

# Calgary Opera Digital School Tour

Educator Guide

## BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

By Vittorio Giannini



CALGARY opera

February 20–March 22, 2024

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge that we live, work and play on the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani), the Tsuut'ina, the Iyarde Nakoda Nations, the Otipemisiwak Métis Government of the Métis Nation within Alberta Districts 5 & 6, and all people who make their homes in the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta

Hello and welcome to our Digital School Tour presentation of Vittorio Giannini's *Beauty and the Beast*.

This opera, first composed for radio and then adapted for stage by Calgary Opera, will transport your students to a place they've never been before with this fairytale. It is a departure from the Disney *Beauty and the Beast* version into an imaginative, emotional world carefully created by our Set Designer Scott Reid, Head of Wardrobe Heather Moore and Stage Director Aaron Coates. Prepare to be swept up into our opera universe!

Thanks to the enthusiastic response of teachers and students over the past few years of Digital School Tour presentations, we've decided to rotate years between in-person production and digital production offerings. The ability to reach out to communities that are hundreds or thousands of kilometres away from our Calgary Opera home in the Beltline community of Calgary is one we are thrilled about and hold with honour.

Thank you for bringing us into your school, your home, your theatre or community organization to share our performance with the children in your life. We don't take this opportunity lightly and look forward to thrilling and entrancing you with our beautiful opera presentation.

Please let us know how you liked it! We are here for you. Feel free to drop us a line and give us some feedback at [pkesler@calgaryopera.com](mailto:pkesler@calgaryopera.com).

Sincerely,

Patricia Kesler (she/her)

Education and Community Engagement Manager

Calgary Opera

Special Thanks to our 2023-24 McPhee Artist Development Program and School Tour Sponsors:

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# Table of Contents

	Page #
A Brief History of Opera	4
A Brief History of Calgary Opera	5
Voice Types in Opera	6
History of <i>Beauty and the Beast</i> and Radio Opera	7
Synopsis	8,9
Composer and Librettist	10
Cast and Biographies	11,12, 13
Artistic Team	14, 15
Exercises & Activities	16, 17, 18, 19
Crossword	21
Crossword Answer Key	22
Colouring Page	23
Language of Opera	24, 25, 26
Bibliography: Works Cited	26

# A Brief History of Opera

Opera is a combination of so many different art forms. It is a sung work on stage that can sometimes include acting, singing, dancing, scenery, props, lighting, costumes and maybe even projections and holograms! An orchestra accompanies the performers and usually performs from the pit, which is a sunken space at the front of the stage and a conductor conducts both the orchestra and the performers from a raised step in the pit. The word opera is the plural form of the Latin word “opus”, which translates quite literally as ‘work.’ Opera developed as a result of discussions held in Florence in the 1570’s by a group of artists known as the Camerata who were influenced by earlier Greek drama. Their discussions led to the musical setting of Rinuccini’s drama, *Dafne*, by composer Jacopo Peri in 1597.

The work of early Italian masters, such as Giulio Caccini and Claudio Monteverdi led to the development of a



Image of Peri’s score for *Dafne*, 1597 from [www.at.or.at](http://www.at.or.at)

musical piece made up of recitative (fast sing-speaking) sections which revealed the main storyline; followed by arias which provided the soloist an opportunity to develop the emotions of the character through emotive singing. The new art form was greeted enthusiastically by the nobility of the time and, over the centuries, by the public, where it became a popular entertainment form that often dealt with the common people and stories of the day.

Opera has flourished throughout the world as a way to express the full range of human emotions. Italians claim the art form as their own, with the bulk of famous opera composers being of Italian origin through to the 1900s. Puccini, Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, Verdi, and Leoncavallo developed the art form through clearly defined periods that produced *opera buffa*, *opera seria*,

*bel canto*, and *verismo*. The Austrian composer Mozart also wrote operas in Italian. Further, he championed the singspiel (sing play), which combined the spoken word with music, a form also used by Beethoven in his only opera, *Fidelio*. Bizet (*Carmen*), Offenbach (*Les Contes D’Hoffmann*), Gounod, Faust, and Meyerbeer (*Les Huguenots*) led adaptations by the French which ranged from the *opera comique* to the grand full-scale *tragedie lyrique*. German composers von Weber (*Der Freschutz*), Richard Strauss (*Ariadne auf Naxos*), and Wagner (*Der Ring des Nibelungen*) developed their own styles of opera as well. The English ballad opera, Spanish *zarzuela* and Viennese operetta styles all helped to establish opera as a form of entertainment, one that continues to enjoy great popularity throughout the



Will Liverman and Angel Blue in *Fire Shut up in my Bones*, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, 2019

world today.

