubts, hopes, feelings and we see ourselves reflected on stage in our own misery and aspirations; a reflection of the human behavior. Rossini is a modern artist who exudes aroma, colors, flavors, and Mediterranean sounds. I feel very much identified in this aspect of *homo ludens*, so well represented in his *opere buffe* that are splendid comedies that transport us to other worlds, other stadiums, sometimes through a fairy tale, sometimes an exotic journey, sometime an epic legend or a theater play.

Our staging aims to show the indefinite nature of a reality that clashes with fantasy and that perhaps, when all is said and done, was only a dream like life itself...because dreams are but dreams.

-Joan Font, production director, *La Cenerentola*



Joan Font



Photo by Brett Croomer/Houston Grand Opera.

ABOUT THE MUSIC:

The Style of **BEL CANTO**

La Cenerentola is a prime example of the early 19th century operatic style known as "bel canto", which in Italian means beautiful song or singing. Its most famous composers, together with Rossini, include Gaetano Donizetti and Vincenzo Bellini.

Bel Canto is Characterized by:

- a pure, clear vocal sound with an emphasis on smooth and even delivery
- precise control of the singer's voice in terms of pitch, dynamics, enunciation, and transition from each note to the next
- vocal agility displayed in runs, trills, cadenzas, and other ornaments (collectively known as coloratura)
- a straightforward, simple orchestration that directs the focus on the vocal line

The bel canto style is rooted in the tradition of Italian opera to showcase the human voice. Singers were expected to embellish their music and improvise ornamentation beyond what was set down in the score.

By the time Rossini wrote *La Cenerentola*, more of these vocal feats would be notated by the composer than had been the case in earlier decades. But singers would still add their own flourishes and personal touches.

What makes these passages especially notable is the composer's dual purpose, transcending the conventions of the form. Rossini creates breathtaking sounds, but they always carry specific information about characters' moods and relationships.

Bel canto
is Italian for
"beautiful singing"
and originated in the
late 16th century.



Photo by Brett Croomer/Houston Grand Opera.

FAIRY TALES

FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Western audiences are most familiar with the version of *Cinderella* written by French author Charles Perrault, who is largely responsible for developing the fairy tale genre. Perrault's stories were based on folk tales, most of which were passed down orally from generation to generation. In 1697, he published *Cinderella, or The Little Glass Slipper*. The Brothers Grimm wrote their own version in 1812 and were followed themselves by the animated Disney film in 1950.

The Cinderella fairy tale is not unique to Europe or the Western world. While scholars disagree about the exact number, it is believed that there are over 800 variations of *Cinderella* from around the globe. While each one differs in setting or plot details, the basic outline is the same: a young person (most often a girl, sometimes a boy) is mistreated. They suffer at the hands of a family member whose own lifestyle is one of leisure or idleness, and who may lavish gifts and attention on other members of the family.

Despite the cruelty, the heroine or hero remains kindhearted and modest, often in the hope that they will one day receive love and affection. A valuable prize is put before the family and the wicked one's scheme to win it. In the end, Cinderella, with the help of animal or human friends, triumphs and receives the prize. In most versions, the prize is the love of a handsome prince and a life of luxury. The widest variation between the Cinderella tales is the ending: in some versions, Cinderella forgives the cruelty of family members, while in other versions, the family is severely punished.

