

# RIGOLETTO



**FLORIDA GRAND opera**

*Rigoletto* is made possible by a generous gift from  
Stephen Keller and Lesleen Bolt, in loving memory of Stephen

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RECOGNIZES THE FOLLOWING DONORS WHO HAVE  
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PUBLIX SUPER MARKETS  
CHARITIES



J.P.Morgan



# MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTOR



Robert Heuer

Florida Grand Opera is pleased to present the magical world of opera to people of all ages in South Florida. We are delighted to invite you to join us for the Opera's 2011-12 season, which will begin with our first-ever production of a zarzuela, Federico Moreno Torroba's *Luisa Fernanda*. The season will also include Florida Grand Opera's first-ever production of Puccini's *La rondine* and productions of Verdi's *Rigoletto* and Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*.

As part of our Student Dress Rehearsal program, we have developed comprehensive study guides to be used in the classroom, at home, for academic learning, and for personal enjoyment. Each guide is filled with background information on the history of the opera, a synopsis and musical examples from our 2011-12 season.

Florida Grand Opera believes that music is vital and essential to a well-rounded education and a life that is culturally fulfilling. We hope that the Dress Rehearsals and these guides develop and support the teaching skills of musicians and teachers so that students' music learning is deepened.

I look forward to seeing you at the Opera!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "BOB HEUER". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Robert M. Heuer  
General Director and CEO  
Florida Grand Opera

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# ATTENDING AN OPERA

## WHAT WILL YOU SEE IN AN OPERA?

Opera combines colorful sets and costumes, dynamic staging, passionate stories, and poetic words with beautiful music. Richard Wagner referred to it as *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or a “total art work.” You might watch dancing, sword fighting, characters dressing in disguises, the tenor wooing the soprano, or unfurling schemes against another character. Operas can be romantic, comedic, tragic, dramatic, or all of the above. Primarily, opera is entertaining!

## WHAT WILL YOU HEAR IN AN OPERA?

Operas are sung in many different languages, the most common of which are Italian, French, German, and English. *Luisa Fernanda*, however, is sung in Spanish. Florida Grand Opera provides supertitles (translations of the text projected on a screen above the stage) in English. Singers are accompanied by the orchestra which can consist of string instruments like violins, violas, cellos, and double basses, woodwinds like flutes, clarinets, oboes, and bassoons, and brass instruments like trumpets, french horns, trombones, and tubas.

## OPERA ETIQUETTE:

- Attending an opera is an exciting occasion! You should dress comfortably, but presentably. Many audience members use an opera as an opportunity to dress in formal attire.
- Arrive early. Audience members who arrive after the start of the performance are prevented from entering until there is a change of scene.
- It is customary to show your appreciation at various times in the performance with applause. The audience will applaud at the beginning of each act as the conductor enters the orchestra pit, at the ends of particularly well sung arias or choruses, at the close of each scene or act, and during the final curtain call as the performers bow.
- If you want to show your admiration even more, you can call out “Bravo!” for a male singer, “Brava!” for a female singer, or “Bravi!” for an ensemble. If you enjoyed the entire production, stand and clap during the curtain call to join in a standing ovation.
- Audience members are expected to turn off all cell phones and refrain from using cameras with or without flash during the performance.
- While concessions are sold in the lobby before the performance and during intermissions, no food or drink is allowed inside of the theatre.
- Be respectful of the musicians and your fellow audience members and do not talk during the performance



New World School of the Arts at the *Don Giovanni* Dress Rehearsal

**Most importantly, enjoy the opera!**

# FLORIDA GRAND OPERA: A HISTORY



Dr. Arturo di Filippi in *Pagliacci*

## FLORIDA GRAND OPERA STANDS AS ONE OF THE OLDEST PERFORMING ARTS ORGANIZATIONS IN FLORIDA AND IN THE NATION.

Florida Grand Opera is one of the resident companies of The Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County where it presents its Miami performances in the *Sanford and Dolores Ziff Ballet Opera House*. Fort Lauderdale performances are given at the Broward Center for the Performing Arts. Florida Grand Opera was formed in June 1994 by the merger of Greater Miami Opera, founded in 1941, and The Opera Guild Inc. of Fort Lauderdale, founded in 1945.

The Greater Miami Opera was founded by Dr. Arturo di Filippi, a voice teacher at the University of Miami. The first production, held at Miami Senior High School in 1942, was a single performance of Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*, performed in English, with Dr. di Filippi singing the role of Canio. In 1945, Dr. di Filippi appeared in a production of *Il trovatore* at Ft. Lauderdale Central High School, representing the first production of the The Opera Guild, Inc. Florida Grand Opera has a rich history of presenting internationally acclaimed artists such as Robert Merrill, Dorothy Kirsten, Richard Tucker, Renata Tebaldi, Roberta Peters, Franco Corelli, Renata Scotto, Montserrat Caballe, Jon Vickers, Sherrill Milnes, Nicolai Gedda, Birgit Nilsson, Anna Moffo, Plácido Domingo, Beverly Sills, Joan Sutherland, Evelyn Lear, James Morris, Thomas Stewart, Diana Soviero, Justino Diaz, Simon Estes, Elizabeth Futral, Helen Donath, Deborah Voigt, and Fernando de la Mora. Luciano Pavarotti made his American debut in 1965 with the company's production of *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

In April, 2007, Florida Grand Opera presented the critically acclaimed world premiere of David Carlson's *Anna Karenina* with libretto by Colin Graham. *Anna Karenina* was commissioned as a co-production by Florida Grand Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. In May 1997, the Company presented the world premiere of *Balseros*, an opera by Robert Ashley with libretto by world renowned Cuban writer María Irene Fornés. *Balseros* was commissioned as a co-production by Florida Grand Opera, Miami-Dade Community College and the South Florida Composers Alliance. Another world premiere was Robert Ward's *Minutes Till Midnight* in 1982. American premieres include Gioachino Rossini's *Bianca e Falliero* and the final revised version of Alberto Franchetti's *Cristoforo Colombo*.

At the core of Florida Grand Opera's mission is a commitment to training emerging opera professionals and educating young people about opera while embracing the diverse cultural heritage of the South Florida community. Each year, established education programs, including the Dress Rehearsal Program and the company's education festivals expose thousands of children and students to opera's many facets. Florida Grand Opera's renowned artist training program, the Young Artist Studio, nurtures gifted young singers and provides them with the skills and experiences necessary to move beyond their training at universities and music conservatories into successful careers in the professional opera world.

Florida Grand Opera will present four main-stage productions for the 2011-2012 season: Federico Moreno Torroba's *Luisa Fernanda*, Puccini's *La rondine*, Verdi's *Rigoletto*, and Gounod's *Roméo & Juliette*. *Luisa Fernanda* is the Florida Grand Opera's first production of a zarzuela, a Spanish lyric-drama that is based in the operatic tradition, but also incorporates popular song and dance.

# ACTIVITY ALERT!

## PURCHASE YOUR TICKET!

Review the charts of the Florida Grand Opera's performance season and prices. Then answer the questions below.

Arsht Center Series in Miami						
	Opening Night	Tuesday Night	Wednesday Night	Friday Night	Saturday Night	Sunday Matinee
<b>OPERAS</b>	Saturday at 7 pm	at 8 pm	at 8 pm	at 8 pm	at 8 pm	at 2 pm
<b>Luisa Fernanda</b>	Nov 12	Nov 15	Nov 23	Nov 18	Nov 26	Nov 20
<b>La rondine</b>	Jan 21	Jan 24	Feb 1	Jan 27	Feb 4	Jan 29
<b>Rigoletto</b>	Jan 28	Jan 31	Feb 8	Feb 3	Feb 11	Feb 5
<b>Romeo et Juliette</b>	Apr 21	Apr 24	May 2	Apr 27	May 5	Apr 29
Premium Seating						
<b>Grand Tier Box</b>	\$250	\$175	\$175	\$225	\$225	\$175
<b>Prime Orchestra/Orch Box</b>	\$225	\$129	\$129	\$175	\$175	\$129
Standard Seating						
<b>Front Orchestra</b>	\$175	\$96	\$96	\$129	\$129	\$96
<b>Orchestra Circle</b>	\$129	\$78	\$78	\$96	\$96	\$78
<b>Mezzanine Box/Mezz Row A</b>	\$129	\$78	\$78	\$96	\$96	\$78
<b>Mezzanine rows B-G</b>	\$78	\$61	\$61	\$67	\$67	\$61
<b>Lower Balc Box/Lower Balc Row A</b>	\$78	\$61	\$61	\$67	\$67	\$61
<b>Lower Balcony Rows B-H</b>	\$49	\$28	\$28	\$37	\$37	\$28
<b>Upper Balc Box/Upper Balc Row A</b>	\$35	\$21	\$21	\$28	\$28	\$21
<b>Upper Balcony Rows B-N</b>	\$21	\$11	\$11	\$19	\$19	\$11

*La rondine* will be performed on what day, date, and time in the Wednesday Series?

2. If a new subscriber buys 4 subscriptions for the Friday Series in the Orchestra Level, what does he/she pay?

3. Which performance occurs closest to Thanksgiving?

4. What sets of series have the same curtain time?

5. On Sundays, what is the cost of the subscription for seating in the Second Tier, Front Orchestra?

6. How much more does a person pay when buying Opening Night subscriptions in the Orchestra Level than the person who buys a subscription in the Front Orchestra?

Broward Center Series in Fort Lauderdale		
	Thursday Night	Saturday Night
<b>OPERAS</b>	at 8 pm	at 8 pm
<b>Luisa Fernanda</b>	Dec 1	Dec 3
<b>Rigoletto</b>	Feb 16	Feb 18
<b>Romeo et Juliette</b>	May 10	May 12
Premium Seating		
<b>Prime Orchestra</b>	\$200	\$200
<b>Orchestra Box</b>	\$200	\$200
Standard Seating		
<b>Front Orchestra</b>	\$125	\$125
<b>Upper Orchestra</b>	\$89	\$89
<b>Side/Rear Upper Orch</b>	\$60	\$60
<b>Front Mezzanine/Mezz Box</b>	\$125	\$125
<b>Mezzanine</b>	\$79	\$79
<b>Side/Rear Mezzanine</b>	\$55	\$55
<b>Lower Balcony/Balc Box</b>	\$46	\$46
<b>Upper Balcony</b>	\$21	\$21

# OPERA'S ROOTS ...

## WHERE DID OPERA COME FROM? WHAT PROMPTED COMPOSERS TO CREATE IT?

Poets, musicians, architects, artists, philosophers, mathematicians, and many other thinkers had become obsessed with a recreation of the Greek culture during the Italian Renaissance. In the 1500's, a certain group of composers from the *Camerata Fiorentina*, or Florentine Academy, began to focus on the reproduction of Greek Drama. The Camerata believed that several factors were extremely important in recreating these dramas: the sung text must be understood, the music should reflect the cadences of speech rather than dance, and most importantly, the music should explore and enhance the emotions being expressed.



Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

The Camerata developed Western music's earliest operas, the most well-known being Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*. Following *L'Orfeo's* success, the art form spread rapidly amongst composers, artists, and poets. The Baroque form consisted of sung *recitatives* by soloists which would move the plot or story line, *arias* in which the soloist would explore an emotion, and *choruses* where the rest of the characters commented on the action. Composers began to create *duets*, *trios*, and other ensemble numbers with multiple soloists, allowing for more character interaction and more dynamic plot lines. As the Classical period began, the chorus of an opera became more integral to the story, rather than merely providing commentary. Arias began to express multiple emotions and more complex ideas and main characters took on more human attributes. All of these develop-

ments are present in the works of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Until the late 1700's, operas fit into very specific classifications: *opera seria*, the noble and "serious" genre, and *opera buffa*, the comic and low brow genre. Mozart revolutionized opera as he began to blend these genres in his later works. In *The Marriage of Figaro*, *buffo*, or comic, servant characters like Figaro were portrayed alongside *seria* noblemen like Count Almaviva. Furthermore, the *buffo* characters often displayed more admirable qualities than the nobles. Mozart's *Don Giovanni* is classified as a *dramma giocoso*, or comic drama. It features lighthearted moments and comic scenes such as Giovanni's servant displaying the catalogue of his master's conquests to a jilted lover, but ends quite dramatically with the womanizer being dragged to Hell for his terrible debauchery.



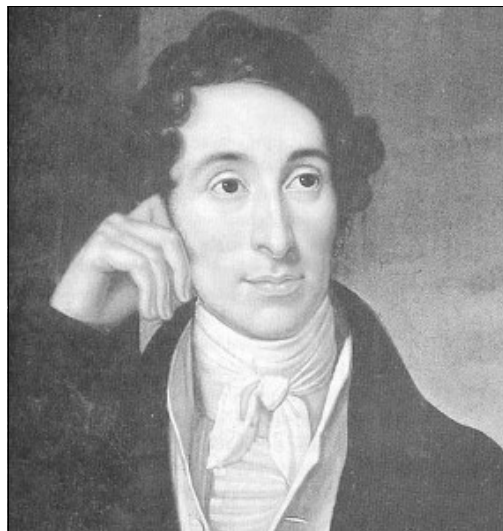
Florida Grand Opera's production of Don Giovanni



# ...AND DEVELOPMENT

Giuseppe Verdi composed operas during the Romantic period as harmonic language became more varied and effective. Due to the concurrent developments in literary style, plots explored a greater depth of emotion and action, and provided commentary on current events with more frequency. As more regions chafed under the oppressive rule of foreign empires, composers sought to express nationalistic themes with their art. Verdi endured many struggles with government and church censors over his operas, because of their political overtones.

As opera developed even further, national styles diversified and developed their own canons. Verdi, Mozart, and Rossini, among others, are considered by scholars to be members of the Italian School of operatic composition. Italian School composers created highly melodic music which displays the singers to



Carl Maria von Weber

the best of their abilities. The orchestra accompaniment is usually secondary to the vocal line, and as such, these operas are termed “Singer’s Opera.” Conversely, the German School of Opera, which crystallized itself through the works of Carl Maria von Weber, Beethoven, and Wagner, emphasizes the power of the music as a whole instead of displays by the vocalist. Weber’s opera *Der Freischütz* (*The Marksman*) is considered the first important German Romantic opera,

and is particularly well known for its unearthly Wolf’s Glen scene. Weber’s opera *Euryanthe* followed *Der Freischütz* and was through-composed, blurring the distinctions between recitative and aria. This melding of *recitative* and *aria* was enhanced and expanded by Richard Wagner, who wrote in flowing and endless melodies. Wagner’s operas like *Tristan und Isolde*, *Parsifal*, and The Ring Cycle best exemplify the German focus on the effectiveness of the orchestra, vocalists, and poetry as a total production to create the drama. The French School, founded by Lully and developed by composers such as Meyerbeer, Bizet, Gounod, and Massenet, is a balancing point between the Italian and German ideologies. Instrumental support for the vocal line was more complex and rich, while the vocal line was less florid. The voice was always well displayed while still doing its part to evoke and progress the dramatic plot.



Richard Wagner

# ON BROADWAY...

**NAMES LIKE *SOUTH PACIFIC*, *OKLAHOMA!*, *PHANTOM OF THE OPERA*, *WICKED*, AND *RENT* ARE OFTEN MORE FAMILIAR TO US THAN THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE OPERATIC REPERTORY.** These musical dramas are heavily integrated into pop culture and are usually synonymous with Broadway and New York City. Have you ever wondered what inspired the creation of this unique art form full of drama, music, and dance? Though the modern musical's inspiration comes from a variety of sources, the opera, more specifically *opera buffa*, lies at its heart.

*Opera buffa*, or 'comic opera,' was a response to *opera seria*, or 'serious opera,' during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. During this time, audiences wanted a plot that they could relate to and have fun watching. In response to this demand, composers began creating works that incorporated domestic characters in funny situations. The music was lighthearted and characters relatable, leaving audiences happy and upbeat by the end of the performance. Some of the most well known *opera buffa* are *The Marriage of Figaro* by Mozart and *The Barber of Seville* by Rossini.

## ACTIVITY ALERT!

Search the internet to find out how an operatic voice is different from a musical theater voice!

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, British and American composers sought to create new comedic works that mixed many genres of music, dance, and drama. These composers drew musical ideas from the *opera buffa* idiom, but also included dance numbers and parody elements that were typical of *burlesque* shows. "Musical comedies" such as Cohan's *Little Johnny Jones* (1904) and Kern's *Nobody Home* (1915) typified this genre. As in *opera buffa*, ordinary, average characters were emphasized and brought to life. The plots were simple and easy to understand. Unlike opera, however, dancing and

acting played a major role in these productions in order to bring the variety show to life.

In 1927, Oscar Hammerstein II and Jerome Kern delivered a musical dealing with prejudice, and tragic, undying love: *Showboat*. This musical was revolutionary for a number of reasons. *Showboat* was clearly distinguishable from the "musical comedy" (like *opera buffa*) and established itself as a "musical play" (like *opera seria*). All of the elements were subservient to the play; the story was cohesive and the integrated songs that contributed to the action by establishing moods, unveiling characters, or advancing the plot. *Showboat* dealt with heavy emotions and was like nothing that had come before it. It paved the way for musicals by allowing them to deal with new subject matter. A few years later, *Strike Up the Band* (1930) included social commentary on war, capitalism, and American politics.

Since the 70's, composers have taken the modern musical in many different directions. Because the music from a "musical" is no longer popular music, composers have often brought "pop" music back to the stage. Andrew Lloyd Weber has done so numerous times in *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1971), *Cats* (1982), and *Phantom of the Opera* (1986) by incorporating rock beats and electric instruments in the orchestra. Some composers, such as Jonathan Larson, have even created entire musicals (*Rent* (1994)) using rock band instrumentation. There is no longer a "typical" sound for a musical, as the repertory is as diverse as the composers who have created it. New musicals explore all facets of the human experience, social injustice, and worldly problems, as well as science fiction and fantasy. Though there is dancing, over the top acting, and rock and roll music in our modern musical, the themes of love, loss, and longing are not unlike its operatic ancestor.

Many call the Broadway musical "American Opera." The musical, though primarily drawing from operatic arts, was created through a conglomeration of many different elements, much like our American culture. Opera made use of drama, music, costumes, and art to

# ...THE MODERN AMERICAN OPERA

tell timeless stories that resound deep within our souls, as many musicals aim to do today. Many parallels can also be drawn between subject matter of *opera buffa* and the musical comedy, as well as *opera seria* and the musical play. Songs are used to create drama, move the story forward, and hopefully teach us something about our own lives. The orchestra is used in both art forms to support the singers and add depth to their words. And though the acting and dancing used to be quite different between an opera and a musical, current trends on Broadway and in opera houses are showing that they are learning from each other's successes. And though they are learning and growing from each other today, we must not forget the musical's roots. Without opera, the modern musical would never have come to be.

## ACTIVITY ALERT!

Draw a line connecting the following operas to their musical adaptations.

### OPERAS

*Norma*

*La boheme*

*Romeo et Juliette*

*Madame Butterfly*

*Ein Tag im Paradies*

*L'Elisir d'Amore*

*Wie einst im Mai*

*La figlia del regimento*

### MUSICALS

*The Blue Paradise*

*Maytime*

*Miss Saigon*

*Little Duck and the Great Quack*

*La Vivandiere*

*The Pretty Druidess*

*Rent*

*West Side Story*

# THE OPERATIC...

## OPERA SINGERS ARE CLASSIFIED IN TWO DIFFERENT WAYS.

First, they are identified as soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, etc., based upon their singing range. Secondly, they are categorized based on characteristics of their sound. Type of voice is often referred to with the German word *Fach* (plural *Fächer*), which means “subject” or “specialty.” A singer’s *fach* determines what roles they are most likely to perform.

Women’s voices are grouped (from high to low) into soprano and mezzo-soprano ranges. Men’s voices are grouped into tenor, baritone, and bass by range. Common additional descriptive words include coloratura, lyric, and dramatic.

<b>Soprano Fächer</b>	
<i>Soubrette Soprano:</i>	This soprano has a voice with the lightest weight and enough agility to handle coloratura passages (vocal runs of many fast notes). She will not typically sing above a high C. A soubrette is also referred to in German as a “Character Soprano.” Her roles are frequently the maid or comic relief of the opera.
<i>Coloratura Soprano:</i>	A coloratura soprano is marked with great agility and a much higher range than a soubrette. Depending on the weight of her voice, the soprano may be additionally described as a lyric coloratura with medium weight and depth, or a dramatic coloratura with the fullest sound and a brassy, ringing quality.
<i>Lyric Soprano:</i>	Lyric sopranos are typified by an ability to sing legato (in a smooth and connected line) with a pure and beautiful sound. Many of a lyric soprano’s roles are the love interests of their opera, so a soprano of this voice type must encompass the innocence and vulnerability written into their music. Lyric sopranos may also grow into a classification known as <i>spinto</i> , which in Italian means “pushed.” This sound is larger than a standard lyric soprano and can cut across a larger orchestra.
<i>Dramatic Soprano:</i>	A dramatic soprano has a full and rich sound with power that can carry across the largest opera orchestras. Their tone is often darker than other sopranos. Dramatic sopranos are also marked with great stamina and endurance.
<b>Mezzo-Soprano Fächer</b>	
Coloratura, Lyric, and dramatic mezzo-sopranos have similar vocal characteristics to their soprano counterparts, but spend more of their time singing in a lower tessitura or range of their voice. Mezzo-soprano voices are typically more mellow and rich in their sound than soprano voices.	
<i>Contralto:</i>	The contralto <i>fach</i> features a significantly lower range and a very dark, rich tone. A contralto is one of the rarer female voice types due to its range and color.



Soprano range



Mezzo-Soprano range



Contralto range

# ... VOICE

<b>Tenor Fächer</b>	
<i>Comic Tenor:</i>	The comic tenor sings roles that require acting rather than exquisitely beautiful singing. His arias may be written in a patter or speech-like style and do not feature the demands of a full lyric melody.
<i>Lyric Tenor:</i>	Similar to the other lyric voices, a lyric tenor must sing with beauty and command both flexibility of coloratura passages and musical phrasing of a legato line.
<i>Heldentenor:</i>	Meaning “heroic tenor” in German, a Heldentenor features a richer and more robust sound than the lyric tenor. In his middle range, a heldentenor may sound very similar to a baritone in color and weight.
<b>Baritone Fächer</b>	
Lyric baritones and dramatic bass-baritones feature the same characteristics of lyric and dramatic voices. A lyric baritone has a sweeter, mellower sound, while a dramatic bass-baritone has more comfort and strength in his lower range as well as enough power to sing over a large orchestra.	
<i>Cavalier Baritone:</i>	The cavalier baritone has a brassy quality to his voice and is capable of singing both lyric and dramatic passages. This voice is very similar to the Verdi Baritone, discussed more in-depth in the next section, but the Verdi Baritone usually sings a much higher tessitura than the cavalier baritone.
<b>Bass Fächer</b>	
Basses are also classified as lyric or dramatic, as well as comic, based upon weight and beauty of the voice.	
<i>Basso Profundo:</i>	This bass voice is marked by an extreme low range. The basso profundo (Italian for “Profound” or “Low Bass”) has an enormously resonant and full-bodied sound.