During the 20th century composers in North America diverged from European traditions in order to focus on their roots while exploring and developing the work of folk music and legends in the country. Composers such as Douglas Moore, Carlisle Floyd, Scott Joplin and more recently Jake Heggie and Terence Blanchard have all crafted operas that have been presented throughout the world to great success. In Canada, composer John Estacio and librettist John Murrell were commissioned by Calgary Opera to produce *Filumena*, based on a true Canadian story of the last woman to be hanged in Alberta - which premiered in 2003 in Calgary to great success, and is one of the most produced Canadian grand operas in the world today.

# A Brief History of Calgary Opera

## A COMMUNITY HUB SINCE THE BEGINNING

The Wesley Church at 1315-7th Street SW, Calgary, now the **Mamdani Opera Centre**, was constructed in 1911 to serve its Methodist (later United Church) congregation as the population of Calgary grew from 4,000 to 43,000 in ten short years. A commanding structure, located in the city's Beltline area, the Wesley played an important role in Calgary's spiritual and cultural life for nearly a century.

The building was used as a place of worship right up until 2004 when mounting repairs and maintenance cost almost led to its demolition. Fortunately, the Wesley was spared that fate when a group of local businesspeople purchased it in November that same year and offered the church to Calgary Opera Association.



Wesley Methodist Church, Calgary

## THE OPERA MOVES IN

Calgary Opera took over the historically designated church in July 2005, converting it into the Calgary Opera Centre. The 3,200 square foot sanctuary became a rehearsal hall, and the building's other spaces were transformed into studios, wardrobe and props shops, and administrative offices. Residency in the renovated Wesley Church took Calgary Opera to the next level in its growth, allowing the company to deliver a unique development program for young artists and enhance education and community engagement activities. It also became an important addition to the city's inventory of performance spaces.

Said Arrata, a Calgary oil and gas executive, gave Calgary Opera a significant gift that helped offset the Centre's operating cost for eight years. In recognition of that generous donation, the Calgary Opera Centre was known as the Arrata Opera Centre for that same time period.

## BECOMING THE MAMDANI OPERA CENTRE

Then, in 2015, Riaz Mamdani, CEO of Strategic Group with a passion for community involvement, entered into a naming sponsorship with Calgary Opera, a partnership which continues to help offset Calgary Opera's operating costs. Supporting the community's art and culture initiatives have always been important to Mr. Mamdani and Strategic Group who have established values of making an impact with partnerships and are committed to building legacies through continued involvement. "Calgary Opera is an important part of our city's culture and history as a modern metropolis," said Mr. Mamdani. "It is an honour to support them in their historically significant home--the Mamdani Opera Centre—in the heart of Calgary. This is a meaningful partnership between two creative and unconventional organizations." The Calgary Opera Association and Strategic Group partnership has, and continues, to provide quality and innovative programming that benefits the entire city.



Riaz Mamdani, photographed in the Gallery of the Mamdani Opera Centre by Neil Zeller

## CALGARY OPERA CONTINUES



- 2023-2024 is the company's 51st season
- Calgary Opera has presented 7 world premieres
- Calgary Opera has presented 9 Canadian premieres

Mamdani Opera Centre today

# Voice Types in Opera

## Voice Types

SOPRANO	The highest female or boy's voice
MEZZO-SOPRANO	Literally middle-soprano, the female voice that falls between soprano and contralto
CONTRALTO	The deepest female voice, often abbreviated to Alto
COUNTERTENOR	The highest male voice, a voice type that has come in and out of popularity
TENOR	A high male voice
BARITONE	The middle register of the male voice
BASS	The lowest type of male voice

Breaking down the voice types, categories within the types listed above:

COLORATURA	Decorative vocal work by way of trills and rapid runs in the vocal line, from the latin "colorare", to colour, today mostly found in conjunction with soprano voice type
DRAMATIC	A heavy, powerful voice with a steely timbre capable of great range and emotion
LYRIC	An average size voice, but capable of singing long beautiful phrases.
HELDEN	A German term referring to a powerful, heroic voice capable of singing very demanding roles, mostly used in relation to tenor voice type
SOUBRETTE	A bright and sweet sound associated with soprano voice type, often called for in young opera characters such as servants. Soubrette lacks the vocal gymnastics that the coloratura is capable of
SPINTO	A voice type able to sing effortlessly high, but also able to descend into more dramatic notes, making them able to portray a broader range of emotion

\*Bonus Resource : To watch a short but descriptive video on operatic voice types explained, go to the Royal Opera House London (ROH) YouTube video here:

<https://youtu.be/hLfvkwTnJVMsi=bWyF65R0D8ml7nkO>

# History of *Beauty and the Beast* and Radio Opera

*Beauty and the Beast* was originally composed specifically for radio when it was commissioned by CBS in 1938. Of course the composer Vittorio Giannini didn't write the story of *Beauty and the Beast*, it is a tale that was circulated orally for centuries in Africa, Europe, India and Central Asia.

The Folktale:

Tales similar to *Beauty and the Beast* found in folklore from around the world all involve a young woman who is the sister of difficult and entitled siblings. The young, humble sister marries some type of animal creature, such as in the folktale *The Snake with Five Heads* from southern Africa in which the younger daughter marries a multi-headed serpent. In the Norwegian tale *East of the Sun, West of the Moon*, a young woman marries a white bear. In the Chinese folktale *The Fairy Serpent*, the youngest of three daughters is married to a snake. A further similarity to the modern story that all of these folktales share is that the animal husbands are all transformed into human men.

The story *Beauty and the Beast* was brought to Western Europe for the first time in print form as one of the tales in the book *La Jeune Américaine, et les Contes Marins* (translates to *The Young American and the Tales of the Sea*) as *La Belle et La Bête*. Published in 1740 and written by Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Gallond de Villeneuve. The story she included was very long. Sixteen years later, Jeanne-Marie Le Prince de Beaumont published an abridged version which appeared in *Magasin des Enfants (Magazine for Children)*. This version was translated into English and appeared in *The Young Misses Magazine* in London in 1757 as *Beauty and the Beast*. The Beaumont English version became the standard upon which modern retellings are based including the most famous versions that modern audiences are familiar with, Walt Disney Pictures' 1991 animated film and 2017 live-action film, neither of which mention Beauty's sisters.

Radio Opera

Heinrich Hertz discovered radio waves in 1888 and this quickly led to the development of radio transmissions on earth and even into space! Guglielmo Marconi continued the work and created the first functioning radios. The first opera broadcasts were transmitted by Lee de Forest from the roof of the Metropolitan Opera House in 1910. After World War I, which saw the use of radio waves to assist in war efforts, had ended, radio use expanded rapidly in the United States. The first commercial radio station went on the air in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA in 1920 by which time over 1,000,000 American households had their own radio. Broadcasting stations were established, like NBC and CBS, which later turned into television broadcast stations when television became popular. But before television, the radio was the centre of the home, with families sitting around them to listen to news updates, Christian broadcasts, and, increasingly, drama programs written for radio with actors speaking the voices and various sound effects created to mimic real life sounds. Concerts of swing music, big band, and opera were broadcast as well.

Operas were heard more and more often on the radio. The Metropolitan Opera House began playing full operas every week for audiences to listen to. This tradition has continued to this day on public radio stations and can be heard in Canada on CBC radio's *Saturday Afternoon at the Opera* program.

You can listen to the original radio broadcast of Vittorio Giannini's *Beauty and the Beast*, conducted by Howard Barlow and performed by The Columbia Symphony Orchestra on November 24, 1938 here:

[Columbia Workshop 115 Beauty And The Beast | Columbia Workshop | Drama | Old Time Radio Downloads](#)

# Synopsis

**What is a synopsis?** It is the plot of the story; a description, in shorter form, of the storyline.

As we have discovered together, our version of *Beauty and the Beast* was written for radio and then we adapted it for the stage. The story begins with a description of what is happening from the Storyteller. If you can imagine only listening to this story, having the Storyteller explain what is happening at the beginning would help you to understand the rest of what you would be hearing. In our case, you can see what is happening, but the Storyteller still helps in setting the scene.