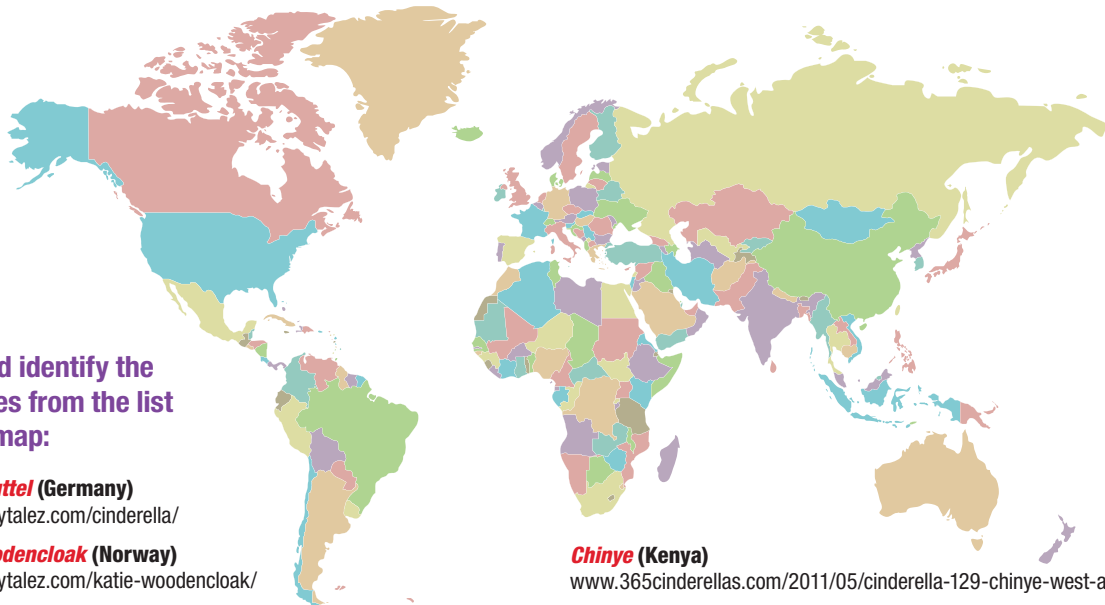
How can one fairy tale appear in so many different cultures? Fairy tales are one category within the larger genre of folklore, which includes myths, legends, music traditions, oral history, proverbs, and traditional beliefs specific to a culture. A culture's folklore comes from the experiences of the people within that culture.

Cinderella is largely a tale about feeling powerless and unloved, and the fear of being mistreated or undervalued. These feelings are not unique to any one culture but are universal experiences. So, too, is the desire for revenge on those we feel have wronged us. Cinderella's rise from lowly servant to Princess is a type of revenge and is her reward for being a good person.



Illustration by Anne Anderson (1874-1930)

Below is a short list of Cinderella fairy tales from around the world



Find and identify the countries from the list on the map:

Aschenputtel (Germany)
<https://fairytales.com/cinderella/>

Katie Woodencloak (Norway)
<https://fairytales.com/katie-woodencloak/>

Bulgarian Version of Cinderella (Bulgaria)
<https://fairytales.com/cinderella-bulgarian-version/>

Ashey Pelt (Ireland)
<https://fairytales.com/ashey-pelt-irish-version-cinderella/>

Rashin-Coatie (Scotland) <https://fairytales.com/rashin-coatie/>

Cenerentola (Italy) <https://fairytales.com/cinderella/>

Chinye (Kenya)
www.365cinderellas.com/2011/05/cinderella-129-chinye-west-african.html

The Hearth Cat (Portugal) <https://fairytales.com/the-hearth-cat/>

Fair, Brown, and Trembling (Ireland, from the Celtic tradition)
<https://fairytales.com/fair-brown-and-trembling/>

Cinderella, or The Little Glass Slipper (France)
<https://fairytales.com/cinderella-little-glass-slipper-2/>

The Magic Orange Tree (Haiti) <http://spiritoftrees.org/the-magic-orange-tree>

OPERA 101

Opera is a dramatic story told through song.

Considered by many to be the most complete art form, it combines all of the elements of art, words, music, drama and dance. The earliest Italian operas were called by several names, such as “favola in musica” (fable in music) and “drama 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 about 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 makes 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*.



