

THE BILINGUAL

# BARBER

OF SEVILLE



THE ATLANTA OPERA  
**STUDIO  
TOUR**

# THE BILINGUAL **BARBER** OF SEVILLE

**FIRST PERFORMANCE**

Teatro Argentina, Rome, February 20, 1816

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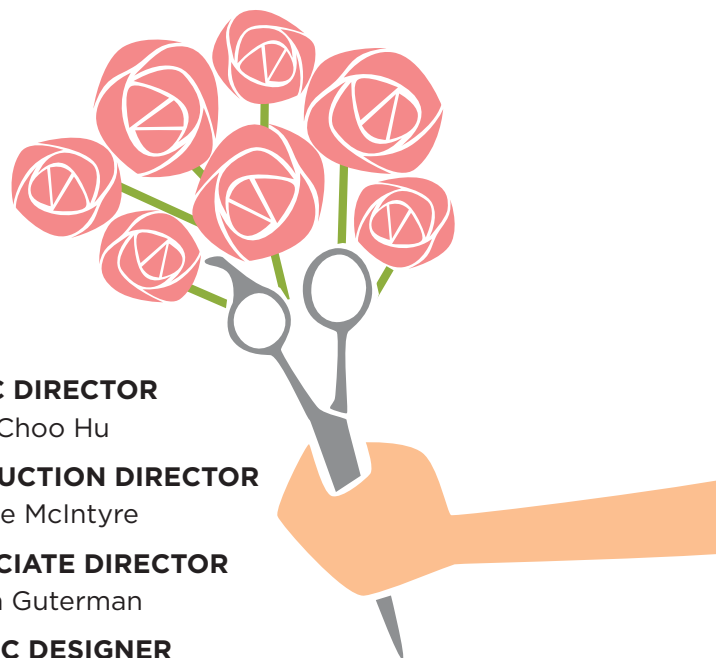
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THE ATLANTA OPERA  
**CREATE. ENRICH. DISCOVER.**  
**WELCOME**

Hello! 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. Thousands of students have been introduced to the artform through the Atlanta Opera Studio touring production. It is our intention for students to gain introductory knowledge about opera through the performance experience and accompanying educational materials.

This study guide has been developed to help you and your students explore *The Bilingual Barber of Seville*, 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 language arts, reading, math, science, problem-solving, and social studies. Our goal is to provide you with an innovative, multidisciplinary approach to teaching required skills and curriculum, including Georgia Performance Standards.

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!

What you can expect from the Atlanta Opera's performance of *The Bilingual Barber of Seville*:

- We will be performing a 50-minute opera in English and Spanish for your students.
- Our show requires attentive listening from the audience.
- The opera may take place in your school gymnasium or cafeteria rather than an auditorium, so students may be seated on the floor.
- You and your students will be invited to ask questions at the end of the performance.

Thank you again for allowing us to share this 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,

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



Students watching an Atlanta Opera Studio Tour performance of *The Magic Flute*. (photo: Jessica Klger)

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 Bilingual Barber of Seville*. 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 Glossary of Opera Terms and the Glossary of Terms for *The Bilingual Barber of Seville*. 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 on pages 15 and 27 to familiarize students with these terms.

## DESIGN A PROMOTIONAL POSTER

Create a poster to promote the upcoming performance of *The Bilingual Barber of Seville*. Display the poster in your school and send samples to The Atlanta Opera at [education@atlantaopera.org](mailto: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**
- **CRY IF IT IS SAD**
- **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!**

### For our teachers, parents, and students:

- Please, no photography or videotaping during the performance. It's against the union rules and can be hazardous to the performers!
- Please turn off all electronic devices.



Students at the Cobb Energy Centre clapping and laughing while watching an Atlanta Opera performance. (photo: Jeff Roffman)



## CAST & SYNOPSIS



*Chris S. Dills*

— BARBER OF SEVILLE —  
TAO STUDIO TOUR 2013-19

Concept sketch of the set for *The Bilingual Barber of Seville* for the Atlanta Opera Studio Tour. (sketch: Christopher S. Dills, 2018.)

### CAST

**ALMAVIVA** (al-ma-VEE-va)

A rich and handsome young nobleman smitten with Rosina.

**FIGARO** (FEE-ga-roh)

The town barber who always manages to be in the middle of everyone's plans and schemes.

**ROSINA** (ro-ZI-nah)

Young and beautiful, the cunning Rosina is in love with Almoviva, but is not aware of his true identity.

**AUNT BARTOLO** (BAR-toh-loh)

Rosina's guardian; an old Widow who hopes to make a fortune by forcing Rosina to marry the nephew of one her rich friends.

### SYNOPSIS

***Alta California, 1830.***

Rosina has moved to Alta California to live with her wealthy Aunt Bartolo. As the opera begins, Rosina has just arrived in town from Spain and she and Aunt Bartolo are seen on the street outside Aunt Bartolo's house. Rosina and a handsome young man (Almoviva) spy each other and are instantly smitten with one another. While Aunt Bartolo stops to adjust her shoe, Rosina tries to communicate with Almoviva to no avail. Aunt Bartolo whisks Rosina into the house. A few moments later, Rosina appears with a note, which she unsuccessfully tries to pass to Almoviva. Aunt Bartolo is suspicious and intervenes, ordering Rosina back into the house. Frustrated, Almoviva leaves, not noticing his old friend and confidant, Figaro, who has seen everything.

Figaro introduces himself, declaring that he is so much more than a barber! He knows everything, sees everything, and can solve any problem—that is why he is in such demand. Almoviva a wealthy ranchero, who wants for nothing, explains that he is in love with Rosina—but Figaro already knows. As they are talking, Rosina appears in the window of the house and waves a note, which she quickly drops to the ground, just as Aunt Bartolo begins to question her about what she is doing. She denies ever having a note, but she hurries off downstairs to find out what fluttered out the window. Almoviva has already scooped it up, before Aunt Bartolo arrives. Aunt Bartolo, assuming that the wind blew it away, shrugs and disappears back into the house.

Almaviva is overjoyed to receive Rosina's note, until he discovers that it is entirely in Spanish. Rosina, you see, speaks only Spanish, as she recently moved from Spain. But Almaviva, the son of a Mexican ranchero was born in Alta California, and his Spanish is very limited. Figaro, brilliant and bilingual translates the note, in which she professes her affection for Almaviva, but reveals that her Aunt Bartolo wants to marry her off to the nephew of one her rich friends. Incredibly moved, Almaviva serenades Rosina from the street.

Figaro pledges to help Almaviva win the girl of his heart (for a price!), and the two quickly come up with a plan to get Almaviva inside the house to speak with Rosina in person. They will disguise Almaviva as a soldier who has been ordered to stand guard at Aunt Bartolo's house.

Meanwhile, Rosina asserts her independence and swears that she will get the better of Aunt Bartolo. Figaro arrives to do Rosina's hair and tells her that the young man under her window is his friend, Lindoro Almaviva, who is very much in love with her. Almaviva arrives, disguised a soldier and bangs loudly at the door. Aunt Bartolo at first refuses him entry, but overwhelmed by his bluster, eventually is brushed aside. Rosina is startled (and delighted) to see him.

The situation becomes even more confusing as Aunt Bartolo enters. Frustrated and irritated, Aunt Bartolo finally shoos Figaro and the supposed soldier towards the door, but the "soldier" is really Rosina in disguise. Almaviva has changed costumes and appears now as Rosina's music teacher, much to Aunt Bartolo's confusion! Almaviva, in the role of music teacher, then gives a voice lesson to Rosina during which they flirt, while Aunt Bartolo dozes off.

Figaro enters to give Aunt Bartolo her haircut. As he does so, the lovers plot their escape. Aunt Bartolo overhears them and decides that she must marry Rosina off immediately. When she goes off for the marriage license, Figaro and Almaviva arrive with a ladder to spirit Rosina away. They climb in through the window. Aunt Bartolo returns for a moment, sees the ladder and takes it away, before hurrying off for the license. Meanwhile, Rosina seems upset when she sees Almaviva and accuses him of being a ladies' man, which her Aunt Aunt Bartolo told her. Almaviva protests his innocence and proves his devotion. As the three are about to make good their escape they notice that the ladder is gone. Aunt Bartolo returns with the license. The intended groom has not arrived and neither has the notary to witness the wedding. Figaro volunteers, and with some clever sleight of hand manages to marry Almaviva and Rosina, and convince Aunt Bartolo that all is well. They all live happily ever after.



