

THE ATLANTA OPERA  
PRESENTS



# OPERA 101



EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

# WELCOME

HELLO!

Thank you for inviting The Atlanta Opera to perform for your students! A core mission of The Atlanta Opera is to provide opportunities for students of all ages – we believe opera is for everyone and we are committed to ensuring that the art form is available to the widest possible cross-section of our community. Each year, our education programs serve more than 25,000 students in Metro-Atlanta and throughout the state of Georgia. Our programs seek to inspire creativity, stimulate critical conversations, promote an enduring appreciation of the arts, and create audiences for the future.

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

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

Thank you again for allowing us to share this experience with you. We value your feedback and will take it into account in planning future education programs. We look forward to hearing from you, your students, administration, and/or parents following the performance.

Sincerely,

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# OPERA 101

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# OPERA 101

## THE BASICS

Opera is a dramatic story told through song. Considered by many to be the most complete art form, it combines all of the elements of art, words, music, drama and dance. The earliest Italian operas were called by several names, such as “favola in musica” (fable in music) and “drama per musica” (drama by means of music). This last title is very close to the dictionary definition, and is the correct basis for any discussion about opera.

The unique thing about opera is the use of music to convey an entire story/plot. This is based on the feeling that music can communicate people’s reactions and emotions better than words (read or spoken) or pictures. Opera takes any type of dramatic story and makes it more exciting and more believable with the help of music. Many famous stories have been made into operas, including *Cinderella*, *Hansel and Gretel*, and *Romeo and Juliet*.

### A BRIEF HISTORY

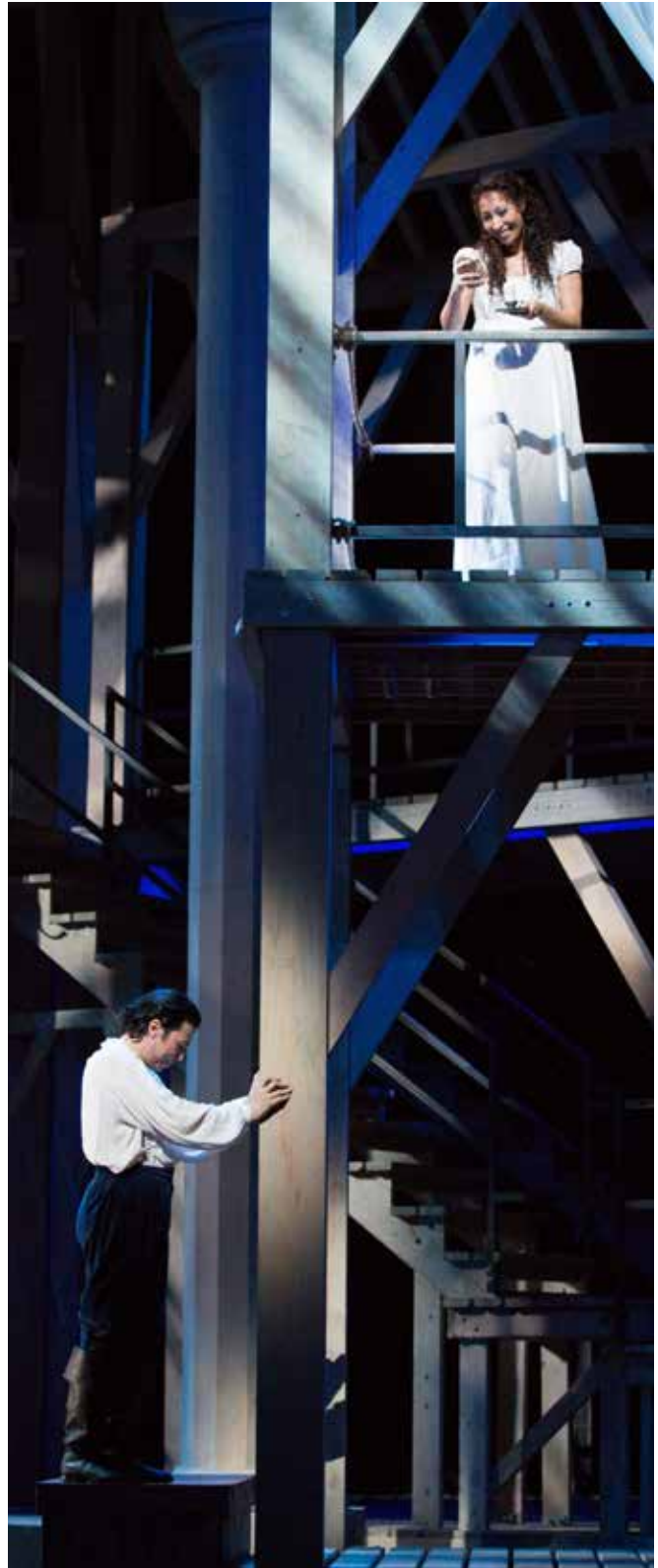
The concept of opera was developing many years before the first opera was written. Its beginning can be traced to the ancient Greeks. They fused poetry and music, creating plays that incorporate song, spoken language and dance, accompanied by string or wind instruments.

