



THE
ATLANTA
OPERA | STUDIO TOUR

GILBERT & SULLIVAN'S
THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE
OPERA GUIDE

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GAS  **SOUTH**



The Pirates of Penzance (photo: Ken Howard/Opera Theatre of St Louis)

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Hello! Thank you for inviting the Atlanta Opera into your school to perform for your students!

The Atlanta Opera Studio was founded in 1980 in an effort to teach students throughout the state of Georgia about opera through live performances and workshops. Thousands of students have been introduced to the art form through the Atlanta Opera Studio touring production. It is our intention for students to gain introductory knowledge about opera through the performance experience and accompanying educational materials.

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

What you can expect from the Atlanta Opera's performance of *The Pirates of Penzance*:

- We will be performing a 45-minute opera in English with English dialogue for your students.
- Our show requires attentive silence 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 community engagement programs. We look forward to hearing from you, your students, administration, and/or parents following the performance.

Sincerely,

The Atlanta Opera
Community Engagement Department
1575 Northside Drive, Suite 350, Atlanta, GA 30318

404-881-8801 education@atlantaopera.org
atlantaopera.org



The Pirates of Penzance (photo: Ken Howard/Opera Theatre of St Louis)

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

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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 you visit the Atlanta Opera.

START WITH THE STORY

In simple terms, an opera is just a story that is sung. Before the performance, review the plot synopsis of *The Pirates of Penzance* (page 8). Ask students to consider the story, characters, and setting of the opera. Use the following questions to lead a class discussion:

- Where is the opera set? What is the time period? Who are the main characters?
- What is this opera about? 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 (page 26) and the Glossary of Terms for *The Pirates of Penzance* (page 9). 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 10 and 27 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.



Students at the Cobb Energy Centre for an Atlanta Opera performance. (photo: Andrew Snook)

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

MYTH 1 OPERA IS BORING & STUFFY

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

MYTH 2 OPERA IS SUNG IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE SO I WON'T UNDERSTAND THE STORY

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

MYTH 3 I NEED TO WEAR A TUXEDO OR A BALL GOWN TO THE OPERA

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

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

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



Make-up artists and wig stylists work to ready singers for performances. (photo: Jeff Roffman)

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

1. Remember: the opera is a live performance. You can hear the performers on stage and that means they can hear you too! Please refrain from talking or whispering during the opera. It is distracting to others around you as well as to the singers. Please do not leave your seat during the performance.
2. Please turn off all cell phones, pagers, beeping watches and anything else that may go “beep” in the night!
3. Please do not take photographs or video or audio recordings of the performance. The light can affect the singers on stage.
4. If you like what you have seen and heard, let the performers know! It is okay to applaud at the end of songs, called arias, and at the end of a scene. You can even call out “bravo” (to the men on stage), “brava” (to the women) and “bravi” (for all on stage). And of course, a standing ovation is always welcome!



Major General - Jonathan Spuhler

Jonathan Spuhler is a baritone, which lies between the low basses and high tenors. He is from Ohio and went to school in Columbus, Ohio at Ohio State University. He was a microbiology major for three years before switching and getting his Bachelors in Music in voice performance. Jonathan chose to switch because of the stories that opera and art song tell; how anyone can relate to the expressions of humanity no matter where you come from.



Mabel - Julie Trammel

Julie Trammel, soprano, is excited to be making her Atlanta Opera debut singing the role of Mabel in the studio tour. Julie is an Atlanta native and has received degrees from both the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and Georgia State University in vocal performance and musical theatre. Julie has performed several favorite operatic roles such as Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*, Gilda in *Rigoletto*, and Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro*. She has also been featured as a soloist in concert internationally and on television. Julie discovered her love of performing as a child, appearing in school drama and choral productions.



Ruth - Heather Witt

Heather Witt is a mezzo soprano living in the Atlanta area but is originally from Indiana. She received her masters degree in vocal performance from Georgia State University and her bachelors degree from Millikin University. Heather saw her first opera at sixteen and knew, at that moment, she wanted to be an opera singer.



Frederic - Brendan Daly

Brendan Daly, tenor, is an Atlanta native and earned his BA in Romance Languages and Literatures from Harvard and his Master's from the Longy School of Music. Brendan has sung a wide range of roles across the country and internationally, specializing in Mozart, bel canto, and baroque repertoires, as well as operetta and contemporary works. A Young Artist in previous seasons at Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Opera Colorado, Tanglewood, Aspen, and the Boston University Opera Institute, Brendan has made recent principal appearances with the Lunenburg Academy in Nova Scotia (*Tancredi*), Atlanta Ballet (*Carmina Burana*), Opera Saratoga (*Trial by Jury*, *Le 66*, *The Mighty Casey*), and Opera Colorado (*Barber of Seville*).



Pirate King - Alan Higgs

Alan Higgs is a bass-baritone from Melbourne Beach, Florida and attended Florida State University for his Masters Degree and his Bachelors Degree is from University of Florida. He chose to be a singer because singing made him happy and music has always held a special place in his heart. He feels lucky enough to be able to follow his dream and perform around the country doing what he loves!



The Pirates of Penzance (photo: Ken Howard/Opera Theatre of St Louis)

The Pirate King and Ruth celebrate Frederic's 21st birthday as they land on a sunny seashore. Ruth explains that Frederic never was supposed to be a "pirate": she had misunderstood her former master's instructions to apprentice him to a ship's "pilot" until he reached adulthood. However, Frederic has been a loyal pirate all these years, but is no longer bound to the service of the Pirate King as of his 21st birthday. With but half an hour left to serve, Frederic warns the Pirate King that from now on, he will have no other choice than to devote himself to their extermination. He urges the pirates to join him and leave behind their life of crime. The King refuses and explains that he, himself, will remain a pirate forever.