Photo by Tim Wilkerson

A BRIEF HISTORY

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. In the 1100s the early Christian church set religious stories to music, a style known as liturgical drama. The first true opera, *Daphne* (1597), was composed by Jacopo Peri. It told the story of a Greek myth. The first great composer of opera was Claudio Monteverdi. Some of his operas are still performed today. German composer Christoph Gluck’s most famous opera, *Orfeo ed Euridice* (1762), marked a shift in importance from the performers to the drama. It also reduced the amount of recitative and laid the foundations for the progression of the art form. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was another prolific composer during this time and many of his operas like *Le Nozze di Figaro* (*The Marriage of Figaro* - 1786) and *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute* - 1791) are still frequently performed around the world.

OPERA 101



OPERA 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 that a balance was achieved between the role of the orchestra and that of the singer. These two forces were combined 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. For example, the Paris opera audience 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. 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.

DIFFERENT OPERA STYLES

Opera Seria – serious opera. These stories are often tragic, and typically involve heroes and kings or ancient myths and gods. *Julius Caesar* (1724) by George Frederic Handel is a classic example of opera seria.

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. *The Italian Girl in Algiers* (1813) by Rossini is an amusing example of opera buffa.

Singspiel, or “Sing Play,” 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* (1791) is an example of this style.

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. *The Barber of Seville* (1816) by Gioachino Rossini is a popular example of bel canto.

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 can often last for several hours. Charles Gounod's *Faust* (1869 version) is an example of grand opera.

Music Drama – is 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. *Die Walküre (The Valkyries)* (1870) and other operas by Richard Wagner defined this style.



Photo by Jeff Roffman

OPERA IN ATLANTA

HISTORY OF OPERA IN ATLANTA

Opera has been an integral part of Atlanta's cultural fabric since October 1866 when the Ghioni and Sussini Grand Italian Opera Company presented three operas in the city. The performances were well received and soon after, small touring companies began to bring more full-length operas to Atlanta.

Atlantans became avid fans of opera and in 1910 The Metropolitan Opera of New York toured Atlanta for the first time. Once a year, for a full week during spring, people flocked to the city to see the Met's wonderful performances and enjoy the many parties that were hosted throughout the city.

The opera was the place to be seen, with people crowding the lobbies and balconies of the various performance venues. The Met tour returned to Atlanta every spring until 1986, with the exception of 1931-1939 due to financial complications of the Great Depression.



Leontyne Price was one of the first African American featured singers with The Metropolitan Opera Company. This photo appeared in the program for the 1964 tour of *Don Giovanni*, in which she sang the role of Donna Anna. (photo: The Metropolitan Opera Company, *Carmen*, 1964 touring season program book / The Atlanta Opera archives)



The Metropolitan Opera Company's 1968 production of *Tosca* with Gabriella Tucci as Tosca, singing "Vissi d'arte." (photo: The Metropolitan Opera Company, *Tosca*, 1968 touring season program book / The Atlanta Opera archives)

With the success and popularity of the Met's annual tour came a desire for Atlanta to have its own opera company. Soon, several smaller, local opera companies began to operate in the area. In 1980, The Atlanta Civic Opera Association was created through the merging of two smaller companies, The Atlanta Lyric Opera and the Georgia Opera. In 1987 the company changed its name to The Atlanta Opera, Inc. Since its early beginnings, the company has grown and changed tremendously.

The Atlanta Opera was the first resident company in the new Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre in the fall of 2007. The Atlanta Opera season runs similarly to an academic calendar, opening in the fall and closing in the spring. It presents mainstage productions at the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre, with a minimum of four performances each. The Discoveries series offers two additional productions at smaller venues, often of special productions or contemporary works best staged in smaller, more intimate settings.

IMPORTANT JOBS

WHO KEEPS THE OPERA RUNNING?

In addition to the singers and musicians you see on stage and in the orchestra pit, there are many other folks who help bring the show to life!

MUSIC DIRECTOR/CONDUCTOR is responsible for the musical excellence of an opera. They ensure the singers understand the music, sing in the appropriate style, and work with the orchestra to make sure everyone is playing correctly together.