Tenor range



Baritone range



Bass range

# THE OPERATIC VOICE CONT.

<u>Fach</u>	<u>Role</u>	<u>Opera</u>	<u>Composer</u>
Soubrette Soprano	Susanna	Le Nozze di Figaro	Mozart
Coloratura Soprano	Gilda	Rigoletto	Verdi
Dramatic Coloratura Soprano	Queen of the Night	Die Zauberflöte	Mozart
Lyric Soprano	Mimi	La Boheme	Puccini
Spinto Lyric Soprano	Butterfly	Madama Butterfly	Puccini
Coloratura Mezzo-Soprano	Rosina	Il Barbieri di Siviglia	Rossini
Lyric Mezzo-Soprano	Carmen	Carmen	Bizet
Contralto	Erda	The Ring Cycle	Wagner
Comic Tenor	Monastatos	Die Zauberflöte	Mozart
Lyric Tenor	Don Ottavio	Don Giovanni	Mozart
Heldentenor	Parsifal	Parsifal	Wagner
Lyric Baritone	Papageno	Die Zauberflöte	Mozart
Cavalier Baritone	Don Giovanni	Don Giovanni	Mozart
Lyric Bass-Baritone	Don Pizarro	Fidelio	Beethoven
Dramatic Bass-Baritone	Scarpia	Tosca	Puccini
Lyric Bass	Don Basilio	Il Barbieri di Siviglia	Rossini
Basso Profundo	Sparafucile	Rigoletto	Verdi

# THE VERDI BARITONE



Felice Varesi, baritone

**ONE OF VERDI'S MOST IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO OPERA IS THE ELEVATION OF THE BARITONE AS A VEHICLE FOR A DRAMATIC CHARACTER.** In this period of Italian opera, baritone and bass singers were almost interchangeable. A baritone role was frequently a supporting character, necessary to the plot, but with no complexity of its own. Verdi, however, utilized a baritone's unique capabilities to create many complex and dramatic characters throughout his operas. The leading roles of *Rigoletto*, *Nabucco*, *Louisa Miller*, and *Simon Boccanegra* are all written for baritones.

The type of baritone required for Verdi's repertoire must have enough power to sing over Verdi's heavier orchestrations, as well as be capable of performing the composer's characteristically beautiful and lyrical melodies. Verdi raised tessitura, or range in which a baritone would typically sing, so a baritone must be comfortable in displaying a rich color in his higher range. Verdi's baritone roles are so influential in the canon of opera that an entire *fach* of baritone singers is referred to as the Verdi Baritone.

The best Verdi Baritone combines a depth and body of sound with incredible *squillo*, or trumpet-like forward resonance. *Squillo* is often referred to as a ping in the voice, or a laser focus. The Verdi baritone must also be capable of portraying many emotions with his voice. Because of this, *Rigoletto* must portray anger, fear, and rage, but also tenderness, love, and consolation. Because of these contrasting emotions, a baritone might have to employ a brassy, powerful tone, immediately followed by a rich and haunting lyricism. No ordinary voice can handle both Verdi's declamatory and dramatic recitatives and his achingly beautiful and melodic arias. Because of this, the Verdi Baritone is considered one of the rarest male voices in opera.

Some of the most well known Verdi Baritones of the Twentieth Century and today include Renato Bruson, Dmitri Hvorostovsky, Lawrence Tibbett, Giorgio Zancanaro and Sherrill Milnes.

## ACTIVITY ALERT!

**Look up videos of one of these men on YouTube and compare their voice with a non-Verdi Baritone.**

**What differences do you hear in their voices?**

# THE CHARACTERS ...



San Diego Opera production of Rigoletto

**Rigoletto** (baritone), the Duke's Jester and a hunchback.

**Gilda** (soprano), Rigoletto's daughter.

**The Duke of Mantua** (tenor), the head of the court at Mantua.

**Sparafucile** (bass), an assassin.

**Maddalena** (contralto), Sparafucile's sister.

**Giovanna** (mezzo-soprano), Gilda's maid.

**Count Ceprano** (bass), a courtier.

**The Countess Ceprano** (mezzo-soprano), Count Ceprano's wife.

**Borsa** (tenor), a courtier.

**Count Monterone** (baritone), a nobleman of Mantua.

**Marullo** (baritone), another of the Duke's courtiers.

**A Herald** (baritone) who announces the entrance of Count Monterone.

**A Page** (soprano), he enters the court on errand for the Duchess in search of the Duke.

Rigoletto centers around the court of the womanizing Duke of Mantua and his jester, the title character. Rigoletto, a hunchback and mocking wit, has made many enemies lampooning the courtiers. Rigoletto has a beautiful daughter, Gilda, whom he has hidden from the world. Though often secluded, a handsome youth has caught her eye in church.

## Act I

### Scene 1

*While most operas begin with an overture or prelude highlighting the work's major themes, Rigoletto opens with a brief, twenty-four measure long prelude in a threatening C minor. It repeats the same rhythmic figure which is associated with Monterone's curse and will appear at numerous points throughout the opera.*

The opera opens with the Duke describing the lovely girl he followed from the church to her carefully protected house. He also lusts after Count Ceprano's wife and announces "This one or that one, I won't be bound by faithfulness." The Duke begins seducing Countess Ceprano and takes her offstage. Rigoletto, who has observed all to this point, steps forward and ridicules the count, calling him a cuckold. Ceprano angrily exits after his wife and Rigoletto laughs, secure in knowing that he can say anything due to the protections afforded as the Duke's jester.

Marullo begins to gossip with the other courtiers. It seems as if the disfigured Rigoletto has a lover, but further conversation is interrupted with the return of the unhappy Duke. Ceprano has interfered with the Duke's seduction. Rigoletto mirthfully suggests a few solutions: abduct the wife, get rid of the husband! Exile him, behead him, what does it matter? Ceprano returns to hear a part of this exchange and it seems that Rigoletto has indeed gone too far in his mockery.



## ... MUSIC & STORY

Ceprano and the angry courtiers agree to meet that evening outside of the Count's house, located across from Rigoletto's home. As the ensemble continues and grows as the courtiers swear vengeance, the Duke warns Rigoletto he has been too rash, but Rigoletto restates his faith that the Duke will protect him. This bacchanal scene is sharply interrupted by the angry entrance of the Count Monterone. The Duke, in yet another tryst, had seduced Monterone's daughter, and he refuses to see Monterone. Rigoletto, looking for more sport, agrees to question the old count. Monterone exclaims passionately, "The honor of my family has been insulted, and even if you condemn me to death, my ghost will remain to haunt you." He then curses the Duke and the jester, "you serpent, who laughs at a father's sorrow." Rigoletto, usually unfazed by threats, recognizes the possibility of divine repercussions and desperately cries out "Orrore!" ("Horror!").

*In Questa o Quella, written in the style of a ballata, or secular Italian musical form used during the 13th-15th centuries, the Duke announces "This one or that one, I won't be bound by faithfulness." Accompanied by carefree music and soaring melody, the tenor has set forth a mantra he will display throughout the opera. Questa o Quella is written in a galloping 6/8 time signature and harmonically spends most of its time in the tonic, dominant, and dominant seventh chords of A-flat major.*

### Scene 2

*Verdi also uses and expands upon a common feature of 19th century Italian opera, the three movement duet, to progress the plot and provide our first glimpse of Gilda. The opening strains embody Gilda's youth and Rigoletto's joy in his daughter. The second movement of the duet features an exquisite and heartbreaking melody for Rigoletto to which Gilda adds repeated and trou-*



San Diego opera production of *Rigoletto*

*bled descending lines, entreating him to be calm. After another short conversation, another beautifully lyric melody is employed as Rigoletto begs protection for his daughter in the final movement. Each movement of this duet is connected by a musical passage, but Verdi freely punctuates the lyrical flow with a new plot direction or dramatic action.*

The stage is now set as a street in Mantua. At one side is Count Ceprano's house and at the other, a small house with a walled courtyard: Rigoletto's home. Rigoletto enters somberly, remembering the curse of Monterone, when he is approached by Sparafucile. The assassin offers his services, as Rigoletto has enemies and aims to protect his daughter. Sparafucile explains that his assassinations take place "more often in my own home, particularly with the aid of my beautiful sister, who dances and charms the victim." Disturbed, Rigoletto sends Sparafucile away, though he may require the mercenary later. The assassin assures he will be waiting.

Rigoletto enters the safety of his own home and reflects on his life; he made cruel amusement on command, but was denied the joys of love due to his deformity. He then dwells on the curse before pronouncing it folly as

# THE CHARACTERS ...

his daughter Gilda enters the room. The following duet paints a striking picture of the man who loves his daughter unconditionally, and the daughter who returns that love though she does not even know her father's name. Gilda begs him to tell his name, but he refuses, and asks fearfully if she has left the house. "Only to go to church," she explains, choosing not to share her newfound admiration for a young man.

Gilda asks if she might see more of Mantua. It occurs to Rigoletto that the courtiers may discover his daughter and abduct her as a means of revenge. In fright, he questions Giovanna, the maid, and entreats her to guard over his daughter. There is a knock at the door, and Rigoletto goes out to inspect the street. Meanwhile, the Duke, the young man Gilda admired in church, sneaks in and tosses a purse to Giovanna to ensure her silence. Rigoletto returns and commands that none should enter the house or garden. Gilda and Rigoletto then bid each other farewell.

Gilda confesses her guilt to Giovanna for not mentioning the young man from church who had followed her home. Giovanna reassures her; the girl is in love with him already, and the man appears generous and noble. Gilda would prefer a poor man devoted to her, but she dreams of this unknown man constantly. The Duke steps out from hiding to declare his love for Gilda and gestures for Giovanna to leave. The duet which follows displays the Duke as a capable lover. He has heard enough of Gilda's thoughts to know the best things to say. As the duet closes, Gilda asks for his name. "Gualtier Maldé," he replies, "a student, and poor." Meanwhile, Ceprano and Borsa appear in the street. Ceprano identifies the little house with the walled garden as the residence of Rigoletto's supposed lover. Hearing their noise, Giovanna rushes to warn the lovers, who bid farewell. The Duke exits and Gilda is left alone to her thoughts.

Rigoletto returns to the street where the courtiers have gathered, observing Gilda's beauty. The men decide to trick Rigoletto into aiding their abduction and convince the man that they are going to kidnap Ceprano's wife in the dark. The courtiers manage to blindfold the jester, cover his ears, and place a mask on him, and make him hold the ladder, not against Ceprano's wall, but his own. They carry out a gagged Gilda. Rigoletto removes his blindfold and rushes to Giovanna, questioning her and recalling the curse.