The characters of the Voices have much the same purpose as the Storyteller, but are presented in a different way. Their presence is like a chorus. A chorus is a group of singers that together help to support and advance the story, and that is what our Voices do. The concept of the chorus was first developed in Classical Greek dramas and was represented by a group of actors who commented upon the main action in the story.

## SYNOPSIS

### OVERTURE

The storyteller explains how a selfish prince was once cursed by ancient magic to live as a beast as ugly as his heart until he could earn the love of another.

### STORYTELLER SETS THE SCENE

A merchant with three daughters was once rich and is now poor. His two older daughters were selfish, and believed they deserved riches and luxuries. His youngest daughter, Beauty, was a happy dreamer, content with the life she had, even while doing her (and her sisters') daily chores.

### INSIDE THE FATHER'S HOME

The Father arrives home, announcing that he's come into some money. The older daughters rejoice, and demand that he go to the city to buy the luxurious and expensive items they believe they deserve. When The Father asks Beauty what she wants, she tells him she only desires "one red rose, from a garden sweet with spring, by a lonely magic stream."

### IN THE GARDEN

A storm rolls in on the way to the city. The Father becomes lost. He finds himself in a garden by a river and asks The Gardener where he is. The Gardener tells him he is at The Beast's castle. The Father notices that there are roses by the river and asks The Gardener if he may take one for his daughter, Beauty. The Gardener agrees, but warns him to be fast because The Beast is approaching.

The Beast arrives and confronts the two men about the stolen rose. The Gardener tries to explain, but in anger, The Beast turns him into a statue. The Beast then tells The Father to take the rose home to Beauty, as well as gold for the older daughters. However, The Father must agree to return to the castle with Beauty, who shall be The Beast's bride. To save Beauty from marrying the Beast, The Father offers up his own life, but The Beast argues that all three daughters will be poor and miserable for the rest of their lives.

# Synopsis

Synopsis Continued

## OUTSIDE THE CASTLE

The Father has delivered the gold and the rose to his daughters. Now he and Beauty are by the stream outside of The Beast's castle. The Father tries to convince her to flee home, but Beauty says she is not afraid of The Beast, and says goodbye to her father.

Beauty knocks on the castle door, and mysterious voices are heard welcoming her in. The castle door opens, and The Beast appears. When he sees Beauty he falls in love and promises that her every wish will be fulfilled now that she is his bride. Beauty tells him that although his offer is kind, she cannot be his bride because of how cruel he was to his own Gardener. The Beast tells her he will give her space and hopes she will come to love him in return.

## THE FATHER'S HOUSE

In a dream Beauty saw her Father grieving for her, and has returned home by way of a magic ring given to her by The Beast. The Father tells her of how his world is grey and sad since she has been gone. Beauty agrees to stay for a little while.

Beauty has another dream, this time she sees The Beast, dying alone by the river and calling out her name. The Father tries to calm her by saying that The Beast does not love her because he is ugly and mean, but Beauty knows the heart of The Beast. She tells The Father how generous and kind he is – even giving her his own magic ring to travel home and comfort The Father, if she promised to return one day.

Beauty knows in her heart that she must go to The Beast.

## OUTSIDE THE CASTLE

Beauty returns to the castle. The mysterious voices tell her that The Beast is by the river, dying of loneliness.

## IN THE GARDEN

Beauty finds the Beast lying by the river and she tells him she loves him because of his kindness to her. As he dies, he tells her to go touch the statue of The Gardener, which returns the man to life. She tells The Gardener to tend the roses as an emblem of her love for The Beast. When Beauty turns back to The Beast, he is gone. The spell causing his ugliness has been broken and he is restored to his natural state: a radiant and glorious young man.

# Composer and Librettist

**Who is the composer?** The composer writes the music of the opera.



## **Composer Vittorio Giannini**

Distinguished American composer and teacher Vittorio Giannini was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA on October 19, 1903.

