

THE ATLANTA OPERA
PRESENTS

SALOME

Richard Strauss



EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

SALOME

FIRST PERFORMANCE

December 9, 1905, Semperoper Dresden,
Dresden, Germany

COMPOSER

Richard Strauss

LIBRETTIST

Richard Strauss

CREATIVE

CONDUCTOR

Arthur Fagen

DIRECTOR

Tomer Zvulun

SCENIC & PROJECTIONS DESIGNER

Erhard Rom

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Robert Wierzel

COSTUME DESIGNER

Mattie Ullrich

CHOREOGRAPHER

Amir Levy

CAST

HEROD ANTIPAS

Frank Van Aken

HERODIAS

Jennifer Larmore

SALOME

Jennifer Holloway

JOCHANAN

Nathan Berg

NARRABOTH

Adam Diegel

THE ATLANTA OPERA

CARL W. KNOBLOCH, JR.

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Alexandria Sweatt

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Salome set rendering by scenic & projections designer Erhard Rom.

Dear Educators,

Hello, and thank you for joining us for this production of Strauss's operatic masterpiece, *Salome*. A psychological thriller draped in lust, power, and seduction, *Salome* is the twisted tale of a depraved tyrant, his bewitching stepdaughter, and her infatuation with John the Baptist. First transported from Mark's Gospel to the world's stage by Oscar Wilde, the opera *Salome* scandalized the music world into the 1930s and continues to captivate with its sublimely rich musical tapestries.

This educator guide has been developed to help you and your students explore *Salome*, as well as to familiarize students with the world of opera (vocabulary, history, etc.). The guide approaches these subjects via a wide range of disciplines, including English Language Arts, Science, Music, Theater and Social Studies. Our goal is to provide you with an innovative, multidisciplinary approach to teaching required skills and curriculum, including connections to the Georgia Standards of Excellence.

In using this guide, we hope you will feel free to adapt pages or activities to best meet the needs of your students. A simple activity may be a perfect launching pad for a higher-level lesson, and a complex lesson may contain key points onto which younger students can latch. Please make this guide your own!

We value your feedback and will take it into account in planning future education programs. We look forward to hearing from you, your students, administration, and/or parents following the performance. Thank you again for allowing us to share this opera with you. It is our sincere hope that you enjoy the experience, and we look forward to seeing you and your students at the opera!

The Atlanta Opera
Education Department
1575 Northside Drive, Suite 350, Atlanta, GA 30318
education@atlantaopera.org
404-881-8801

IMPORTANT INFO

- **Final Dress Rehearsal:**
Thursday, January 23, 2020 at 7:00pm
- **Location:** Cobb Energy Centre
- **Performed in German with English supertitles**
- **Running time is approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes, no intermission.**
- **Contains adult content including sexual themes, simulated violence, and simulated assault**
- **Recommended for Grades 10-12**
- **For more information visit:**
atlantaopera.org/salome

SYNOPSIS

WHAT'S THE OPERA ABOUT?

SYNOPSIS

The palace of Herod at Tiberias, Galilee (Judea), c. 30 A.D.

At King Herod's palace, the young captain Narraboth admires the beautiful princess Salome, who sits at the banquet table with her stepfather, Herod, and his court. A page warns Narraboth that something terrible might happen if he continues to stare at the princess, but Narraboth won't listen. The voice of Jochanaan is heard from the cistern, where he is kept prisoner, proclaiming the coming of the Messiah, and two soldiers comment on the prophet's kindness and on Herod's fear of him. Suddenly Salome appears, disgusted with Herod's advances toward her and bored by his guests. Jochanaan's voice is heard again, cursing the sinful life of Salome's mother, Herodias. Salome asks about the prophet. The soldiers refuse to allow her to speak with him, but Narraboth, unable to resist her, orders that Jochanaan be brought forth from the cistern.

Although initially she is terrified by the sight of the holy man, Salome quickly becomes fascinated by his appearance, begging him to let her touch his hair, then his skin, and finally his lips. Jochanaan forcefully rejects her. Narraboth, who can't bear Salome's desire for another man, stabs himself. Salome, not noticing him and beside herself with excitement, continues to beg for Jochanaan's kiss. The prophet tells her to save herself by seeking Christ and retreats into the cistern, cursing Salome. Herod appears from the palace, looking for the princess and commenting on the moon's strange appearance. When he slips in Narraboth's blood, he suddenly panics and suffers hallucinations. Herodias angrily dismisses his fantasies and asks him to go back inside with her, but Herod's attentions are now focused on Salome. He offers her food and wine, but she rejects his advances. From the cistern, Jochanaan resumes his tirades against Herodias, who demands that Herod turn the prophet over to the Jews. Herod refuses, maintaining that Jochanaan is a holy man and has seen God. His words spark an argument among the Jews concerning the true nature of God, and two Nazarenes talk about the miracles of Jesus. As Jochanaan continues to accuse her, Herodias demands that he be silenced.

Herod asks Salome to dance for him. She refuses, but when he promises to give her anything she wants, she agrees once she has made him swear to keep his word. Ignoring her mother's pleas not to, Salome dances seductively, removing her clothes. The delighted king wants to know what reward she would like, and she asks for the head of Jochanaan on a silver platter. Horrified, the king refuses, while Herodias laughs approvingly at Salome's choice. Herod offers other rewards, but Salome insists, reminding Herod of his oath. The king finally gives in. As the executioner descends into the cistern, the princess anxiously and impatiently awaits

her prize. When the prophet's head is brought to her, she passionately addresses Jochanaan as if he were still alive and kisses his lips. The terrified Herod, outraged at Salome's behavior, orders the soldiers to kill her

- *Courtesy of Pittsburgh Opera and Opera News*

THE SETTING

Salome is set in the year A.D. 30 in the palace of Herod Antipas, who is known as the ruler of Judea. In fact, Herod was only the ruler of the regions called Galilee and Perea. His father, Herod the Great, promised him all of Judea but only left him in charge of the two smaller regions. All three of these regions are located in what is now known as Israel. Although it is not mentioned specifically, it's most likely that *Salome* takes place in Herod's palace in Tiberias, on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. Tiberias is still a city in Israel today.

In A.D. 30, Judea was a client state of the Roman empire, so Herod ruled under Tiberius, the emperor of Rome.

- *Courtesy of Manitoba Opera*



This is a map of first century Judaea Province. Courtesy of *Jesus: An Historian's Review of the Gospels*.