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



## THE GREATEST OF OPERATIC COMEDIES

Why is Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* considered the greatest comedy in the operatic canon? From the first robust notes of the overture and ensuing trills of laughter in the string section, the audience can sense comedy in the air. Small wonder that animators have used *The Barber of Seville* in sketches with perennial children's favorites like Bugs Bunny, Woody Woodpecker, Daffy Duck, Porky Pig, and Tom and Jerry; even Homer Simpson appeared as "The Homer of Seville." This is music that makes an immediate and palpable comic impression.

So what goes into the comedic mix? We start with the story, which reimagines for the operatic stage the first of the Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais "Figaro plays"; *Le Barbier de Séville*, *Le Mariage de Figaro*, and *La Mère coupable*. The particularly witty and biting *Le Mariage de Figaro* was actually once banned due to its seditious content (after all, one couldn't have a servant outwitting the nobility!). Beaumarchais himself was something of a rogue – his biography reveals he was a "French playwright, watchmaker, inventor, musician, diplomat, fugitive, spy, publisher, horticulturalist, arms dealer, satirist, financier and



Rosina and Figaro from the Atlanta Opera's mainstage production of *The Barber of Seville* at the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre. (photo: Ken Howard)



Rosina and Figaro from the Atlanta Opera's mainstage production of *The Barber of Seville* in 1989 at the Alliance Theatre. (photo: Chip Simone)

revolutionary." The lively Figaro plays have all been set as operas; in addition to Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*, the best known are Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, and American composer John Corigliano's loose adaptation of *La Mère coupable* into *The Ghosts of Versailles*. Of the three, *The Barber of Seville* offers the most straightforward comedic plot, with its disguises, stratagems, pranks and nonstop witty banter.

The Atlanta production features a dynamic cast with impeccable comedic timing. A part of the magic lies in the cast's facility with patter. Patter is an essential element of *opera buffa*, or Italian comic opera. It's characterized by rapid-fire succession of single note rhythmic patterns, or quickly fitting a large number of words into a short amount of music gradually evolved from opera into operetta and musical theater. Gilbert & Sullivan and Stephen Sondheim later made it part of their own repertoire. You'll hear it first just minutes after the overture – "Figaro! Figaro, Figaro, Figaro!"

The most important element in the success of a comedic opera such as *The Barber of Seville* is the audience. Feel free to gasp in surprise, laugh, giggle, and even guffaw. The nonstop hilarity of this riotous comedy may well demand it.



*The Barber of Seville* is a prime example of the early 19th-century operatic style known as bel canto—in Italian, beautiful song or singing. Its most famous composers, together with Rossini, include Gaetano Donizetti and Vincenzo Bellini.

## BEL CANTO

### Characterized by:

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

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

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

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



From top to bottom: *Don Pasquale* (2017), *The Daughter of the Regiment* (2018), and *The Italian Girl in Algiers* (2013) are all examples of bel canto operas. (photos: Jeff Roffman)

Rossini's most popular opera owes a great debt to the Italian comic street theatre called *commedia dell'arte* (comedy of art). Performers playing stock characters would improvise dialogue based on one of a few sets of familiar scenarios. *Commedia dell'arte* enjoyed immense popularity in Italy in the 1600s. The companies that mounted these shows saw potential for international success and some of them left for German and French-speaking lands. France was the largest such market, and the Italian *commedia* troupes reached great fame in Paris, influencing French theatre. Beaumarchais, the French playwright of the late 18th century who wrote the play *The Barber of Seville*, had clearly absorbed much of the structure of *commedia dell'arte*: most of the characters in his play are modeled after *commedia* character archetypes.



zanni: Figaro

In *commedia dell'arte* there is typically a pair of lovers (*innamorati*) who strive to unite in marriage, but are foiled for a time by one or more elders (*vecchi*), possibly a guardian or an older spouse. Helping the young lovers is one or more servants (*zanni*), who are in turn modeled on the *facchini* or "handymen" who populated the piazzas of Italian towns. Figaro the barber is obviously a representative of the *zanni* character type. He is wily, acrobatic, inventive, and above all, capable of outsmarting everyone else.

For the most part, *commedia dell'arte* ceased to exist in Italy by the beginning of the 19th century, although not before making its mark on French plays that, in turn, provided the plots for a large number of Italian operas. *Commedia dell'arte* dealt with stories about love, lust, abduction and trickery, performed to great acclaim for the poorest members of northern Italian society. Opera, on the other hand, despite its attempts, never gained significant

## STOCK CHARACTER GROUPS

### The Servants, or *Zanni*

witty, resourceful, mischievous

### The Masters, or *Vecchi*

authoritative, villainous, selfish

### The Lovers, or *Innamorati*

romantic, naïve, impressionable.

Their relationship is typically the central plot, advanced by the antics of the *Zanni* and *Vecchi*.

popularity among working class audiences. The relationship between Italian opera, French theatre, and Italian *commedia dell'arte* is an interesting example of how different cultures influence one another. *Commedia dell'arte* began as a low-class entertainment, and became the basis for many works of theatre, opera, and literature of Western Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries.



innamorati: Almaziva & Rosina

Courtesy Canadian Opera Company  
 Images: published in the U.S. before 1923 and public domain in the U.S.



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**HISTORY OF BARBERS**

*The Barber of Seville is a comedy about a barber and jack-of-all- trades. He comes to town singing about how great he is in an aria called “Largo al factotum,” which means “make way for the top man.” This kind of singing is called patter, a style that requires our singer to sing many words very quickly and repeat them again and again. It is kind of like a rap song where he tells everyone about how he can do everything better than anyone else.*

Throughout history, barbers have often played a surprisingly complex and important role in society. Primitive communities were superstitious and the early tribes believed that both good and bad spirits could enter the body through the hairs on the head, and inhabit every individual. The bad spirits could only be driven out of the individual by cutting the hair, so various fashions of hair cutting in each tribe made the “barber” one of the most important professions.

Barbers were prominent figures in ancient Egypt as well as Greece. In fact, officials of Athens could be identified right away by the way their beards were styled. This made the barber shop a place to which statesmen, philosophers, poets, artists and bureaucrats would regularly travel, making it a center for political, social and sporting news.



A Greek barber shaving a man from 1818. (Image: Coloured aquatint by I. Clark after A.N.' by A. N.. Credit: Wellcome Collection. CC BY)



Figaro, performed by Sidney Outlaw, singing the “Largo al factotum.” (photo: Ken Howard)

The third century saw a change of fashion when the Macedonians, led by Alexander the Great, lost several battles to Persians due to their beards. Their opponents would pull on the beards, forcing Macedonians down and subsequently stabbing them. Alexander did not hesitate to order the de-bearding of his men, thus causing a major fashion trend in civilians.

Ticinius Mena is given credit for introducing the concept of “barbers” in 296 BC to Rome when he traveled from Sicily. Romans quickly incorporated this into their culture, even commemorating the first barber to come to Rome. The next beard fashion change occurred when Hadrian became emperor. He had grown a beard to hide the many scars on his face. Once again, popular fashion followed, and barbers had even more work in the styling of beard.

The idea of the barber as having extraordinary powers did not disappear even in middle ages. Bloodletting or draining blood from a body became a popular method for curing illness, and became one of the main duties of a barber. For the procedure, two bandages were used—one bandage to bind the arm before bleeding and another to be used afterwards. When not in use, the two bandages would be hanging on the pole outside the door as a sign. This is where the idea of the barber pole originated. Soon a similar pole was done in imitation and used as a constant “sign.”

Barber-surgeons began to thrive, as people from common folk to royalty made regular trips to get haircuts and to treat their illnesses. Barbers included dentistry as a part of their practice, infuriating the dentists. With the rise of scientific and technologic innovations by 1450 barbers were limited to shaving, hair cutting, toothdrawing, and bloodletting. There was an official division between surgeons and barbers in 1745 by sanction of the king in England that was also incorporated by Louis XIV causing all European barbers to be limited to hair care.