He was born into a musical Italian-American family and showed an early musical talent. At the age of 9 he won a scholarship to study at the Verdi Conservatory in Milan, Italy, where he remained for 4 years. After returning to the U.S. and several years of private study, he attended the Juilliard School, with Rubin Goldmark as his composition teacher and Hans Letz as violin teacher. In 1932 he won the American Prix de Rome and returned to Italy, this time to Rome, for 4 more years.

Upon his return to the U.S. in 1939, he was appointed to the faculty at Juilliard as a teacher of composition and orchestration and then further, in 1941, as a teacher of musical theory. In 1956 he was appointed professor of composition at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, his birth place. In 1965, he became the first director of the North Carolina School of the Arts in Winston-Salem.

Musically, during the 40's he composed much Baroque and Classical music, including opera, and always with his characteristic Romantic style. His most famous opera, a version of *The Taming of the Shrew*, was composed in 1950. In the 60's he started to experiment with more modern music, with a more dissonant harmonic style, however he always stayed true to his roots and the Italian *bel canto* style which kept him mostly out of the mainstream of contemporary music making. Although he was a prolific composer, most of his music is infrequently performed today.

He died in 1966 in New York, N.Y., USA

**Who is the librettist?** A librettist writes the words for the opera. The libretto is the complete opera script and comes from the Italian word for little book, which is where the words were printed for audiences so that they could understand what was being sung. This began as a commemorative practice but became a helpful aide for the audience to understand the story.

## **Librettist Robert A. Simon**

Robert A. Simon was born in 1897 in New York, N.Y. and was a graduate of Columbia University. Over the course of his career he was a writer, a librettist and a translator who was a music critic of *The New Yorker* magazine for 23 years, from its first issue in 1925 until 1948. During those years he wrote the librettos for several American operas including Robert Russell Bennett's *Maria Malibran* (1935), Albert Stoessel's *Garrick* (1937) and Vittorio Giannini's opera *Beauty and the Beast* (1951) and *Rehearsal Hall* (1962).

After his time at the *New Yorker*, he continued on at the New York radio station WOR-AM and also worked in the broadcast department of the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency. He worked for RCA records making broadcasts and writing record-liner notes. He also was a fiction writer and wrote a detective story as well as books poking fun at the music world and a collection of *Bronx Ballads*.

He was married with two children in his lifetime and died in Manhattan, N.Y. at the age of 84 in 1981.

# Cast and Biographies

Character	Description	Artist	Voice Type
Beauty	A young woman who is kind and brave	Christina Thanisch-Smith	Soprano
The Beast	A nobleman who is cursed	Arieh Max Sacke	Tenor
The Storyteller/ Voice 3	The Storyteller introduces and ends the story	Jillian Clow	Mezzo Soprano
The Father	A kind father who wants the best for his daughters	Connor Hoppenbrouwers	Baritone
The First Daughter	An unkind and lazy sister	Nicole Leung	Soprano
The Second Daughter	An unkind and lazy sister	Justine Ledoux	Mezzo Soprano
The Gardener/ Voice 1	A gardener and caretaker of the Beast's roses	Elias Theocharidis	Tenor
Voice 2	The Voices (1, 2, 3) are like the chorus of an opera - helping to support the story	Branden Olsen	Bass-Baritone

## Christina Thanisch-Smith—Beauty

Christina Thanisch-Smith is a German/Canadian soprano, and a graduate of McGill University. Last season she was a member of Les Jeunes Ambassadeurs Lyriques, a finalist for the Atelier lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal, and debuted with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra as soprano soloist for Handel's *Messiah*. Christina recently made her Maison Symphonique de Montréal debut as the soloist for Mahler's *Symphony No. 4*, and role debut as Eurydice in Gluck's *Orphée et Eurydice* with Manitoba



Underground Opera. While at McGill, she sang the title roles in Poulenc's *Les mamelles de Tirésias* and Handel's *Partenope*. This is her first season in Calgary Opera's McPhee Artist Development Program, where she will be seen as Giannetta in *The Elixir of Love*.