Mabel enters to enjoy the seaside air. Frederic, in search for a wife, interrupts her and asks if she would consider marrying him. He explains that though he was once a pirate, he is now a reformed man. Mabel happily volunteers herself to be his wife. Frederic comes back to his senses and warns Mabel of the pirates. Mabel's father, Major General Stanley, enters and introduces himself. The Major General has heard of the pirates, and knows they are very soft-hearted about orphans, having been previously captured by the pirates and escaped by lying and claiming to be an orphan. The Major General instructs Frederic that only after he eliminates the pirates can he marry Mabel.

Ruth and the Pirate King find Frederic and tell him the shocking news that, although he has lived 21 years, he

was born in leap year, and, therefore, has only had five birthdays. This means that Frederic is still bound to serve the pirates! Despite being heart-broken, Frederic realizes he must, as always, do his duty. So, Frederic tells the Major General's terrible and guilty secret: he is NOT an orphan! This infuriates the King and Ruth, who storm off to seek revenge on the Major General! Mabel arrives to discover Frederic about to re-enter his pirate life. Frederic explains that they may not get married until he reaches his 21st BIRTHDAY...not 21st year. This plunges Mabel into despair but they promise to remain true to each other until the day Frederic is a free man. Frederic runs off to find the pirates.

Mabel leaves and hides as the pirates prepare for their conquest. The Major General appears in an upstairs window and the pirates hide. Mabel comes on to search for her father who has left his bedroom. The pirates spring up to capture the Major General and Mabel and the Pirate King proclaims they are rightfully his new enlisted crew because the Major General lied about being an orphan. The Major General does some quick thinking and proclaims the pirates must surrender in the name of the Queen! The Pirate King, being a loyal subject, agrees to yield at once to this higher claim. Ruth explains that the pirates are actually all British nobles who have gone wrong over the years. This touches Major General Stanley deeply, and, with Mabel's help welcomes the pirate band as friends, and Frederic as Mabel's betrothed!

indentures

a written agreement to serve someone for a specified length of time

apprentice

a person that learns a trade or skill under the guidance of an expert

duty

a moral or legal obligation

breakers

waves

gyrate

go round and round

sanctimonious

making a show of following the rules of good behavior

rivulet

little river, a brook

impunity

freedom from punishment, harm, or loss

felicity

great happiness

ward

a person (as a child) under the protection of a guardian

animalculous

tiny creatures, only seen through a microscope

quips

a witty or funny saying

paradox

a statement that may be true but seems to say two opposite things

ingenious

clever

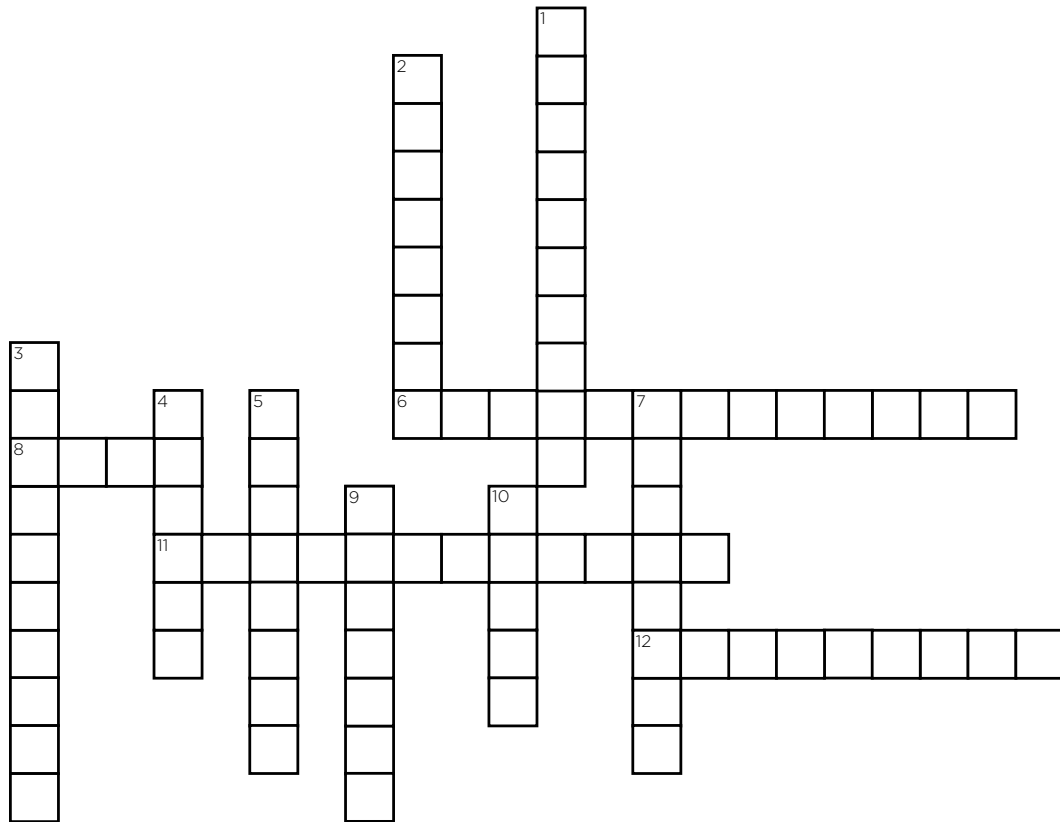
leap year

one year out of every four in which a day is added to the calendar year (February 29)