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ABOUT ALTA, CALIFORNIA

The Atlanta Opera Studio Tour's adaptation of Rossini's *The Bilingual Barber of Seville* is set in Alta California in the 1830s. This article will give you a little background about the region and its significance to U.S. and Mexican history.

## VOCABULARY

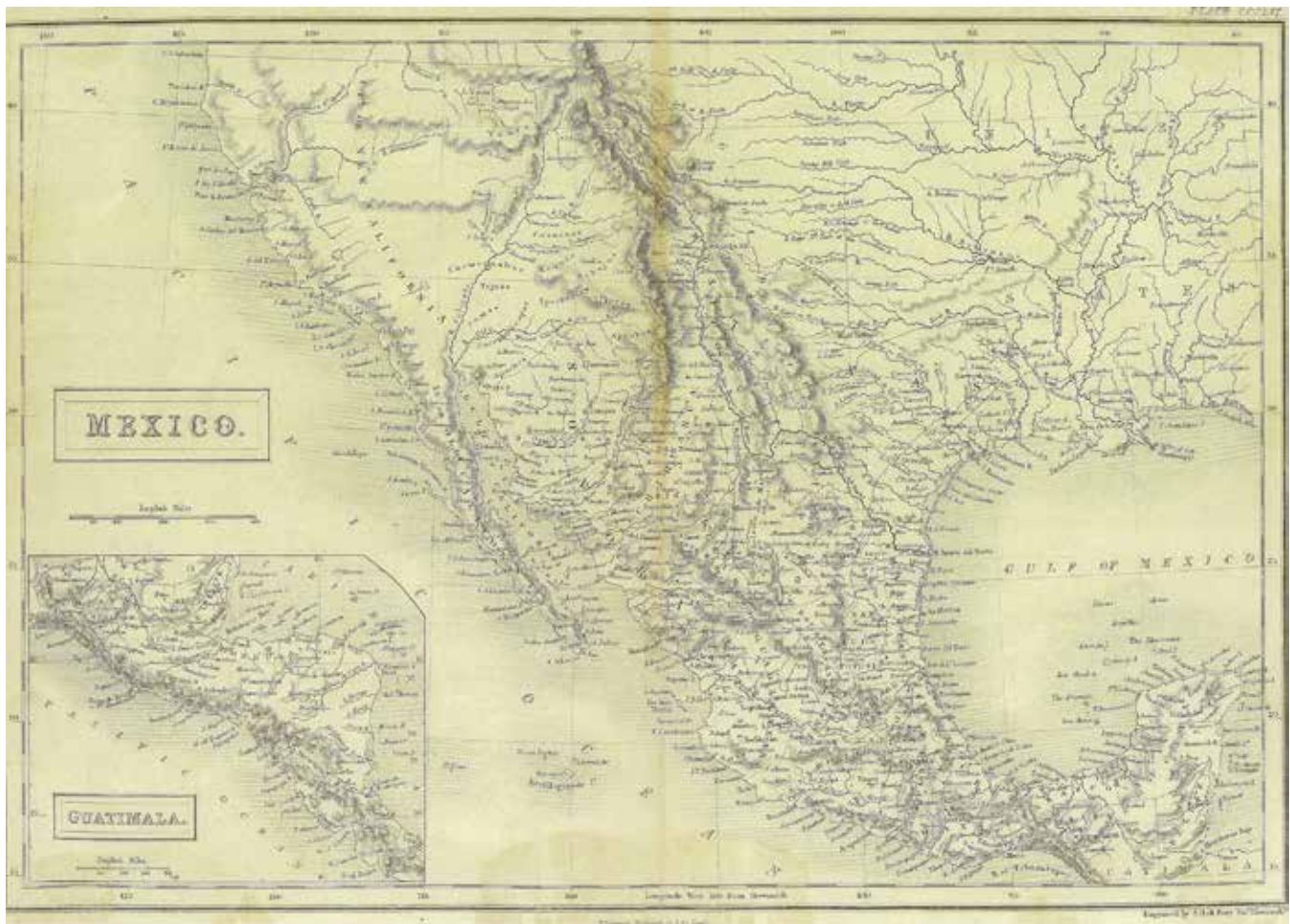
**Mission:** The Spanish government established missions with the help of various religious orders to convert the native populations to Catholicism and establish a foothold in new territories. Under law, after ten years the mission land was supposed to revert back to native control and ownership. Needless to say, this did not happen often.

**Pueblos:** Towns that have a small village center and are surrounded by fields. There are no outlying farms. The Spanish government established pueblos with the goal of populating them with Hispanic people.

**Ranchos:** Government land granted ranches. Both the Spanish and the Mexican governments granted ranchos. Those granted ranchos tried to establish themselves as a sort of Nuevo Spanish nobility in the settlement.

**Presidio:** A Spanish fort/military installation.

**Manifest Destiny:** The widely held belief in the 19th century United States that American settlers were destined to expand through out the continent, and that it was their duty to do so.



Mexico in 1838 included California, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas. (Image: From Encyclopedia Britannica 7th edition. Author: Wikimedia Commons user DigbyDalton/Morgan Wright)





A painting of Mission San Diego de Alcalá as it appeared in 1848 depicts the original bell tower. (Image: published in the U.S. before 1923 and public domain in the U.S. From *Mission San Diego* (1920) by Zephyrin Engelhardt.)

## HISTORY

Alta California (Upper California), or later, “Nueva California” has a rich history.

Alta California originated as a province of New Spain and then, after the Mexican War of Independence came under Mexican rule.

Spain was interested in Alta California as early as the 16th century, claiming it as part of their territory after early explorations. During the 17th century, many plans for colonization were made, but the efforts were haphazard and sporadic until the Spanish government learned of Russian interest in the area. This created a sense of urgency and pushed the Spanish monarchy to fund the first mission at San Diego in 1769. The first pueblo was founded in San José in 1777 and in Los Ángeles in 1781.

By 1804, there had been such an influx of Spanish people in Alta California that the Province of Las Californias (which included both Alta and Baja Californias) was divided in two to make administration easier. The northern part became “Alta California” or “Nueva California.” One can easily imagine that Rosina from *The Barber of Seville* immigrated to Alta California from her home in Seville, Spain. As Spanish settlers continued to move in, the Spanish government gave large land grants to retired soldados de cuera (or “leather-jackets”, soldiers who had served in the presidios of New Spain) to raise cattle and sheep. (Almaviva dresses up as a soldado to trick Uncle Bartolo into letting him in the house so he can meet with Rosina). These ranchos were largely worked by Native Americans, and the rancheros who owned the ranch

became sort of new nobility for the new world. (Even though Aunt Bartolo lives in the pueblo, she admires and wants to be like the rancheros and enter the nobility.)

Spain lost control of Alta California in 1823 to Mexico following the Mexican War of Independence which ended in 1821 after ten long years. Mexico was then in charge of land grants and ended up granting many more ranchos than Spain ever had. For instance, of the 800 ranchos awarded between 174 and 1846, Spain awarded only thirty while Mexico granted 770. The story of ranchos, then, is really a story of Mexico. Mexico retained control of Alta California until 1846.

During the Mexican period, more and more white immigrants from both the United States and Europe were pushing into the territory. (Almaviva’s family is an example of this. Even though Almaviva grew up in Alta California, and his extended family may have some Mexican roots, he is Anglo and doesn’t speak Spanish well.) American settlers and Californios begin to intermarry and the lines between the Spanish, Mexican, and European American peoples began to blur significantly. Eventually, however, tensions rose within the American and Mexican populations, and when the United States annexed Texas in 1846, the situation reached a crisis point. American settlers in Northern California created a militia and captured Mexican Sonoma. The Mexican American War in Texas had begun, and the United States’ expansionist fever was at its height with Manifest Destiny as its rallying cry.



An engraving showing a soldado de cuera. (Image: published in the U.S. before 1923 and public domain in the U.S. fascicule Del-Prado Osprey, *l’histoire de la cavalerie, la cavalerie de la Nouvelle-Espagne*. Author: Raymundus à Murillo)

Californios fought back, but ultimately lost the struggle. In 1848, California became part of the United States with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hildalgo.