In the 1100s the early Christian church set religious stories to music, a style known as liturgical drama. The first true opera, *Daphne* (1597), was composed by Jacopo Peri. It told the story of a Greek mythological character, Daphne, from Ovid’s “Metamorphosis.”

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

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

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



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



## OPERA AROUND THE WORLD

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

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

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

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

## DIFFERENT STYLES OF OPERA

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

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

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

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

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

**MUSIC DRAMA** A style of opera that is created by a single artist who writes both the text and the music to advance the drama. This style fuses many art forms, and makes each one as important as the others. *Die Walküre (The Valkyries)* (1870) and other operas by Richard Wagner defined this style.



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

# OPERATIC VOICES

## DIFFERENT VOICE TYPES

### TYPES OF OPERATIC VOICES

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

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



Violetta from *La traviata*

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



Carmen from *Carmen*

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



Tonio from *Daughter of the Regiment*

**BARITONES** fit between choir tenors and basses - not as high as the tenors, but not as low as the basses. They can play both good and bad characters: sometimes they're the boyfriends or brothers - or the ringleader for some comedic shenanigans - but in serious operas they can be the bad guys.



The Dutchman from *The Flying Dutchman*

**BASSES** are the lowest male voice type - they can sound like a bassoon, tuba or low trombone. In a serious opera they can represent age and wisdom (and sometimes evil geniuses), in a comic opera they can make you laugh. Sometimes they steal the show with their super low notes and provide a comforting presence with their warm, rumbly tones.



Don Pasquale from *Don Pasquale*

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

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

(photos: Nunnally Rawson, Jeff Roffman, Raftermen)



# COMPOSERS

## FAMOUS IN OPERA



**GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL** (1685-1759) German born composer who spent much of his career in England writing Italian opera seria. His style used a lot of fast moving notes (the “note-y” passages are called “runs” or melismas) and a fairly simple accompaniment. He is most famous today for his oratorios (basically non-staged, often religious, operas). *Messiah* is the most famous of these. During his life, however, he was considered the greatest opera composer of his day.



**WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART** (1756-1791) Austrian composer of Italian opera and singspiel during the Classical Period. Mozart was one of the very few opera composers who was a master of all musical forms existing at his time. His operas were written for specific singers—and for those he really hated he wrote exquisitely difficult music! His operas *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *Così fan tutte*, and *The Magic Flute* all continue to be “bread and butter” pieces of operatic repertoire.



**GIOACHINO ROSSINI** (1792-1848) Italian composer who became a bridge from the Classical Era to the Romantic Era and a writer of the bel canto (literally, “beautiful singing”) style of opera. He is most famous today for *The Barber of Seville* and *La Cenerentola* (*Cinderella*). He also wrote *William Tell*, the overture of which became the theme song for *The Lone Ranger*! Rossini was extremely prolific and wrote about 39 operas in 19 years.