natal day

birthday

ACTIVITY CROSSWORD PUZZLE



ACROSS

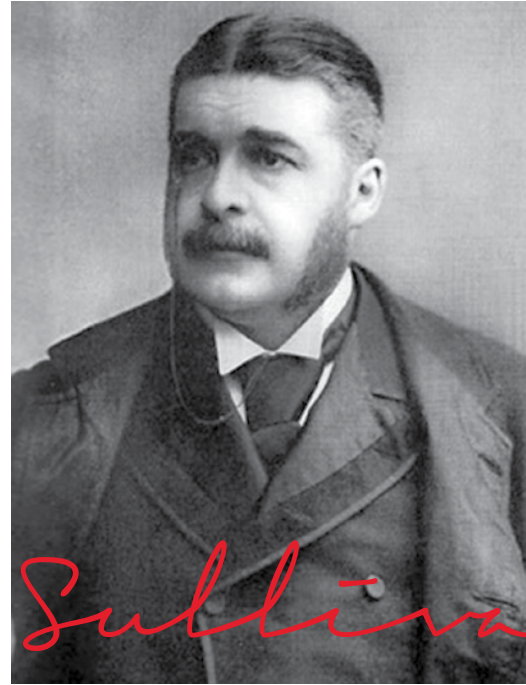
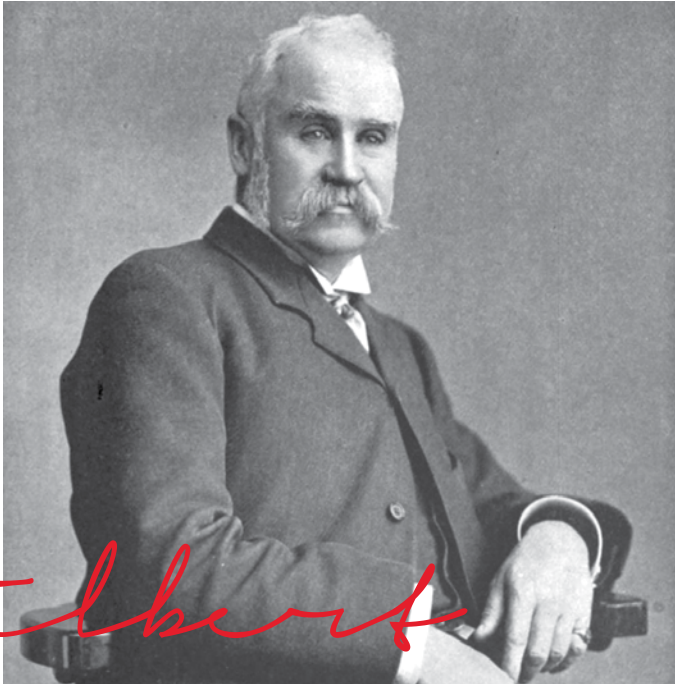
- 6. Making a show of following the rules of good behavior
- 8. A moral or legal obligation
- 11. Tiny creatures, only seen through a microscope
- 12. Clever

DOWN

- 1. A person that learns a trade or skill under the guidance of an expert
- 2. Another word for “waves”
- 3. A written agreement to serve someone for a specified length of time
- 4. Go round and round
- 5. Great happiness
- 7. Freedom from punishment, harm, or loss
- 9. A statement that may be true but seems to say two opposite things
- 10. A witty or funny saying

WORD BANK

INDENTURES, APPRENTICE , DUTY , BREAKERS, GYRATE, SANCTIMONIOUS, IMPUNITY, FELICITY, ANIMALCULOUS, QUIPS, PARADOX, INGENIOUS



Sir William Schwenck Gilbert was born in London on November 18, 1836, the son of a novelist and a descendant of the eminent scientist, Sir Humphrey Gilbert. After a brief career in the law, he became a journalist, drama critic, and playwright. His nonsense verses, which appeared briefly in *Punch* and afterwards in *Fun* magazine, were later published as *The Bab Ballads*, cleverly illustrated by Gilbert himself. (He also drew illustrations for his father's novels.) For the stage, he wrote comedies, sentimental dramas, librettos, and parodies. In 1871, a musician colleague, Frederick Clay, introduced him to Sullivan.

Unlike Gilbert, **Sir Arthur Seymour Sullivan** was virtually born into his profession. He was destined for music from the time of his birth on May 13, 1842, in London. Since both parents were musical (his father a bandmaster), Sullivan always said: "I learned to walk with a clarinet." He sang in the Chapel Royal boy's choir and won a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music. Later he studied on the Continent, in Leipzig. A gifted organist, teacher, and conductor, Sullivan composed in nearly all musical genres, but soon his theatrical talents became evident as he began setting comic librettos to music.

The first lasting operetta of Gilbert and Sullivan's was *Trial by Jury*, 1875, an adaptation of a Bab Ballad and an instant hit. It was followed by the popular *H.M.S. Pinafore*, 1878, and *The Pirates of Penzance*, 1879. (Penzance is a coastal resort town in Cornwall, England, somewhat akin to our Atlantic City, not at all appropriate for a pirate lair!) The music for *Pirates* was composed by Sullivan in New York City. He and Gilbert had come there in 1879 partly for a production of *Pinafore*, in order to combat the spurious *Pinafore* imitations which were springing up in America. But their hidden purpose was to insure that their next operetta (*Pirates*) did not suffer the same fate. At that time, Britain and the United States had no copyright agreement, so British works were often plagiarized in America. Naturally, their original creators earned no royalties from these unauthorized productions. Gilbert wryly remarked, "It's not that I need the money so much, but it upsets my digestion." So the two men decided to produce *Pirates* themselves, in New York. Gilbert brought his libretto with him, and Sullivan composed the music during December of 1879. (He had left

his Act I music in England by mistake so had to rewrite all of it from memory!) All was done in utmost secrecy, including rehearsals, and Sullivan, who was ill, barely managed to finish it in time, writing the Overture the night before the premiere, December 31, 1879. (Gilbert actually helped him copy the orchestral parts.)

