



THE ATLANTA OPERA
STUDIO TOUR
PRESENTS

THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE

FIRST PERFORMANCE

December 31, 1879, Fifth Avenue Theatre, New York City

COMPOSER

Arthur Sullivan

LIBRETTIST

William S. Gilbert

ADAPTATION

Bruno Baker

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR

Bruno Baker

SCENIC DESIGNER

James F. Rotondo, III

COSTUME DESIGNER

Joanna Schmink

TOUR MANAGER

Jonesia Williams



THE ATLANTA OPERA

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THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE

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THE ATLANTA OPERA
CREATE. ENRICH. DISCOVER.
WELCOME

Thank you for inviting The Atlanta Opera into your school to perform for your students! **The Atlanta Opera Studio Tour** was founded in 1980 in an effort to teach students throughout the state of Georgia about opera through live performances and workshops. Over one million students have been introduced to the art form of opera through **The Atlanta Opera Studio Tour**. It is our intention for students to gain introductory knowledge about opera through the performance experience and accompanying educational materials.

This educator guide has been developed to help you and your students explore *The Pirates of Penzance*, 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, Math, Science, Social Studies, and Fine Arts. 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.

Thank you again for allowing us to share this experience with you. 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.

Sincerely,

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**WHAT TO
EXPECT FROM
THE ATLANTA
OPERA'S
THE PIRATES
OF PENZANCE**

- 40-minute opera (in English) with a 5-minute Q&A
- The performance requires attentive listening from the audience.
- The performance can take place in your school gymnasium or cafeteria instead of an auditorium, and students can be seated on the floor.
- You and your students will be invited to ask questions at the end of the performance.



Students watching the Atlanta Opera Studio Tour performance of *The Bilingual Barber of Seville*.

Activities included in the Educator's Guide are designed to correlate with Georgia Standards of Excellence in English Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, and Fine Arts.

LESSONS & ACTIVITIES

SUBJECT CONNECTIONS

Preparing Students for Performance	ELA: Speaking and Listening; Fine Arts: Music, Theatre Arts, & Visual Arts
Who's Who & Synopsis.....	ELA: Reading Literary; Fine Arts: Music & Theatre Arts
Meet the Creators	ELA: Reading Informational; Fine Arts: Music & Theatre Arts
What is an Operetta?.....	ELA: Reading Informational; Fine Arts: Music
Opera 101: The Basics	ELA: Reading Informational; Fine Arts: Music
Opera 101: Types of Operatic Voices	ELA: Reading Informational; Fine Arts: Music
Opera 101: Important Jobs at The Opera.....	ELA: Reading Informational; Fine Arts: Music
Opera in Atlanta	ELA: Reading Informational; Fine Arts: Music
<i>The Pirates of Penzance</i> Crossword Puzzle	ELA: Language; Fine Arts: Music
Where in the World is Penzance?.....	ELA: Reading Informational; Social Studies
Leap Year Activity.....	ELA: Reading Informational; Math; Science
Pirates in Georgia Activities.....	ELA: Reading Informational; Fine Arts: Theatre Arts, Science; Social Studies/History
Timeline: The World of Gilbert & Sullivan	ELA: Reading Informational; Fine Arts: Music, Social Studies/History
Pirate Hat Crafting	Fine Arts: Visual Arts
Costume Design Activity	Fine Arts: Theatre Arts & Visual Arts
Imagine a Place (Set Design Activity)	Fine Arts: Theatre Arts & Visual Arts
Write a Letter to the Artists.....	ELA: Writing; Fine Arts: Music
Write a Review	ELA: Writing; Fine Arts: Music
Opera Vocabulary	ELA: Language; Fine Arts: Music
Opera Vocabulary: Matching Activity	ELA: Language; Fine Arts: Music
The Science of Sound: Operatic Voices	ELA: Reading Informational; Fine Arts: Music, Science
The Science of Sound: How Sound is Made	ELA: Reading Informational; Fine Arts: Music, Science
Theater Activity	Fine Arts: Music & Theatre Arts

Per teacher feedback, we've highlighted some suggested activities by grade level below. 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 with which younger students can engage.

PK - 2ND

Preparing Students for Performance
Where in the World is Penzance?
Pirates in Georgia Activities
Pirate Hat Crafting
Costume Design Activity
Imagine a Place (Set Design Activity)
Write a Letter to the Artists
Opera Vocabulary
Opera Vocabulary: Matching Activity
Theater Activity

3RD - 5TH

Preparing Students for Performance
Who's Who & Synopsis
Meet the Creators
What is an Operetta?
Opera 101: The Basics
Opera 101: Types of Operatic Voices
Opera 101: Important Jobs at The Opera
Opera in Atlanta
Pirates of Penzance Crossword Puzzle
Where in the World is Penzance?
Leap Year Activity
Pirates in Georgia Activities
Timeline: The World of Gilbert & Sullivan
Costume Design Activity
Imagine a Place (Set Design Activity)
Write a Letter to the Artists
Write a Review
Opera Vocabulary
Opera Vocabulary: Matching Activity
The Science of Sound: Operatic Voices
The Science of Sound: How Sound is Made
Theater Activity

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Preparing Students for Performance
Meet the Creators
What is an Operetta?
Opera 101: The Basics
Opera 101: Types of Operatic Voices
Opera 101: Important Jobs at The Opera
Opera in Atlanta
Pirates of Penzance Crossword Puzzle
Where in the World is Penzance?
Leap Year Activity
Pirates in Georgia Activities
Timeline: The World of Gilbert & Sullivan
Costume Design Activity
Write a Review
Opera Vocabulary
Opera Vocabulary: Matching Activity
The Science of Sound: Operatic Voices
The Science of Sound: How Sound is Made
Theatre Activity

HIGH SCHOOL

Preparing Students for Performance
Meet the Creators
What is an Operetta?
Opera 101: The Basics
Opera 101: Types of Operatic Voices
Opera 101: Important Jobs at The Opera
Opera in Atlanta
Where in the World is Penzance?
Leap Year Activity
Pirates in Georgia Activities
Timeline: The World of Gilbert & Sullivan
Write a Review
The Science of Sound: Operatic Voices
The Science of Sound: How Sound is Made
Theater Activity

THE ATLANTA OPERA
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PRE-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

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 of things you can do before The Atlanta Opera visits your school or community venue.

WHAT IS AN OPERA?

An opera is just like a play, except people sing the words in addition to speaking them. In most operas, all of the words are sung. There are other types of operas, however, in which there is almost as much speaking as singing. These are sometimes called operettas.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

You will immediately notice that opera singers, unlike their peers in popular music, do not use microphones. Rather, an opera singer develops her own body as a source of “natural” amplification.

START WITH THE STORY

In simple terms, an opera is a story set to music. Before the performance, review the plot synopsis of *The Pirates of Penzance*. 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 struggles do the characters face?
- What are their relationships to each other?
- What do you expect to see and hear at the opera?

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY TERMS

Refer to the Opera Vocabulary page and discuss with the students which of these terms they may hear and/or see during the performance.

- Are any of these words familiar in other settings?
- Are there root words, prefixes or suffixes that are familiar or lend an idea to the meaning of the term?
- Use the activities that follow to familiarize students with these terms.