MEET THE CHARACTERS

CHARACTER	PERFORMED BY	VOICE TYPE	ABOUT
Herod (HARE-ed) King of Judea and Perea	Frank Van Aken	tenor	Herod is based on the historical figure who, as the son of Herod the Great, ruled Judea from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39. Herod is married to Herodias, the widow of his brother, whom he held captive for 12 years and eventually strangled to death. Herod controls a vast court and is entertaining a diverse group of international guests, including Jews, Nazarenes, Greeks and Romans. He has the Christian prophet Jochanaan imprisoned in his palace cistern. To his wife's disapproval, he sexually desires his stepdaughter and niece, the princess Salome.
Herodias (hare-OH-dee-us) Herod's wife	Jennifer Larmore	mezzo-soprano	Herodias is based on the historical figure who was married to Herod Antipas during his reign over Judea. Prior to this marriage, Herodias was the wife of Herod's brother, whom Herod had imprisoned and slain, and who was the father of her daughter, Salome. She is upset about her husband's explicit attraction to Salome and the prophet Jochanaan's claims that her marriage is incestuous and thus unholy. While the relation is not mentioned, historical writings indicate that in addition to being Herodias's brother-in-law, Herod was also her half-uncle, and that this formed the basis for the prophet's disapproval.
Salome (SAH-loh-may) Daughter of Herodias	Jennifer Holloway	soprano	Salome is based on the historical figure best known from the New Testament (Mark 6:21-29), where she is referred to only as "the daughter of Herodias." The name Salome is attributed to her by historian Flavius Josephus. In biblical legend, Herodias offers her as a dancer to Herod in exchange for John the Baptist's murder; in Strauss's opera, the murder is presented as Salome's idea. Often referred to as "the Princess of Judea," Salome desires Jochanaan and rejects the advances of both her stepfather Herod and Narraboth throughout the course of the opera.
Jochanaan (YOH-kah-nahn) The prophet John the Baptist	Nathan Berg	bass-baritone	Jochanaan is based on the historical figure more commonly referred to as John the Baptist, who prophesied the coming of Christ the Messiah. Jochanaan is captured by Herod's forces in the desert and imprisoned in the palace cistern.
Narraboth (NERR-ah-both) Captain of the Guard	Adam Diegel	tenor	Narraboth is Herod's top-ranked soldier. The young Syrian is infatuated with Salome, and he allows her access to Jochanaan the prophet in exchange for a glance from her. When he sees that she desires Jochanaan, he kills himself.

- Courtesy of Manitoba Opera



The Atlanta Opera's 2003 production of *Salome* at the Fox Theatre. (photo: J.D. Scott)

SALOME

BY NOEL MORRIS

There was a time when combining church and theater was considered an act of indecency. Early performances of Handel's *Messiah*, for example, scandalized upstanding citizens of Dublin and London. The silent partners of 19th-century opera were ever-present censors, functionaries who prevented composers from showing priests, biblical figures, crucifixes, and religious rites in the disreputable atmosphere of a theater. Depending on the degree of Church influence in a particular city, composers were perennially having to rewrite shows to gain a censor's approval. Needless to say, creating an opera based on the story *Salome* was a bold move—even in 1905.

Incest was not a problem for the Herod family, which inspired this tale. Herod the Great, King of the Roman province of Judea (and villain of the Christmas story) divided his kingdom among three sons: Herod Archelaus, Herod Antipas, and Philip. Philip married his first cousin Herodias and produced a daughter. Herodias later deserted him for her brother-in-law Herod Antipas. Enter John the Baptist, who denounced the queen: "For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife" (Mark 6:18 KJV). Herodias was outraged. Threatened by John's popularity among the masses, she convinced her husband, Herod Antipas, to have John arrested. According to the Gospels, it was she who persuaded her daughter to dance for the king and condemn John to death.

When first adapting this story for the stage, playwright Oscar Wilde took liberties with this part of the tale (perhaps a plot based on removing a political rival

seemed too ordinary). Instead, Wilde created an intense psychological thriller by shifting the dramatic thrust onto the shoulders of a psychopathic teenager. *Salomé* entertains through shock: 1. a young girl locks horns with a ruthless tyrant, 2. a decadent father figure is consumed with lust for his stepdaughter, 3. the girl uses his lust, manipulating him to gain power over the object of her own desire—the holy man John the Baptist (in the opera he's called Jochanaan, a transliteration of the Hebrew name).

Although Wilde was an Irishman, he wrote his 1891 play *Salomé* in French. The following year, *Salomé* went into rehearsal in London starring the legendary Sarah Burnhardt, but the Lord Chamberlain shut it down. Citing a ban on depicting biblical figures on the stage, an official decree prohibited any public performance of *Salomé*, a decision that remained in effect until 1931. Nevertheless, the play was published in English and in French. Fifteen years after it was written, *Salomé* finally had its premiere in Paris, but the playwright couldn't attend. At the time, Oscar Wilde, who was gay, was in Newgate Prison serving a sentence of hard labor for "gross indecency" ("homosexuality" was not decriminalized in the United Kingdom until 1967). In 1902, Max Reinhardt, an aspiring young director, launched his career staging a German version of *Salomé* in Berlin. By the time Richard Strauss saw the play, he had already read it and chosen the key of C-sharp minor for the opening line "How beautiful the princess Salome is tonight!"

Strauss was raised among the lions of 19th-century music. His father, Franz, had been a brilliant and well-connected French horn player. "Vehement, irascible, tyrannical" is how Richard described him. An ardent musical conservative, Franz Strauss loathed the musical

“And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.”

Mark 6:22 KJV

shockwave issuing from the pens of contemporaries such as Franz Liszt and Richard Wagner.

“[Franz] Strauss is a detestable fellow,” Wagner quipped. “But when he plays the horn, you can’t be angry with him.”

It’s difficult to comprehend this schism in 19th-century music because none of it sounds radical to 21st-century ears - like trying to feel shocked by the sight of a woman wearing pants. Ironically, even as Franz Strauss championed the traditional, there was a modernist giant developing under his own roof. Richard, who would become one of the most successful composers of the coming age, later recalled having led a secret life in his father’s home: “I still remember very well how at around seventeen years of age, I almost feverishly swallowed the score of [Wagner’s] *Tristan* and fell into a frenzy of enthusiasm.”

At the age of 24, Richard Strauss wrote his first international hit, the tone poem *Don Juan*, a piece which aligned him firmly with the modernists. Through the tone poems, and an enormous outpouring of art songs, Strauss discovered his uncanny gift for turning visual images and narrative into sound. Looking toward the new century, he employed lush, unorthodox harmonies and opulent orchestration. During this time, he was making good money as a conductor, but still had his sights firmly set on opera.

By 1903, he had written three operas without much success. His *Feuersnot* (1901) had run into trouble with authorities over sexual content. In correspondence with Gustav Mahler, who was artistic director of the Vienna Court Opera, Strauss remained optimistic: “The censor in Vienna I find extremely funny! I can’t dare to hope for a ban. The advertising value of a ban by the censor would be the best thing that could happen to my little opera, since it wouldn’t mean that the performance in Vienna was actually cancelled, but just postponed.”

In fact, more than a century later, *Feuersnot* had yet to catch on, but Strauss’s comment certainly showed his attitude toward scandal. After all, his next opera would be based on a play that wasn’t even allowed on the English stage.

Using Hedwig Lachmann’s German translation of Oscar Wilde’s play, Strauss began serious work on *Salome* in 1903. He made a number of cuts to the play eliminating subplots and minor characters. In 1904, he continued work while on tour of the United States. Back home, he played excerpts for his father. “My God, what nervous music,” said the old man. “It’s as if one’s pants were full of maybugs.” Richard finished *Salome* in Berlin during the summer of 1905, three weeks after his father had died.