## Arieh Max Sacke—The Beast

Toronto-born tenor Arieh Max Sacke is in his first year of the McPhee Artist Development Program at Calgary Opera. Recent stage credits include Basilio in *The Marriage of Figaro* (Calgary Opera), Urizen in Allan Bevan's *Perfectly Mad* (Orpheus Choir of Toronto/Chorus Niagara), Ferrando in *Così fan tutte* (Opera by Request), Don Ramiro in *La Cenerentola* (COSA Canada), the Narrator



in Bach's *Coffee Cantata*, and Alexis in *The Sorcerer* (MADS). Arieh was a 2023 Manitoba Opera Digital Emerging Artist, and was previously a Festival Artist with Opera Saratoga, with whom he portrayed Elder Three in *Sky on Swings* and covered Pirelli in *Sweeney Todd*. He attained his Master of Music at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.

# Cast Biographies

## Jillian Clow—The Storyteller/Voice 3

Originally from PEI, mezzo soprano Jillian Clow is in her first season as a McPhee Artist with Calgary Opera. Recently, she made her debut as a soloist with the Prince Edward Island Symphony Orchestra. She also sang Handel's *Messiah* with the Confederation Centre of the Arts and joined the Island Choral Society in their performance of Mozart's *Requiem*. Jillian was an artist in residence at the Lunenburg Academy of Music on two occasions and returned to make her role debut as Angelina in LAMP's production of Rossini's *La Cenerentola* in 2022. During her graduate studies at UBC (M.Mus), she performed roles including Tisbe (*La Cenerentola*), Zweite Dame (*Die Zauberflöte*), and Dryade (*Ariadne auf Naxos*).



## Connor Hoppenbrouwers—The Father

Baritone Connor Hoppenbrouwers recently made his debut as a soloist with the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra and is in his second season of Calgary Opera's McPhee Artist Development Program. Originally from Edmonton, Connor began his studies with John Tessier and continued on with J. Patrick Raftery. Prominent roles for Connor include Paul Jobs in *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*, Dancaïre in *Carmen* with Calgary Opera (2022/23), Count Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro* with the University of British Columbia Opera Workshop, Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte* with The University of Alberta Opera Workshop, and as a soloist with The Alberta Baroque Ensemble. An avid musician, Connor also performs regularly with orchestras and jazz bands as a double bassist.



## Nicole Leung—The First Daughter

Canadian soprano Nicole Leung is in her second season in the McPhee Artist Development Program where she was most recently seen as Barbarina in *The Marriage of Figaro*. Past season highlights at Calgary Opera include Frasquita (*Carmen*), Delia in Joe Illick's *Stone Soup*, Héro (*Béatrice et Bénédicte*), and The Fairy Godmother (*Cinderella*) for their school touring production. Last summer she appeared as Pamina in The Little Opera Company's production of *The Magic Flute: The Trials of Tamino and Pamina*. A graduate of the Yale School of Music, she was seen as Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*), Morgana (*Alcina*), and Rosalba (*Florenzia en el Amazonas*).



## Justine Ledoux—Second Daughter

Quebec mezzo-soprano Justine Ledoux is known for the sincerity of her singing, her velvety tone, and her extraordinary charisma on stage. She obtained her master's degree from the Conservatoire de musique de Montréal, and 2023-2024 is her second season with Calgary Opera's McPhee Artist Development Program. At Calgary Opera she was most recently seen as Marcellina in *The Marriage of Figaro* (W.A. Mozart), and will be seen this spring as Wellgunde in *Das Rheingold* (R. Wagner). Select operatic roles include Mercédès in *Carmen* (G. Bizet); Béatrice and Ursule in *Béatrice et Bénédicte* (H. Berlioz); Cendrillon in *Cendrillon* (J. Massenet), The Stepmother in *The Juniper Tree* (P. Glass), and Dorabella in *Così fan tutte* (W.A. Mozart).



# Cast Biographies

## **Elias Theocharidis**—The Gardener

Toronto-born tenor Elias Theocharidis is now in his 2nd year of the McPhee Artist Development Program, recent roles include Malcolm in Calgary Opera's *Macbeth*, Bénédict in Berlioz's *Béatrice et Bénédict*, and The Prince in their touring production of *Cinderella* adapted by Rob Herriot. Other notable roles include Don José in Peter Brook's *La Tragédie de Carmen*, Don Ottavio in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Mr. Rushworth in the Canadian Premiere of Jonathan Dove's *Mansfield Park*, and Nemorino in *Donizetti's L'elisir d'amore*. In 2019, he was the tenor soloist in Mozart's *Requiem* with the Toronto Sinfonietta under Maestro Matthew Jaskiewicz. Later this season he will be seen as Froh in Wagner's *Das Rheingold* with Calgary Opera.