DESIGN A PROMOTIONAL POSTER

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

OPERA ETIQUETTE

Students' job as audience members:

- **MAKE YOUR SCHOOL PROUD** by being an excellent audience member – please be quiet and listen carefully. Remember you are seeing a live performance, not watching television or a movie. The performers can see and hear you (as can other audience members).
- **LAUGH IF IT IS FUNNY**
- **CLAP AT THE END** of the performance to show how much you liked it. If you really enjoyed it, you can shout “BRAVO” or “BRAVA” – which means “great job!”
- **HAVE FUN!**



Students at the Cobb Energy Centre clapping and laughing while watching the Student Short performance of *The Daughter of the Regiment* in 2018. (photo: Jeff Roffman)

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WHO'S WHO & SYNOPSIS



The Atlanta Opera's 2016 mainstage production of *The Pirates of Penzance* at The Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre. (photo: Jeff Roffman)

WHO'S WHO

THE PIRATE KING The largely unsuccessful leader of the Pirates of Penzance

RUTH Frederic's life-long caretaker and a member of the Pirates of Penzance

FREDERIC An unlucky pirate apprentice; he falls in love with Mabel

MAJOR-GENERAL STANLEY A general in the British Army

MABEL The youngest daughter of Major-General Stanley; she captures the heart of Frederic

SYNOPSIS

Time: During the reign of Queen Victoria

Place: A sunny seashore on the coast of Cornwall, England

SCENE 1

On the coast of Cornwall, a merry band of pirates, known as the Pirates of Penzance, are having a party to celebrate the twenty-first birthday of Frederic, the pirate **apprentice** of the crew. Their leader, the Pirate King, congratulates Frederic on being a loyal pirate all these years, then Ruth explains that Frederic was never supposed to be a pirate. She tells the Pirate King that it was her mistake that brought him to the pirates for Frederic's father had asked her, as the boy's caretaker, to apprentice his son to be a ship's pilot; however, she mistook Frederic's father's instructions and apprenticed the boy to a pirate instead.

This day, being is Frederic's twenty-first birthday, means that at twelve o'clock midnight, his apprenticeship officially ends. Frederic tells the pirates that once his

apprenticeship is over, although he loves them all, he will devote his life to stopping all pirates because **piracy** is wrong. Frederic invites the pirates to join him and leave behind their life of crime, but the Pirate King refuses and explains that he will remain a pirate forever.

SCENE 2

Frederic leaves the pirates to start his new life as a respected member of **society**. He happens upon Mabel, who is enjoying the fresh air and beauty of the sea. He is struck by her song and beauty and interrupts her to ask if she would marry him. He explains that though he was once a pirate, he is now a **reformed** man. Mabel happily accepts.

Major-General Stanley, Mabel's mother, arrives and declares that she refuses to allow her daughter to marry a pirate. Frederic explains that he has given up his life with the Pirates of Penzance and wishes to start a new life. The Major-General has heard of the Pirates of Penzance, and knows they are soft-hearted about **orphans**. She tells Frederic that she was once

captured by the pirates but escaped by claiming to be an orphan. Suddenly the Major-General has an idea to get rid of the pirates for good. She informs Frederic that only after he eliminates the pirates can he marry Mabel.

SCENE 3

Ruth and the Pirate King find Frederic and tell him the shocking news that, although he has lived twenty-one years, he was born during a leap year on a February 29th – **Leap Day!** This means Frederic has only had five birthdays and is still **bound** to his pirate life! Frederic realizes he must, as always, honor his duty. So, he reveals that the Major General's is NOT an orphan! This infuriates the King and Ruth, who storm off to seek revenge on the Major General!

SCENE 4

Mabel arrives to discover Frederic about to return to his pirate life. Frederic explains that they may not get married until he reaches his 21st *birthday* ... not his twenty-first year. This saddens Mabel, but the two lovers promise to remain true to each other until the day Frederic is a free from his duty. Frederic runs off to find the pirates.

SCENE 5

Mabel searches for her mother to share the news. At once, the pirates spring up to capture the Major-General and Mabel! The Pirate King proclaims that they are rightfully a part of his crew because the Major-General lied about being an orphan. The Major-General and the pirates' fighting is interrupted by Mabel who tries to reason with her mother to end



Mabel and Frederic from The Atlanta Opera's 2016 production of *The Pirates of Penzance*. (photo: Jeff Roffman)

the senseless quarrel. Ruth steps in and explains that although the pirates have strayed over the years, they are still a family who care about each other; just like the Major-General and Mabel. This touches Major General Stanley deeply, and with Mabel's help, she welcomes the pirate band of Penzance as friends. Frederic and Mabel are engaged to be married and live happily ever after!

SYNOPSIS GLOSSARY

apprentice

someone who works for somebody else to learn that person's skill or trade

bound

required by law or duty to do something

Leap Day

February 29th; the extra day added during every leap year (every four years)

orphan

someone who has lost both parents

piracy

robbery of a ship at sea

reformed

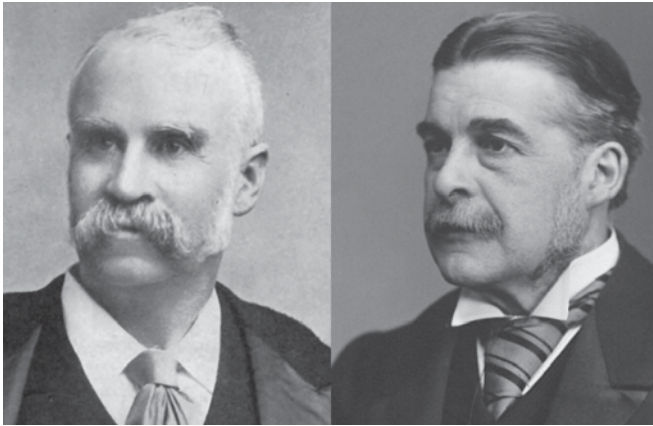
changed for the better

society

a community or group of people that share common traditions, institutions, and interests

stray

to wander away from a group or from the proper place



Pictured above are W.S. Gilbert, no later than 1903 and Sir Arthur Seymour Sullivan, 1898. (Image: Published in the U.S. before 1923 and public domain in the U.S. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arthur_Sullivan_1898cr.jpg)

THE COMPOSER & LIBRETTIST

Librettist **W.S. Gilbert** wrote the words and composer **Sir Arthur Sullivan** wrote the score for their fourteen operas, in a collaboration that lasted 25 years. Their quarter of a century long partnership began in 1871, when the pair were brought together by theatre manager **Richard D'Oyly Carte**. Gilbert and Sullivan are perhaps best known for their comic operas: *The Mikado*, *H.M.S Pinafore*, *The Pirates of Penzance* and *Iolanthe*.

THEIR WORKS ARE KNOWN AS OPERETTAS

Sitting somewhere between an opera and a musical, operettas, or 'light operas' flourished in the UK thanks to Gilbert and Sullivan's operettas, which are still popular with audiences today. Operetta tends to be shorter than opera and mix song with spoken dialogue, and impressive dance numbers. To put it simply, operettas can generally be described as light operas with spoken dialogue. In comparison, most musicals can be described as plays with singing.