STAGE DIRECTOR is responsible for the action on the stage. They work with the designers to create the concept for the production. He or she helps the singers understand why their characters would act in certain ways, and how the characters communicate with each other.

CHOREOGRAPHER creates movement or dancing for operas. They study dance, movement and do research on different historical periods.

PRODUCTION MANAGER helps make the director's and designers' vision a reality by working with the shops that build the scenery and costumes.

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR makes sure that the lighting, scenery, costumes and props are coordinated and that the crews who handle those elements know what needs to be done during the performance.

STAGE MANAGER manages the rehearsal schedule and takes detailed notes about the stage directions, lighting cues and scenery changes. During the performance, they are backstage calling all the technical cues and making sure the show runs smoothly.

SET DESIGNER creates the concept for the physical environment of the opera and works with the director to create the scenery that helps tell the story. They research history, color, space, architecture, and furniture.

LIGHTING DESIGNER helps create the mood of each scene with light, shadow, and color. They also study the music and work with the set designer and the director to decide how light will be used to help tell the story.

COSTUME DESIGNER creates the look of the characters with clothing. They choose the fabrics and supervise the construction of the costumes, or selection of pre-made costumes.



Photo by Jeff Roffman

The Stage Manager calls cues by watching monitors of a performance of *Turandot* in 2017.

WIG & MAKE-UP DESIGNER creates the hair and make-up styling for the show in tandem with the costumes and the production design. They are also responsible for any special effects make-up like scars, wounds or blood.

WARDROBE MANAGER makes sure all the costumes are clean and pressed and coordinates all the costume changes. Dressers help the singers put on their complicated costumes and change their costumes during the performance.

PROPERTIES (PROPS) MASTER is responsible for all the objects that the singers touch or move that are not part of their costumes. They do a lot of research to find the perfect period newspaper, set of glasses, bouquet of flowers, or book. They make artificial things look real on stage, like food or drink.

CREW & STAGEHANDS includes carpenters and electricians. They assist with the installation of the set on stage once it has been built. During the performance they are responsible for set and lighting changes

GLOSSARY

BASIC OPERA TERMS & VOCABULARY

ACT / SCENE

Acts and scenes are ways of categorizing sections of operas. An act is a large-scale division of an opera, and each opera will typically include from two to five acts. Acts can be subdivided into scenes, which are often differentiated by a change in setting or characters.

ADAGIO

Literally “at ease,” adagio is a tempo marking that indicates a slow speed. An adagio tempo marking indicates that the performer should play in a slow and leisurely style.

ALLEGRO

Italian for “cheerful” or “joyful,” Allegro is the most common tempo marking in Western music, indicating a moderately fast to quick speed.

ARIA

A song for solo voice accompanied by orchestra.

BRAVO

Italian for “nicely done”; shouted by audience members after a performance

CADENZA

An ornamented musical elaboration played in a free style by a soloist to display his or her virtuosity.

CHORUS

A section of an opera in which a large group of singers performs together, typically with orchestral accompaniment.

CRESCENDO

A gradual raising of volume in music achieved by increasing the dynamic level. When music crescendos, the performers begin at a softer dynamic level and become incrementally louder.

DIMINUENDO

A gradual lowering of volume in music achieved by decreasing the dynamic level. During a diminuendo, the performers begin at a louder dynamic level and become incrementally softer.

DYNAMICS

A musical trait pertaining to loudness and softness. Dynamics encompass a spectrum from **pianissimo** (very soft) to **piano** (soft) to **mezzo piano** (moderately soft), all the way up to **fortissimo** (very loud). Music can shift to another dynamic level either suddenly or gradually, through a **crescendo** or **diminuendo**.

ENSEMBLE

A musical piece for two or more soloists, accompanied by orchestra. Types of ensembles include **duets** (for two soloists), **trios** (for three soloists), and **quartets** (for four soloists).