Pirates had a fairly successful run. To avoid plagiarism, theater-goers were not allowed to bring pencil and paper into the auditorium, and the music was locked up at night! The operetta contains one of Gilbert and Sullivan's best and most tuneful "patter" songs, the Major-General's aria. Not only is it a tongue-twister, but it includes skillful juxtapositions of unusual rhymes, one of Gilbert's specialties. New York still loves Pirates. In 1980, a revival of this operetta, starring Linda Ronstadt and Kevin Kline, was a big hit. It also won a Tony award! During 1881, Richard D'Oyly Carte, Gilbert and Sullivan's theater manager, built the Savoy Theatre in London solely in order to put on the G. and S. operettas. After that, the cast members were always known as Savoyards, as are other companies today who produce Gilbert and Sullivan works, of which there are fourteen altogether including *Patience* (1880-81), *Iolanthe* (1882), *Princess Ida* (1883), *Ruddigore* (1886), *The Yeoman of the Guard* (1888), *The Gondoliers* (1889), and the most famous one, *The Mikado* (1884-85).

Although he collaborated with musicians on many stage works, Gilbert was tone-deaf. He supposedly said, "I know only two tunes. One is 'God save the Queen' and the other isn't." However, he had a wonderful sense of theater. He not only wrote superb librettos but masterfully staged all of the G. and S. productions, allowing no acting deviations from his instructions, directing everyone to do the comic scenes with utmost seriousness, and insisting on clear enunciation.

Sullivan conducted the performances as skillfully as he had previously set Gilbert's lyrics to music. While he was very firm about musical accuracy,

his criticisms were more tactful than Gilbert's. He also urged the cast to sing as though they were doing grand opera itself! His approach to the cast was patient and humorous. Once the chorus women complained that they could not sing the words on a high "A". "You don't like my 'A'?" queried Sullivan, "Why, I consider it one of the best 'A's' I ever composed in my life!"

Eventually Gilbert and Sullivan became estranged over business matters and wrote no more operettas together. Each wanted to be remembered primarily for his serious works. (Sullivan wrote one opera, *Ivanhoe*, 1890). Today, their non-comic compositions are largely forgotten, except for Sullivan's hymns, "Onward, Christian Soldiers" and "Nearer, My God, to Thee," as well as his song, "The Lost Chord," written in memory of his brother. Sullivan was a kindhearted, spirited, charming gentleman, well-liked. Though he never married, he had many friends, including royalty, and was knighted in 1883. After a long illness, probably brought on by overwork, he died at age 58, on November 22, 1900, St. Cecilia's Day.

It was not until 1907 that Gilbert was knighted. A brilliant wit, he had a more prickly and contradictory personality than Sullivan did, but he was a devoted husband, fond of children and animals, and had a strong sense of fair play. In 1911, at 75, Gilbert died of a heart attack while trying to rescue a drowning woman. Neither of the two collaborators is considered great by himself, but each brought out the best in the other, as they created the finest British musical theater of the Victorian Age. The hilarious satire of society, in ingenious word-play, well-crafted dialogue and music, melodious parody of other genres, lack of vulgarity, and overall sprightliness have made G. and S. operettas wellknown and popular around the world. Not only have these works influenced all English speaking musicals since, but they themselves will no doubt continue to delight audiences for years to come!

by Joanna Overn - Opera for the Young©

Gilbert & Sullivan

1836 W.S. Gilbert born in London, England on November 18th

World History

1837 Queen Victoria comes to British throne

1838 Trail of Tears - mass relocation of American Indians

1842 Arthur Sullivan born in London, England on May 13th

1846 Great Potato Famine in Ireland

1848 Texas becomes part of America after wars with Mexico

1859 Charles Darwin publishes "Origin of Species"

1861 Start of American Civil War

1871 Gilbert and Sullivan collaborate for the first time by writing a Christmas play, *Thespis*

1872 Sullivan composes the popular Christian hymn "Onward Christian Soldiers"

1874 Gilbert and Sullivan's first successful operetta, *Trial by Jury*, was written

1876 Bell patents the first telephone and the first light bulb is produced (photos below)

1876 Richard Wagner completes his "Ring" cycle of operas

1877 Thomas Edison invents first phonograph

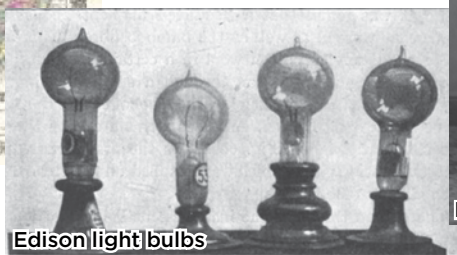
1878 *H.M.S. Pinafore* was written, Gilbert and Sullivan's first international success

1879 *The Pirates of Penzance* premieres in New York City

1879 The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company was created to produce and perform Gilbert and Sullivan's operas



Texas



Edison light bulbs



Edison and phonograph



Queen Victoria

1881 The Savoy Theatre opens and is the permanent home of Gilbert and Sullivan's productions. The Savoy was the first theatre (indeed the world's first public building) to be lit entirely by electric lighting.