SOME OF GILBERT'S FANCIFUL STORYLINES ARE BASED ON REAL EXPERIENCES

As the story goes, when William Schwenck Gilbert was just 2 years old, he was kidnapped by Italian bandits. His parents were on holiday in Naples when a couple of men approached the maid looking after baby Gilbert and demanded the child. For a small fortune, his parents were able to win back their son.

Whether the dramatic story is true or not, it had a profound effect on Gilbert's story-telling – he created Ruth, the foolish nurserymaid from *The Pirates of Penzance*, and wrote *The Gondoliers*, which tells the story of the heir to the throne, who was kidnapped as a baby.

SULLIVAN WAS A SUCCESSFUL COMPOSER IN HIS OWN RIGHT

He might not have been so well known, had he not collaborated with Gilbert, but Arthur Sullivan's credentials are still pretty impressive.

Aged 14, he was the first ever recipient of the Mendelssohn Scholarship, which allowed him to study at the Royal Academy of Music. His graduation piece, *The Tempest*, was so successful, Sullivan gained near celebrity status overnight. He went on to write a ballet, a symphony, and a cello concerto, not to mention his one-act comic opera *Cox and Box*.

From the English National Opera: *Beginner's Guide to Gilbert & Sullivan*
<https://eno.org/discover-opera/beginners-guide-gilbert-sullivan/>



The original facade of the Savoy Theatre facing the Embankment, London, England. (Image: PeoplePlay are the web arm of the London Theatre Museum. Reproduction is allowed for educational purposes. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1881_Savoy_Theatre.jpg.)

London's Savoy Theatre

As well as being a hotelier, composer and theatre manager, Richard D'Oyly Carte was also a talent agent and comic-opera enthusiast. The 'scheme of his life', as he called it, was to make comic opera as popular in England as it was in France. It was this desire that led him to bring Gilbert and Sullivan together.

In 1881, after nearly ten years of collaboration, Carte decided that he would open his own theatre to showcase the works of Gilbert and Sullivan. This led to some of Gilbert and Sullivan operas becoming known as the 'Savoy Operas' – a branch of comic operas developed in 19th London.

When it was built, the Savoy Theatre was at the forefront of innovation. Carte and his manager, George Edwardes introduced numbered seating, free programs, and a no tipping policy for the cloakroom. Most impressively, the Savoy Theatre was the first public building in the world to be lit entirely by electricity. Thanks to this innovation, Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe* was one of the first ever productions to use electricity in the staging.



OPERETTA: noun

A short opera, usually on a light or humorous theme and typically having spoken dialogue

Operetta was developed during the middle of the 19th century to satisfy a desire for short, upbeat works instead of long, serious operas. Until operettas became popular, two kinds of opera existed: Tragic Opera and Comic Opera. However, comic opera wasn't necessarily funny! Comic operas meant that it showed everyday life in a realistic way, but could still have a tragic end.

Operettas were a huge success in England, due largely to the works of Gilbert and Sullivan. English operettas usually had a light-hearted plot with plenty of humor, shorter arias that were not so demanding on the singers' voices, lots of word-play (which sparked the popularity of the "patter song"), and divided responsibility of the storyline between singing and speaking which helped things to move along more quickly. Many Gilbert and Sullivan operettas are still performed today, and also helped inspire other kinds of compositions like musicals.

OPERA vs. OPERETTA

The difference between an opera and an operetta, or an operetta and a musical can be hard to define, and some composers might call their work one thing while everyone else calls it something different!

	OPERA	OPERETTA	MUSICAL
Subject	Typically serious or more complicated	Light and amusing	Serious or comedic Usually more believable or relatable
Length	Longer	Shorter	Long or short
Musical Characteristics	Completely sung; uses a more formal structure with arias and recitatives	Sung and spoken; still uses arias, recitatives, plus patter songs and musical parody	Sung and spoken; less formal structure; uses solos and dialogue instead of arias or recitatives
Dramatic Characteristics	Plot can move more slowly and develop character emotions	Plot moves quickly; characters are often silly or satirical; lots of wit and humor	Can be serious or humorous; plays with music and dancing despite being unrealistic

credit: St. Louis Opera Theatre

Opera is a dramatic story told through song, 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* (*Orpheus and Eurydice* - 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 GLOBE

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. *Giulio Cesare (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. *Il Barbiere Di Siviglia (The Barber of Seville - 1816)* by Gioachino 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 *Die Zauberflöte (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. *Norma* (1831) by Vincenzo Bellini is a popular example of bel canto.

GRAND OPERA 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)

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.



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*.



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!



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.



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.



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: Raftermen, Jeff Roffman)

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OPERA 101: IMPORTANT JOBS

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 in celebration of the opera's arrival. Performing at the Auditorium-Armory, the fabulous Fox Theatre, and the 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 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.



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)

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.

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SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

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



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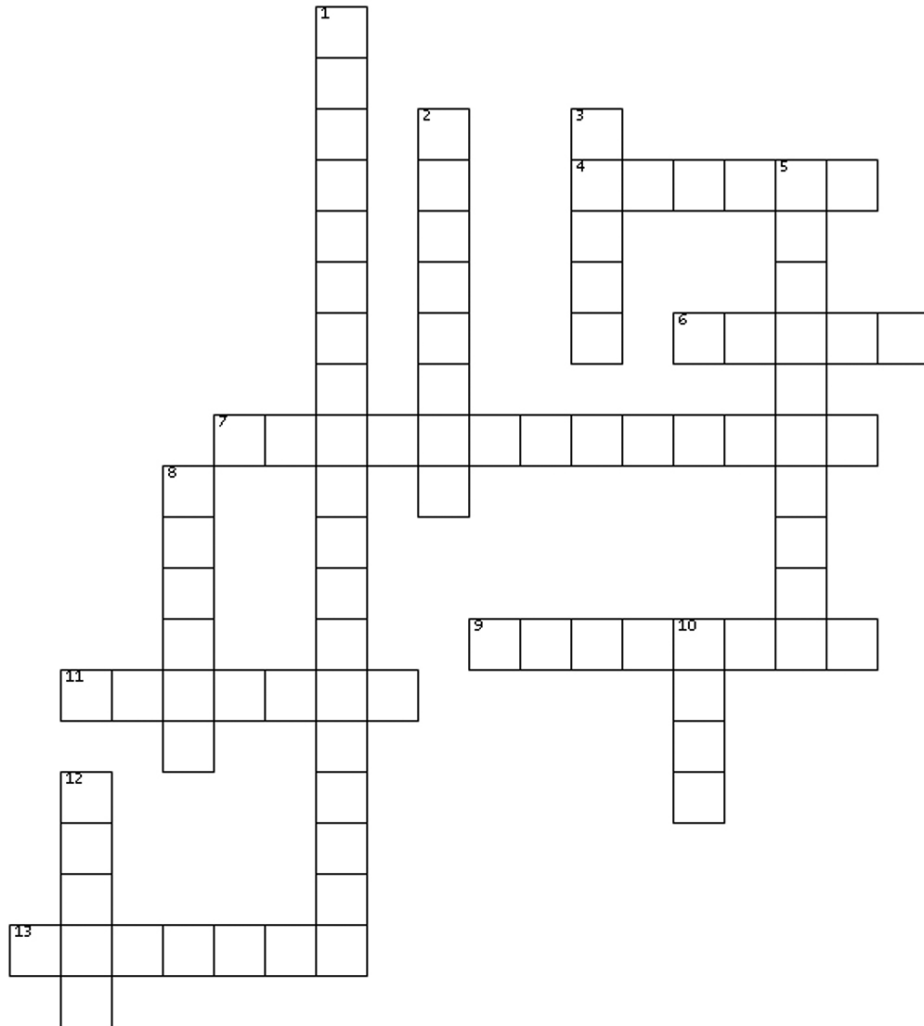
This program is supported in part by the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs.