FINALE

The last portion of an act, a finale consists of several musical sections that accompany an escalating dramatic tension. Finales frequently consist of multiple ensembles with different numbers of characters.

FORTE

Meaning “loud” or “strong” in Italian, forte is a dynamic level in music that indicates a loud volume. Adding the suffix “-issimo” to a word serves as an intensifier—since forte means “loud,” **fortissimo** means “very loud.”

INTERMISSION

A break between acts of an opera.

LEGATO

A type of articulation in which a melody is played with smooth connection between the notes.

LIBRETTO

The text of an opera, including all the words that are said or sung by performers.

MELODY

A succession of pitches that form an understandable unit. The melody of a piece consists of the tune that a listener can hum or sing.

OVERTURE

An instrumental piece that occurs before the first act as an introduction to an opera.

PIANO

Abbreviated p in a musical score, piano indicates a soft dynamic level.

RECITATIVE

Speech-like singing in-between musical numbers that advances the plot.

RHYTHM

Refers to the way music unfolds over time; it is a series of durations in a range from long to short. Along with pitch, it is a basic and indispensable parameter of music.

SCORE

The complete musical notation for a piece, the score includes notated lines for all of the different instrumental and vocal parts that unite to constitute a musical composition.

TEMPO

Literally “time” in Italian, tempo refers to the speed of a piece of music.

TIMBRE

Pronounced TAM-bruh, a French word that means “sound color.” It refers to the complex combination of characteristics that give each instrument or voice its unique sound.

VOCABULARY

ACTIVITY

Write the letter of the correct match next to each problem.



ACTIVITY

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1. _____ CHORUS | a. A break between acts of an opera. |
| 2. _____ SCENES | b. A type of articulation in which a melody is played with smooth connection between the notes. |
| 3. _____ DYNAMICS | c. The last portion of an act. |
| 4. _____ ADAGIO | d. Refers to the speed of a piece of music. |
| 5. _____ SCORE | e. A way to categorize the sections of operas. |
| 6. _____ INTERMISSION | f. A musical trait pertaining to loudness and softness. |
| 7. _____ ARIA | g. A gradual raising of volume in music achieved by increasing the dynamic level. |
| 8. _____ TIMBRE | h. A song for solo voice accompanied by orchestra. |
| 9. _____ TEMPO | i. A musical piece for two or more soloists, accompanied by orchestra. |
| 10. _____ LEGATO | j. A tempo marking indicating a moderately fast to quick speed. |
| 11. _____ OVERTURE | k. Italian for "nicely done;" shouted by audience members after a performance |
| 12. _____ ALLEGRO | l. Refers to the complex combination of characteristics that give each instrument or voice its unique sound. |
| 13. _____ LIBRETTO | m. Speechlike singing in between musical numbers that advances the plot. |
| 14. _____ RECITATIVE | n. The complete musical notation for a piece, |
| 15. _____ ENSEMBLE | o. The text of an opera. |
| 16. _____ BRAVO | p. Refers to the way music unfolds over time; it is a series of durations in a range from long to short. |
| 17. _____ CRESCENDO | q. An instrumental piece that occurs before the first act as an introduction to an opera. |
| 18. _____ FINALE | r. A section of an opera in which a large group of singers performs together, typically with orchestral accompaniment. |
| 19. _____ DIMINUENDO | s. A gradual lowering of volume in music achieved by decreasing the dynamic level. |
| 20. _____ RHYTHM | t. A tempo marking that indicates that the performer should play in a slow and leisurely style. |