## Act II

***In Si, vendetta, tremenda vendetta, Verdi utilizes the same melody for both parts of the duet, but Gilda sings her lines in a different key, displaying her contrasting emotion as she asks her father to forgive. Through this technique, Verdi displays a father and daughter both in disagreement about course of action and united in their love for each other at the end of the second act.***

We return to the Duke's palace the next morning to hear the him telling of how he returned to the walled garden last night and found the house empty. He is devastated that someone would steal the dear angel from him. Gilda's purity could almost convince the Duke to change his ways. Enter the courtiers, bragging of their late night escapade capturing Rigoletto's "mistress." The Duke expresses his amusement. As the courtiers give further details, he realizes Gilda is in the palace! After declaring his love for Gilda, he hurries off to locate her.

## ... MUSIC & STORY CONT.,

Rigoletto enters the court, conversing with Ceprano and Marullo, but still searching for signs of Gilda. The courtiers laugh at his anxiety for the woman they believe to be his mistress. A page enters, inquiring for the Duchess after the Duke, and the courtiers present stories for why the Duke cannot see her. Rigoletto realizes that Gilda is with the Duke and demands to see her, revealing her identity as his daughter. Rigoletto angrily chastises the courtiers for their plot and then begs for her release.

Gilda bursts in to the hall and runs into her father's arms, crying in shame. Rigoletto demands the courtiers leave and they exit the stage. Gilda tells her tale, from the first meeting at church through her kidnapping. The two comfort each other, and Rigoletto assures her upon completing one task, they will leave Mantua. Suddenly, guards enter with Monterone as he is being taken to prison. The old man states that his curse has failed as the Duke lives, but Rigoletto assures him he will have vengeance. In their final duet of the act Rigoletto vows his revenge while Gilda begs him to forgive the man she still loves.

### Act III

***The most significant musical number of Act III is the Duke's aria La donna è mobile, which Verdi takes great pains to render familiar to the audience. Stylistically, the aria could have been sung on any street corner in Verdi's time and it only serves to reaffirm what the audience knows about the Duke's character. It is used many times throughout the Act.***

Rigoletto has waited patiently, hoping his daughter will forget her love of the Duke. He has brought her to an inn owned by Sparafucile. The Duke is inside, wooing Maddalena. Again, Rigoletto asks if Gilda loves the Duke. She answers, "always," as the Duke describes how easily he seduces women. Maddalena appears, and the Duke offers assurance that she is his only love, and offers his hand in marriage. Gilda recognizes the same words that the Duke once spoke to her and realizes he no longer loves her. The Duke continues to claim his love for Maddalena. Rigoletto comforts his daughter and swears vengeance upon the Duke.

Rigoletto instructs Gilda to return to their home, disguise herself as a boy, take money, and meet him the next day in Verona. He then contracts Sparafucile for the Duke's murder. Meanwhile, the Duke asks for a room upstairs to rest and sings himself to sleep. Maddalena begs her brother to spare the man's life because she has fallen in love. A disguised Gilda, who has not gone on to Verona, returns to the inn and listens to the conversation. Sparafucile agrees that if a traveler should come before midnight, they will be killed instead.

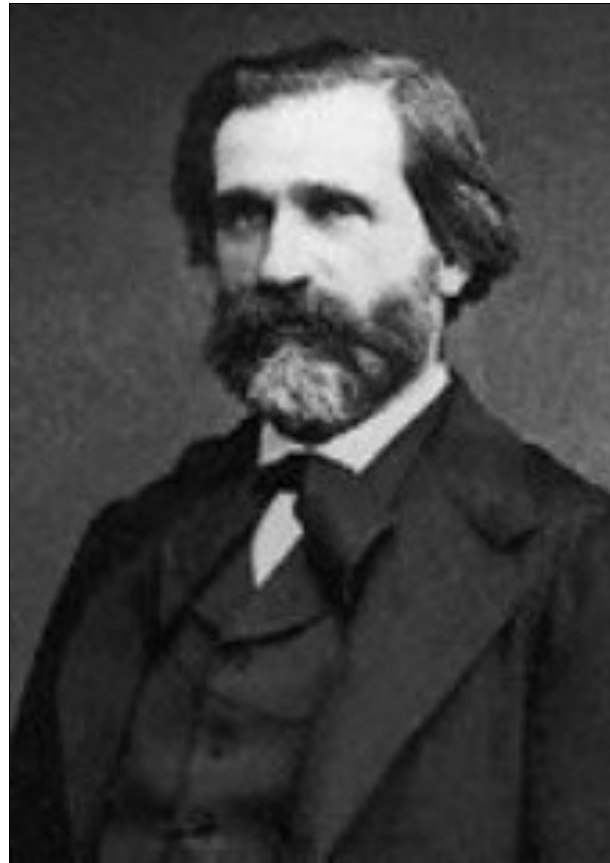
Gilda struggles with her conscience. Maddalena, a less than virtuous woman, has argued on behalf of the Duke. Shouldn't Gilda, who loves the man still in spite of his falseness, save his life? Finally, she makes up her mind and knocks on the inn door, announcing herself as a poor beggar. At midnight, Rigoletto comes back to the inn to receive the bag containing the victim's body. Refusing help, he begins to carry the sack to the river, but then hears a familiar song. The Duke has left the Inn through the back door and is singing as he travels. Rigoletto tears open the bag to reveal his mortally wounded daughter. They sing a touching last duet in which Gilda asks his forgiveness and promises to pray for him in heaven with her mother. Gilda dies in his arms and Rigoletto once again remembers the curse. Blinded by his thirst for vengeance, Rigoletto has lost that which was most dear to him and the Duke avoids his earned punishment.

# GIUSEPPE VERDI

**GIUSEPPE VERDI (1813-1901) WAS BORN IN THE SMALL VILLAGE OF RONCOLE IN THE NORTHERN PART OF ITALY.** His father, an innkeeper and farmer, worked to give him as much education as possible. Verdi began musical instruction at four years old with Pietro Baistrocci, the village church organist, and took over his post at age nine. By 1825, Verdi began lessons in Busseto with the *maestro di cappella* (master of the chapel) Ferdinando Provesi and was composing works by the next year.

Antonio Barezzi, a wealthy merchant in Busseto and founder of Busseto's Philharmonic Society, became Verdi's first patron. Verdi was a frequent guest in Barezzi's home and would later marry his daughter Margherita. In 1832, Barezzi agreed to sponsor Verdi for a year of study in Milan. Giuseppe packed his bags and applied to the Milan Conservatory, but was not admitted due to his age and lack of space in the school. Barezzi continued his support and paid for Verdi to study privately under Vincenzo Lavigna for the next three years.

During these studies in Milan, Ferdinando Provesi passed away and Barezzi and the Philharmonic Society looked to Verdi as the natural replacement. However, the provost of the church wished to hire his own candidate, starting a political battle in the town. A year later, Verdi finally was given the position of *maestro di musica* in 1835. He and Margherita Barezzi married in 1836, and he spent the next three years teaching and composing for the Philharmonic Society.



Verdi

Verdi's first foray into opera, *Roccester*, was written in 1836, but the manuscript has been lost. *Oberto, Conte di San Bonifacio* was composed and premiered at La Scala in Milan in 1839. A well known soprano, Giuseppina Strepponi, took an interest in Verdi's composition and helped convince La Scala's impresario Merelli to premier *Oberto* at the next season. Verdi's first opera was successful enough to earn him a contract with La Scala for three more operas over the next two years. The first of which was a comedy, *Un giorno di regno*, that premiered in September of 1840. This opera buffa failed miserably. Embarrassed and despairing over the recent death of his young wife and two children, Verdi cancelled his contract with Merelli and La Scala.

The impresario still had faith in Verdi, and revived *Oberto* the next January. At the same time, Merelli encouraged the composer to look at *Nabucco*, a libretto based on the Biblical story of Nebuchadnezzar. Verdi found himself drawn to this dramatic story. The opera premiered in 1842, starring the soprano Strepponi, to wild success. *Nabucco's* Hebrew Slave Chorus "Va Pensiero" is still considered Italy's favorite patriotic song. The young composer soon became a sensation among the Italians due to his politically themed operas that spoke to a segmented nation ruled by foreign powers.

After his first triumphs with *Nabucco* and *Ermani* (1844), Verdi began his self-titled *anni di galera*, or galley years. These years were intensely productive: Verdi wrote twenty operas in seventeen years, cementing his personal vision and com-



-positional style, as well as his place as the foremost Italian operatic composer. Chief among his developments during this period were more expressive orchestrations, which increased drama in his plot lines, as well as more distinct musical representations of each character. *Rigoletto* (1850) was the first opera to fully display Verdi's growth as a composer of dramatic operas.

From 1858 until his death in 1901, Verdi only composed five more operas. These later operas, including *Otello* and *Aida*, displayed Verdi's absolute genius for melodic and expressive music, as well as rich orchestration. Giuseppe Verdi left behind an incredible legacy for the opera repertory with twenty eight operas. Many of those operas, including *Rigoletto*, are among the most performed operas in the world.

### A List of Verdi operas

<i>Oberto</i> , November 17, 1839	<i>Luisa Miller</i> , December 5, 1849
<i>Un giorno di regno</i> , September 5, 1840	<i>Stiffelio</i> , November 16, 1850
<i>Nabucco</i> , March 9, 1842	<i>Rigoletto</i> , March 11, 1851
<i>I Lombardi alla prima crociata</i> , February 11, 1843	<i>Il trovatore</i> , January 19, 1853
<i>Ernani</i> , March 9, 1844	<i>La traviata</i> , March 6, 1853
<i>I due Foscari</i> , November 3, 1844	<i>Les vepres siciliennes</i> , June 13, 1855
<i>Giovanna d'Arco</i> , February 15, 1845	<i>Simon Boccanegra</i> , March 12, 1857
<i>Alzira</i> , August 12, 1845	<i>Aroldo</i> , August 16, 1857
<i>Attila</i> , March 17, 1846	<i>Un ballo in maschera</i> , February 17, 1859
<i>Macbeth</i> , March 14, 1847	<i>La forza del destino</i> , November 10, 1862
<i>I masnadieri</i> , July 22, 1847	<i>Don Carlos</i> , March 11, 1867
<i>Jérusalem</i> , November 26, 1847	<i>Aida</i> , December 24, 1871
<i>Il corsaro</i> , October 25, 1848	<i>Otello</i> , February 5, 1887
<i>La battaglia di Legnano</i> , January 27, 1849	<i>Falstaff</i> , February 9, 1893

# FRANCESCO MARIA PIAVE

**FRANCESCO MARIA PIAVE (MAY 18, 1810- MARCH 5, 1876) WAS A PROLIFIC LIBRETTIST FOR NINETEENTH CENTURY OPERA COMPOSERS.** He is most well known his partnership with Giuseppe Verdi and authored ten libretti for the composer. Piave and Verdi were very dear friends, though the composer was merciless in his demands for his libretti.

Piave faced many challenges in adapting *Le Roi s'amuse* to suit the government censors of Italy. In one letter, Verdi placed additional pressure upon the man, saying, "If I were the poet, I would be very, very concerned, all the more because you would have a great deal of responsibility if by chance (may the Devil not make it happen) they should not allow this drama." Back and forth Verdi and Piave went with the censors, changing the location, the title, the ruler, until Verdi almost gave up on setting the story to music. Fortunately, an agreement was reached and Piave admirably maintained the dramatic integrity of Hugo's original play, satisfied the censors, and, perhaps most importantly, gave Maestro Verdi a libretto worthy of his music.