This project is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

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CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Name: _____

Use the synopsis of *The Pirates of Penzance* to complete this crossword puzzle.



ACROSS

5. Maid on the ship of the Pirates of Penzance, and Frederic's childhood nanny
6. A general in the British Army
9. The youngest daughter of Major-General Stanley; she captures the heart of Frederic
10. February 29th; the extra day added during every leap year
11. A person who has lost both parents
12. someone who works for somebody else to learn that person's skill or trade

DOWN

1. The largely unsuccessful leader of the Pirates of Penzance
2. To wander away from a group or from the proper place
3. Robbery of a ship at sea
4. An unlucky pirate apprentice; he falls in love with Mabel
7. Changed for the better
8. To get rid of completely

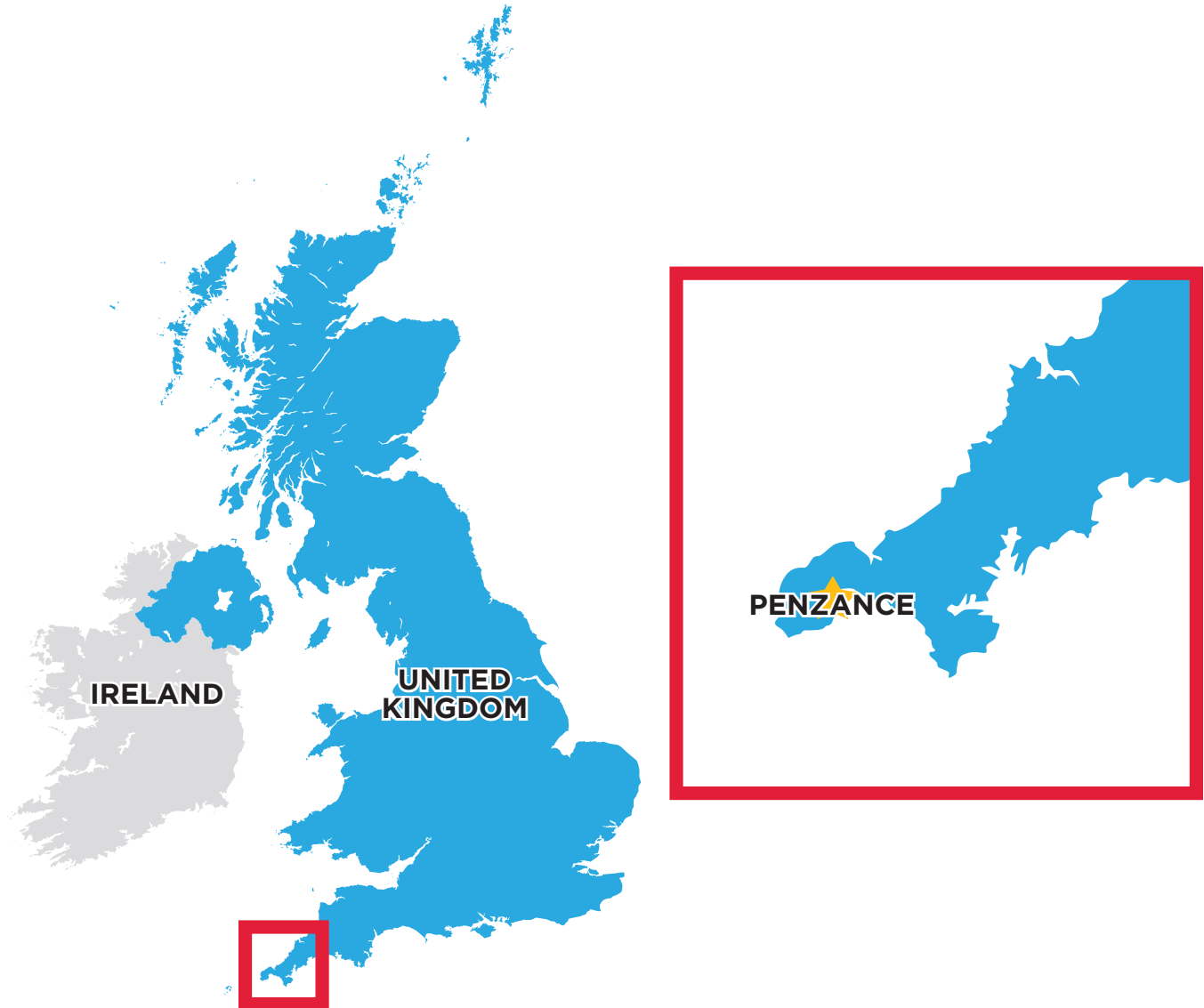
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WHERE IN THE WORLD IS PENZANCE?

Name: _____

Penzance is a resort in Cornwall, United Kingdom, and it is a port for the Scilly (pronounced “silly”) Islands. The main port in Penzance is called Mousehole. Penzance had become popular as a peaceful resort town, so the very idea of it being overrun by pirates was amusing to audiences when the operetta was written. However, the town was vulnerable to piracy. It was sacked and burned by the Spanish in the late 1500s and had to be almost entirely rebuilt. Until the 1700s it was subject to raids by Mediterranean pirates.



On your own, **research** the town of Penzance and answer the following questions:

1. Name a town, close to where you live, that is similar to the size and population of Penzance.
2. What is the distance in miles and kilometers from Atlanta, Georgia to Penzance?

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LEAP YEAR ACTIVITY

Name: _____

WHAT IS A LEAP YEAR?

It takes approximately 365.25 days for Earth to orbit the Sun — a solar year. We usually round the days in a calendar year to 365. To make up for the missing partial day, we add one day to our calendar approximately every four years. That is a leap year. In an ordinary year, if you were to count all the days in a calendar from January to December, you'd count 365 days. But approximately every four years, February has 29 days instead of 28. So, there are 366 days in the year. This is called a leap year

WHY DO WE HAVE LEAP YEARS?

A year is the amount of time it takes a planet to orbit its star one time. A day is the amount of time it takes a planet to finish one rotation on its axis. It takes Earth approximately 365 days and 6 hours to orbit the Sun. It takes Earth approximately 24 hours — 1 day — to rotate on its axis. So, our year is not an exact number of days. Because of that, most years, we round the days in a year down to 365. However, that leftover piece of a day doesn't disappear. To make sure we count that extra part of a day, we add one day to the calendar approximately every four years. Here's a table to show how it works:

YEAR	NUMBER OF DAYS IN THE YEAR	LEAP YEAR?
2020	366	YES
2021	365	NO
2022	365	NO
2023	365	NO
2024	366	YES

Because we will subtract approximately 6 hours — or 1/4 of a day — from 2021, 2022, and 2023, we will have to make up that time in 2024. That's why we have leap day!