**VINCENZO BELLINI** (1801-1835 - pictured at left) & **GAETANO DONIZETTI** (1797-1848) Composers of the bel canto style. Bellini and Donizetti perfected a style which celebrated beautiful vocal lines. Bellini’s opera, *Norma*, is recognized as the best example of bel canto style. Donizetti is famous for his amazing productivity and beloved for his operas *The Elixir of Love* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Bel canto opera features arias made of two contrasting parts: the cavatina, which is slow and melodic, and a cabaletta, which is fast with a lot of flashy runs.



**RICHARD WAGNER** (1813-1883) The most influential operatic composer of all time. He departed from the Italian lyric form and developed the concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk*—music theater that places equal weight on text, drama and music—a “Total Art,” epic in length. Wagner’s operas include *The Ring Cycle*, which is comprised of four operas, which lasts 3-5 hours. His harmonies are far more complex than those in earlier Italian opera.



**GIUSEPPE VERDI** (1813-1901) Arguably, the greatest Italian opera composer of all time. His contributions are among the most beloved operas on stage and include such lions of the theater as *La Traviata*, *Rigoletto*, and *Aida*. Many more of his titles are staples of opera houses today. His work was a great evolutionary step in the history of opera—a perfect culmination of opera composers from Mozart through Bellini and an undisputed master of operatic form.



**GIACOMO PUCCINI** (1858-1924) If Wagner is the most influential composer of opera, then Puccini is the most popular and accessible. His operas are full of lush, beautiful melodies; believable, enduring characters; and extremely affecting theater. His operas include: *La bohème*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Tosca*, and *Turandot*. Each of his operas shows Puccini’s remarkable facility at evoking time and place. He was unafraid of utilizing musical techniques that other more avant garde composers were using, but he continued to remain, unmistakably, Puccini.

Source: Portland Opera

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(photos: Nunnally Rawson, Jeff Roffman, Raftermen)



# IMPORTANT JOBS

## WHO KEEPS THE OPERA RUNNING?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

**WIG & MAKE-UP DESIGNER** creates the hair and make-up styling for the show in tandem with the costumes and the production design. They are also responsible for any special effects make-up like scars, wounds or blood.

**WARDROBE MANAGER** makes sure all the costumes are clean and pressed and coordinates all the costume changes. Dressers help the singers put on their complicated costumes and change their costumes during the performance.

**PROPERTIES (PROPS) MASTER** is responsible for all the objects that the singers touch or move that are not part of their costumes. They do a lot of research to find the perfect period newspaper, set of glasses, bouquet of flowers, or book. They make artificial things look real on stage, like food or drink.

**CREW & STAGEHANDS** includes carpenters and electricians. They assist with the installation of the set on stage once it has been built. During the performance, they are responsible for set and lighting changes.

## HISTORY OF OPERA IN ATLANTA

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

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



Leontyne Price was one of the first African American featured singers with The Metropolitan Opera Company. This photo appeared in the program for the 1964 tour of *Don Giovanni*, in which she sang the role of Donna Anna. (photo: The Metropolitan Opera Company, *Carmen*, 1964 touring season program book / The Atlanta Opera archives)



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

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

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

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

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

### FINE ARTS

#### **Music – Responding GM.RE.1; GM.RE.2**

Opera 101  
Types of Operatic Voices  
Pre-performance activities  
Opera Vocabulary  
Write a Review  
The Science of Sound

#### **Music – Connecting GM.CN.1; GM.CN.2**

Opera 101  
Important Jobs at The Opera  
Opera in Atlanta  
Pre-performance activities  
Write a Review

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

Opera 101  
Types of Operatic Voices  
Pre-performance activities  
Write a Review

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

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### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