SCIENCE OF SOUND: OPERATIC VOICES

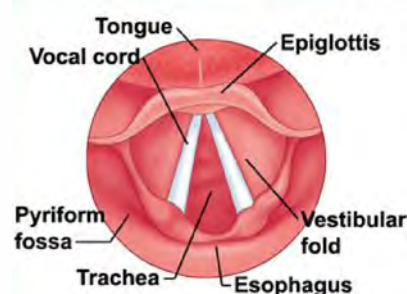
Singing in Europe and America is now generally divided into two categories: classical and popular. What most people think of as operatic or classical singing developed in Europe hundreds of years ago. This style flourished during the seventeenth century as opera became a popular form of entertainment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

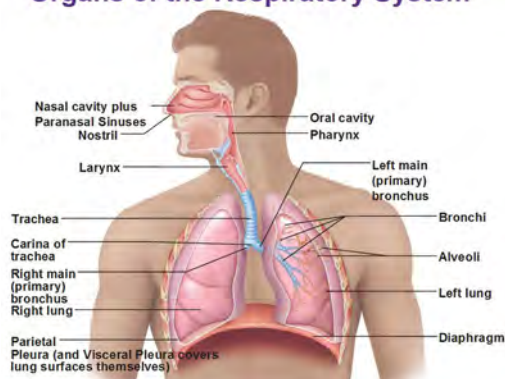
Very few people are born with the capability to sing this way. Classical singers take voice lessons about once a week and practice every day for many years in order to develop a beautiful operatic sound. In fact, most trained voices are not mature enough to perform leading roles on a big stage until they’re at least 28 years old. Compare that with the most popular singers on the radio today who could release their first albums as teenagers!

THE VOCAL CORDS

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 strands of tissue 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. 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.



Organs of the Respiratory System



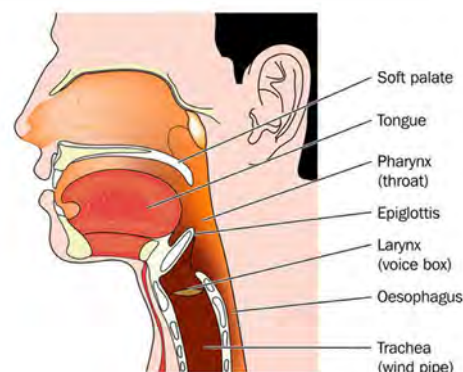
BREATHING/SUPPORT

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. 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 (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 “hoowoo” 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.



SCIENCE OF SOUND: OPERATIC VOICES

If you sing in a choir at school, you're probably already familiar with the different types of voices. We have the same kinds of voice types in opera, but there are a few differences:



Butterfly from *Madama Butterfly*

Sopranos are the highest female voice type, with a range similar to a violin. In opera, they usually sing roles like the daughter, the girlfriend or wife. They can be princesses and good girls, but they can also have some tricks up their sleeves!

Mezzo-sopranos are similar to your choral altos. Their sound is darker and warmer than a soprano. They often play older women, sometimes they play evil women, and sometimes they even play young boys! They can be witches but they can also be attractive – sometimes both at the same time.



Carmen from *Carmen*



Faust from *Faust*

Tenors are the highest male voice type – they often sing roles like the hero, the prince, the boyfriend. They can sound like a trumpet in both range and color. Tenors can be athletic and energetic and they can also be sensitive and emotional. They get all the good high notes and a lot of the applause!



Figaro from *The Barber of Seville*

Baritones fit between choir tenors and basses – not as high as the tenors, but not as low as the basses. They can play both good and bad characters: sometimes they're the boyfriends or brothers – or the ringleader for some comedic shenanigans – but in serious operas they can sometimes be the bad guys.

Basses are the lowest male voice type – they can sound like a bassoon, tuba or low trombone. In a serious opera they can represent age and wisdom (and sometimes evil geniuses), in a comic opera they can make you laugh. Sometimes they steal the show with their super low notes and provide a comforting presence with their warm rumbling tones.



Sarastro from *The Magic Flute*

Think of your favorite story, movie or television show. If that story was to be turned into an opera, what kind of voice types would be best for each of the characters?

You can hear different kinds of voice types in popular music too. Think about your favorite singers – do they have high voices or low voices? What do you like best about the way they sing?