ARE LEAP YEARS REALLY THAT IMPORTANT?

Leap years are important so that our calendar year matches the solar year — the amount of time it takes for Earth to make a trip around the Sun. Subtracting 5 hours, 46 minutes and 48 seconds off of a year maybe doesn't seem like a big deal. But, if you keep subtracting almost 6 hours every year for many years, things can really get messed up. For example, say that July is a warm, summer month where you live. If we never had leap years, all those missing hours would add up into days, weeks and even months. Eventually, in a few hundred years, July would actually take place in the cold winter months!

ACTIVITY

Try out these challenge questions! The year 1880 was Frederic's 21st year.

1. If he is 21 in 1880 ... What year was he born?
2. How many Leap Years are there from 1880 to 2022?
3. How many years would Frederic be alive in 2022?
4. How many birthdays (February 29th) would he have had by 2022?

credit: NASA Space Place

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PIRATES IN GEORGIA!

Name: _____

PIRATES!

The very word brings shivers to those who sail the seas. Popular movies romanticize their deeds, but to Georgia colonists in the mid-18th century, their exploits were to be feared rather than admired. Georgia's coast and coastal islands were havens where pirates could hide. Edward Teach, best known as the famous pirate "Blackbeard", was a fearsome pirate who sailed the along the Georgia coast raiding merchant ships during the early 18th century.



Blackbeard the Pirate, copper engraving, 1736. Joseph Nicholls (fl. 1726–55). (Image: Image: Published in the U.S. before 1923 and public domain in the U.S. Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Edward_Teach_Commonly_Call%27d_Black_Beard_\(bw\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Edward_Teach_Commonly_Call%27d_Black_Beard_(bw).jpg).)

LEARN ABOUT PIRATES IN GEORGIA!

PRE-K & KINDERGARTEN

Follow the link below for pirate activities and lesson plans for Pre-K & Kindergarten students.

<https://pba.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/334381b2-f394-4d8c-927f-234114bde17f/kidvision-pirate-ship-adventure/>

UPPER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Watch this video about the pirates of the Georgia coast!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NtjEdPYex-Q>

Discuss these questions about the video you just watched.

1. Who was the most famous pirate known along the Georgia coast?
2. What is the origin of the expression, "The cat's out of the bag?"
3. Why did pirates eat in the dark?
4. Why would governments commission privateers if their methods were the same as those of the pirates?

Compare & Contrast

1. Use what you learned about the pirates of Georgia to compare the Pirate King in The Pirates of Penzance to the famous pirate, Blackbeard.
2. What similarities and differences does the Pirate King have with famous fictional pirates you know, like Captian Hook or Captian Jack Sparrow?

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL

Watch this video about the pirates of the Georgia coast!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NtjEdPYex-Q>

1. Research some of the pirates that operated off the Georgia coast, including Blackbeard. Relate some of the stories of these pirates either orally (storytelling) or in a written report in your own words. Find pictures of these pirates to include in your report. Draw and display pictures of pirate ships.
2. Ships and other maritime vessels figure prominently throughout Georgia's history. Begin a list of ships and other maritime vessels (including pirate ships) that have a place in Georgia history and add to it as the study progresses. Include as much information as possible such as dates, historical era, purpose or accomplishment of each vessel and its relationship to Georgia history.

Credit: PBS LearningMedia: Georgia Stories - Pirates!
<https://pba.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/65a1f203-dce2-4cdc-b3ca-130526eafb66/georgia-stories-pirates/>

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TIMELINE: THE WORLD OF GILBERT & SULLIVAN

Name: _____

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 they live. For example, great changes were occurring in the world during Gilbert and Sullivan's time. Look over the timeline. How might these changes have affected the people then?



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

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PIRATE HAT CRAFTING

Make your own pirate hat!

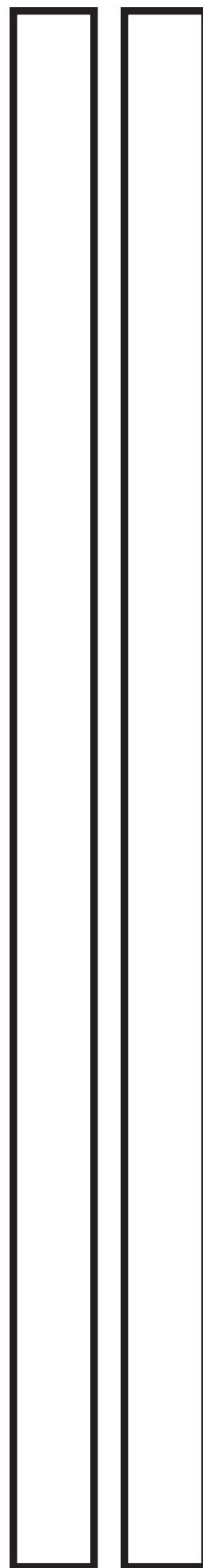
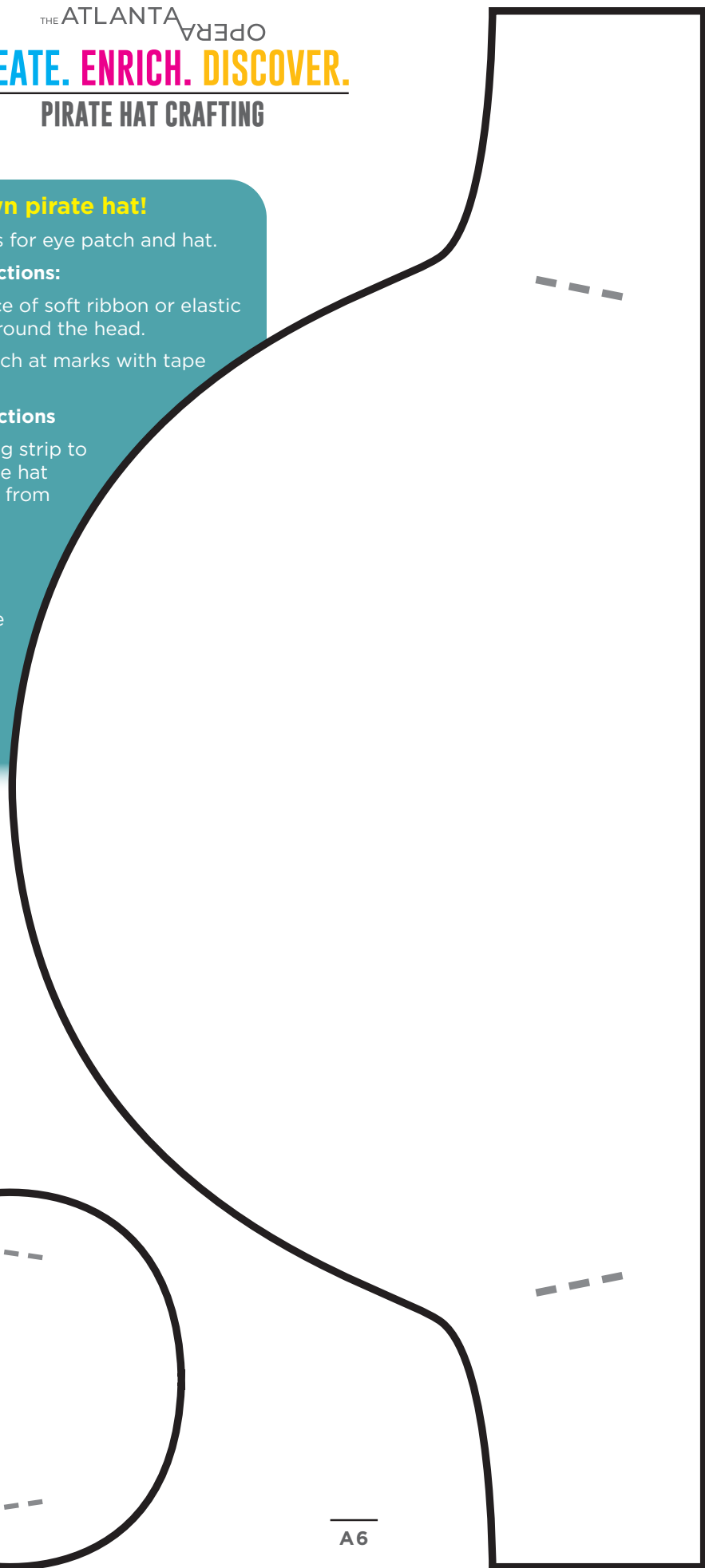
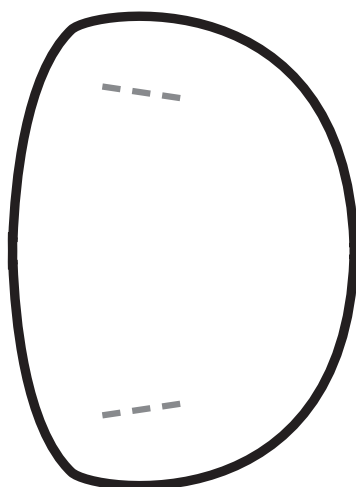
Cut out all pieces for eye patch and hat.