#### **ELA - Reading Literary**

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

Opera 101  
Pre-performance activities  
Opera Vocabulary  
The Science of Sound

#### **ELA - Reading Informational ELAGSERI1; ELAGSERI2**

The Science of Sound

#### **ELA - Writing ELAGSEW1; ELAGSEW2**

Write a Review

#### **ELA - Speaking and Listening ELAGSESL1**

Pre-performance activities  
The Science of Sound

### SCIENCE:

#### **S1P1; S7L2; S8P4; S8P2**

The Science of Sound



# SUPPORT

## SPECIAL THANKS

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



Official Beverage of The Atlanta Opera



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**Mary Brown Fund of Atlanta**

**Camp-Younts Foundation**

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**Sara Giles Moore Foundation**

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**Mr. William E. Pennington**

**The City of Roswell**

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**The David, Helen, & Marian Woodward Fund**

**The Zeist Foundation**

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

### **WHAT IS AN OPERA?**

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

### **HOW DOES IT WORK?**

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

### **OPERA ETIQUETTE**

#### **Students’ job as audience members:**

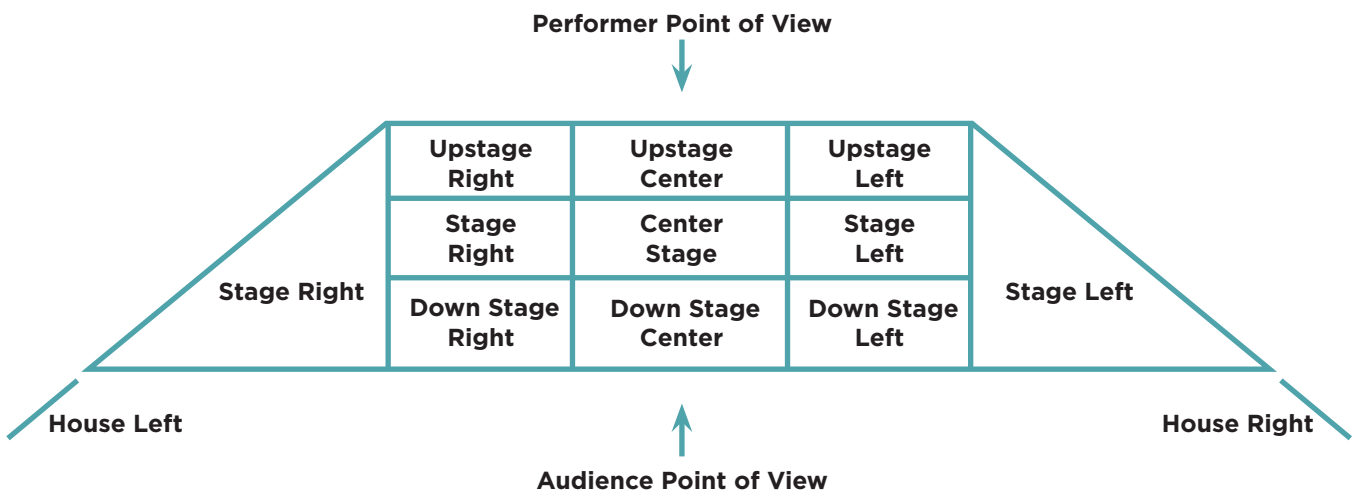
- **MAKE YOUR SCHOOL PROUD** by being an excellent audience member – please be quiet and listen carefully. Remember you are seeing a live performance, not watching television or a movie. The performers can see and hear you (as can other audience members).
- **LAUGH IF IT IS FUNNY**
- **CLAP AT THE END**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



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

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

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



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

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



### **ACT / SCENE**

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

### **ADAGIO**

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

### **ALLEGRO**

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

### **ARIA**

A song for solo voice accompanied by orchestra.

### **BRAVO**

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

### **CADENZA**

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

### **CHORUS**

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

### **CRESCENDO**

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

### **DIMINUENDO**

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

### **DYNAMICS**

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

### **ENSEMBLE**

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

### **FINALE**

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

### **FORTE**

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

### **INTERMISSION**

A break between acts of an opera.