Photos by Tim Wilkerson, Ken Howard, and Jeff Roffman.

SCIENCE OF SOUND: HOW SOUND IS MADE

YOUR SENSE OF SOUND: ENERGY & 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.

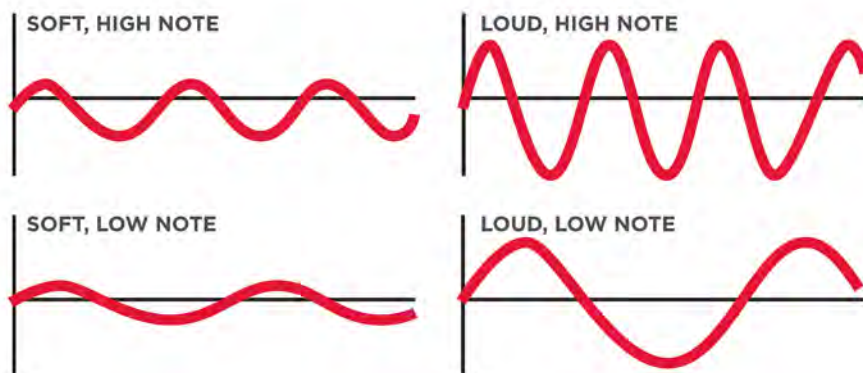
THINK ABOUT IT!

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:



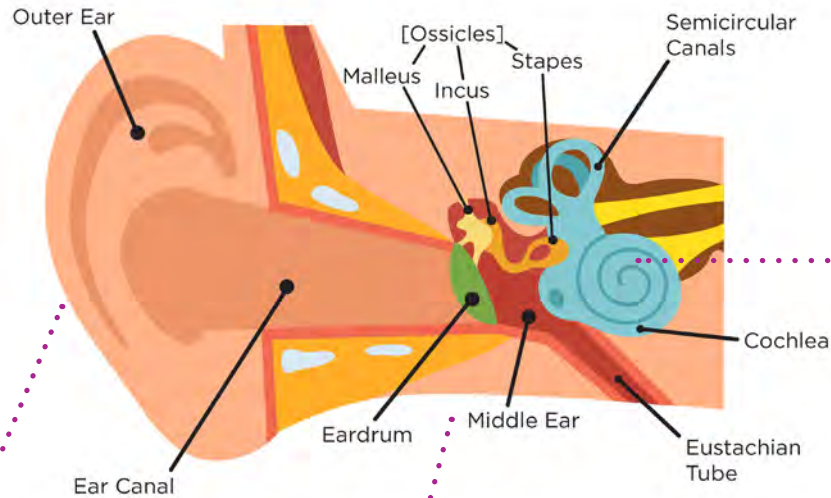
TRY THIS

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?

ACTIVITY



SCIENCE OF SOUND: HOW SOUND IS MADE



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.

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 malleus (hammer), the incus (anvil), and the stapes (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.

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.

DID YOU KNOW?
Earwax (the 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.

DID YOU KNOW?
The ossicles are the three smallest bones in your body.
The stapes is the tiniest of all!

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!

POST-SHOW ACTIVITY

Write a Review

WRITING ABOUT WHAT WE SEE & HEAR

Review of performances are important to every opera company. They help the company know how the performance was enjoyed in the outside world, and get other people excited about coming to see the show! You are the opera critic. Think about the performance you just saw of *La Cenerentola* 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. To write your own review, you can focus on two different elements – what you saw and what you heard.

FACTS & OPINIONS

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THE ART OF THE ADJECTIVE

Critics need to have a great vocabulary of descriptive words when they write about what they hear so that the people reading their reviews can imagine what it was like to be there. People use lots of different adjectives to describe the voices of opera singers. Here's a review that's chock-full of great adjectives:

"The **light, smoky** baritone of George Gagnidze only hints at Rigoletto's outsize emotions, and the **sweet, pure** soprano of Lisette Oropesa keeps Gilda **sweet** but **inert**. The **handsome, hyperactive** tenor Vittorio Grigolo has two registers, bellowing and crooning, and the conductor, Marco Armiliato, has his hands full trying to keep up with Mr. Grigolo's **wayward** tempos."