Eye Patch Instructions:

1. Measure a piece of soft ribbon or elastic to fit loosely around the head.
2. Attach eye patch at marks with tape or glue.

Pirate Hat Instructions

1. Attach one long strip to each side of the hat about 2 inches from the edge (on back side).
2. Tape strips together at the back of the head, or fasten with hair pins.
3. Trim excess.

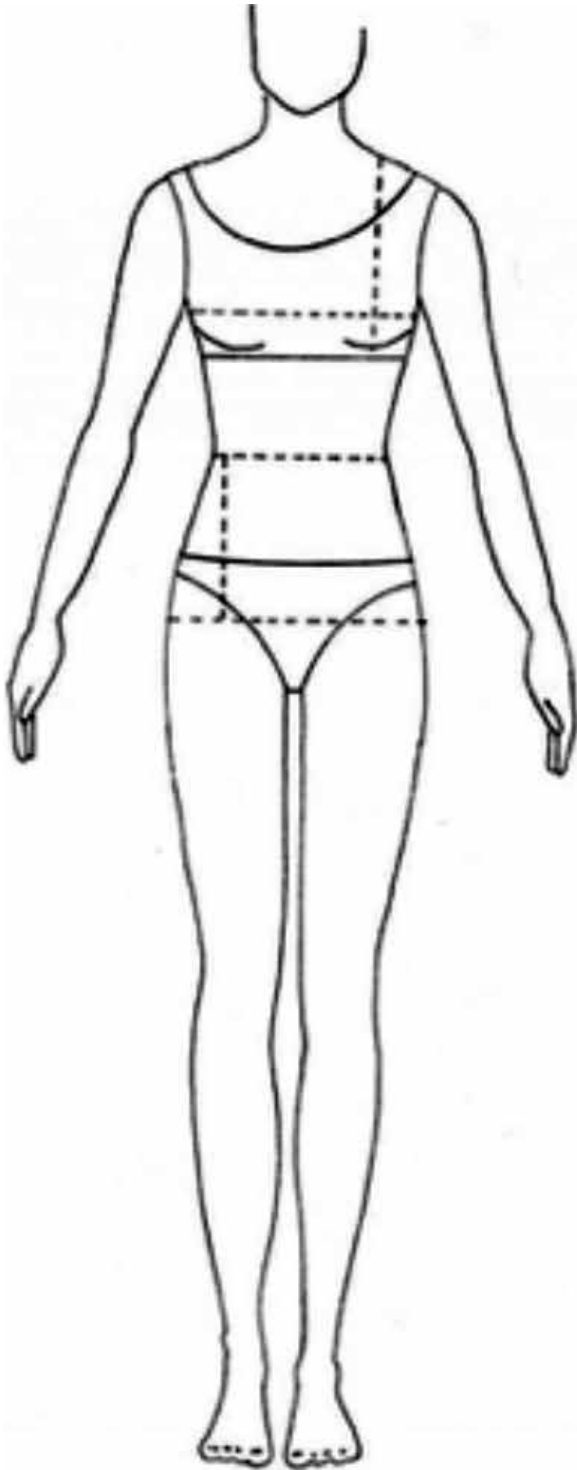


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COSTUME DESIGN

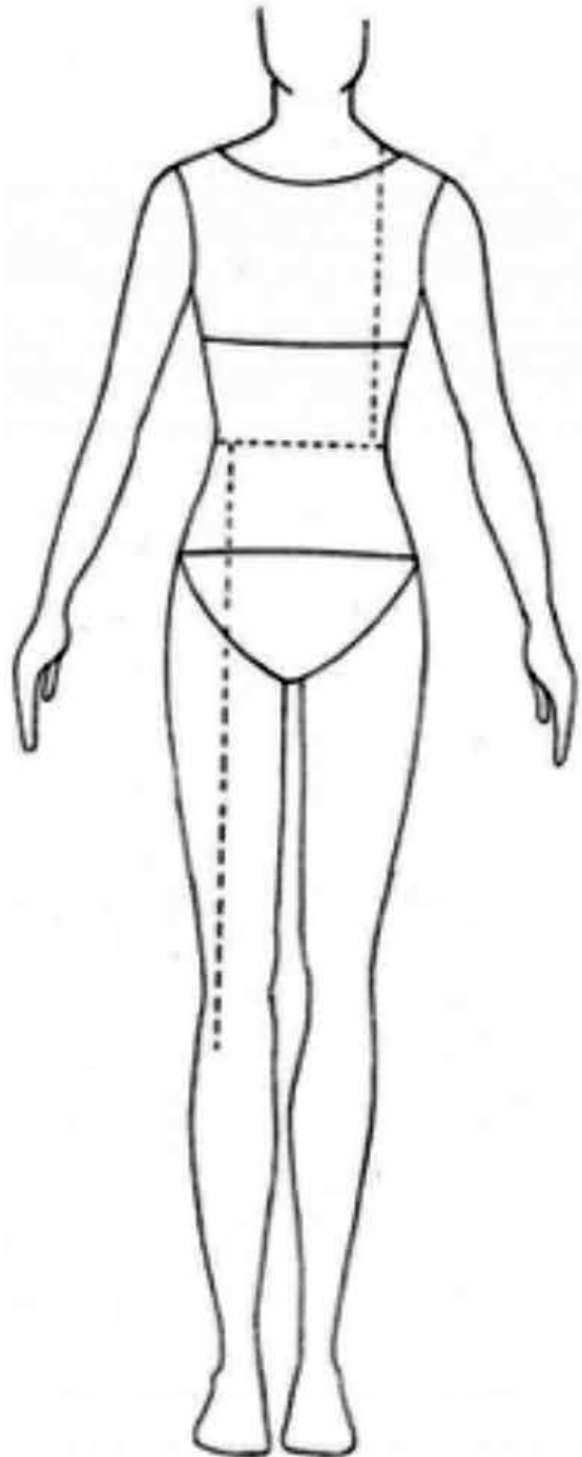
Name: _____

Draw a costume for any character in the opera. The costume can be traditional, modern or abstract, but you must explain why you made the choices you did. Include as many details as possible. If you'd prefer not to draw, feel free to decorate paper, then cut and paste it to the costume template.