Reflecting the emotional power of the story, the role of Salome is demanding and particularly difficult to cast. The part calls for a singer with the stamina and voltage of a dramatic soprano (think Isolde or Brünnhilde), but with a lightness that befits the teenaged character. And then there’s the Dance of the Seven Veils — the singer must be able to infuse this ten-minute strip tease with a potency that justifies just about everything else that happens dramatically.

Salome received its premiere in Dresden at the end of 1905. Reportedly, there were 38 curtain calls. Within two years, *Salome* saw some fifty other productions, and Strauss quickly became a wealthy man. In New York City, *Salome* was given two public showings in 1907 by The Metropolitan Opera before it was banned. The detractors, headed by the daughter of the powerful board member J.P. Morgan, attempted to enlist the help of English composer Edward Elgar. Elgar refused, stating that “[Strauss is] the greatest genius of the age.” While in 1909, Oscar Hammerstein’s opera house staged a production in New York and a touring company from Chicago brought the production back to the city in subsequent years, the Met’s ban on *Salome* remained in place until 1934.



Left: Richard Strauss; right: Hedwig Lachmann ca. 1885. (Image: No known copyright restrictions / copyright expired)

MEET THE COMPOSER

RICHARD STRAUSS (1864-1949)

Richard Strauss was born on June 11, 1864 in Munich, Germany.

Strauss's father, Franz, was the principal horn player of the Munich Court Orchestra and was recognized as Germany's leading virtuoso of the instrument. His mother came from the prominent brewing family of Pschorr. During a conventional education, Strauss still devoted most of his time and energy to music. When he left school in 1882, he had already composed more than 140 works, including 59 lieder (art songs) and various chamber and orchestral works.

The years 1898 and 1899 saw the respective premieres of Strauss's two most ambitious tone poems, *Don Quixote* and *Ein Heldenleben* (*A Hero's Life*). In 1904, he and his wife, Pauline, who was the foremost exponent of his songs, toured the United States. While in New York City, Strauss conducted the first performance of his *Symphonia Domestica* (*Domestic Symphony*). The following year, in Dresden, he enjoyed his first operatic success with *Salome*, based on Oscar Wilde's play. Although *Salome* was regarded by some as blasphemous and obscene, it triumphed in all the major opera houses except Vienna, where the censor forbade Gustav Mahler to stage it.

Strauss had an unrivaled descriptive power and a remarkable ability to convey psychological detail. This last quality was particularly evident in his operas. With *Salome* (1903-05), Strauss transferred his

mastery of the orchestral tone-poem to an opera that is outstanding for the intensity with which it conveys Salome's naive lust for John the Baptist and the depravity of her stepfather Herod's court. His next opera, *Elektra* (1906-08), is a second blockbusting one-act study of female obsession, in this case revenge. In this score, Strauss went as far toward atonality as he ever desired. *Elektra* was followed by *Der Rosenkavalier* (1909-10), a "comedy in music" that is set in 18th-century Vienna and features an anachronistic string of waltzes and characters like the Marschallin, Baron Ochs, Octavian, and Sophie, whom audiences at once took to their hearts. This opera remains Strauss's most popular stage work.

He spent the last 38 years of his life refining and polishing his style, writing often for smaller orchestras, partly out of practical considerations (to ensure the audibility of sung words in the theatre) and partly because large-scale Romantic musical textures were becoming less and less significant. In later years, Strauss's style became more classical in the Mozartean sense. Indeed, the opera *Capriccio* and other late works may be said to have achieved a perfect fusion of the late German Romantic and the Neoclassical manner.

MEET THE POET & TRANSLATOR

HEDWIG LACHMANN (1865 - 1918)

Hedwig Lachmann was a German author, translator, and poet. She was born in Stolp, Pomerania (a historic region between Germany and Poland) in 1865 and was the daughter of a Jewish cantor. She spent her childhood in Stolp and a subsequent seven years in Hürben (Swabia). At the age of 15, she passed exams in Augsburg to become a language teacher. Two years later she became a governess in England.

From 1899 until 1917 she belonged to both the Friedrichshagener and Pankower poetry societies. She met her future husband, Gustav Landauer, in 1899 at the house of Richard Dehmel (a notorious German poet). One of their grandchildren, Mike Nichols, grew up to be a well-known Hollywood director (*The Graduate*, *The Birdcage*, *Closer*).

She contributed to poetry collections, including one of her own works, and translated many English, French, and Hungarian works into German. Her translation of *Salome* is considered to be an improvement upon Oscar Wilde's French original.

- Courtesy of Manitoba Opera



Oscar Wilde ca. 1882. (photo: 1047N U.S. Copyright Office; No. 22; No. 2883; Copyright by N. Sarony; Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540.)

MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT

OSCAR FINGAL O'FLAHERTIE WILLS WILDE (1854-1900)

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde was a famous Irish intellectual, playwright and author living in London in the 1890s. He is best known for his novel, "The Picture of Dorian Gray" and his masterpiece play *The Importance of Being Earnest*, but it was his decadent lifestyle and colorful bon mots for which he is remembered.

Wilde completed his undergraduate degree at Trinity College of Oxford. He dressed in an unusual, "dandified" manner and was famous for his sharp wit. When he landed in the United States to give lectures on the English Renaissance and Decorative Arts, he told customs officials that he "had nothing to declare but his genius."

Although he was married to a wealthy woman named Constance Lloyd, it was well known that Wilde was a homosexual and conducted an on-again, off-again relationship with a poet named Lord Alfred Douglas, 16 years his junior. Douglas' father, the Marquess of Queensberry, caught wind of the relationship and immediately began bullying Wilde with threats of prosecution. Finally, he got his wish, and in 1895 Wilde was convicted of "gross indecency with other men" and imprisoned for two years. He never returned to his homes in Ireland or England, fleeing to the more liberal France instead, where he died, destitute, at the age of 46.

Wilde's one-act play, *Salome*, is a loose interpretation of the account of the beheading of St. John the Baptist in the 1st century A.D. as recorded in the New Testament

(Gospel of Mark 6:15-29 and Gospel of Matthew 14:1-12). While *Salome* is in fact a minor character in the biblical tale, she was the focus of fascination for many late 19th century artists, who found in her character a unique vehicle for exploring the shifting significance of female sexuality. Wilde's treatment of *Salome* extends this focus, portraying the Judaic princess as the main reason for the beheading of John the Baptist (Jochanaan). While the New Testament depicts Salome as a pawn of her mother's plan to eliminate the prophet, Wilde re-imagines John's execution as the direct and deliberate result of Salome's unrequited sexual desire for him.

Wilde's *Salome* was born at a Paris café in 1891, and he quickly became obsessed with the title character; in her he created a fascinating fusion of light and dark.

- Courtesy of Manitoba Opera

THE ORIGINS OF THE OPERA

Wilde's play was initially banned in England and premiered in Paris to mixed reviews in 1896. In 1903, Hedwig Lachmann wrote a German translation of Wilde's play which was staged in Berlin later that year and opened to great acclaim. Upon seeing the play, Richard Strauss decided it was tailor-made for musical adaptation. He began work on the musical score in late 1904, completing it in the summer of 1905.