## ALTA CALIFORNIAN SOCIETY

Among the richest and most influential citizens of Santa Barbara was the de la Guerra family. This family provides some context for the wealth and political influence of some of the families in Alta California, families that Almadiva's was patterned after.

José Antonio de la Guerra y Noriega was born in 1779 in Spain. When he was thirteen years old, he moved to Mexico City in New Spain to live with his wealthy uncle Pedro Gonzales de Noriega. José joined the frontier army in 1793 and in 1798 because a cadet at the Presidio of San Diego in Alta California. He rapidly and successfully moved up through the ranks, eventually becoming commandant of the presidio when he was twenty-seven. Eventually, this brilliant man became the commandant of the presidio at Santa Barbara. He also



José de la Guerra y Noriega, 1850. Leonardo Barbieri (Italian, 1810-c1873). Oil on canvas. (Image: Santa Barbara Historical Museum. <https://www.sbhistorical.org/>)



A Welcome to the Casa, 1932. W. H. D. Koerner (American, 1878-1938). Oil on canvas. (Image: Santa Barbara Historical Museum. <https://www.sbhistorical.org/>)

served in the Mexican National Congress. He served in the army for 52 years, and was affectionately known as El Capitán.

What really established his family, however, were land grants and a savvy understanding of real estate. Eventually he became owner of over 500,000 acres, made up of five ranchos throughout California. He and his wife had seven sons and four daughters. Their home, the Casa de la Guerra, was the political, social and cultural center of the pueblo of Santa Barbara. When California became a state, Don José's son, Don Pablo, became a state senator. His daughter, Ana Maria de Guerra, married a wealthy American industrialist and trader from New England. Her wedding celebration lasted three days!

Spanish and Mexican influence continued to run strong in the Southwestern United States throughout the early 20th century, and Mexican influence continues to contribute to the culture and history of the United States today.

*Courtesy Portland Opera to Go!*



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**SPANISH VOCABULARY & MATCHING**

In *The Bilingual Barber of Seville*, Figaro helps Almadiva translate a letter from his new love Rosina. Re-create the translation of Rosina's letter below by drawing lines to match the Spanish with Figaro's English translations.

Estimado  
admirador secreto,

Mi nombre es Rosina.

Soy huérfana y acabo de  
mudarme desde España para  
vivir con mi tía,  
la viuda Bártolo

Ella es muy antigua y no me deja  
hablar con ningún caballero ni me  
deja salir de la casa sola.

Creo que quiere casarme con el hijo  
de uno de sus amigos con el hecho de  
preservar la fortuna de la familia.

¡Pero sólo tengo ojos para ti!

She wants to marry me off  
to the son one of her friends  
so she can keep control of  
the family fortune.

But I only have eyes for you!

Dear secret admirer,

My name is Rosina

I'm an orphan  
and I've just moved here  
from Spain to live with my aunt,  
the widow Bartolo.

She's very old-fashioned  
and won't let me talk  
to any young men  
or go out of the house  
by myself.

## SPANISH VOCABULARY

### Admirador

admirer; fan

### Huérfana

orphan; a child whose parents have died, are unknown, or have permanently abandoned them.

### Viuda

widow; a woman who has lost her spouse by death and has not remarried.

### Antigua

old-fashioned; out-dated

### Casarme

to marry





Composer Rossini G 1865 by Carjat. (Image: published in the U.S. before 1923 and public domain in the U.S.)

## COMPOSER

### EARLY YEARS

The composer of *The Barber of Seville* was born in Pesaro, Italy, on February 29, 1792 (a leap year). For a time his parents earned a living traveling from one small opera house to another-his mother as a singer and his father as a horn player in the orchestra.

**GIOACHINO ROSSINI** was occasionally left behind with his grandmother and his aunt in Pesaro. He had only a little education in reading, writing, grammar and arithmetic. Much of the time he ran wild.

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

At 14, he began more formal music studies at the Conservatory. Although he rebelled against the strict textbook rules for music, he was a good student and even received a gold medal. At the end of his first year, he was chosen to write a cantata that was performed in public. Unfortunately, he had to leave the Conservatory after four years in order to earn money for his family. All his life he was to regret the fact that he did not receive more musical training.

### SUCCESS

Rossini's first paid composition was a one-act comic opera for a theatre in Venice. *The Marriage Contract*, written in less than a week, earned him one hundred dollars – an enormous sum for the 19-year-old Gioachino! The opera was a success, and he kept writing. His first major success came in 1812 with *The Touchtone*, which used musical pieces from his earlier opera. This comic opera was performed over 50 times in its first season alone. As a result of its success, he was paid to write three more operas for Venice. Speed was one of Rossini's most notable characteristics as a composer he had actually written five operas in that one year! Rossini's first serious opera, *Tancredi* (its overture borrowed from The



Tournedos Rossini with Truffle Madeira Sauce. (photo: kennejima ©2012, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/kennejima/7502133416/>)

Touchtone) opened in Venice in 1813, and became popular throughout Italy, Europe, and North and South America. With his comic opera *The Italian Girl in Augier*, the 21 year-old Rossini became the hit of Venice. Emperor Aurelian in Palmyra, and The Turk in Italy followed.

Rossini gave his name to many recipes, including a very famous dish called Tournedos Rossini. Great chefs dedicated dishes to him, such as Poached Eggs alia Rossini, Chicken alia Rossini, and Filet of Sole alia Rossini. A dessert dedicated to *William Tell* was a tart served on the opera's 1829 Paris opening night. Of course, it was an apple tart decorated with an apple pierced by a sugar arrow alongside a sugar crossbow.

Active in social and cultural affairs, Rossini remained in his later years as a Viennese newspaper had earlier described him as highly accomplished, of agreeable manner and pleasant appearance, full of wit and fun, cheerful, obliges, courteous, and most accessible. He is much in society, and charms everyone by his simple unassuming style. Thus we can see that Rossini was a person not unlike Figaro himself: resourceful, quick-witted, and friendly to all. By this time, of course, Rossini was enjoying the wealth he had earned by all his industry; portraits show him as plump, with a simple, kindly face, and a humorous twinkle in his eyes, looking rather like a prosperous businessman in his Sunday suit and wig!

### A GREAT LOSS

After a final illness, Rossini died in his summer home in Passy, outside Paris, on November 13, 1868. He was buried in Paris at a magnificent funeral attended by many admirers and dignitaries. Later, at the request of the Italian government, his body was moved to the Church of Santa Croce in Florence. After providing for his wife, he left most of his wealth to start a conservatory of music at Pesaro, his birthplace in Italy.

### LIBRETTIST

Italian librettist **CESARE STERBINI** (1784-1831) is best known today for his collaboration with Rossini on *The Barber of Seville*.

Sterbini was born in Rome. In addition to his work as a librettist, he was a poet and an official of the Vatican treasury, and was fluent in Greek, Latin, French and German. He wrote his first libretto, *Paolo e Virginia*, in 1812 for Vincenzo Migliorucci.



Librettist Cesare Sterbini. (Image: published in the U.S. before 1923 and public domain in the U.S.)

Sterbini first worked with Rossini on *Torvaldo e Dorliska* in 1815, replacing Jacopo Ferretti. He followed this with *The Barber of Seville* in 1816, adapted from Beaumarchais' play, which became Sterbini's greatest and most lasting achievement.

### PLAYWRIGHT

#### PIERRE-AUGUSTIN CARON DE BEAUMARCHAIS

was born in Paris on January 24, 1732, the son of a watchmaker. Beaumarchais left school at twelve to work as an apprentice under his father and learn the art of watch making, spent nearly a year researching improvements and at the age of twenty one, he invented an escapement for watches that is still used today. A dispute over the rights to the invention brought him to the attention of the King Louis XV of France who commissioned him to make watches for members of the royal court.

In 1755 Beaumarchais married a rich widow and adopted the name "Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais." A socially ambitious man, he believed the name sounded more aristocratic. His wife died less



Playwright Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais. (Image: published in the U.S. before 1923 and public domain in the U.S.)

than a year later, leaving him a fortune he soon lost. A natural inventor, Beaumarchais adapted his late wife's harp with the addition of a pedal, contributing to the development of the modern version of the instrument. In 1759 he became harp teacher to the daughters of the king.