FRONT



BACK



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IMAGINE A PLACE

Name: _____

Imagine you are the set designer for *The Pirates of Penzance*. Create your vision below for each scene where the opera takes place and draw each one as you imagined them:

Set Designers create 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.

THE PIRATE SHIP

THE SUNNY SEASHORE

THE MAJOR-GENERAL'S HOUSE

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FAN LETTERS: WRITE TO THE PERFORMERS

Name: _____

Using the words in the word bank below, write a letter to one or more of the performers from *The Pirates of Penzance*. What did you like most? What did the music sound like? Did the singers use props or costumes to help tell the story? Who was your favorite performer? If you prefer, draw your favorite part of the performance. Give the letter or the drawing to your teacher to send back to The Atlanta Opera.

Word Bank

Frederic
Pirate King

Ruth
Mabel

Major General
leap year

apprentice
acting

singing
opera

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REVIEW: WRITING ABOUT WHAT WE SEE & HEAR

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 *Hansel and Gretel* 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

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.

THE ATLANTA OPERA
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MATCHING OPERA VOCAB

Name: _____

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. |

CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRAINED VOICE

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

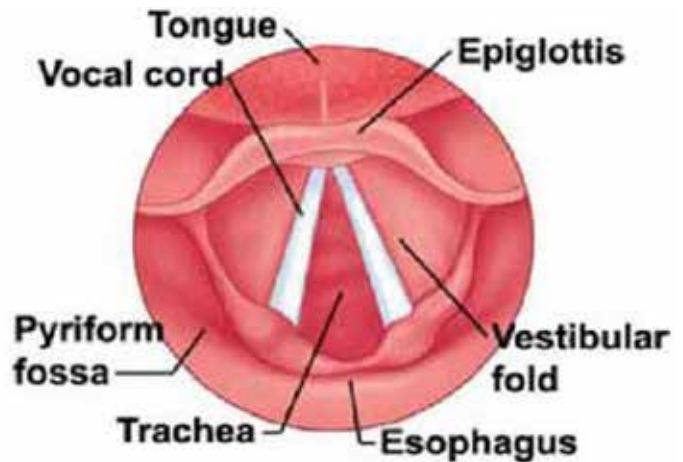
- an extensive range (the ability to sing both high and low)
- varying degrees of volume (loud and soft)
- resonance in the chest and sinus cavities (produces a full or round sound)
- an ability to project or fill a large space without amplification

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!

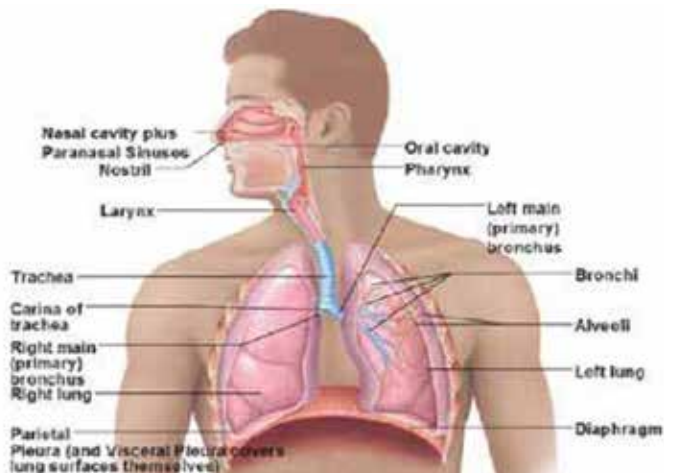
THE VOCAL CORDS

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 between 1 and 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 equal a lower voice.



BREATHING / SUPPORT

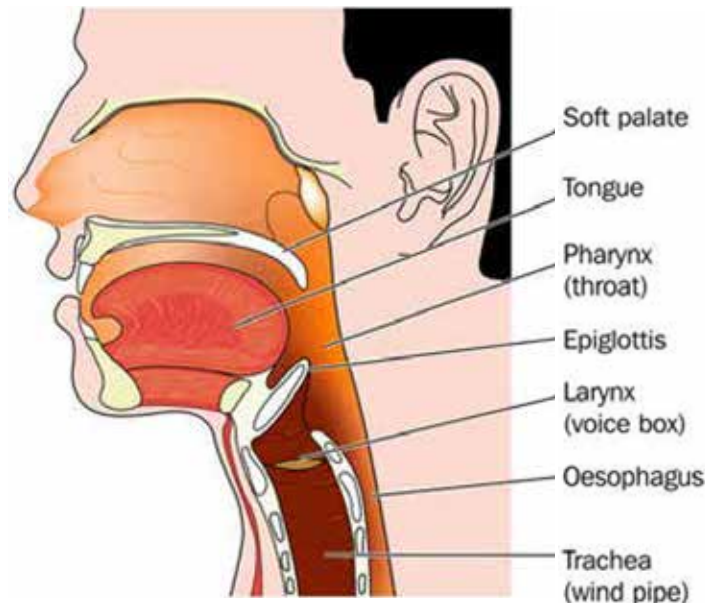
In order to sing long phrases with a lot of volume and a good tone, singers must breathe in a specific manner, making use of the entire torso area (lungs, ribs, diaphragm and viscera). As they breathe in, each part of this network does its job: the lungs fill up with air, which forces the ribs to expand 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 fatness in the low stomach or filling an inner-tube around their waist. Expelling the air, or singing, is essentially a slow and controlled movement of those muscles. If all of the air escapes from the lungs quickly, the tone of the voice will sound breathy and will lack intensity. Successful opera singers must be able to isolate the diaphragm and ribs, controlling the rate at which they return to their original positions. This allows for a consistent stream of air that travels from the lungs, through the larynx and out of the mouth.



RESONANCE

One of the most obvious characteristics of an operatic voice is a full, resonant tone. Singers achieve this by lifting their soft palate. This is a part of the mouth that most people don't ever think about and 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.