## **Branden Olson**—Voice 2

Branden Olsen is an Atlantic Canadian bass-baritone in his second year of the McPhee Artist Development Program. He is a pedagogical clinician and conductor of exceptional promise. In 2021 Branden won first place (voice) at the Federation of Canadian Music Festivals National Competition. He has a master's in both choral conducting and voice performance and is currently studying under renowned Canadian tenor David Pomeroy. Branden was honoured to workshop the newly commissioned February with Opera on the Avalon, and also to conduct the Atlantic Boychoir in Cornwall, UK. He was recently seen on the Calgary Opera stage as Antonio (*The Marriage of Figaro*), and with the Little Opera Company in Winnipeg as Papageno (*The Magic Flute*). Branden is proudly funded by ArtsNB.



# Artistic Team

## ARTISTIC TEAM—Stage Director and Music Director

Every opera and theatre performance needs more than just the performers! Although you don't often see the Artistic Team that is working on a performance, they are there during all of the rehearsals, making sure the opera or play makes sense and looks and sounds great.

The person who directs the performers and helps them to tell the story in a way that makes sense on stage is the Stage Director.

In the case of opera, there is always music! When you attend an opera performance in a big theatre, there is usually an orchestra full of musicians playing percussion like bass drums, triangle, and xylophones; wind instruments like clarinets and saxophones; brass instruments like trumpets, trombones, French horns, and euphoniums; and string instruments like violins, violas, cellos and upright bass. In a smaller performance, there is often just one person playing all of the music: the Pianist. In the case of our production, our Pianist is also the Music Director of the performance who makes sure the music is played in the correct places and is performed with absolute excellence. In opera, the music acts as a character, as a very important part of the piece that helps to tell the story.

### **Aaron Coates**—Stage Director

Aaron is a director, writer, and actor based in Calgary. He studied acting at Mount Royal University and at École Philippe Gaulier in Paris. Directing credits include: *Mail Ordered* (Creatives Inspirit), *Ticket to Love*, *The Bat*, *Figaro's Wedding*, *NYC Meets YYC*, *Prison Divas*, *Archibaldo*, *The Bachelor*, *La Bohème*, *The Phantom of the Opera Sing-Along*, *The Sound of Music Sing-Along* (Cowtown Opera); *Nemorino and the Magic Potion*, *Cinderella*, *The Magic Flute*, *The Scorpions' Sting*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Hannaraptor* (Calgary Opera); *The After Party*, *The Way of All Fish* (Lunchbox Theatre); *Dying City* (Pangloss), *The Old Neighborhood* (Rogues Theatre), *Iraq and Back* (Ghost River Theatre), and *The End of the Rope* (Vertigo Theatre). Aaron spent nine seasons as Co-Artistic Producer of *Dirty Laundry*, Calgary's live improvised soap opera, where he directed over 150 episodes. He went on to become Associate Artistic Director of Cowtown Opera for three seasons. He is currently a faculty member of Company of Rogues Actors' Studio in Calgary.



### **Evan Mounce**—Music Director and Pianist

Calgary-based pianist and vocal coach Evan Mounce is in demand as a leader and collaborator. Evan is Assistant Chorus Director of the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, newly appointed Répétiteur with Calgary Opera, and Director of Music at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. As a vocal coach Evan has worked with kd lang, preparing her for her 25th anniversary tour of *Ingenue*. Recent collaborations include work with Luminous Voices, Spiritus Chamber Choir, and Edmonton Opera. With his wife Laura Brandt, Evan has presented numerous recitals including for the Mountain View International Festival of Song and Chamber Music, the ProArts Recital Series, and together they have performed on two river cruises from Budapest to Amsterdam as ambassadors of Calgary Opera.



# Artistic Team



**Scott Reid**—Set Designer and Projection

Scott Reid has been designing for theatre, opera and dance for over 30 years. He is a set, lighting and projection designer. His designs have been seen across North America. Scott earned both his BFA and MFA in design from the University of Alberta.