In April 1764, Beaumarchais traveled to Spain; this would become a major influence on his later writings. He returned to France in March 1765 and became a playwright. *The Barber of Seville* was written in 1770 but not performed until five years later. During this time, Beaumarchais continued to be involved in legal disputes and, acting as his own lawyer, published his famous *Memoires* (1773), in which he cleverly attacked an unpopular parliament, making him an instant celebrity, for the public at the time saw Beaumarchais as a champion for social justice and liberty.

While Beaumarchais's literary career was taking off, he was secretly working as a spy for the king of France. He traveled to London, where he sent back reports about the British blockade of Boston Harbor. Later, Beaumarchais supported the American Revolution by organizing funds, arms, supplies and ships. The Revolution reached its crescendo in 1777. British forces surrendered at Saratoga to a rebel force largely clothed and armed by the supplies Beaumarchais had been sending; it marked a personal triumph for him and a turning point in the war. Beaumarchais wrote the sequel to *The Barber of Seville*, called *The Marriage of Figaro*. In this story, the Count and Rosina, now the Countess Almaviva, return with their trusty servant Figaro. The play hilariously mocks the upper class and it was banned by the king of France for four years because the content was seen as a threat to the monarchy. The play was finally performed and was wildly popular. Mozart composed his opera, *The Marriage of Figaro*, based on the play in 1786. Beaumarchais' plays were successful and popular, inspiring the revolutionary spirit that was sweeping through Europe.

Figaro the character was intended to be a self-portrait of Beaumarchais: a resourceful adventurer who is a witty, charming, ingenious philosopher with numerous skills. Beaumarchais was responsible for preserving the later works of the famous French writer, Voltaire, by purchasing the rights to the writer's works in 1779 and publishing them in Germany, as the works were outlawed in France. Beaumarchais was exiled during part of the French Revolution, but safely returned to Paris in 1796 where he died peacefully in 1799.



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**ROSSINI'S TIMELINE**

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

**1789**

The French Revolution begins with the storming of The Bastille.

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**1792**

Rossini is born on February 29th.

The first execution by guillotine takes place in France.

Gas lighting is introduced in England.

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**1793**

Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette executed.

Reign of Terror begins in France.

Eli Whitney invents the cotton gin, spurring the growth of the cotton industry and rise of slave labor in the U.S. South.

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**1801**

Beethoven composes the Sonata No. 14 in C sharp minor, popularly known as the Moonlight Sonata.

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**1806**

Rossini enters Bologna Academy and composes his first full-scale opera, *Demetrio e Polibio* (*Demetrius and Polybius*).

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**1810**

Rossini receives first commission for the opera *La cambiale di matrimonio* (*The Marriage Contract*).

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**1812**

Rossini's opera *La pietra del paragone* is produced at La Scala in Milan, Italy.

The Brothers Grimm fairy tale collection is published.

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**1813**

Rossini has his first international successes with his opera seria *Tancredi* and opera buffa *L'italiana in Algeri* (*The Italian Girl in Algiers*) opens in Venice.

Napoleon is imprisoned on the island of St. Helen.



1816

Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (*The Barber of Seville*) premieres in Rome, under the title *Almaviva, or the Futile Precaution*. It flopped.

The metronome is invented in Germany.

The stethoscope is invented.

---

1817

Rossini's *La Cenerentola* (*Cinderella*) premieres in Rome.

America purchases Florida from Spain for \$5 million.

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1822

Rossini marries Isabella Colbran.

The accordion is invented in Germany.

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1825

Rossini receives a 10-year contract from Charles X of France.

America's first fully-staged opera performance takes place at the Park Theater, New York City.

The American premiere of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*.

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1829

Rossini's last opera, *Guillaume Tell* (*William Tell*), premieres in Paris. Following this success, Rossini decides to retire from composing.

W.A. Burt invents the typewriter.

Louis Braille invents embossed printing, permitting the blind to read.

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1830

The French government collapses and Rossini loses his contract.

New Orleans burns down in the Great Fire of 1830.

---

1837

Rossini leaves Paris for Bologna, where he falls victim to a prolonged illness.

Oberlin College enrolls women, becoming the first co-ed college in the U.S.

# 1845

Isabella Colbran, Rossini's first wife, dies.

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# 1846

Rossini marries Olympe Pélissier.

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# 1848

Wisconsin becomes the 30th U.S. state.

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# 1855

Rossini and Olympe return to Paris.

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# 1865

Slavery in the United States is abolished.

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# 1867

African-American men are given the right to vote in Washington, D.C.

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# 1868

Louisa May Alcott writes *Little Women*.

The first professional baseball team is founded: the Cincinnati Red Stockings.

Rossini dies in Passay, France at the age of 76 on November 13th.

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## MAKE YOUR OWN TIMELINE!

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

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

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

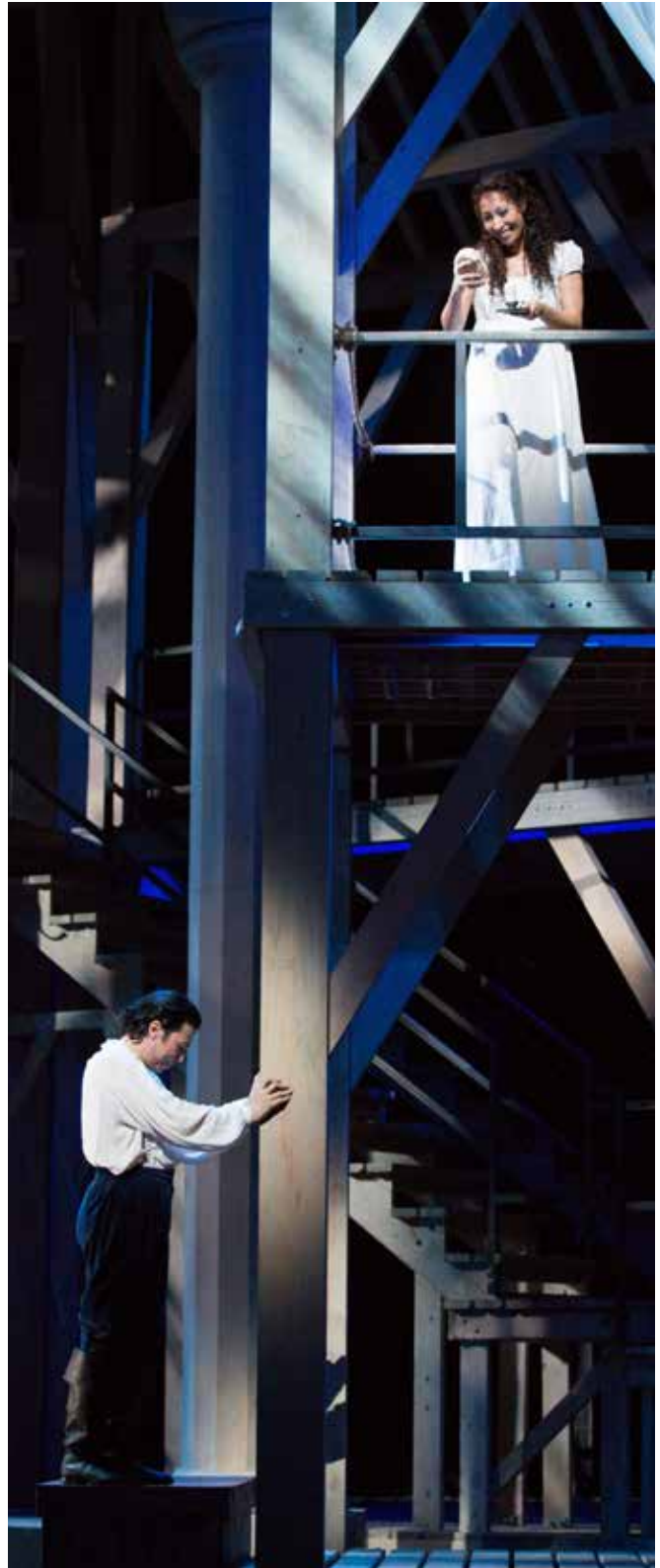
The concept of opera was developing many years before the first opera was written. Its beginning can be traced to the ancient Greeks. They fused poetry and music, creating plays that incorporate song, spoken language and dance, accompanied by string or wind instruments.