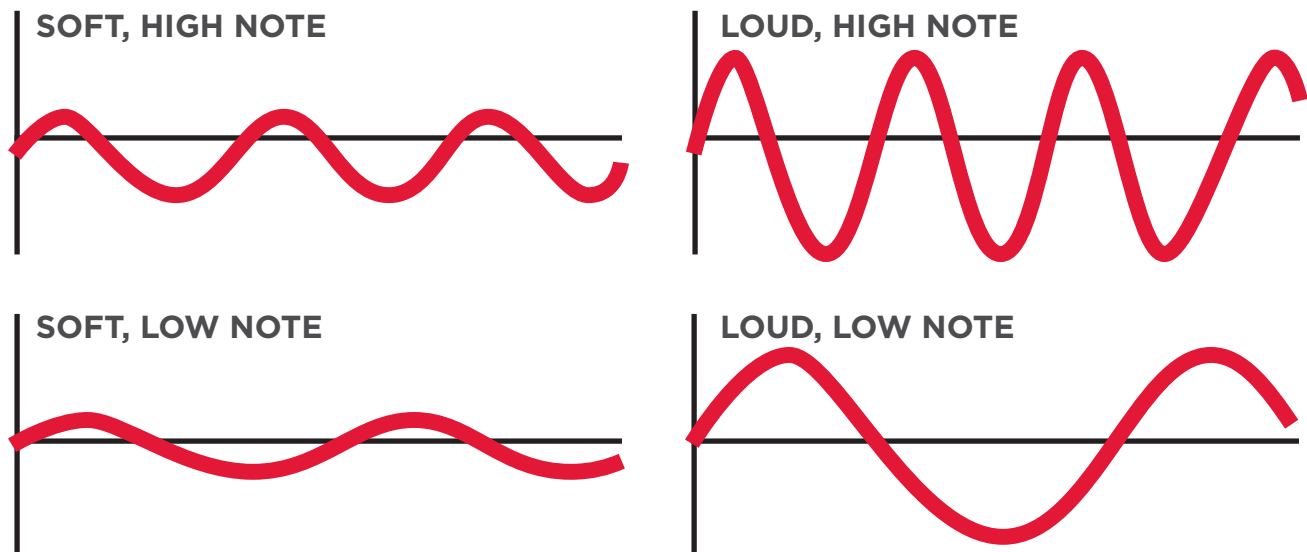
THINK ABOUT IT!

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 fast frequency. Low-pitched notes have a slow frequency. In opera, the highest pitches are usually sung by women. Very low pitches are sung by men.

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

This is what sound waves look like:

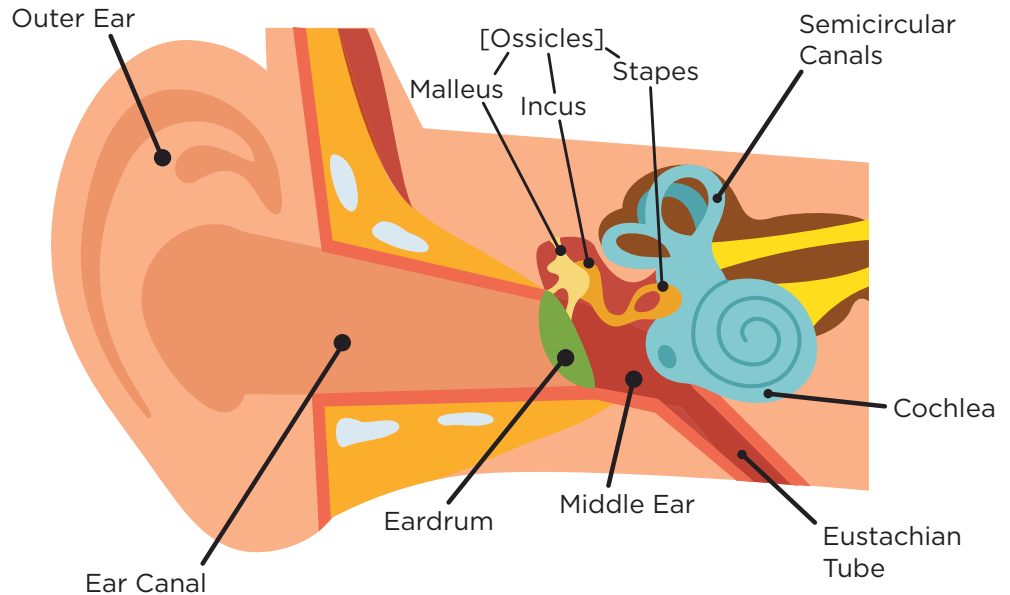


TRY THIS!

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

THE 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.

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.

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.

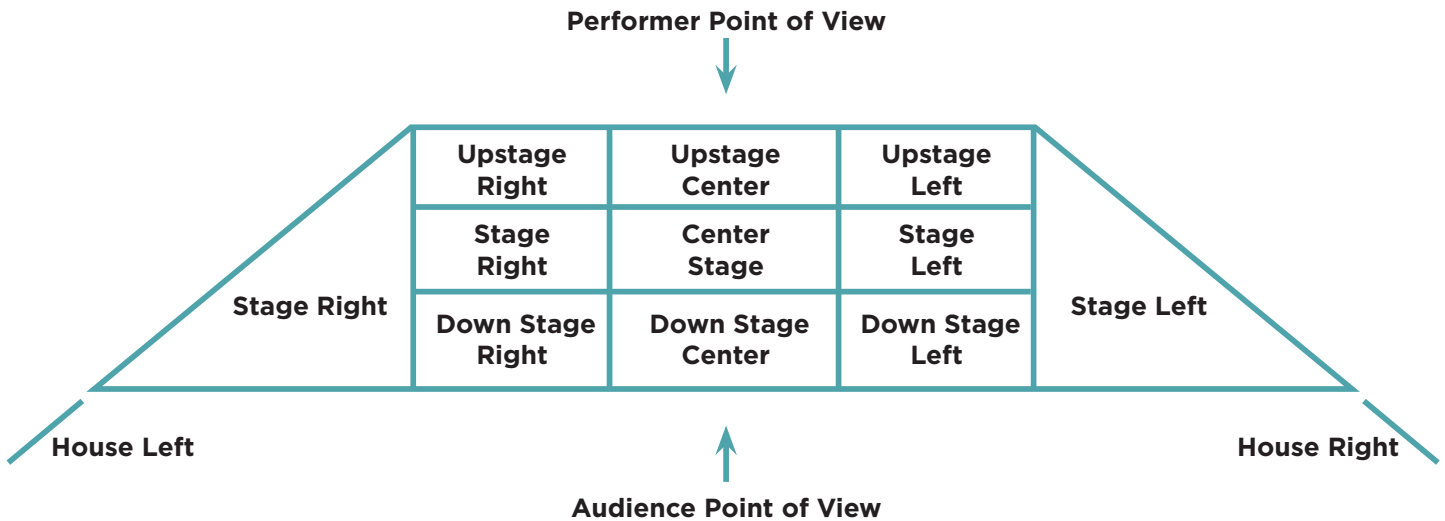
DID YOU KNOW? The ossicles are the three smallest bones in your body.
The stapes is the tiniest of all!

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!

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.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Pirates-of-Penzance>
- <https://eno.org/discover-opera/operas/introduction-pirates-penzance/>
- <https://eno.org/discover-opera/beginners-guide-gilbert-sullivan/>

RECORDING SUGGESTIONS

- <https://open.spotify.com/album/2NnIKbmjLpeG22oCtCOcU1>
- <https://open.spotify.com/album/4AhmDYT5kV54iNJZPlnQ2O>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rs3dPaz9nAo>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RfjAJn4SC-w>

ATLANTA OPERA RESOURCES

- <https://www.atlantaopera.org/opera101/education/>