The opera premiered on December 9, 1905, in Dresden, Germany. The singers engaged for the premiere were horrified at the demands placed on them by the score, and the leading soprano refused to appear in the "Dance of the Seven Veils" (necessitating a body double); but the opera, which received 38 curtain calls, was an immediate success and cemented Strauss's reputation as a major young composer. The audience and critics were shocked by its subject matter and erotic themes, including the infamous dance and the final scene in which Salome declares her love and passionately kisses the severed head of John the Baptist. New productions were immediately mounted in several countries. The first New York production, which opened on January 22, 1907, had its remaining performances cancelled after some wealthy, influential patrons objected to its content. However, *Salome* is considered a masterpiece and has remained a mainstay of the operatic repertoire.

Strauss composed the opera in German, and that is the version that has become widely known. In 1930, he made an alternate and less-performed version in French using the language of the original Oscar Wilde play.

- Courtesy of Manitoba Opera



ARTHUR FAGEN
CARL & SALLY GABLE MUSIC DIRECTOR

Arthur Fagen is a regular guest of the world's leading opera houses, concert halls, and music festivals, including, most notably, the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Staatsoper Berlin, Bavarian State Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, and Vienna Staatsoper. In North America, he has been a frequent guest of the New York City Opera, Portland Opera, Chautauqua, and New Orleans Opera, among others. Notable orchestras he has conducted include the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra; the Czech Philharmonic; RAI Orchestras of Turin, Naples, Milan, Rome; and Israel Symphony Orchestra. Maestro Fagen served as music director of the Dortmund Philharmonic Orchestra and Opera, principal conductor in Kassel and Brunswick, chief conductor of the Flanders Opera in Antwerp and Ghent, and was music director of the Queens Symphony Orchestra. He has made a number of recordings for Naxos and BMG. Born in New York, maestro Fagen began his conducting studies with Laszlo Halasz and served as assistant to Christoph von Dohnanyi at Frankfurt Opera and James Levine at the Metropolitan Opera. Maestro Fagen is professor of music in instrumental conducting at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music.



TOMER ZVULUN
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR

General & Artistic Director of The Atlanta Opera since 2013, Israeli-born Tomer Zvulun is also one of opera's most exciting stage directors, earning consistent praise for his creative vision, often described as cinematic and fresh. His work has been presented by prestigious opera houses around the world, including the Metropolitan Opera, the opera companies of Seattle, San Diego, Minnesota, Boston, Cleveland, Dallas, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Buenos Aires, Wexford, New Orleans, and Wolf Trap, as well as leading educational institutes and universities such as The Juilliard School, Indiana University, Boston University, and IVAI in Tel Aviv. Since taking the leadership in Atlanta he increased the operations of the company from 12 to 32 performances a season, while stabilizing the financials. Some of his noted achievements include launching the successful Discoveries series, a program that presents new contemporary works and rarely done operas in alternative venues, creating the first young artist program in the company's history, and doubling the company's annual fundraising. His work at The Atlanta Opera earned the company an international reputation and numerous awards and prizes. These include the nomination of The Atlanta Opera for the 2016 International Opera Awards in London and the selection of the acclaimed Discoveries series as Atlanta Best of 2015 by The Atlanta Journal-Constitution and Silent Night for Atlanta Best of 2016.

CAST & CREATIVE



FRANK VAN AKEN
HEROD

Dutch tenor Frank van Aken studied in Utrecht and is a music graduate of the Opera Studio of the Royal Conservatory in The Hague. He completed his vocal studies with James McCray.



JENNIFER LARMORE
HERODIAS

Last seen at The Atlanta Opera in Weill's *The Seven Deadly Sins*, Atlanta native and Grammy-Award winner Jennifer Larmore is an outstanding American mezzo-soprano, well known for her versatility and stagecraft.



JENNIFER HOLLOWAY
SALOME

Lauded for her "liquid, lambent voice," soprano Jennifer Holloway gives new life to the characters she plays and the music she sings at leading opera houses.



NATHAN BERG
JOCHANAAN

Hailed as a "majestic bass" (Financial Times), Canadian bass-baritone Nathan Berg makes his Atlanta Opera debut as Jochanaan.



ADAM DIEGEL
NARRABOTH

Adam Diegel regularly earns international acclaim for his impassioned dramatic sensibilities, powerful voice, and for his classic leading man looks.

OPERA 101

THE BASICS

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*.

A BRIEF HISTORY

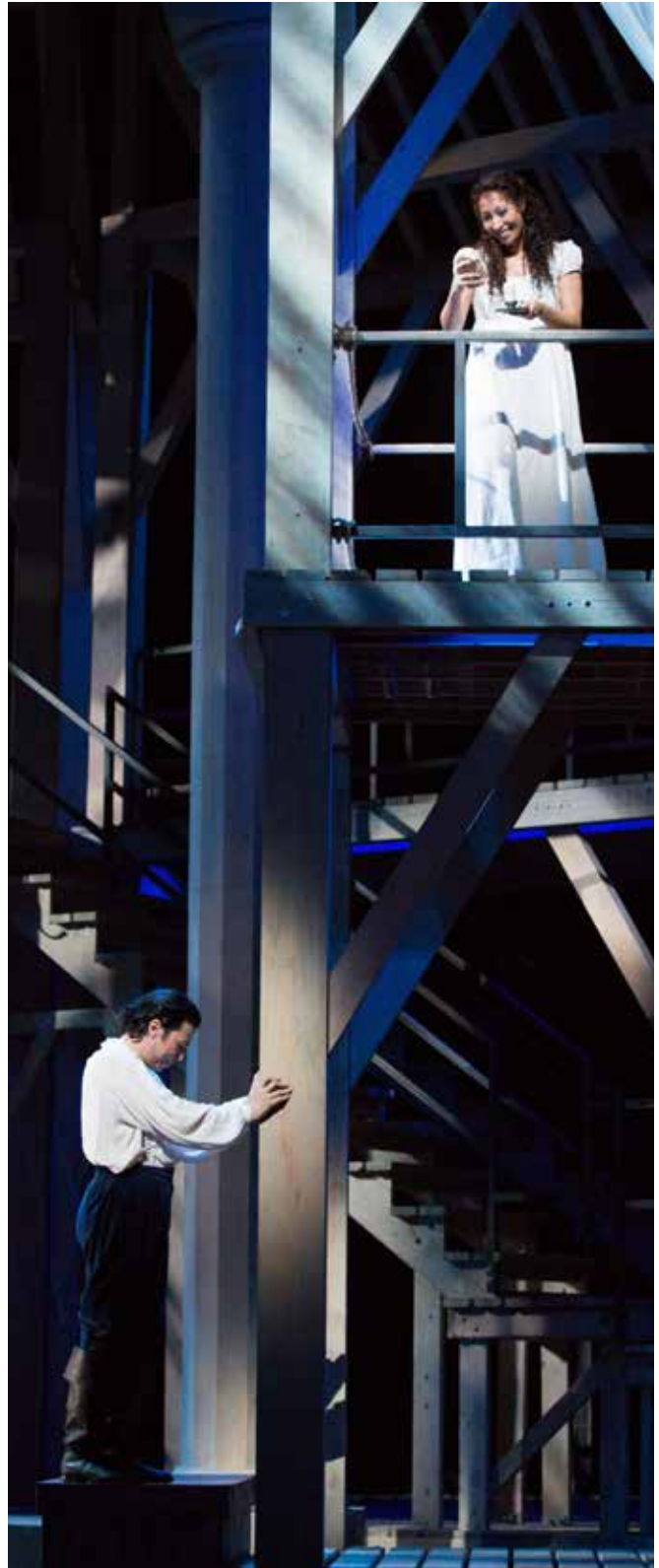
The concept of opera was developing many years before the first opera was written. Its beginning can be traced to the ancient Greeks. They fused poetry and music, creating plays that incorporate song, spoken language and dance, accompanied by string or wind instruments.