### **LEGATO**

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

### **LIBRETTO**

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

### **MELODY**

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

### **OVERTURE**

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

### **PIANO**

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

### **RECITATIVE**

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

### **RHYTHM**

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

### **SCORE**

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

### **TEMPO**

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

### **TIMBRE**

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

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

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

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

Pretend you are an opera critic. Think about the performance you just saw and write your thoughts like you might see in the newspaper or an online review. Remember that a critic reports both the positive and negative features of a production. You might want to focus on one part of the opera that you particularly liked or disliked. Keep in mind that reviews express the opinions of the person who writes the review, and different people will often have different ideas about the same performance! Below are some tips to get you started.

To write your own review, you can focus on two different elements – what you **saw** and what you **heard**.

### FACTS & OPINIONS

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

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

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

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

### THE ART OF THE ADJECTIVE

Critics need to have a great vocabulary of descriptive words when they write about what they hear so that the people reading their reviews can imagine what it was like to be there. People use lots of different adjectives to describe the voices of opera singers. Here’s a review that’s chock-full of great adjectives:

“The **light, smoky** baritone of George Gagnidze only hints at Rigoletto’s outsize emotions, and the **sweet, pure** soprano of Lisette Oropesa keeps Gilda **sweet** but **inert**. The **handsome, hyperactive** tenor Vittorio Grigolo has two registers, bellowing and crooning, and the conductor, Marco Armiliato, has his hands full trying to keep up with Mr. Grigolo’s **wayward** tempos.”

Sometimes it is very hard to describe the way music makes us feel. While there are definitely objective facts we can evaluate when we listen to music (qualities like loud or soft, fast or slow) most of the time we listen subjectively. This means that every opinion is valid – you don’t have to know anything about opera to be moved by someone’s singing or a beautiful instrumental solo.

Write a few sentences about the character you liked best and why. How did the music help tell you who the character was? Think of five adjectives to describe the way that person’s voice sounded to you. How did it make you feel to listen to them?

### SUM IT ALL UP

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

Share your critique with us! The Atlanta Opera wants to know what you thought of our performance. If you would like to share your review with us, please send it on!

The Atlanta Opera Education Department, 1575 Northside Dr., NW, Suite 350, Atlanta, GA 30318 or [education@atlantaopera.org](mailto:education@atlantaopera.org)



## CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRAINED VOICE

Singing in Europe and America is now generally divided into two categories: classical and popular. What most people think of as operatic or classical singing developed in Europe hundreds of years ago. This style flourished during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as opera became a popular form of entertainment and operatic music increased in complexity. The most recognizable characteristics of a classically trained voice are:

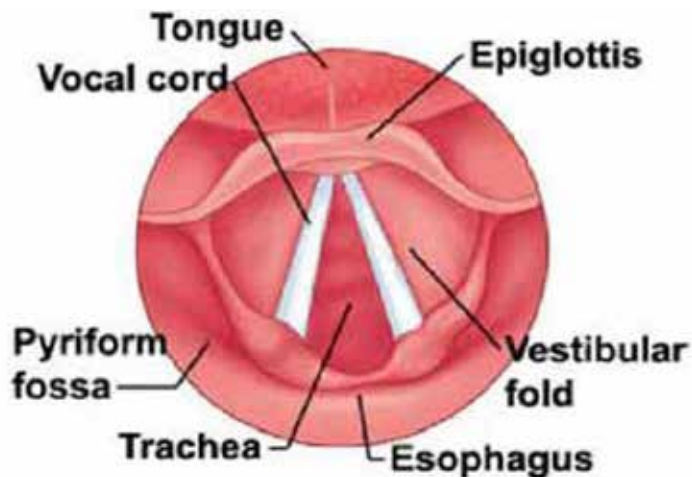
- an extensive range (the ability to sing both high and low)
- varying degrees of volume (loud and soft)
- resonance in the chest and sinus cavities (produces a full or round sound)
- an ability to project or fill a large space without amplification

## TRAINING

Very few people are born with the capability to sing this way. Classical singers take voice lessons about once a week and practice every day for many years in order to develop a beautiful operatic sound. In fact, most trained voices are not mature enough to perform leading roles on a big stage until they're at least 25 years old. Compare that with the most popular singers on the radio today who could release their first albums as teenagers!