1883 Sullivan was knighted by Queen Victoria of England

1885 *The Mikado* premieres

1889 Eiffel Tower built in Paris (designed by Gustave Alexandre Eiffel)

1889 *The Gondoliers*, Gilbert and Sullivan's last great success, premieres

1896 First modern Olympic Games held in Athens, Greece

1900 Arthur Sullivan dies of heart failure, following an attack of bronchitis

1901 Australia becomes a commonwealth

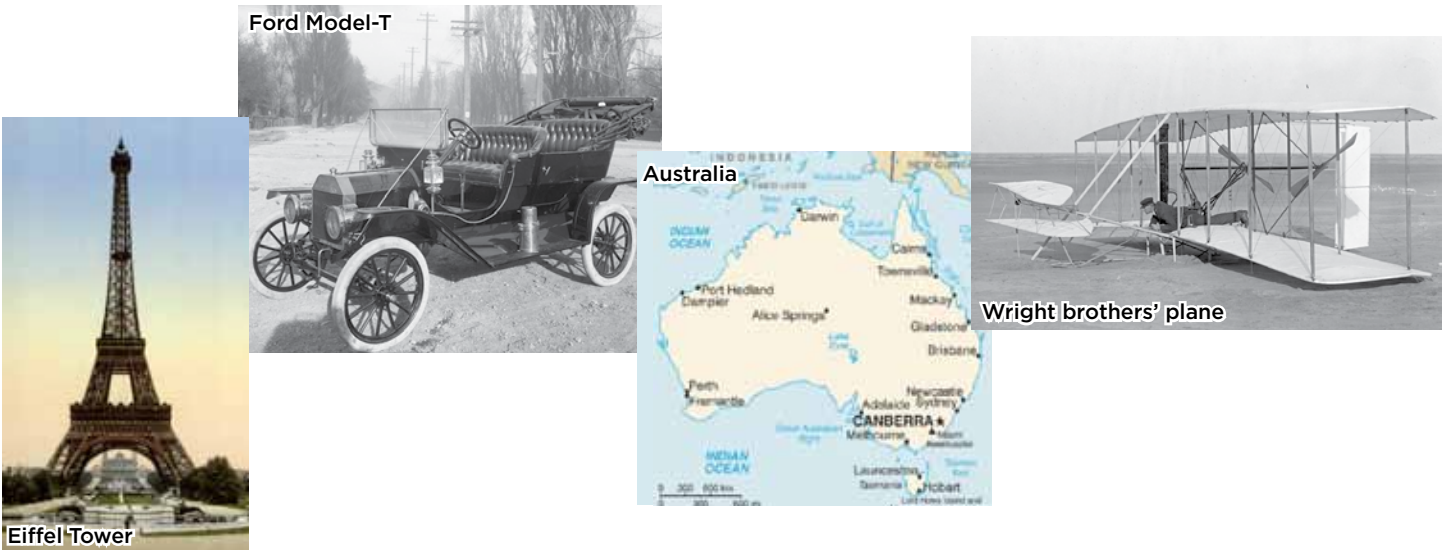
1903 The Wright Brothers make the first flight at Kitty Hawk

1907 Gilbert is knighted

1908 Ford introduces the Model-T

1909 Plastic is invented

1911 W.S. Gilbert dies from a heart attack trying to save a woman from drowning





The Pirates of Penzance (photo: Ken Howard/Opera Theatre of St Louis)

An operetta is a musical-dramatic production similar in structure to a light opera but characteristically having a romantically sentimental plot interspersed with songs, orchestral music, and rather elaborate dancing scenes, along with spoken dialogue.

The operetta originated in part with the tradition of popular theatrical genres such as the *commedia dell'arte* that flourished in Italy from the 16th to the 18th century, the *vaudeville* of France, and English ballad opera. In the 19th

century the term operetta came to designate stage plays with music that were generally of a farcical and satiric nature. The most successful practitioner of this art was Jacques Offenbach, whose *Orphée aux enfers* (1858; *Orpheus in the Underworld*) and *La Belle Hélène* (1864; “The Beautiful Helen”) used the guise of Greek mythology to express a satiric commentary on contemporary Parisian life and mores. In England, from the late 1870s, the team of W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, influenced by Offenbach’s works, established their own part in the genre with a large body of works, the best-known of which include *H.M.S. Pinafore* (1878), *The Pirates of Penzance* (1879), *The Mikado* (1885), and *Iolanthe* (1882).

In Vienna about 1870, Johann Strauss the Younger was producing operettas of a more romantic and melodious type, such as *Die Fledermaus* (1874; *The Bat*), which in many respects reconciled the differences between operetta and opera. Toward the end of the 19th century, perhaps influenced by the gentler quality of Viennese operetta, the French style became more sentimental and less satiric, stressing elegance over parodic bite. Viennese successors to Strauss, such as Franz Lehár (Hungarian by birth), Oscar Straus, and Leo Fall, and French composers such as André Messager contributed to the evolution of operetta into what is now called musical comedy or musical.

The operetta traditions of Austria, France, Italy, and England began to wane in the early 20th century but found new life in the United States in the works of Reginald De Koven (*Robin Hood*, 1890), John Philip Sousa (*El Capitan*, 1896), Victor Herbert (*Babes in Toyland*, 1903), and Sigmund Romberg (*The Student Prince*, 1924; *The Desert Song*, 1926). In the United States the development of jazz accelerated the transition from operetta to musical comedy.

operetta. (2015). In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved from <http://www.britannica.com/art/operetta>

A leap year is a year containing an extra day or month in order to keep the calendar year in sync with an astronomical or seasonal year. Seasons and astronomical events do not repeat at an exact number of days, so a calendar which had the same number of days in each year would over time drift with respect to the event it was supposed to track. By occasionally inserting an additional day or month into the year, the drift can be corrected.

According to the British National Maritime Museum, the first leap year in the modern sense was 1752, when 11 days were 'lost' from the month September with the adoption of the Gregorian calendar by Britain and her colonies. After 1752 we adopted the system still in use today where an additional day is inserted in February in years wholly divisible by 4, other than years ending in 00. The exception is those years divisible by 400, which are still leap years (like 2000). This is certainly not the first use of leap years. The Julian calendar used before 1752 had a simpler system of leap years, and remember, no calendar is universal.