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 mythological character, Daphne, from Ovid’s “Metamorphosis.”

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.



The Atlanta Opera's 2016 mainstage production of *Romeo and Juliet* at The Cobb Energy Centre. (photo: Jeff Roffman)



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 a story.

DIFFERENT STYLES OF OPERA

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 Frideric Handel is a classic example of opera seria.

OPERA BUFFA Comic opera, typically sung in Italian. The jokesters in these operas are typically from 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 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.



The Atlanta Opera's 2014 mainstage production of *The Barber of Seville* at The Cobb Energy Centre. (photo: Ken Howard)

SCIENCE OF SOUND

OPERATIC VOICES

TYPES OF OPERATIC VOICES

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

SOPRANOS are the highest female voice type, with a range similar to a violin. In opera, they usually sing roles like the Heroine, Princess, Queen, or Damsel in Distress. Sopranos are usually the female lead in the opera.



Violetta from *La traviata*

MEZZO-SOPRANOS are the middle female voice type. Their sound is darker and warmer than a soprano. They often perform the roles of witches, sisters, maids, and best friends. Mezzos also play young men on occasion, aptly called “pants roles” or “trouser roles,” such as Hansel in *Hansel and Gretel*.



Carmen from *Carmen*

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



Tonio from *Daughter of the Regiment*

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 be the bad guys.



The Dutchman from *The Flying Dutchman*

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, rumby tones.



Don Pasquale from *Don Pasquale*

Think of your favorite story, movie or television show. If that story was 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: Nunnally Rawson, Jeff Roffman, Raftermen)

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 people 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. They help 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.



The Stage Manager calls cues by watching monitors of a performance of *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* in 2018. (photo: Jeff Roffman)

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.

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.

In 1910, New York's Metropolitan Opera brought its tour to Atlanta for the first time. Once a year, for a full week during spring, people flocked to the city to see the Metropolitan Opera's wonderful performances and enjoy the many parties that were hosted throughout the city in celebration of the opera's arrival. Performing at the Auditorium-Armory, the fabulous Fox Theatre, and the Boisfeuillet Jones Atlanta Civic Center, the Metropolitan Opera's annual tour was a major social event. Every night of the week featured the performance of a different opera legend including Enrico Caruso, Birgit Nilsson, Leontyne Price, Frederica



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 1961 production of *Turandot* with Birgit Nilsson as Turandot. She sang this role in May that same year at the Fox Theater in Atlanta. (photo: The Metropolitan Opera Company, *Turandot*, 1967 touring season program book / The Atlanta Opera archives)

von Stade, Sherrill Milnes, Marilyn Horne, Plácido Domingo, Beverly Sills, Joan Sutherland, Richard Tucker and Luciano Pavarotti. The Met tour returned to Atlanta until 1986, with the exception of 1931-1939 due to financial complications of the Great Depression.

With the success and popularity of the Met's annual tour came a desire for Atlanta to have its own opera company. In 1979, the Atlanta Civic Opera was born, a result of a merger between the Atlanta Lyric Opera and Georgia Opera. The first artistic director was noted composer Thomas Pasatieri. The company's first popular opera production was *La traviata* on March 28, 1980 at the Fox Theatre. The following December, a festive gala was held in Symphony Hall with such noted artists as Catherine Malfitano, Jerry Hadley and Samuel Ramey. In 1985, the company was renamed The Atlanta Opera.

In the fall of 2007, The Atlanta Opera became the first resident company in the new Cobb Energy Performance Arts Centre. In 2013, the company recruited internationally recognized stage director Tomer Zvulun as its General and Artistic Director. In the 2014-2015 season, the company launched the acclaimed Discoveries series of operas staged in alternative theaters around Atlanta. In the 2016-2017 season, the company expanded its mainstage season from three to four productions at the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre. The Opera works with world-renowned singers, conductors, directors, and designers who seek to enhance the art form and make it accessible for a sophisticated, 21st century audience. Today, The Atlanta Opera is one of the finest regional opera companies in the nation and continues to adhere to its original 1979 mission to enrich lives through opera.

Lessons included in the Opera Guide are designed to correlate with Georgia Standards of Excellence in English Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, and Fine Arts.

FINE ARTS

Music – Responding

Middle School & High School General Music; Chorus;
Band; Orchestra RE.1;
Middle School & High School General Music; Chorus;
Band; Orchestra RE.2

Types of Operatic Voices
Pre-Performance Activities
ELA: Opera Vocabulary
Listening Activity
Write a Review
Science: The Science of Sound: Operatic Voices &
Resonance

Music – Connecting

Middle School & High School General Music; Chorus;
Band; Orchestra CN.1;
Middle School & High School General Music; Chorus;
Band; Orchestra CN.2

Synopsis
Meet the Creators
Opera 101
Important Jobs at The Opera
Opera in Atlanta
Pre-Performance Activities
Listening Activity
ELA: Opera Vocabulary
Write a Review

Theatre Arts – Responding TA.RE.1; TA.RE.2

Types of Operatic Voices
Pre-Performance Activities
ELA: Opera Vocabulary
Listening Activity
Write a Review
Science: The Science of Sound: Operatic Voices &
Resonance

Theatre Arts – Connecting TA.CN.1; TA.CN.2

Synopsis
Meet the Creators
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Important Jobs at The Opera
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Write a Review

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

ELA - Reading Literary

**ELAGSERL1; ELAGSERL2; ELAGSERL3; ELAGSERL4;
ELAGSERL7**

Opera 101
Pre-Performance Activities
Opera Vocabulary
Listening Activity
The Science of Sound: Operatic Voices & Resonance
The Science of Sound: How Sound is Made

ELA - Reading Informational ELAGSERI1; ELAGSERI2

Who's Who and Synopsis
The Science of Sound

ELA - Writing

ELAGSEW1; ELAGSEW2

Write a Review

ELA - Speaking and Listening ELAGSESL1

Pre-Performance Activities
The Science of Sound: Operatic Voices & Resonance

SUPPORT

SPECIAL THANKS

The Atlanta Opera would like to thank the following for their generous support of our educational and community engagement programs.



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The City of Roswell

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The Zeist Foundation

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THE ATLANTA OPERA

PRE-PERFORMANCE

ACTIVITIES PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE OPERA

Are you worried about how to act or what to wear? You are not the only one! Opera stereotypes can make the art form seem intimidating to lots of people. Having an idea of what to expect at the performance may make it easier to enjoy your experience. Here are some suggestions for things you can do before you visit The Atlanta Opera at the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre.