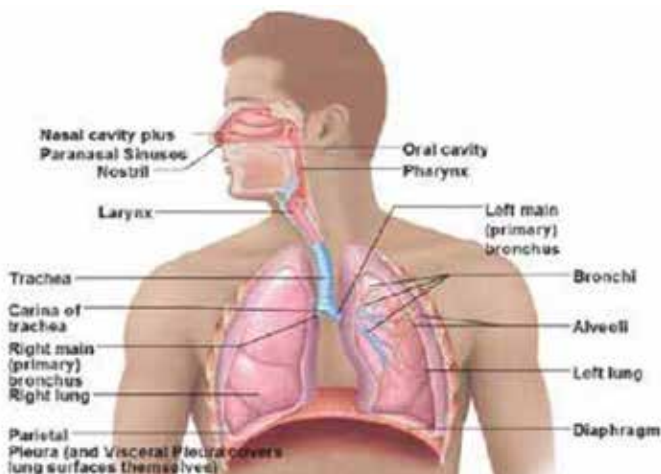
## THE VOCAL CORDS

Science tells us that all sound is made by two things vibrating together. The same concept applies when we talk or sing. The sounds we make are really just the vibration of two little muscles called the vocal cords. The vocal cords are held in the larynx, which is sometimes called the voicebox or (in boys) the Adam's Apple. These two little cords of tissue vary in length but are typically 1 - 2 inches long. When you want to say something, your brain tells your vocal cords to pull together until they're touching lightly. Then, air pushes through them, and the vocal cords begin to vibrate, opening and closing very quickly. This vibration creates a sound. The pitches you sing are dependent on the speed at which the cords vibrate. A faster vibration creates a higher pitch. The length of the cords also affects the pitch of the voice. Longer cords make a lower voice.



## BREATHING / SUPPORT

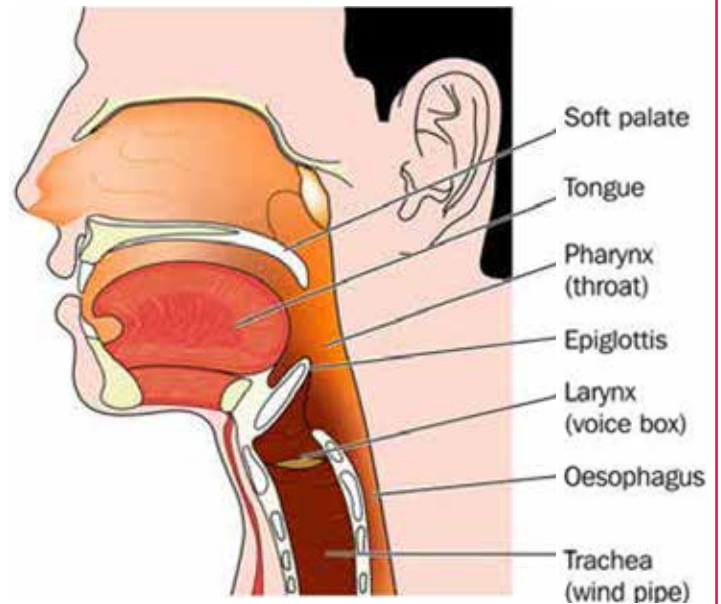
In order to sing long phrases with a lot of volume and a good tone, singers must breathe in a specific manner, making use of the entire torso area (lungs, ribs, diaphragm and viscera). As they breathe in, each part of this network does its job: the lungs fill up with air, which forces the ribs to expand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



## RESONANCE

One of the most obvious characteristics of an operatic voice is a full, resonant tone. Singers achieve this by lifting their soft palate. This is a part of the mouth that most people don't ever think about and can be difficult to isolate. Here are some simple exercises to feel where it is and hear the resonance in your voice when you lift it: Start to yawn. Feel that lifting sensation in the back of your mouth? That is the soft palate going up. With a relaxed mouth, slide your tongue along the roof of your mouth, from your teeth back toward your throat. You should feel your tongue go up, then down (that's your hard palate), then back up again. That soft, fleshy area at the very back is your soft palate. Say the word "who" like you would say it in normal conversation. Now, say "hoooo" like a hoot owl. Can you hear the difference?