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 myth.

The first great composer of opera was Claudio Monteverdi. Some of his operas are still performed today.

German composer Christoph Gluck’s most famous opera, *Orfeo ed Euridice* (1762), marked a shift in importance from the performers to the drama. It also reduced the amount of recitative and laid the foundations for the progression of the art form.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was another prolific composer during this time and many of his operas like *Le nozze di Figaro* (*The Marriage of Figaro* - 1786) and *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute* - 1791) are still frequently performed around the world.



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 just 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 always the working class, such as maids, peasants, or servants, who keep busy getting the best of their employers. *The Italian Girl in Algiers* (1813) by Rossini is an amusing example of opera buffa.

**SINGSPIEL**, or "Sing Play," evolved in German speaking countries out of the comic opera tradition. It includes elements of comic opera, spoken dialogue interjected among the sung phrases, and often, an exotic or fanciful theme. Mozart's *The Magic Flute* (1791) is an example of this style.

**BEL CANTO** This Italian phrase means "beautiful singing". These operas grew from a style of singing emphasizing long phrases, breath control and flexibility in singing both loudly and softly. *The Barber of Seville* (1816) by Gioachino Rossini is a popular example of bel canto.

**GRAND OPERA** Spectacular opera. It is performed with elaborate sets and costumes. Many people are needed to make it happen. Grand opera involves royalty, heroism, an elaborate ballet scene, and can often last for several hours. Charles Gounod's *Faust* (1869 version) is an example of grand opera.

**MUSIC DRAMA** 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)



## 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 operas' 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 von Stade, Sherrill Milnes, Marilyn Horne, Plácido Domingo, Beverly Sills, Joan Sutherland, Richard



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)

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 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 to The Atlanta Opera.

In the fall of 2007, The Atlanta Opera was 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 2014-15 season, the company launched the acclaimed Discoveries series of operas staged in alternative theaters around Atlanta. In the 2016-17 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, 21<sup>st</sup> 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.



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 ATLANTA OPERA  
**CREATE. ENRICH. DISCOVER.**  
**IMPORTANT JOBS**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



The Stage Manager calls cues by watching monitors of an Atlanta Opera mainstage performance at the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre. (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.

THE ATLANTA OPERA  
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**OPERA GLOSSARY & VOCABULARY**

### **ACT / SCENE**

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

### **ADAGIO**

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

### **ALLEGRO**

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

### **ARIA**

A song for solo voice accompanied by orchestra.

### **BRAVO**

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

### **CADENZA**

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

### **CHORUS**

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

### **CRESCENDO**

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

### **DIMINUENDO**

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

### **DYNAMICS**

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

### **ENSEMBLE**

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

### **FINALE**

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

### **FORTE**

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

### **INTERMISSION**

A break between acts of an opera.

### **LEGATO**

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

### **LIBRETTO**

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

### **MELODY**

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

### **OVERTURE**

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

### **PIANO**

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

### **RECITATIVE**

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

### **RHYTHM**

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

### **SCORE**

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

### **TEMPO**

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

### **TIMBRE**

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



THE ATLANTA OPERA  
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**ACTIVITY: OPERA VOCABULARY**

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

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

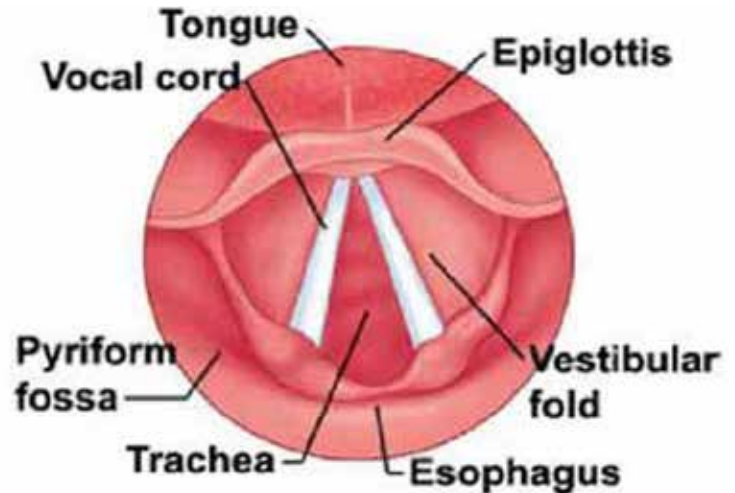
- an extensive range (the ability to sing both high and low)
- varying degrees of volume (loud and soft)
- resonance in the chest and sinus cavities (produces a full or round sound)
- an ability to project or fill a large space without amplification

## 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!

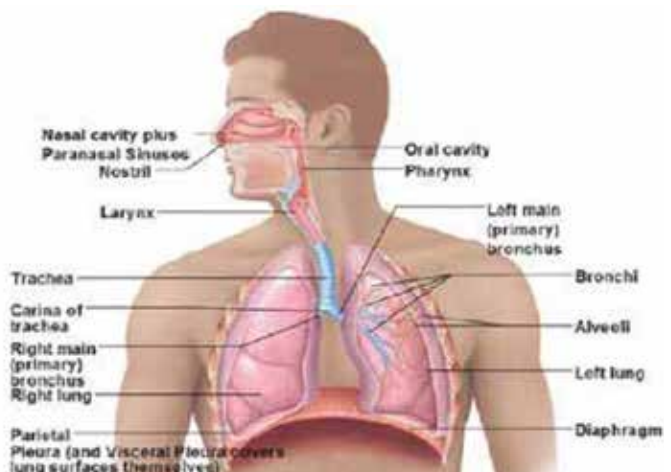
## THE VOCAL CORDS

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

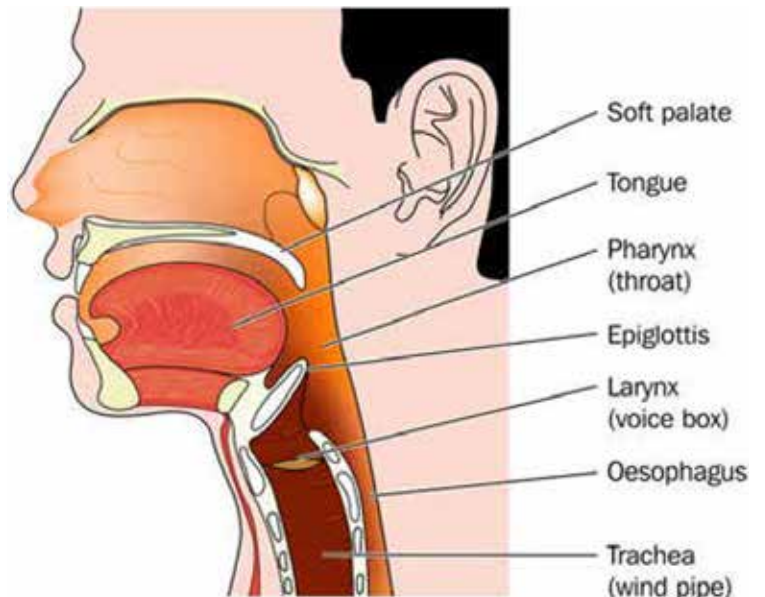
In order to sing long phrases with a lot of volume and a good tone, singers must breathe in a specific manner, making use of the entire torso area (lungs, ribs, diaphragm and viscera). As they breathe in, each part of this network does its job: the lungs fill up with air, which forces the ribs to expand 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 an old British woman. Lifting the soft palate is the foundation for the resonance in a singer's voice. With a lot of practice, a singer can lift his or her palate as soon as they begin to sing, without even thinking about it.