START WITH THE STORY

In simple terms, an opera is a story set to music. Before the performance, review the plot synopsis of *Salome*. Ask students to consider the story, characters, and setting of the opera. Use the following questions to lead a class discussion:

- What is this opera about?
- What is the time period?
- Who are the main characters?
- What does the character want?
- What are their relationships to each other?
- What do you expect to see and hear at the opera?

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY TERMS

Refer to the Glossary of Opera Terms. Discuss with the students which of these terms they may hear and/or see during the performance.

DESIGN A PROMOTIONAL POSTER

Create a poster to promote the upcoming performance of *Salome*. Display the poster in your school and send samples to The Atlanta Opera at education@atlantaopera.org.



Students at the Cobb Energy Centre for the Atlanta Opera's Student performance of *La Cenerentola*. (photos: Raftermen)

OPERA MYTHS

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 & STUFFY

Not true! Operas tell some of the most interesting, scandalous, and beautiful stories of all time. It is not unusual for operas to include love triangles, murders, fatal illnesses, or 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 are sung in languages other than English. Since many people in our audience do not speak other languages, 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. You will see people wearing everything from jeans to ball gowns. Dressing up can be part of the fun of attending an opera performance, but you should wear whatever makes you comfortable. The opera is a place for everybody.

MYTH 4: OPERA SINGERS JUST SCREECH & HIT HIGH NOTES ALL THE TIME

Most of the music we listen to today is electronically reproduced and amplified by speakers. Opera is one of the only places you'll hear singers perform without a microphone. All the sounds you will hear at the opera are natural and coming straight from the singers' throats and the orchestra's instruments to your ears. Opera singers have trained for years to project their sound and make it larger than life. While you may not be accustomed to live, unamplified singing, it can be a wonderful experience if you think about how much skill is required.



Students arriving at the Cobb Energy Centre to see an Atlanta Opera performance. (photo: Raftermen)

Here are a few more tips to make your trip to the opera more comfortable.

REMEMBER: The opera is a live performance. You can hear the performers on stage, and that means they can hear you too! Please refrain from talking or whispering during the opera. It is distracting to others around you as well as to the singers. Please do not leave your seat during the performance.

Please turn off all cell phones, beeping watches, and anything else that will make noise during the performance.

Please do not take photographs or video or audio recordings of the performance. The light can affect the singers on stage.

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. You can even 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!

THE ATLANTA OPERA

PRE-PERFORMANCE

LISTENING ACTIVITY



Salome costume renderings by costume designer Mattie Ullrich.

Many music critics/experts consider *Salome* to be one of the most important events in German opera since the works of Richard Wagner. Critics say its concentrated power, eerie and sinister harmonies, and extraordinarily exotic orchestration marked a new development in opera music. Critics praise Strauss for composing the music of *Salome* so delicately and thoughtfully that it communicated the complex emotions of its characters in a way that words alone never could.

The music of *Salome* includes a series of leitmotifs, or short melodies with symbolic meanings. Some are clearly associated with specific characters such as Salome and Jochanaan. Some **leitmotifs**, especially those associated with Herod, change frequently in form and symbolic meaning, making it difficult to pin them down to specifics. Strauss provided names

for some of the leitmotifs, but not all of them. Other people have also assigned a variety of names to some of the leitmotifs in *Salome*. These names often illustrate the ambiguity of certain leitmotifs. For example, some labels are abstract such as “Yearning,” “Anger,” and “Fear,” while some are more concrete such as “Herod’s Scale.”

The harmony of *Salome* makes use of extended tonality, chromaticism, a wide range of keys, unusual modulations, tonal ambiguity, and polytonality. Some of the major characters have keys associated with them, such as Salome and Jochanaan, as do some of the major psychological themes, such as desire and death.

Strauss called for a 105-piece orchestra for *Salome*, not only for its weight and power, but for the variety of tone color such a large body of diverse instruments could provide, and to extend the range of possibilities available to him in each family of instruments. The orchestration is glittering and colorful, with occasional exotic instruments or unusual uses of traditional instruments.

The string section is the backbone of the orchestra, providing more than half of more than 100 instruments needed. Strauss called for a large-sized string section, modeled after the orchestral size of the late 19th century romantic era. For the Atlanta Opera production, the orchestra will expand to 75 musicians.

SINGING THE ROLE OF SALOME

Richard Strauss described the character of Salome as “a 16-year-old princess with the voice of an Isolde.” Strauss was making a comparison to the notoriously demanding soprano role in Richard Wagner’s opera *Tristan und Isolde* (1865). In general, the soprano voice is the highest of the female voices, but the Wagnerian role of Isolde is what’s called a dramatic soprano role: it requires a voice that can sing with great intensity and power. Moreover, because Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde* uses a large orchestra, singing Isolde means having an even larger voice of exceptional reach, one that’s capable of being heard without amplification over the sound of 80-100 instruments playing at the same time.

Like Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*, Strauss’s *Salome* features a very large orchestra – approximately 100 instruments – which is why the composer suggested that singing Salome was a vocal undertaking comparable to Isolde.

THE ATLANTA OPERA

PRE-PERFORMANCE

LISTENING ACTIVITY

But in addition to all those vocal attributes, the singer must also be someone who can plausibly personify a 16-year-old woman, which is a consideration that becomes particularly significant with the opera's famous "Dance of the Seven Veils." Different productions and singers have treated the dance in a number of permutations – many singers opt to use professional dancers as stand-ins, others take on the dance themselves – but it's clear that the role of Salome requires a combination of extraordinary talents and natural attributes that rarely occur within one individual.

The music of *Salome* is laden with literary, cultural and musical influences. First, its libretto was taken directly (with some edits) from Oscar Wilde's sensational play of the same name. Wilde considered his play to be highly musical in language, but Strauss was able to use his score to illuminate and transfigure the emotions and motivations behind Wilde's words. After all, Strauss was also working during a fascinating period: the early years of psychoanalysis; Sigmund Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* had been published only five years before *Salome*'s premiere in 1905. And, like Richard Wagner before him, Strauss's complex and sophisticated orchestral writing didn't just tell a story: it seethed with the emotions, neuroses and unspoken drives of the characters.

Wagner's influence on Strauss is well illustrated in *Salome*, with its expanded orchestral language, long, sometimes unresolved melodies, and extensive use of motifs throughout. The opera's music combines lush exotic lyricism with moments of hair-raising dissonance. When Strauss first played the score for his father, his father made a comment to the effect that the music had "ants in its pants." The rich score has no set arias or ensembles but is a churning experience of unresolved lines of agitated and manic music.

All this combined to create one of the most thrilling pieces ever composed, and one which still has the power to leave its audience breathless.

For further listening, you can find a complete recording of all of *Salome*'s music here:
<https://open.spotify.com/album/1bFdDIXJrbXu7gS1lOpfYV>

legato

A musical term, literally translated from Italian as "tied together," or sung in a smooth flowing manner, without breaks between notes.

MUSICAL EXCERPT

Act I: "Wie schön ist die Prinzessin Salome heute Nacht!" ("The Princess Salome is very beautiful tonight!")