Verdi held his librettists to exacting standards. He constantly asked for lines to be rewritten in order to suit the music he envisioned. At times, Verdi would even write entire paragraphs describing what needed to occur in a scene. Piave was one of the few librettists who not only tolerated this, but obeyed Verdi's demands, and returned poetry full of exquisite beauty and never possessing more words than necessary.

When Piave had a stroke in 1867 which rendered him unable to speak, Verdi provided financial support for his good friend and Piave's family. Upon his death in 1876, Verdi paid for the funeral of his good friend. Piave provided the libretti for some of Verdi's most successful operas which are still performed to this day. One can only guess what *Rigoletto*, *La Traviata*, and *Simon Boccanegra* would have been like without the patient and long-suffering pen of Francesco Maria Piave.



Francesco Maria Piave

# LE ROI S'AMUSE



King Francis I of France

**VICTOR HUGO WROTE HIS PLAY *LE ROI S'AMUSE (THE KING'S FOOL)* IN 1832, AND THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT IMMEDIATELY BANNED IT AFTER ITS FIRST PERFORMANCE.** Hugo sued for permission to continue performances and won fame as a proponent of free speech, but lost the suit to the government. The play is based on the life of the French monarch Francis I, who ruled France from 1515 to 1547, and his court jester Triboulet. Triboulet was a keen wit and made many courtiers upset by his jests. At one point, the jester reportedly went too far in insulting the King's mistress and was offered the ability to choose his method of execution. His quip, "to die of old age," diffused the tension and saved his life.

Francis I was known for his amorous nature and many personal scandals. Hugo had plenty of material to choose from in creating his play. Just as in *Rigoletto*, Triboulet is a deformed man who loves his daughter and tries to protect her from the interests of the King. While much of the play is historical fiction, the French authorities frowned upon such characterization of an absolute monarch and felt it might be a commentary on the current monarch Louis-Philippe. Due to its controversial nature, the play was not staged again until 1882 after the Third Republic of France was well established.

When Verdi discovered *Le Roi s'amuse*, he immediately became obsessed with adapting it for an opera. He wrote to Piave in Venice,

"Oh, *Le Roi s'amuse* is the greatest subject and perhaps the greatest drama of modern times. Triboulet is a character worthy of Shakespeare!!... Now, in reflecting on various subjects, when *Le Roi* returned to my mind, it was a thunder bolt, an inspiration, and I said the same thing: 'Yes, by God, that one can't go wrong.' So then, arouse the interest of the Presidenza, turn Venice upside down, and make the censorship allow this subject."

## ACTIVITY ALERT!

Do some research on King Francis I.

What kind of scandals was he involved in?

# CREATOR OF *LE ROI*: VICTOR HUGO



Victor Hugo

**VICTOR HUGO (FEBRUARY 26, 1802- MAY 22, 1885) LIVED THROUGH MANY OF FRANCE'S MOST FORMATIVE HISTORICAL EVENTS.** At two years old, Napoleon Bonaparte was named emperor. Ten years later, Hugo witnessed the re-instatement of the Bourbon Monarchy. His mother was a Catholic Royalist and greatly influenced Victor's education and political sentiments until the French Revolutions of 1848. At this time, his views shifted towards republicanism and the philosophical concept of "free-thought," which states opinions should be formed only on logic and reason.

Hugo is most famous in his home country for his prolific poetry. Americans would recognize him best for his novels *Les Misérables* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Victor Hugo was also an accomplished playwright, essayist, artist, and in the late part of his life, a statesman and politician. The majority of his written works involved the political or social issues of his time, as well as furthering the Romantic movement in France. For example, Hugo's first major work of fiction, *The Last Day of a Condemned Man*, recounts the thoughts of a prisoner on the day of his execution. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* served to encourage Paris to restore the neglected Cathedral of Notre Dame (and many other pre-Renaissance buildings) in light of the new tourism interest after the book's success. *Les Misérables*, which culminates with the Paris revolutions of the 1830s, was a mirror of the French Revolution of 1848 that occurred as Hugo wrote the novel.

Many composers have turned to Victor Hugo's work for their vocal music. Among others, Gabriel Fauré, Camille Saint-Saëns, and Reynaldo Hahn have set Hugo's poems to art songs. Hahn's setting of "*Si mes vers avaient des ailes*" is one of the most well of these art songs. Over one hundred operas are based on Victor Hugo's plays, including operas by Donizetti and Ponchielli. Verdi had already written *Ernani* based on a Hugo play before he found *Le Roi s'amuse*, the inspiration for *Rigoletto*.

Victor Hugo had a profound affect on French Romanticism, politics, social awareness, literature, and philosophy. His writings continue to touch and shape lives in modern times.



# HISTORICAL CONTEXT: 1850-1851

**RIGOLETTO WAS WRITTEN AND PREMIERED IN 1850-1851. WHAT ELSE HAPPENED DURING THIS TIME?**

## 1850

- January 29** Henry Clay introduces the Compromise of 1850 to the U.S. Congress.
- March 16** Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* is published.
- May 9** Joseph Louis Gay-Lussac, French chemist and physicist, dies. Working with partners, he discovered the elements Boron and Iodine, and the composition of water. Gay-Lussac also formulated a law of chemistry linking volume of a gas to its temperature.
- June 6** Levi Strauss makes his first pair of blue jeans.
- July 17** The Harvard Observatory in Massachusetts takes the first photograph of a star.
- August 28** Premiere of Richard Wagner's opera *Lohengrin* in Weimar, Germany.
- October 1** University of Sydney founded in Sydney, Australia.
- November 13** Robert Louis Stevenson, author of *Treasure Island*, is born.
- Harriet Tubman is an official conductor of the Underground Railroad.
- The Great Famine continues in Ireland.

## 1851

- January 28** Northwestern University is founded in Chicago, Illinois.
- March 11** Verdi's *Rigoletto* premieres in Venice.
- May 6** Dr. John Gorrie patents a refrigeration machine.
- August 12** Isaac Singer patents the sewing machine.
- September 18** The *New York Times* is founded.
- October 18** Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* is published in London.
- October 24** Two moons of Uranus, Ariel and Umbriel, are discovered by William Lassell.
- December 2** Louis Napoleon declares himself Emperor in France.

# HISTORICAL CONTEXT: FRENCH POLITICS

## **BEGINNING WITH THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION OF 1776, COLONIES AND NATIONS AROUND THE WORLD BEGAN TO LOOK WITH DISTASTE UPON ANTIQUATED FORMS OF GOVERNMENT, SUCH AS MONARCHIES.**

In France, the disparity between the common worker and the aristocrat became too much to bear at the end of the 18th century. Peasants starved while wealthy families attended balls. Queen Marie Antoinette supposedly said, “Let them eat cake,” when the poor complained for want of bread. Here is a brief timeline of France’s political upheavals throughout the 18th and 19th centuries.

- 1789** The French Revolution, starting with the storming of the Bastille on July 14th, ends the monarchy which dated back to the 9th century.
- 1793** The Reign of Terror, led notably by Robespierre, begins to imprison all French people with aristocratic blood or Royalist sympathies. Many are executed publicly by the guillotine, including Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette, and Louis-Phillipe II.
- 1799** France has gone through rule by numerous factions and after years of disquiet, Napoleon Bonaparte arranges a *coup d’etat* to take control of the country.
- 1804** Napoleon declares himself Emperor of France and begins a series of military campaigns to take over most of continental Europe by 1814.
- 1815** Napoleon is defeated at the Battle of Waterloo and the French Monarchy is reestablished with Louis XVIII from the House of Bourbon.
- 1830** The July Revolution, or French Revolution of 1830, in which the House of Bourbon is overthrown, and the Orleans Monarchy is established with King Louis-Phillipe.
- 1832** Hugo writes *Le Roi s’amuse*, which portrays an abusive and libertine monarch from the 16th Century. The Monarchy had only been reestablished for seventeen years, with Orleans in power for only two years, and was highly sensitive to any possible criticism. France had not know a stable government for nearly fifty years and the monarchy had a tenuous hold of the country as it was. There had been numerous uprisings including worker riots in Lyon in 1831 and an insurrection in June of 1832 in Paris.
- 1848** Republicans lead another revolution ending the Monarchy and establishing Louis Napoleon Bonaparte (Napoleon’s nephew) as president of the French Republic. A year later, he ends the Republic and declares himself emperor.
- 1871** After France’s loss in the Franco-Prussian War, Napoleon is overthrown and exiled as the Third Republic of France is established. This republic exists for seventy years.

# THE BATTLE WITH CENSORSHIP

## **BOTH VICTOR HUGO AND GIUSEPPE VERDI FACED DIFFICULTIES WITH GOVERNMENT CENSORS.**

France was struggling with its method of self-government and endured revolution after revolution. Italy was segmented during the nineteenth century, and many of these parts were ruled by foreign powers. In both nations, the governments of the time struggled to maintain control of dissident subjects.

Victor Hugo's play could have been interpreted as a critique of Louis-Philippe, the last King of France, while Verdi's opera might have referenced the Austrian monarchs who controlled Venice. It is amazing that the librettist Piave was able to stay as true to Hugo's source material as he did, given the demands of the Austrian censors. Verdi almost gave up on the opera, but Piave persevered, and though the location was changed, no historical names could be used, and the concept of the sack used to hold the dead body was found objectionable, *Rigoletto* succeeded.

Unfortunately, censorship has existed throughout history and continues to this day. Books of classic literature are challenged when they are taught in schools. In other parts of the world, like China, even the internet is censored. The People's Republic of China has many laws that vigorously regulate the information that is accessible to the citizens of its nation. Many search engines, instant messages, forums, and online communities (including Facebook and Twitter!) are not available to Chinese citizens in order to prevent critical opinions of the government.

### **ACTIVITY ALERT!**

**Can you think of other examples of censorship in today's society?**

**Do you think it is ever appropriate or necessary to censor an artist, author, or anyone else?**

# CREATING AN...

**THE *RIGOLETTO* THAT YOU WILL SEE IS THE FINISHED PRODUCT. BUT, ASIDE FROM THE PERFORMANCES OF THE SOLOISTS, WHAT TYPE OF WORK WAS DONE TO REACH THIS POINT, AND WHO DID THIS WORK?**

**THIS SECTION WILL TELL YOU ABOUT ALL OF THE PUZZLE PIECES WHICH MAKE AN OPERA A COMPLETE AND BEAUTIFUL PICTURE.**

## The Production Team

**The Stage Director:** A staging director is responsible for what the actors and performers do on stage. They also work with the opera singers on acting, characterization, and believability of performance.

**The Costume Designer:** This person designs each character's costume. They research the production's chosen period meticulously and determine what each character will wear, and why they will wear it. This designer and a crew of seamstresses will then build each costume to fit the performers, or alter costumes the company already has in stock.

**The Set Designer:** A scenic designer is responsible for the furniture, buildings, and other sets seen on the stage. He or she will also research architectural details of the chosen period and location, furniture of the period, even gardening of the time. The set may be very minimal and modern, or it could be sumptuous and complex.

**The Lighting Designer:** This designer must focus lighting equipment on the areas of the stage which will be used in the Stage Director's blocking. He or she also has to know exactly what is going on in each scene to set the lighting levels and colors.

**Props Master:** The Properties Master is in charge of all objects the performers use onstage. Swords, guns, flowers, knives, wine bottles, lanterns, food, and just about anything else imaginable may be needed as part of the stage action. A Props Master must procure all of these props, ensure that they are period appropriate, and organize them backstage so the performers can easily find their individual props before each scene.