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



## 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."



**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: Tim Wilkerson, Ken Howard, Jeff Roffman)

## **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.

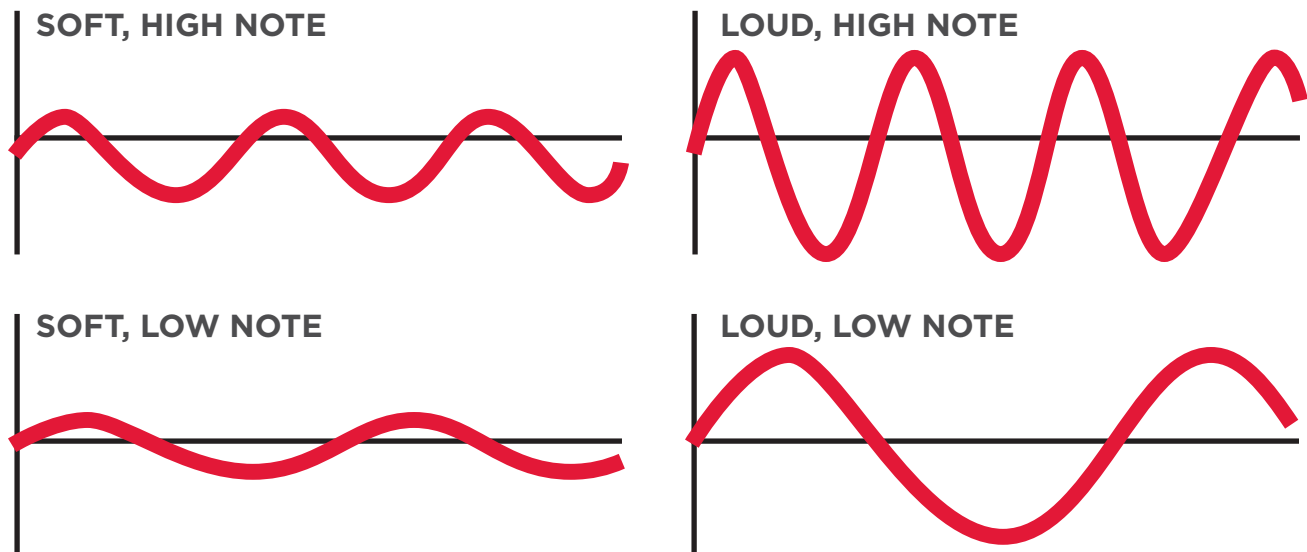
## **THINK ABOUT IT!**

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:

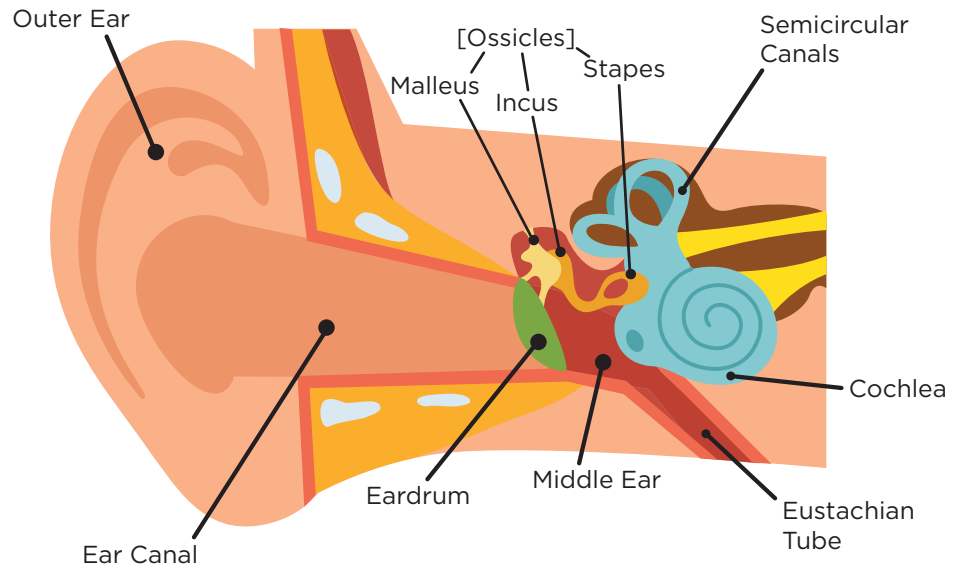


## **TRY THIS!**

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!



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

You are the opera critic. Think about the performance you just saw of *The Bilingual Barber of Seville* 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](mailto:education@atlantaopera.org)

THE ATLANTA OPERA  
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**ACTIVITY: WRITE TO THE PERFORMERS**

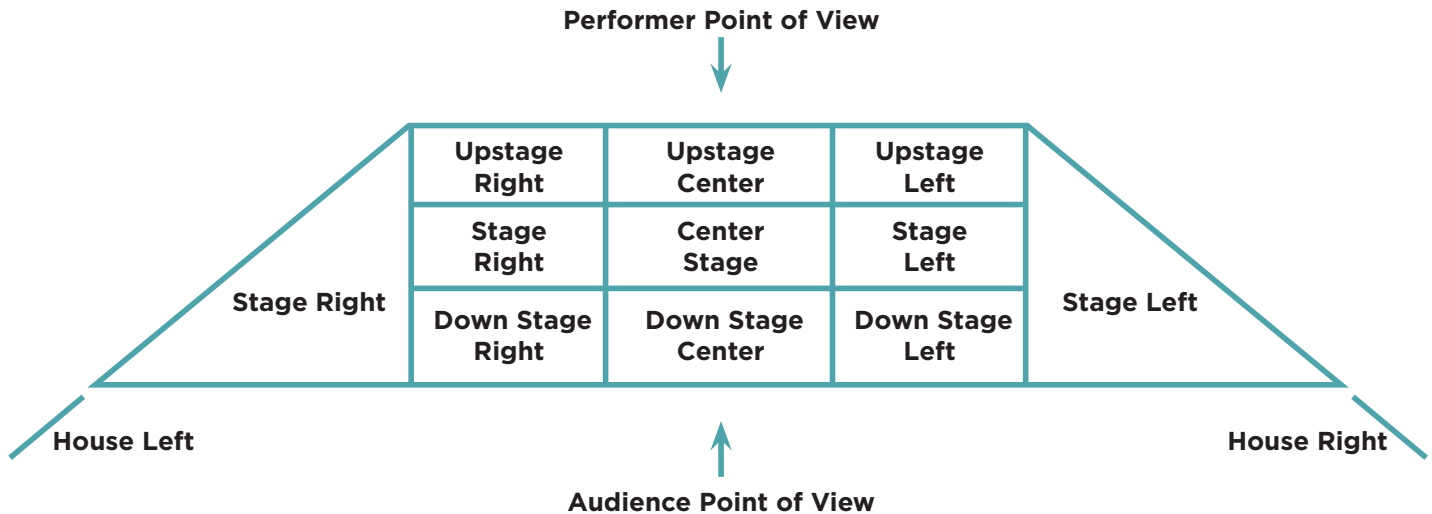
Try to use the words in the word bank below. What did you like most? What did the music sound like? Did the singers use props or costumes to help tell the story? Who was your favorite performer?

On a separate piece of paper, or at the bottom of this page, draw your favorite part of the performance. Give the letter and the drawing to your teacher to send back to us.

**OPERA WORD BANK**

Figaro, Rosina, Almaviva, Aunt Bartolo, Aria, Acting, Baritone, Soprano, Tenor, Duet, Composer

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.



Using the sketches provided, design costumes for Papagena & Papageno, two of opera's favorite characters from Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. Designed and sketched by Joanna Schmink, Costume Designer for The Atlanta Opera.