Say the sentence "How do you do?" as if you were British. Lifting the soft palate is the foundation for the resonance in a singer's voice. With a lot of practice, a singer can lift his or her palate as soon as they begin to sing, without even thinking about it.



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

## YOUR SENSE OF SOUND: ENERGY & EQUIPMENT

Sound is important to human beings because it helps us to communicate with each other. Your sense of sound also helps you to enjoy music like opera. Musicians use sounds to communicate thoughts or feelings. But what is sound exactly? How do we hear it?

## THE ENERGY: HOW SOUND IS MADE

Sound is vibrating air. Sounds can vibrate in different patterns. These patterns are called sound waves. The different patterns change the sound we hear. Listen to traffic on a busy street. Noise like this is disorganized sound. Now listen to a piece of music. Music is sound and silence that is organized into patterns.

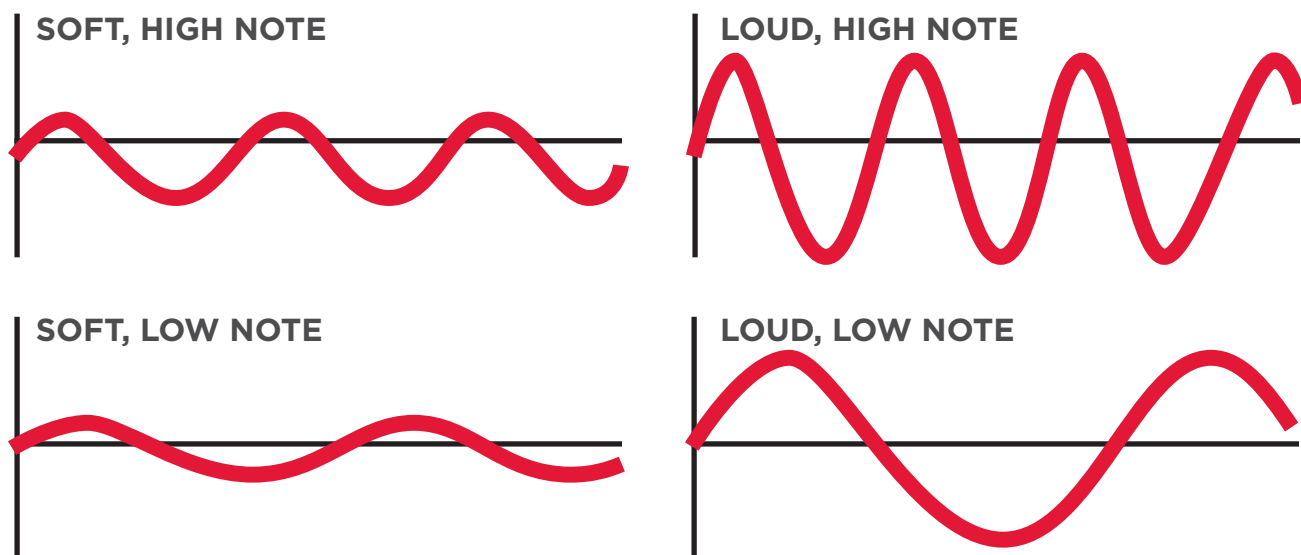
## THINK ABOUT IT!

How are the sounds of traffic and music different? How does each sound make you feel? Can traffic sound like music? Can music sound like traffic?

Sound waves can vibrate many times in one second. The number of times a sound wave vibrates in one second is called its frequency. The frequency tells how high or low the sound will be. This is called pitch. High-pitched notes vibrate at a fast rate, so they have a high frequency. Low-pitched notes have a slow frequency. In opera, the highest pitches are usually sung by women. Very low pitches are sung by men.