### ACTIVITY ALERT!

**The Production Team decides in which period they want to place an opera.**

- 1. How would you set *Rigoletto*?**
- 2. What specific area of the production team interests you the most?**

# ...OPERA PRODUCTION

## The Musical Team

**The Conductor:** The Conductor, or Maestro, is responsible for all elements of the musical aspect of the opera. He or she determines tempos and interpretations of the music, and rehearses with the orchestra, choral ensemble, and soloists to achieve the effects he desires. The conductor possesses an intimate knowledge of the entire opera score as well as appropriate musical style for each particular composer.

**Rehearsal Accompanist and Coach:** When the staging director is blocking a scene of only soloists, or a choral number early in the rehearsal process, it is unnecessary to require the entire orchestra. Instead, the cast members rehearse with a pianist, who must also know the score exceptionally well and understand the conductor's musical approach.

**Chorus Master:** A Chorus Master is responsible for preparing the opera chorus for rehearsals with the Maestro and the soloists. Chorus members are always expected to be musically prepared, but the Chorus Master instructs them on phrasing (when to breath in a musical line), dynamics (volume levels), uniform vowels and diction, and interpretation of the music.

## The Technical Team

**The Stage Manager:** An audience may never see the production's Stage Manager, but their responsibilities extend far and wide. They coordinate all of the efforts of the stage director, lighting designer, set designer, and props master. Every change of lighting, curtain open and close, set movement, and stage entrance is done at a cue from the Stage Manager. Additionally, they are responsible for the safety conditions of the stage. Stage Managers must be exceedingly organized from start to finish. He or she oversees:

**Fly Master:** Many theatres have a system of pulleys and ropes called a Fly System from which flat set pieces hang. The Fly Master operates the fly system to change scenery.

**Stage Hands:** The stage hands help safely move large set pieces in order to create seamless scene changes. They may also clear props and furniture from the stage during a black out.

**Master Electrician:** The Master Electrician is the Lighting Designer's primary assistant in creating all lighting cues. He or she helps set up the lighting instruments and focus them for the most effective look onstage.

**Sound Technician:** If the opera requires any non-instrumental sound effects, such as a cannon shot during a battle scene, the production will make use of a Sound Technician to be responsible for these effects, as well as controlling microphones for curtain speeches and other announcements.

As you can see, there are many, many roles in an opera production beyond the costumed characters you see onstage. What you will see in *Rigoletto* is a labor of love undertaken by easily hundreds of men and women who care passionately about this craft.

# SPOTLIGHT ON PRODUCTION...

**CAMILLA HAITH IS THE *COSTUME DIRECTOR* FOR THE FLORIDA GRAND OPERA.**



Camilla Haith grew up outside of Chicago, Illinois. As a child, she spent a great deal of time dancing and singing “for whoever would listen.” Camilla was first introduced to the opera art form at age 8 when her class took a trip to Chicago Lyric Opera. From the first measure of music to the grand finale, Camilla was enraptured with the production. While her classmates were sleeping, Camilla’s teacher had to do everything possible to keep her from jumping off the balcony and on to the stage. It was not at this time, however, that Camilla decided on her future career choice. Opera was simply something that she enjoyed.

When she was seventeen, Camilla attended King Richard’s Faire. It was not the jousting or the turkey legs that excited her, it was the costumes! The elaborate period costumes were so exciting to her that she approached the information booth to find out how she could get involved. As the daughter of a tailor, Camilla knew some basic sewing skills and also knew how to embroider. Because of her enthusiasm and tireless work effort, Richard Weber, the Costume Designer, took her under his wing and began to teach her about costuming for the next two years. She was not involved in theater or musicals during high school. After graduating, Camilla spent a lot of time working with the renaissance festival, in all aspects of the production. After

trying her hand at performing, she realized that fashion design was her true passion.

Camilla graduated from high school and began attending North Park University to study Romance Languages (Spanish, French, Italian), with a minor in Ancient History and Swedish. Two years into school, she was offered a job to design and create clothes that would be featured in an ad for a nightclub. The ad was so successful that the club owner asked her if it would be possible for her to have a fashion show within a couple of weeks. She accepted the offer and created a whole line of clothes within several weeks. It was at this time that she realized a need for skills that only fashion school could provide. She withdrew from North Park and began attending International Academy of Design and Technology. Unfortunately, Camilla became ill after six months and had to drop out. After she recovered, she used the pattern making skills acquired in her short time at IADT to create wedding dresses while working as a Medical Office Manager for an ophthalmology practice in Chicago. In her late twenties, Camilla decided that she needed to be back in the fashion world and returned to school at IADT. Before graduating IADT, her teacher lured her into attending URTAs (a showcase for a student and young professional’s work) for grad school! She accepted a generous offer from Penn State and earned her Master’s Degree, as well as another Bachelor’s Degree, during her time there.

After a short period of free-lancing, Camilla was accepted as the Catherine Levy Scholarship Design Assistant for the Opera Theatre of St. Louis. She worked there for two seasons and was eventually encouraged to apply to her current position at Florida Grand Opera. Because Opera Theatre of St. Louis and Florida Grand Opera were co-producing the opera *Anna Karenina*, Camilla was able to meet with Bob Heuer (CEO) and Vlad Vukovik (Director of Production) when they came to St. Louis. She was selected for the job and has been here ever since!

# ...CAMILLA HAITH

## FAST FACTS

**Food:** Chicago-Style Pizza

**Color:** Purple

**Movies:** *Dangerous Liaisons*, *Dogma*

**Band/artists:** David Bowie, The Mighty Boosh, Bauhaus

**Plays:** *Hamlet*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*

**Books:** *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Kurt Wallender Mysteries*

## Education:

B.F.A. in Fashion Design, International Academy of Design & Costuming

B.F.A. in Theater, Penn State

M.F.A. in Theater with an Emphasis in Costume Design, Penn State

## ACTIVITY ALERT!

What career would you consider interesting?

Where do you think you could go to learn more about it?

## CAREERS IN THE ARTS:

Accompanist

Artist

Artistic Director

Arts Administrator

Arts Ed. Curriculum Writer

Box Office Director

Business Manager

Choir Director

Choreographer

Composer

Conductor

Costume Designer

Cutter (costumes)

Dancer

Draper (costumes)

Dresser (theater)

Extra (background actor)

Fundraiser (Development)

Instrumentalist

Lighting Designer

Makeup Artist

Manager (arts organizations)

Music Librarian

Musician

Props Designer

Public Relations Specialist

Publicist

Shop Foreman (stage)

Singer

Stage Carpenter

Stage Director

Stage Manager

Wardrobe Mistress

Wigmaker

# THE ROLE OF A SUPERNUMERARY



Pablo Menvielle has long been a familiar face on the Florida Grand Opera stage. He began performing as a supernumerary in FGO's 2001 production of Jules Massenet's *Manon* at ten years old. Since then, Pablo has participated in seventeen operas. He is now twenty years old and is pictured at left with his younger brother Lucas and his father Gabriel after a 2010 performance of Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffman*. In this section, he has answered some questions about what it is like to be involved in this aspect of the production.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **What is a Supernumerary and what might they do in an opera?**

A supernumerary is an actor or actress in an opera that has a minor role based on relevance to the libretto of the opera in question. Supers portray characters like soldiers, servants, pages, city people, and in some cases, nobles. However, supers almost never have speaking or singing roles.

## **What is the audition process like to become a Supernumerary?**

The audition process highly varies from opera to opera. Sometimes the director trusts the discretion of the management and simply takes supers that are called by management. Other times there are auditions in which the director asks for specific attributes and then selects people based on demographics and how they physically fit the part being cast.

## **What has been your favorite memory as a Super?**

Bizet's *Carmen* is my favorite memory as a super. It was truly a fantastic opera. We got to wear real "torero" outfits that had once been used in a real bullfight! It just adds to the experience. Not to mention that thanks to that experience, I found an irresistible appeal to flamenco. Now I'm crazy for it, and the way that Bizet incorporates that style and taste of Seville to a French opera is great! We were also soldiers, and village people... And smugglers! It was an all-around incredible production. Great music, great people, great singers, great dancers, great production!

## **What advice would you give to other young people who want to get involved in opera?**

My advice to young people who want to be in the opera is, what are you waiting for?! Audition as soon as possible! The longer you wait, the less operas you can be in. It's a fantastic feeling to be part of something so big like an opera. Just to know that you're part of something huge with lights, costumes, staging, singing, it's just overwhelming. Hearing the roar of the crowd is the most rewarding feeling you can get for this effort, never mind the pay of a super; I don't know of any super that wouldn't do it for free! If you like opera, singing, or just want to try something new, you should audition. The opera is not stereotypically associated with the youth, but there's no reason why it shouldn't be. We can change that! We're young, and active, and the arts only belong to the present and the future. Past generations have handed us down this gift, and it's up to us to open it and use it wisely.

## **YOU TOO CAN BE ON STAGE**

**If you are interested in becoming a supernumerary please contact  
FGO Production Stage Manager, LisaMichelle Eigler at: [leigler@fgo.org](mailto:leigler@fgo.org)**



# LESSON PLANS & ACTIVITIES

**THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES AND LESSONS ARE MADE TO SUPPLEMENT AND REINFORCE CLASSROOM CURRICULUM.**

## **TEACHING OBJECTIVES**

We recommend that prior to the performance students should be able to:

- Pronounce the title of the opera
- Pronounce the name of the composer
- Recognize major character names
- Recall major plot points in their own words

Students who demonstrate strength in art, music and / or language arts should be encouraged to explore:

- How language and music combine to tell a story
- How opera reflects real human situations and emotions
- How music can be used to create a mood
- How the many elements combine to create an opera

# HAPPILY EVER AFTER?



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## HOW WOULD THE STORY HAVE CHANGED IF THE COURTIERS HAD NOT KIDNAPPED GILDA?

This lesson encourages students to pick a turning point in a tragedy and show how the action of the opera would have been significantly altered had a different decision been made or a different action taken. Students use a graphic organizer to analyze the plot of the opera. They identify a turning point in the opera, alter the decision that the characters make, and predict the characters' actions throughout the rest of the opera. Students create a plot outline and present their new stories to the class. Teachers can test students' content knowledge and understanding of conflicts while also challenging their creativity and their understanding of plot.

# EXPLORING CHARACTER, CONFLICT AND PLOT IN DRAMATIC TRAGEDY

## SESSION ONE

If you need to review the major elements of the story, use the **Drama Map** to outline the characters, conflict, resolution, and setting of the story.

As a class, use the **Plot Diagram** to outline the events in the tragedy.

1. Print the diagram and make copies for the class so that students can refer to the completed diagram as they work through this lesson.
2. Ask students to brainstorm to identify the major decisions that the characters make and plot them at the appropriate point.
3. Choose one decision to model as a class and ask students: What other decisions could the character have made at this point in the plot? How could the remainder of the plot have changed as a result? List student responses on the board or on a transparency. Work toward a happy ending for the story.
4. Explain the project that students will work on by comparing the activity students just completed to a "Choose Your Own Adventure" book. Tell students they will essentially be choosing their own adventures from the point in the plot where the decision they are changing occurs. Stress that the actions and decisions that are made in the story need to fit the character and setting.
5. Divide students into groups (or let them work individually, if you prefer), assigning each group one of the decisions identified during the brainstorming activity. Students who work in groups take their plots from the point when the decision is made and carry it throughout other decisions to the end of the story. Each group member should contribute to the new plot.
6. Have students complete the **Plot Tree Worksheet**, which will encourage students to not only identify alternate decisions characters could have made but also how these decision affect later the plot.
7. At the end of the session, explain that the next two class sessions will be structured work time for groups as they work out their new plots and prepare their presentations to share with the class.
8. For homework, ask students to make a journal entry focusing on their discoveries about plot to this point. For a specific response, try the following prompt: Pick one character from the play and decide what one main factor seems to motivate that character. How do you see the factor influencing the character throughout the play? Do you think the factor is an equally influential force for people today? How?