<https://open.spotify.com/album/1bFdDIXJrbXu7gS1lOpfYV>

CONNECTION TO THE STORY

As the opera opens, we are plunged into a scene of palace attendants and guards watching the royal family (offstage) at dinner. Narraboth, a young Syrian, adoringly watches the princess Salome; the Page watches Narraboth nervously, and the soldiers watch everyone, commenting on the action.

MUSICAL ELEMENTS & SIGNIFICANCE

The opera has no formal opening like an overture or prelude. It is as though it starts right in the middle of a scene. The first notes (0:01) feature the clarinet rippling upwards in one of Salome's themes: light and somewhat twisted at the same time, with a tantalizing hint of exoticism. Narraboth's vocal lines (0:10) are **legato** (smooth and flowing) as he rhapsodically describes Salome's beauty. On the other hand, the Page's lines are more declamatory and somber, tinged with fearful premonition (0:21).

FURTHER REFLECTION

At the start of the opera, the characters on stage are voyeuristically peering into the palace dining room. We, the audience, are voyeurs as well, as we watch the action on stage. What does this say about the way Strauss structured his opera? Why do you think, in this instance, that the composer chose to do away with an overture and just jump right into the action?

- Courtesy of Canadian Opera Company

THE ATLANTA OPERA

ELA OPERA VOCAB

BASIC OPERA TERMS

ACT / SCENE

Acts and scenes are ways of categorizing sections of operas. An act is a large-scale division of an opera, and an opera will typically include 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.

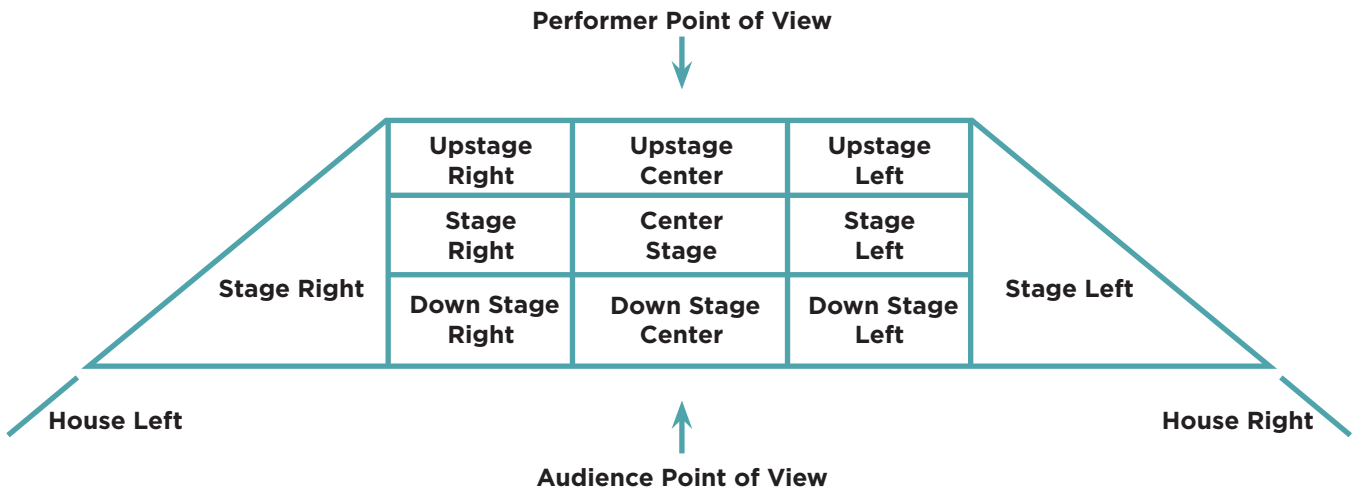
TIMBRE

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.

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

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| 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. Speech-like 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 perform 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. |

Review the stage diagram below with the students. Draw the diagram on the whiteboard and have students come up and write in each part of the stage.



Long ago, stages used to be raked or slanted toward the audience. If you went away from the audience, or climbed up the incline, it became upstage. Down the incline was downstage. Remember, stage left and stage right are from the actor's perspective when they are on stage, not the audience.

- Ask all of your students to face in the same direction. Facing you or a wall is good.
- Have your students close their eyes and stand with their feet flat on the floor.
- Now, ask them to slowly raise their heels off of the floor and keep them that way.
- This is how it would feel to stand on a raked (or slanted) stage.
- Their heels are upstage, or on the higher part of the stage, near the back, and their toes are facing the audience. Have them imagine they are walking up and down, like they were actually going to points where the floor was higher and lower.
- Have them try to move around a bit and see what it feels like.
- Give them some stage directions to follow.
 - **EXAMPLE:** Cross stage-left or walk downstage, etc.
- Increase the complexity of the stage directions, making them two or more parts.
 - **EXAMPLE:** Walk to stage-right, then cross to up-stage left.
- Have students direct each other, giving simple stage directions.
- Students can create their own scene from the opera, block them and then perform them for the class.

Reviews of performances are important to every opera company. They help the company know how the performance was enjoyed by audiences, and get other people excited about coming to see the show!

Pretend you are an opera critic. Think about the performance you just saw of *Salome* 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

A review often combines two things – facts and feelings. It is a piece of straight reporting in which the reviewer tells the reader what he or she saw (facts), and an opinion piece in which the reviewer tells the reader what they liked or didn't like about those elements (opinions). Here is an example of a reviewer reporting what they saw:

“The town plaza is suggested by Paul Steinberg’s dizzyingly colorful set, with a mosaic floor and walls and piñatas hanging from above.”

For the first part of your review, briefly describe what you saw on stage – report what the sets, costumes and lights looked like. These are the facts about the show.

Next, give your opinion about whether you liked these choices. Did they help tell the story effectively?

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 make 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!

The Atlanta Opera Education Department, 1575 Northside Dr., NW, Suite 350, Atlanta, GA 30318 or education@atlantaopera.org

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 17th 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:

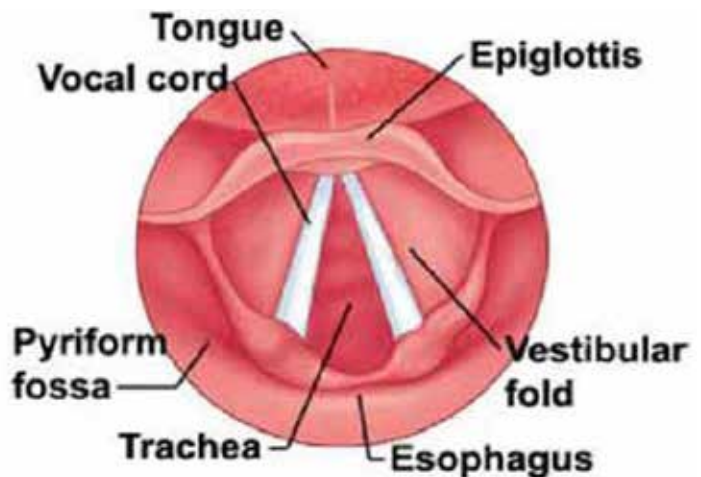
- an extensive range (the ability to sing both high and low)
- varying degrees of volume (loud and soft)
- resonance in the chest and sinus cavities (produces a full or round sound)
- an ability to project or fill a large space without amplification

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 25 years old. Compare that with the most popular singers on the radio today who could release their first albums as teenagers!