The Gregorian calendar is a modification of the Julian calendar first used by the Romans. The Roman calendar originated as a lunar calendar

(though from the 5th century BC it no longer followed the real moon) and named its days after three of the phases of the moon: the new moon (calends, hence "calendar"), the first quarter (nonas) and the full moon (ides). Days were counted down to the next named day, so 24 February was ante diem sextum calendas martii ("the sixth day before the calends of March").

Since 45 BC, February in a leap year had two days called "the sixth day before the calends of March". The extra day was originally the second of these, but since the third century it was the first, hence the term bissextile day for 24 February in a bissextile year. Where this custom is followed, anniversaries after the inserted day are moved in leap years. For example, the former feast day of Saint Matthias, 24 February in ordinary years, would be 25 February in leap years. This historical nicety is, however, in the process of being discarded: The European Union declared that, starting in 2000, 29 February rather than 24 February would be leap day, and the Roman Catholic Church also now uses 29 February as leap day. The only tangible difference is felt in countries which celebrate 'name days'.



The Pirates of Penzance (photo: Ken Howard/Opera Theatre of St Louis)

ACTIVITY CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

1880 was Frederic's 21st year. Using the calendar, answer the following:

He is 21 in 1880 . . . What year was he born?

How many Leap Years from 1880 to 2015?

How many years would Frederic be alive in 2015?

How many birthdays would he have had by 2015?

ACTIVITY WHERE IN THE WORLD IS PENZANCE?

Penzance is a resort in Cornwall, Great Britain, 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?



ACTIVITY TALK LIKE A PIRATE

Talk Like a Pirate Day is celebrated on September 19th every year, and it's an unofficial holiday created by John Baur and Mark Summers, and popularized by writer and columnist David Barry. It is basically pure fun, but can also be a great connection to investigation of history, maritime science, language and the arts. Here are some ideas that might make Talk Like a Pirate Day a school-friendly activity:

1. Learn your nautical directions:

Starboard = right Port = left Stern = back Bow = front

2. Develop a pirate vocabulary:

- Aarr!: Pirate exclamation. Done with a growl and used to emphasize the pirate's current feelings.
- Ahoy: Hello
- Cutlass: Popular sword among pirates
- Davy Jones' Locker: The bottom of the sea. The final resting place for many pirates and their ships. As far as anyone knows, there was no real person named Davy Jones. It's just the spirit of the ocean, firmly a part of pirate mythology since at least the middle of the 18th century.
- Disembark: To leave the ship
- Embark: To enter the ship in order to go on a journey
- Foul: Turned bad or done badly, as in 'Foul Weather' or 'Foul Dealings'
- Grog: A drink that pirates enjoyed
- Keelhaul: Punishment. Usually tying the sailor to a rope and dragging him under the ship from stern to stern
- Lubber: Land lover. Someone who doesn't want to go to sea.
- Matey: Friend or comrade
- Ne'er-do-well: A scoundrel or rascal
- Plunder: Treasure taken from others
- Rigging: Ropes that hold the sails in place
- Tankard: A large mug, for ale
- Weigh anchor: Prepare to leave
- Yardarm: Extended from the mast and used to hang criminals or mutineers or, more prosaically, to hoist cargo on board ship

3. Organize a 'Treasure Hunt' either in the classroom or on campus. The 'treasure' may be little more than an envelope with some classroom currency or a bag of M&Ms, but it is the following of directions and 'clues' that make this a fun and educational activity.

5. Create your very own 'pirate' name and use them in the classroom. Teachers and aides (including classroom parents) should have pirate names, too.

6. Most pirate crews elected their captain. Talk about the 'democratic' process and see how it applies to their community, school and classroom. Decide what powers a piratical leader would have in the classroom, and how long they would 'rule.' Elect a "Pirate King for a Day" or "Pirate Queen for a Day" for your classroom.

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 2010 production of *Orfeo ed Euridice*.
(photo: Tim Wilkerson)



**OPERA
AROUND
THE WORLD**

Italy was the first country where opera became popular.

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

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

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

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

DIFFERENT OPERA STYLES

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

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

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

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

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

Music Drama 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 2013 production of *The Italian Girl in Algiers*. (photo: Jeff Roffman)

ATLANTA OPERA HISTORY

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

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

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



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



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)

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

The Atlanta Opera was the first resident company in the new Cobb Energy Performance Arts Centre in the fall of 2007. The Atlanta Opera season runs similarly to an academic calendar, opening in the fall and closing in the spring. It presents three mainstage productions at the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre, with four performances each. We offer two additional productions at smaller venues, often of special productions or contemporary works best staged in smaller, more intimate settings, with three performances each. We also invite students to attend special "student short" matinees.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRAINED VOICE

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

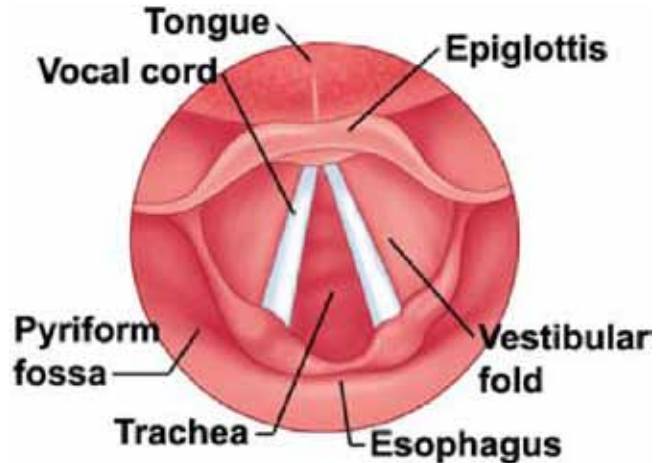
- an extensive range (the ability to sing both high and low)
- varying degrees of volume (loud and soft)
- resonance in the chest and sinus cavities (produces a “hooty,” full or round sound)
- an ability to project or fill a large space without amplification