# DRAMA MAPPING

## *RESOLUTION MAP*

HOW IS THE CONFLICT RESOLVED?

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE  
CONFLICT IS RESOLVED?

HOW DOES THE CONFLICT AND ITS  
RESOLUTION AFFECT THE  
CHARACTER?

.....

***CHARACTER MAP***  
*Character* \_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT DOES THE CHARACTER LOOK LIKE?**

**HOW DOES THE CHARACTER BEHAVE?**

**HOW DO OTHER CHARACTERS IN THE OPERA REACT TO THIS CHARACTER?**

# DRAMA MAPPING

## *CONFLICT MAP*

*WHAT IS THE CONFLICT? (ANOTHER PERSON, THING OR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS OF THE CHARACTER)*

**WHY DOES THIS CONFLICT OCCUR?**

**WHAT ARE SOME WAYS THIS CONFLICT COULD BE RESOLVED?**

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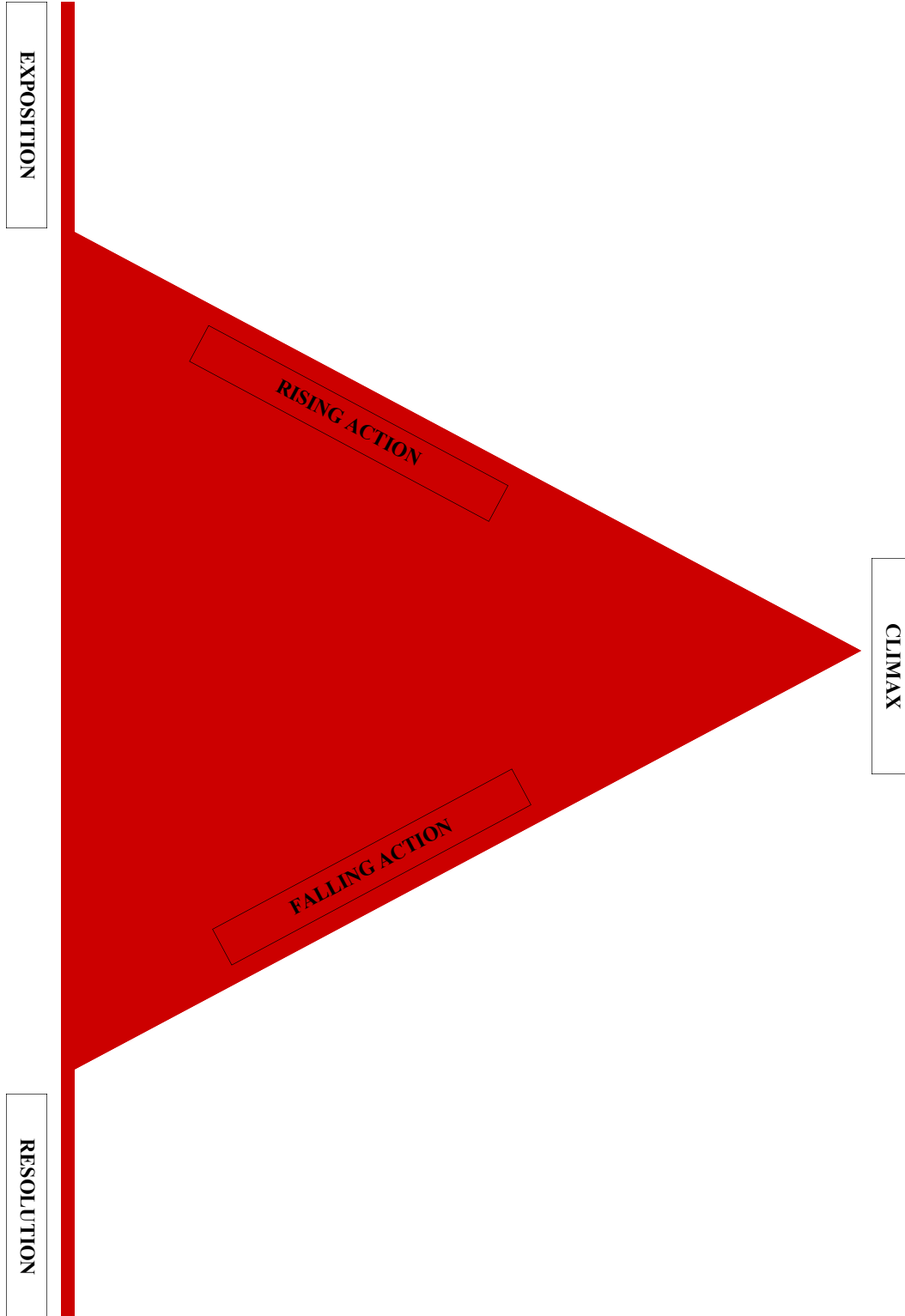
***SETTING MAP***

***WHERE DOES THE STORY TAKE PLACE?***

**WHEN DOES THE STORY TAKE PLACE?**

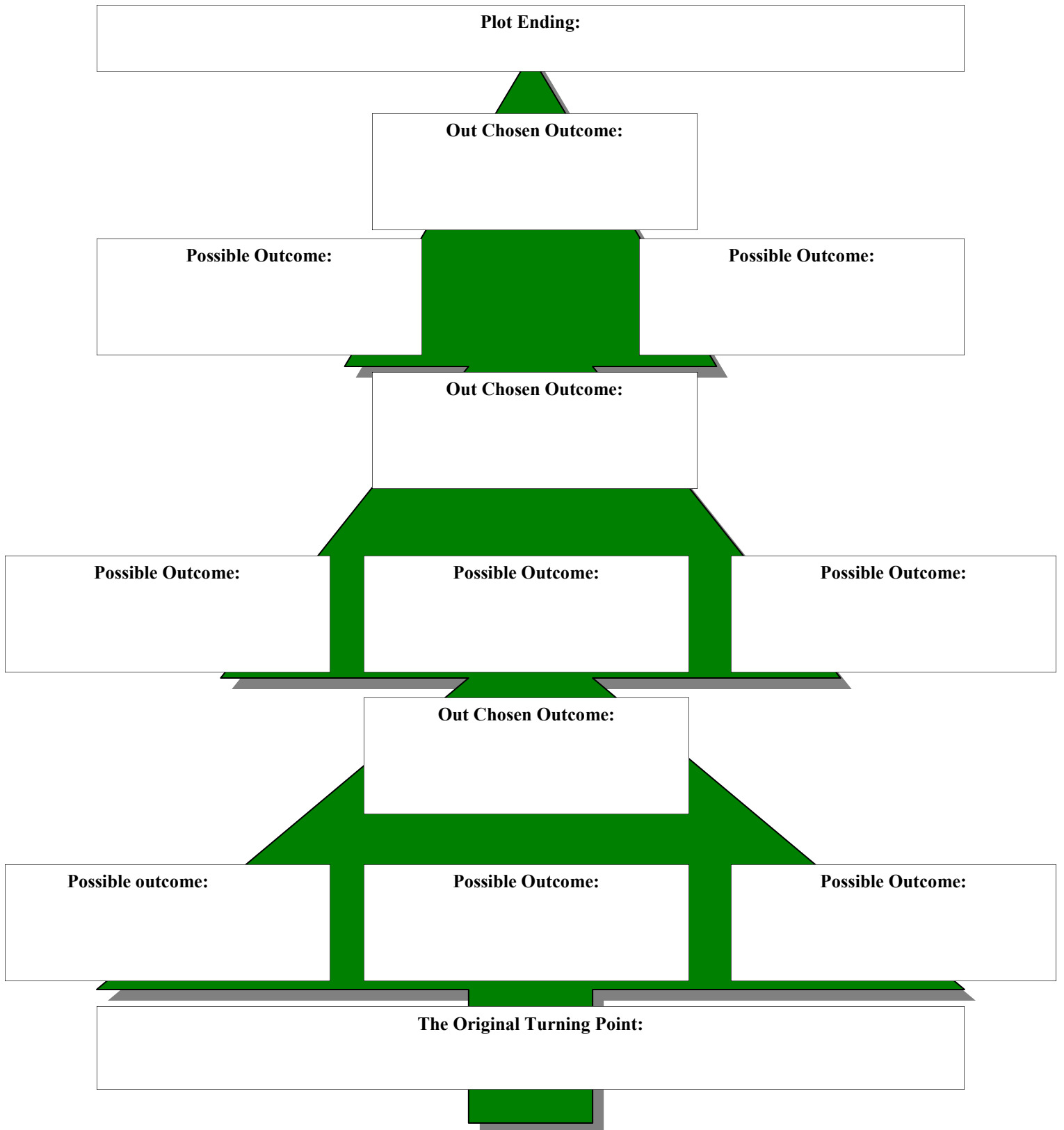
**WRITE A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE SETTING**

# PLOT DIAGRAM





# PLOT TREE WORKSHEET



# EXPLORING CHARACTER, CONFLICT AND PLOT IN DRAMATIC TRAGEDY CONT.,

## SESSIONS TWO AND THREE

1. Allow students additional time as necessary to complete the **Plot Tree Worksheet**, thinking through each of the new decisions and outcomes in their revised version of the story.
2. If students need a more structured exploration of the choices in their newly version of the story, use the **Drama Maps** to outline the characters, conflict, resolution, and setting of the new series of events.
3. Ask each group to use the **Plot Diagram** student interactive to outline the events for their new ending. Before students begin this work, demonstrate the abilities of the student interactive, showing students that the central point in their story can slide to the left or right as appropriate for their version of the story.
4. Ask students to pay particular attention to how the structure and speed of the story changes (or doesn't) based on the new "happily ever after" ending, recording their observations in their writer's notebooks.
5. Display or refer to the **Ideas for "Happily Ever After" Presentations** and encourage students to choose a project and begin working on it by the end of the second session.
6. Circulate among students while they work during these sessions, providing help and feedback as appropriate.
7. At the end of each session, ask students to make a journal entry for homework, focusing on their discoveries about plot to this point and their work on their presentations. For a specific response, you might suggest the following: How has the structure of the play changed as the decisions and actions changed in your story? What do you notice when the climax occurs or the number of events between climax and the end or the beginning of the play?



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# IDEAS FOR “HAPPILY EVER AFTER” PRESENTATIONS

Make a poster that details the action of your rewritten play.

Act out the new, improved turning point and explain the action that would follow.

Create a timeline of the new plot

Interview key characters in the drama to see how they prefer the new ending.

Create a “Special News Report” that describes the new twist on a literary masterpiece.

Construct a picture book of your retelling

Stage a reunion of characters that died in the original version of the play.

Cast well-known celebrities as the characters in your new drama and defend why each celebrity is an appropriate choice.

Produce a storyboard of the revised drama.

Present a “Director’s Commentary” of the changes that were made.