**ALMAVIVA**

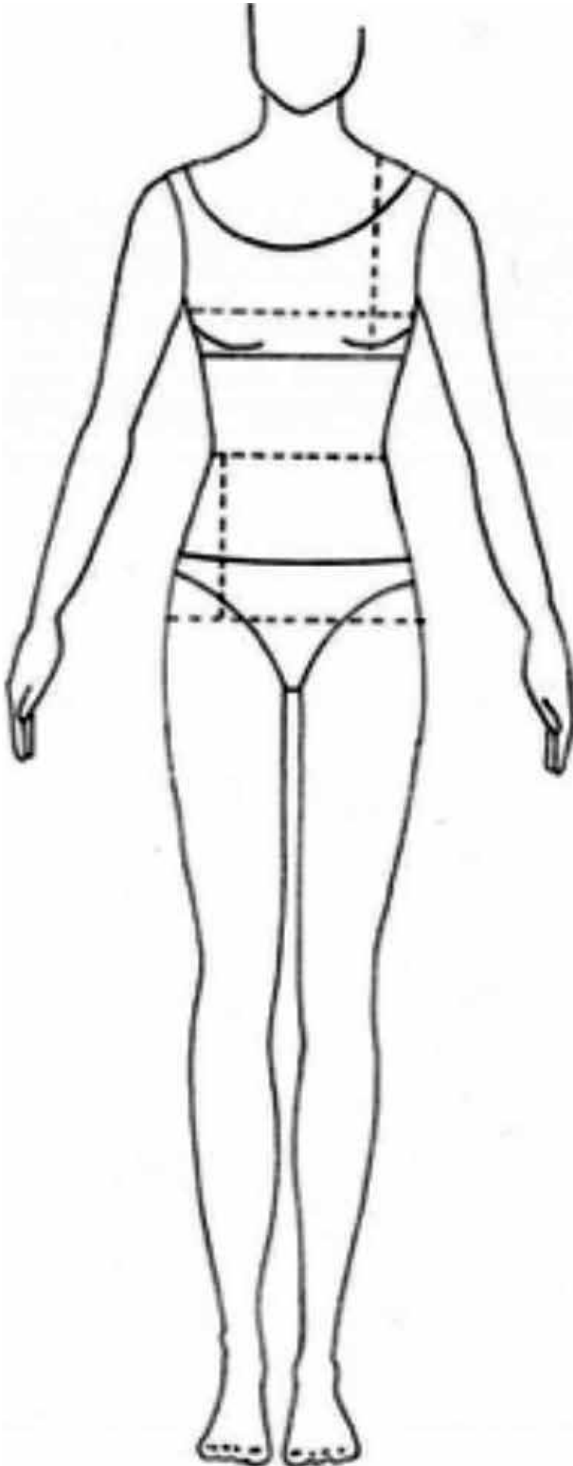
**ALMAVIVA DISGUISED  
AS THE MUSIC TEACHER**

**ALMAVIVA DISGUISED  
AS A SOLDIER**

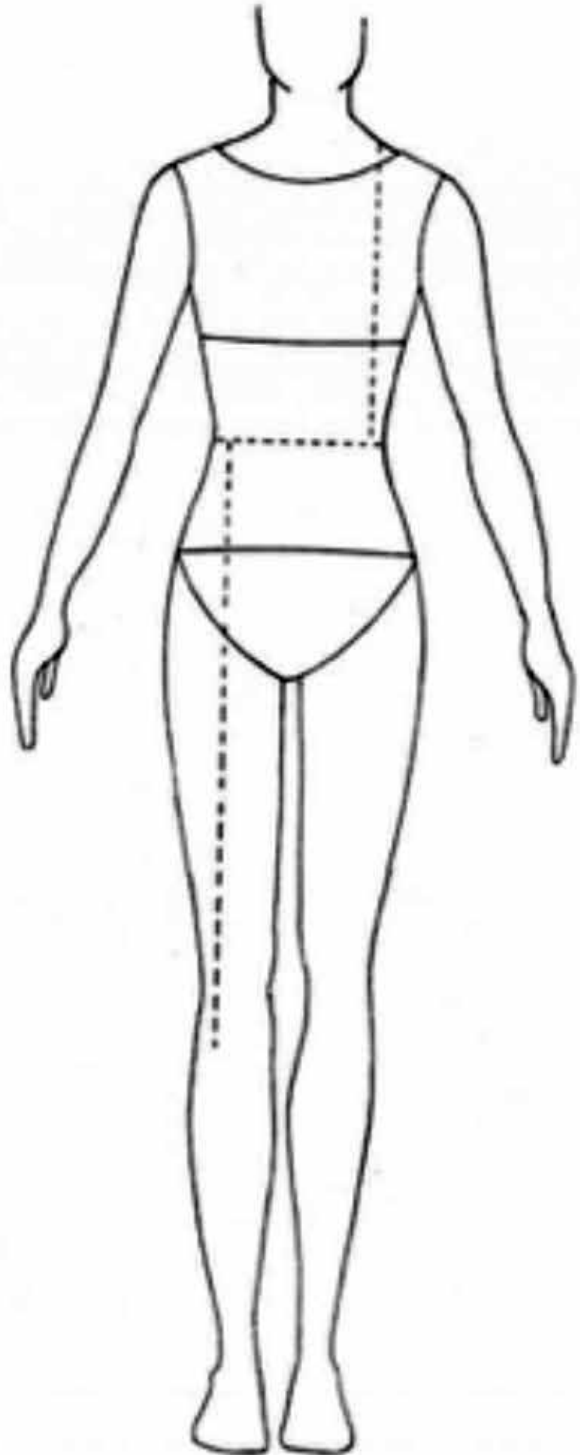


Draw a costume for any character in the opera. The costume can be traditional, modern or abstract, but you must explain why you made the choices you did. Include as many details as possible. If you'd prefer not to draw, feel free to decorate paper, then cut and paste it to the costume template.

## FRONT



## BACK



## ELEMENTARY LEVEL MATH PROBLEMS

1. Mr. Smith wants to buy 2 tickets to see *Madama Butterfly* at Cobb Energy Centre. The tickets are \$8.00 a piece. How much will the tickets cost Mr. Smith?
2. If you wanted to buy 5 tickets to *Così fan tutte* and they are \$3.00 each, how much will you spend?
3. You owe \$11.00 for two opera tickets. You give the ticket seller \$20.00. How much change should you get back?
4. Your teacher has \$100 to spend on tickets for *The Magic Flute*. Tickets cost \$5.00 for students and \$10.00 for adults. How many student tickets could she buy? How many adult tickets could she buy?
5. Your class is going on a field trip to see a performance of *Carmen*. There are 20 students going and 5 chaperones. Tickets cost \$7.00 for students and \$12.00 for chaperones. 1 chaperone gets a free ticket. How much will the tickets cost for field trip?

### ELEMENTARY ANSWERS

1.  $8+8=\$16$  or  $8 \times 2=\$16$
2.  $3+3+3+3+3=\$15$  or  $5 \times 3=\$15$
3.  $20-11=\$9.00$
4.  $100/5=20$  students,  $100/10=10$  adults
5.  $20 \times 7=\$140$  for students,  $4 \times 12=\$48$  for adults,  $140+48=\$188$  total

## MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL MATH PROBLEMS

1. Mr. Smith wants to buy 75 tickets to see *Madama Butterfly* at the Cobb Energy Centre. The tickets are \$12.00 a piece. How much will the tickets cost Mr. Smith?
2. You want to buy a block of tickets to *Così fan tutte*. Tickets are \$59.00 each but there is a special package offering a 20% discount for group sales. You have 64 people in your group. How much will you spend?
3. You owe \$111.00 for two opera tickets. You charge this on your credit card and there is a 2% fee. What is your total cost?
4. Your teacher has \$250.00 to spend on tickets for *Rigoletto*. Tickets cost \$7.00 for students and \$10.00 for adults. She needs to buy tickets for 29 students and 4 adults. Does she have enough money? Explain your answer.
5. Your school is going on a field trip to see a student matinee of *The Magic Flute*. There are 452 students going and 22 chaperones. Tickets cost \$7.00 for students and \$10.00 for chaperones. 1 chaperone per every 20 students gets a free ticket. How much will the tickets cost for field trip? How many free chaperone tickets will your group receive?

### MIDDLE SCHOOL ANSWERS

1.  $75 \times 12=\$900$
2.  $59 \times 64=\$3,776.00$   $\times 20\% = \$755.20$   $3,776.00-755.20=\$3,020.80$  total
3.  $111 \times 2\% = 2.22$   $111+2.22=\$113.22$
4. Yes  $29 \times 7=\$203$  students,  $10 \times 4=\$40$  adults  $203+40=\$243$
5.  $452 \times 7=\$3,164$  for students,  $18 \times 10=\$180$  for adults,  $3,164+180=\$3,344.00$  total - 4 free chaperones



Lessons included in the Opera Guide are designed to correlate with Georgia Performance Standards in English Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, Mathematics, and Fine Arts. Specific standards addressed are listed below with each corresponding activity or lesson.

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

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