TRAINING

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

THE VOCAL CORDS

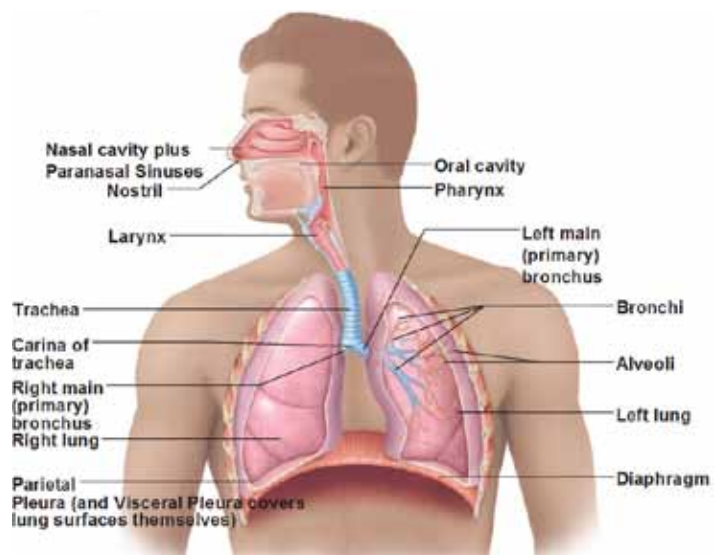
Science tells us that all sound is made by two things vibrating together. The same concept applies when we talk or sing. The sounds we make are really just the vibration of two little muscles called the vocal cords. The vocal cords are held in the larynx, which is sometimes called the voicebox or (in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



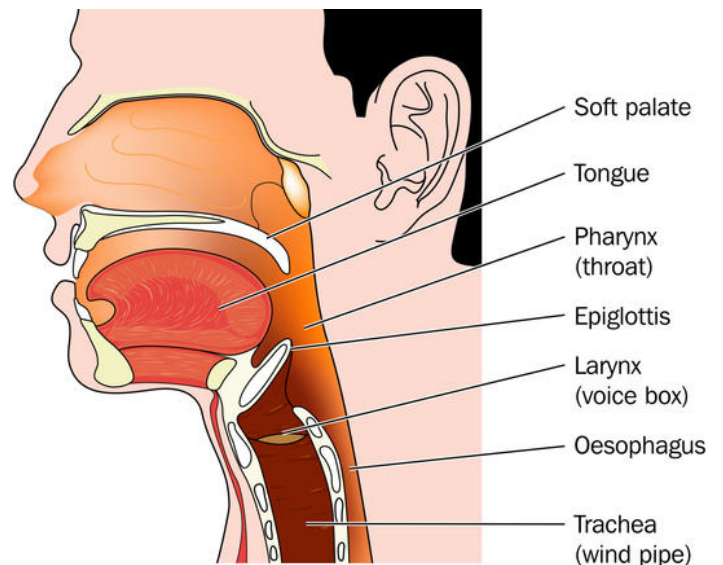
diaphragm descends, the viscera (stomach, intestines and other organs) are forced down and out. Singers describe this feeling as fatness in the low stomach or filling an inner-tube around their waist. Expelling the air, or singing, is essentially a slow and controlled movement of those muscles. If all 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 it can be difficult to isolate. Here are some simple exercises to feel where it is and hear the resonance in your voice when you lift it: Start to yawn. Feel that lifting sensation in the back of your mouth? That is the soft palate going up. With a relaxed mouth, slide your tongue along the roof of your mouth, from your teeth back toward your throat. You should feel your tongue

go up, then down (that's your hard palate), then back up again. That soft, fleshy area at the very back is your soft palate.

Say the word "who" like you would say it in normal conversation. Now, say "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.



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 daughter, the girlfriend or wife. They can be princesses and good girls, but they can also have some tricks up their sleeves! Some modern day sopranos are Beyonce and Taylor Swift.



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



Tenors are the highest male voice type - they often sing roles like the hero, the prince, the boyfriend. They can sound like a trumpet in both range and color. Tenors can be athletic and energetic and they can also be sensitive and emotional. They get all the good high notes and a lot of the applause! Today's pop tenors include Justin Timberlake and Adam Levine.



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



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. A few characters that would be considered basses are Darth Vader and Chef on South Park.



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

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

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.



The Atlanta Opera stage manager calling lighting cues backstage, during a production.
(photo: Jeff Roffman)

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.

Wig and 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 and 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.

Act

A group of scenes with a common theme, such as a specific time or place.

Aria

Italian for “air”; A piece sung by one person.

Bravo

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

Cast

All the singers and actors who appear on stage

Chorus

A musical piece sung by a group of people.

Conductor

The individual who determines the musical direction of the performance

Duet

A song sung by two singers or voices

Finale

The final musical number in an opera, often involving multiple people

Libretto

The words or text of an opera

Overture

Musical introduction played by the orchestra

Quartet

A song sung by four singers or voices

Recitative

Speech-like singing in-between arias that advances the plot

Score

A notated piece of music showing each part on its own staff

Trio

A song sung by three singers or voices

ACTIVITY *A NIGHT AT THE OPERA WORD MATCH*

Match up the opera term with its appropriate definition.

Act	A song sung by two singers or voices
Aria	All the singers and actors who appear on stage
Bravo	The individual who determines the musical direction of the performance
Cast	A notated piece of music showing each part on its own staff
Chorus	The words or text of an opera
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Score	A group of scenes with a common theme, such as a specific time or place
Trio	A song sung by four singers or voices

ACTIVITY 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 in the outside world, and get other people excited about coming to see the show!

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 made you feel to listen to them?