Make a children’s book of your new play

Create a diorama of the new turning point and final scene or contrast the new final scene with the old final scene.

Record a commercial advertising your new play (or pretend it’s a movie version). is “coming soon to a theatre near you.”

Stage a discussion between two young children talking about their new favorite cartoon (incidentally, also your rewritten drama).

Make a Venn Diagram showing the plot from the original story, your new, improved plot, and the places where the two plots intersect

Pretend that your retelling is a best-selling novel. Interview the author.

Make a “choose your own adventure” version of the play, incorporating all group members’ ideas.

Present a puppet show acting out the new play.

Rewrite the final scene of the play, referencing previous action so that someone reading it (or even better, watching it acted out) knows the changes that have been made.

Create a comic strip of your retelling

Produce an advertising campaign that markets the new version of the drama to teenage audiences.

Come up with your own, unique idea.

# EXPLORING CHARACTER, CONFLICT AND PLOT IN DRAMATIC TRAGEDY CONT.,

## SESSION FOUR

1. Give students five to ten minutes to make last-minute preparations and to practice their presentation.
2. Have groups present their new stories to the entire class, sticking closely to the five-minutes-per-group guideline that you've established.
3. Once all of the groups have presented, ask students to discuss how the characters' decisions affected the shape of the overall plot (e.g., Does the climax come closer to the beginning or end, for instance? Does a happy ending have a faster resolution?)
4. If students worked in groups, pass out copies of the **Group Assessment** handout and ask students to complete their reflection and feedback and submit the handout and their presentations before the end of the class.
5. At the end of each session, ask students to make a journal entry for homework, summarizing and reflecting on the project. If you prefer a specific writing prompt, ask your students to focus on the following question: What did you like best about preparing for the presentation? Least? What have you learned that you might not have had this presentation not been assigned?



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# GROUP ASSESSMENT

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Identify your responsibilities within the group:

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2. Did you complete all of the tasks assigned to you? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_ most of them

If either the above answer is “no” or “most of them,” explain why you could not complete all of the assigned tasks.

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3. How would you rate your participation in the group?

\_\_\_ I was incredibly involved in each phase of this project.

\_\_\_ I completed all work assigned to me, but was not otherwise involved.

\_\_\_ I completed most of the work assigned to me but other group members contributed more than I did.

\_\_\_ I did not contribute to the group project.

If you feel the need to defend your answer to #3, do so here.

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4. Identify another group member: \_\_\_\_\_

5. How would you rate this person’s participation in the group?

\_\_\_ This person was incredibly involved in each phase of this project.

\_\_\_ This person completed all work assigned to him/her, but was not otherwise involved.

\_\_\_ This person completed most of the work assigned to him/her, but other group members contributed more than he/she did.

\_\_\_ This person did not contribute to the group project.

If you feel the need to defend your answer to #5, do so here.

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6. Identify another group member: \_\_\_\_\_

7. How would you rate this person’s participation in the group?

\_\_\_ This person was incredibly involved in each phase of this project.

\_\_\_ This person completed all work assigned to him/her, but was not otherwise involved.

\_\_\_ This person completed most of the work assigned to him/her, but other group members contributed more than he/she did.

\_\_\_ This person did not contribute to the group project.

If you feel the need to defend your answer to #7, do so here.

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# GLOSSARY OF...

## A

**ACT:** A portion of an opera designated by the composer, which has a dramatic structure of its own.

**ARIA:** A solo piece written for a main character, which focuses on the character's emotion.

## B

**BANDA:** A small group of instrumentalists who play either on the stage or backstage.

**BARITONE:** The male singing voice that is higher than bass but lower than tenor.

**BASS:** The lowest male singing voice.

**BEL CANTO:** An Italian phrase literally meaning "beautiful singing." Also refers to opera written in this style.

**BUFFO:** From the Italian for "buffoon." A singer of comic roles (basso-buffo) or a comic opera (opera-buffa).

**BRAVO:** Literally, a form of applause when shouted by members of the audience at the end of an especially pleasing performance. Strictly speaking, "bravo" is for a single man, "brava" for a woman, and "bravi" for a group of performers.

## C

**CABALETTA :** Second part of a two-part aria, always in a faster tempo than the first part.

**CADENZA:** A passage of singing, often at the end of an aria, which shows off the singer's vocal ability.

**CANZONE:** A folk-like song commonly used in opera buffa.

**CAVATINA :** Slow section of a two part aria.

**CHORUS:** A group of singers, singing together, who sometimes portray servants, party guests or other unnamed characters.

**CHORUS MASTER:** The one in charge of choosing chorus members and rehearsing them for performance.

**COLORATURA:** Elaborate ornamentation of vocal music written using many fast notes and trills.

**COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE:** A type of comic opera popular in Italy in the 16th to 18th centuries that involved improvisation using stock characters and gestures.

**COMPRIMARIO:** A secondary or supporting role or a person singing such a role.

**CONTRALTO:** The lowest female singing voice.

**COUNTERTENOR:** The countertenor is a natural tenor (or sometimes baritone) with an elevated range.

## D

**DOUBLE ARIA:** An aria which consists of two parts. The first part, or cavatina, is usually slow and the second, or cabaletta is faster. There is often recitative between the two sections.

**DRAMATIC:** The heaviest voice, capable of sustained declamation and a great deal of power, even over the largest operatic orchestra of about 80 instruments.

**DRAMATURG:** One who suggests repertory, advises on the suitability of competing editions of operas and writes or edits material for program books and supertitles.

**DRESS REHEARSAL:** A final rehearsal that uses all of the costumes, lights, etc. While sometimes it is necessary to stop for corrections, an attempt is made to make it as much like a final performance as possible.

**DUET:** An extended musical passage performed by two singers. They may or may not sing simultaneously or on the same musical line.

## E

**ENCORE:** Literally means "again." It used to be the custom for a singer to repeat a popular aria if the audience called "encore" loudly enough. This is still done in the middle of an opera in countries such as Italy, but it is rare elsewhere. Soloists frequently give encores at the end of a concert but not an opera.

**ENSEMBLE:** Two or more people singing at the same time, or the music written for such a group.

# ...OPERA TERMS

## F

**FALSETTO:** A method of singing above the natural range of the male voice. Often used in opera for comic effects such as a man imitating a woman.

**FINALE:** The last musical number of an opera or the last number of an act.

## G

**GRAND OPERA:** Strictly speaking, opera without spoken dialogue. It is usually used to refer to opera which uses a large orchestra and chorus and grand themes.

## I

**INTERLUDE:** A short piece of instrumental music played between scenes or acts.

**INTERMISSION:** A long break, usually about 20 minutes, between the acts of an opera, during which the audience is free to move around.

## L

**LEITMOTIV:** A short, recurring musical phrase associated with a particular character or event.

**LIBRETTO:** The text or words of an opera.

**LYRICS:** The sung words or text of a musical comedy or operetta song.

## M

**MAESTRO:** Literally "master;" used as a courtesy title for the conductor.

**MAGIC OPERA:** An opera in which there are many magical effects and often animals appearing on stage.

**MARK:** To sing very softly or not at full voice.

**MELODRAMA:** In a technique which originated with the French; short passages of music alternating with spoken words.

**MEZZO-SOPRANO:** The middle female singing voice, lower than soprano, but higher than contralto.

## N

**NUMBER OPERA:** An opera composed of individual numbers such as recitative, arias, duets, ensembles, etc.

## O

**OPERA:** Italian for "work." A libretto acted and sung by one or more singers to an instrumental accompaniment.

**OPERA BUFFA:** An opera about ordinary people, usually, but not always comic, which first developed in the 18th century.

**OPERA SERIA :** A "serious" opera.

**OPERETTA or MUSICAL COMEDY:** A play, some of which is spoken but with many musical numbers.

**ORCHESTRA:** The group of instrumentalists or musicians who, led by the conductor, accompany the singers.

**ORCHESTRATION:** The art of applying orchestral color to written music by assigning various instruments different parts of the music.

**OVERTURE:** An orchestral introduction to an opera.

## P

**PARLANDO:** A style of singing like ordinary speech. It can occur in the middle of an aria.

**PATTER SONG:** A song or aria in which the character sings as many words as possible in a short amount of time.

# GLOSSARY OF ...

**PIANO-VOCAL SCORE:** Usually a reduction of an opera's orchestral score.

**PIT:** A sunken area in front of the stage where the members of the orchestra play.

**PRELUDE:** Usually a short introduction that leads into an act without a break, as opposed to an overture which is longer and can be played as a separate piece.

**PRINCIPAL:** A major singing role, or the singer who performs such a role.

**PRODUCTION:** The combination of sets, costumes, props, lights, etc.

**PROMPT:** To help a singer remember lines, some opera houses will place a person (prompter) in a box below and at the very front of the stage.

## R

**RECITATIVE:** Words sung in a conversational style, usually to advance the plot. Not to be confused with aria.

**REDUCTION:** In a piano reduction, the orchestra parts are condensed into music which can be played by one person on the piano.

**RÉPERTOIRE:** Stock pieces that a singer or company has ready to present. Often refers to a company's current season.

**RÉPÉTITEUR:** A member of the music staff who plays the piano for rehearsals and, if necessary, the piano or harpsichord during performances.

**ROULADE or RUN:** A quick succession of notes sung on one syllable.

## S

**SCENA:** Literally "a scene;" a dramatic episode which consists of a variety of numbers with a common theme.

**SCORE:** The written music of an opera or other musical work.

**SERENADE:** A piece of music honoring someone or something.

**SEXTET:** A piece for six singers.

**SINGSPIEL:** German opera with spoken dialogue and usually, but not necessarily, a comic or sentimental plot.

**SITZPROBE:** Literally, "seated rehearsal," it is the first rehearsal of the singers with the orchestra and no acting.

**SOPRANO:** The highest female singing voice.

**SOUBRETTE:** A pert, young female character with a light soprano voice.

**SPINTO:** A lyric voice that has the power and incisiveness for dramatic climaxes.

**STROPHIC:** Describes an aria in which the same music repeats for all stanzas of a text.

**SUPERTITLES:** Translations of the words being sung, or the actual words if the libretto is in the native language, that are projected on a screen above the stage.

**SYNOPSIS:** A written description of an opera's plot.

## T

**TENOR:** The highest common adult male singing voice.

**TESSITURA:** Literally "texture," it defines the average pitch level of a role.

**THROUGH-SUNG:** An opera in which the music is continuous, without divisions into recitative and aria.

**TRAGÉDIE LYRIQUE:** Early form of French opera that recognized a distinction between the main scenes and divertissements consisting of choruses, dances, etc.

**TREMOLO:** The quick, continuous reiteration of a pitch.

**TRILL:** Very quick alternation of pitch between two adjacent notes. See coloratura.

**TRIO:** An ensemble of three singers or the music that is written for three singers.

**TROUSER ROLE:** A role depicting a young man or boy but sung by a woman.



# ...OPERA TERMS

## V

**VERISMO:** Describes the realistic style of opera that started in Italy at the end of the nineteenth century.

**VIBRATO:** A natural wavering of frequency (pitch) while singing a note. It is usually inadvertent as opposed to a trill.

**VOCAL COACH:** A member of an opera company who coaches singers, helping them with the pronunciation, singing and interpretation of a role.

## W

**WIG DESIGNER:** Designs and oversees the creation of the wigs used in a production.

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and Plot in Dramatic Tragedy**

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