Sometimes it is very hard to describe the way music makes us feel. While there are definitely objective facts we can evaluate when we listen to music (qualities like loud or soft, fast or slow) most of the time we listen subjectively. This means that every opinion is valid – you don't have to know anything about opera to be moved by someone's singing or a beautiful instrumental solo.

Write a few sentences about the character you liked best and why. How did the music help tell you who the character was? Think of five adjectives to describe the way that person's voice sounded to you. How did it made you feel to listen to them?

SUM IT ALL UP

In your opinion, what did you like best about the production? What did you think could use some improvement? Would you recommend that other people come see this opera?

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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ACTIVITY

POST-SHOW ACTIVITY

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CREATE YOUR OWN PODCAST

Prepare a podcast show featuring interviews with characters who attended Cenerentola (Angelina) and the Prince's wedding. Explore their relationships and feelings to her journey from a girl who was once badly mistreated and is now a princess.

ACTIVITIES

- Working in a small group, prepare the interview questions for the characters below.
- Take turns interviewing and answering the questions.

Her stepfather

Her stepsisters

Alidoro

The Prince

Want to make the interview more interesting? Get some background information on the story by interviewing:

Some neighbors

People who work in the castle

The King or Queen

Friends of Cenerentola

People who went to the ball

Ask them questions about:

Cenerentola's life with the wicked stepsisters

The wedding banquet

The Ball

The Bracelet

Topics for Deeper Discussion or Writing

Topic #1:

Compare and contrast two versions of the fairy tales listed in "Fairy Tales from Around the World."

How does the version of Rossini's *La Cenerentola* you saw differ from the ones you picked from the list?

How does culture influence the story?

.....

Topic # 2

The story of Cinderella has been performed and adapted in many different ways from an opera, ballet, musical theater, and even film. Now that you've seen Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, which is an opera, watch a different version of *Cinderella* performed in a different way (film, theater, musical theater, ballet, etc.). Compare and contrast the storytelling in the opera version and the version that you picked. If you could create your own version of *Cinderella* what art form would you use to tell your story and why?

RESOURCES AND SOURCES

The Atlanta Opera Website:

- o <https://www.atlantaopera.org/performance/la-cenerentola/>

Artist websites:

- o <http://emilyfons.com/biography/>
- o <http://santiagoballerini.com/>
- o <https://alanhiggsbassbaritone.com/#bio>
- o <http://piperartists.com/portfolio/dale-travis/>
- o <https://www.uzanartists.com/portfolio/dean-williamson/>
- o <https://www.houstongrandopera.org/artist-detail/?id=1295>

Additional Resources for Further Exploration:

- <https://literarydevices.net/archetype/>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Films_based_on_Charles_Perrault%27s_Cinderella
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Films_based_on_Cinderella?sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjx6ueYmvbiAhVSmVkkHeLpDhoQ1i8IKzAa
- <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/>
- <https://fairytalez.com/>

Recording Suggestions:

- <https://open.spotify.com/album/3Bm5biiGR9hvfYOyDZ7Sig>
- <https://youtu.be/OUX-yvwwFdl>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7WQwdKV4Xis>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGOD6bOg5Ek>
- <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLWpqPsEHuRYad6l6USSQsu7EiPBVEr7-I>



Photo by Brett Croomer/Houston Grand Opera.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Dramatic Arts/Theatre | Music | Visual Art | English Language Arts
World Languages | Social Studies

Additional Curriculum Connections information:

<https://artsbridgega.org/field-trip/la-cenerentola-presented-by-the-atlanta-opera/>