SUM IT ALL UP

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

Pirate Hat and Eye Patch Craft Sheet

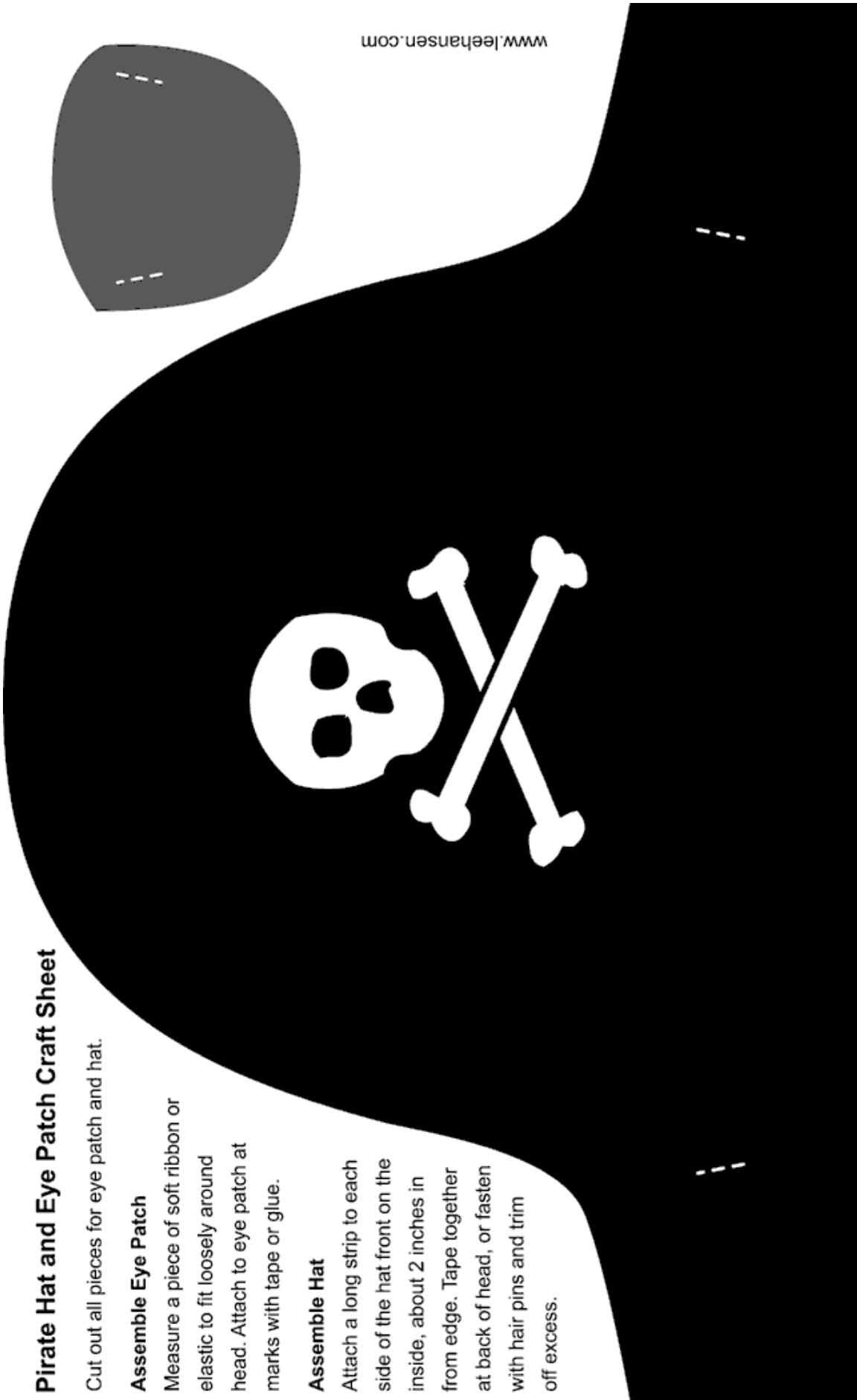
Cut out all pieces for eye patch and hat.

Assemble Eye Patch

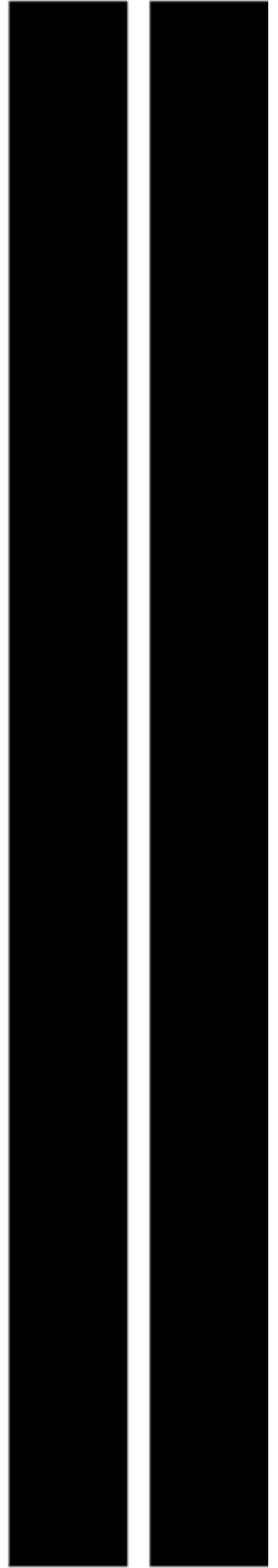
Measure a piece of soft ribbon or elastic to fit loosely around head. Attach to eye patch at marks with tape or glue.

Assemble Hat

Attach a long strip to each side of the hat front on the inside, about 2 inches in from edge. Tape together at back of head, or fasten with hair pins and trim off excess.



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