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

This is what sound waves look like:

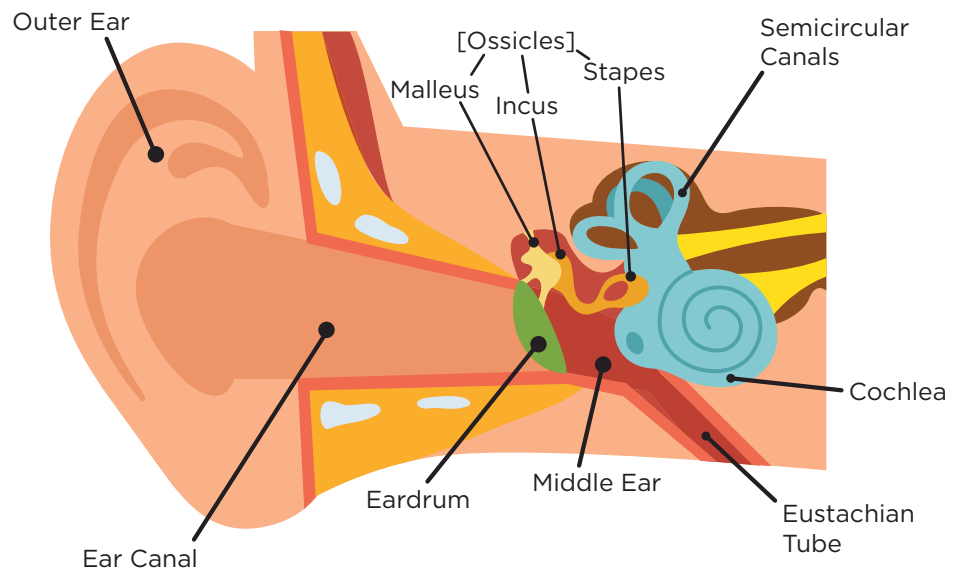


## TRY THIS!

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

## THE OUTER EAR

This is the only part of your ear that you can see. Your outer ear has two jobs: to collect the sound and protect the rest of the ear. Invisible sound waves travel through the air and enter the outer ear through an opening in your ear called the canal. The outer ear also makes earwax to protect the rest of the ear.



## THE MIDDLE EAR

After sound waves travel through the canal, they reach your middle ear. The middle ear turns the sound waves into vibrations before it sends them to the inner ear. Sound passes through your eardrum and three tiny bones called ossicles. Each ossicle has a name. They are the malleus (hammer), the incus (anvil), and the stapes (stirrup). The eardrum is a thin piece of skin attached to the hammer. The hammer is attached to the anvil, and the anvil is attached to the stirrup. When these three tiny bones vibrate, sound is passed on to the inner ear.

**DID YOU KNOW? Earwax (the yellowish stuff that forms in your ears) is your friend!**  
It protects the rest of the parts of your ear from getting dirt in them.

## THE INNER EAR

Once vibrations enter your inner ear, they travel to the cochlea. The cochlea is a small, curled tube, shaped like a snail's shell. It is filled with liquid and lined with millions of tiny hairs. Vibrations cause the liquid and the hairs to move. Then the hairs change the sound into nerve signals for your brain. The brain interprets the nerve signals and tells you what sound you are hearing.

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

## THE BALANCING ACT

Your ears do more than just hear... they also help keep you standing upright! Three small loops are located directly above the cochlea. The loops are called the semi-circular canals. They help us maintain our balance. The semi-circular canals tell your brain the position of your head - is it looking up? Turned to the left? Your brain determines where your head is and then keeps the rest of your body in line.

Try this! Fill a cup halfway with water. Move the cup around a bit, then stop. Notice how the water keeps swishing around even after the cup is still. Sometimes this happens in your semi-circular canals when you spin around very fast. The fluid that continues to move around in your ear is what makes you feel dizzy!



**ELEMENTARY LEVEL MATH PROBLEMS**

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

**ELEMENTARY ANSWERS**

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

**MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL MATH PROBLEMS**

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

**MIDDLE SCHOOL ANSWERS**

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