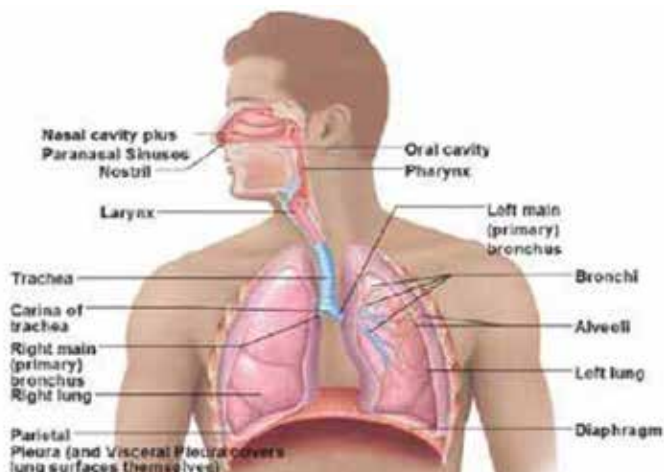
THE VOCAL CORDS

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 muscles called the vocal cords. The vocal cords are held in the larynx, which is sometimes called the voicebox or (in boys) the Adam's Apple. These two little cords of tissue vary in length but are typically 1 - 2 inches long. When you want to say something, your brain tells your vocal cords to pull together until they're touching lightly. Then, air pushes through them, and the vocal cords 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 cords vibrate. A faster vibration creates a higher pitch. The length of the cords also affects the pitch of the voice. Longer cords make a lower voice.



BREATHING / SUPPORT

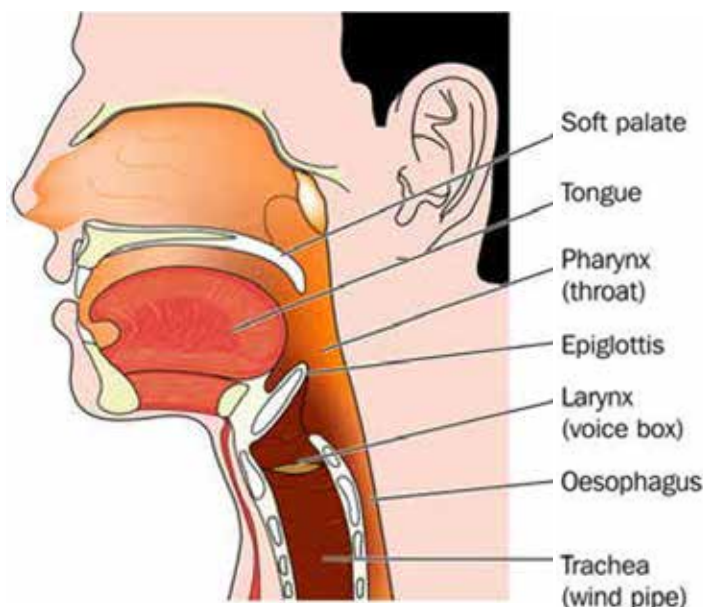
In order to sing long phrases with a lot of volume and a good tone, singers must breathe in a specific manner, making use of the entire torso area (lungs, ribs, diaphragm and viscera). As they breathe in, each part of this network does its job: the lungs fill up with air, which forces the ribs to expand 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 fullness in the low stomach or filling an innertube 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 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 "hoooo" like a hoot owl. Can you hear the difference?

Say the sentence "How do you do?" as if you were British. 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.



The Atlanta Opera's 2008 mainstage production of *Cinderella* at The Cobb Energy Centre featured Jennifer Larmore in the title role. (photo: Tim Wilkerson)

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.

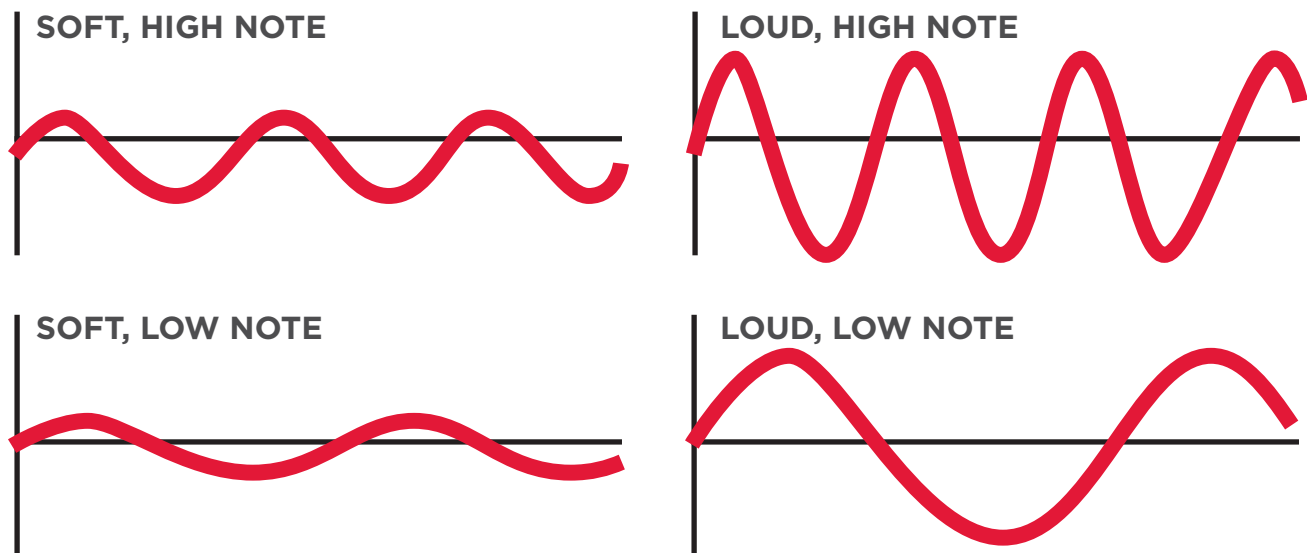
THINK ABOUT IT!

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 high 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?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- The Atlanta Opera Website:
<https://www.atlantaopera.org/opera101/>
<https://www.atlantaopera.org/salome>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION:

- <https://www.roh.org.uk/news/opera-essentials-strauss-salome>
- “The Endless, Grisly Fascination of Richard Strauss’s “Salome”
<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/the-endless-grisly-fascination-of-richard-strauss-salome>

RECORDING SUGGESTIONS:

- * Full-length recording: <https://open.spotify.com/album/1bFdDIXJrbXu7gS1lOpfYV>

OTHER VERSIONS OF SALOME:

- *Salome* - Trailer (1953); Starring: Rita Hayworth, Stewart Granger, Charles Laughton
<https://youtu.be/AO7hCTljflc>

ARTIST WEBSITES:

- <https://www.frankvanaken.com/biography>
- <https://www.jenniferlarmore.net/>
- <http://www.jennholloway.com/>
- <http://www.nathanberg.com/bio/>