<https://scottreiddesign.com/>



**Heather Moore**—Costumer Designer

Heather Moore is a film and theatre professional based in Calgary. She has worked as Costume Supervisor, Assistant Designer and Head of Wardrobe all over the world. Heather is currently Head of Wardrobe at Calgary Opera.



**Shelby-Jai Flick**—Stage Manager

Shelby-Jai has stage managed across Canada, and is happy to now call Calgary home. Recent credits include: *The Bremen Town Musicians*, *Norma*, *Christmas at the Opera*, *La Bohème* (Calgary Opera); *Lighting the Way*, *The Temporary* (Downstage); *The Seven Wonders* (Beakerhead 2019); *We Are All Treaty People* (Quest Theatre/Young People's Theatre); in addition to ongoing work with the Tokyo 2020 Olympics

Apprentice Stage Manager: Kaitlyn Alderson

Wardrobe Crew: Raven Hehr

Lighting Designer and Assistant Technical Director: Brett Johnson

Hair & Wigs: Franca Vaccaro

Hair Stylist: Michelle Suffolk

Hair Stylist: Melissa Savinkoff

Head of Makeup / Makeup FX Artist: Tracy Falukozi

Head of Props: Kate Greggerson

Director of Production: Cody Stadel

Assistant Technical Director: Brett Johnson

Vocal Tracks: Dan Plumtree

Video & Post Production Company: New Jack Productions, Jody and Laura Lund

Production Assistant: Luiz Veronese

This video was filmed at the Mamdani Opera Centre in Calgary, Alberta, Canada in 2023.

# Exercises & Activities

Through the elementary music program and performances such as this digital opera for young audiences, we endeavor to raise appreciation and awareness of different types of music in children. Opera is a new artform for many elementary students, and yet, one that they tend to relate to and understand through the multiple access points of costume, makeup, acting, music, dance and singing.

It is the goal of our program to introduce the incredible storytelling capabilities of opera so that students can use it for their own self-expression and creativity, through activities designed to look at all aspects of an opera production.

## Recitative exercise

The singing in opera has different parts:

*Aria*—Italian for an ‘air’ or ‘song’. The big number where the singer expresses feelings and shows off the voice.

*Recitative*—Speech-singing where the singer chants the words in rhythm of free speech, used to further the plot or set up an aria.

Recitative is an Italian word that is used to describe a kind of sing-speaking that occurs in opera. Because singing a sentence takes much longer than saying it, we need tools in opera to speed up the story so that we can tell it in a reasonable amount of time.

Recitative is used to progress the story and give more information to the audience about what they are seeing in a short amount of time. It is accompanied by simple music that underlies the singing and follows the rhythm of the speech. It is not complicated in order to keep the focus on the words. Arias contain more melody and are sung in much longer lines, often just a few lines are sung over and over again and are accompanied by an entire orchestra. The singing is beautiful in arias and contains a lot of emotion.

Examples of recitative in *Beauty and the Beast*:

- On the next page is a section of the score with the Gardener and the Father when they first meet. Their singing is simple and speech-like, with little musical accompaniment, and serves to give much information to the audience in a short amount of time. They do not repeat lines, nor add a lot of melody and extra vocal flourishes to the parts.
- The Storyteller in the very beginning of the opera uses recitative to set up the story ahead

Anybody can sing recitative!

**Activity:** Have the students write a short script about something every day, like what they had for breakfast, or what they are planning on doing with their summer vacation. It can be a conversation amongst two people, like it is in the following score excerpt of the Gardener and the Father, or it can be all sung by one person in a monologue meant to inform the audience about a particular thing. Speak sing it, in a simple melody invented on the spot.

Ask them how they would sing it? Would they follow a steady rhythm or use the natural rhythm of speech? How does speeding up the singing or slowing it down change the meaning of what they are singing?

<i>Beginner</i>	Present the children with a pre-written script. Have them make up the simple melody for it as they sing the lines.
<i>Advanced</i>	Have the children write their own script as a monologue or a conversation between two people. Give them a set of notes or chords to work with as both the melody of the recitative and the accompanying music. Have one student in the team play the accompanying chords or simple melody line.

Here is a wonderful short video that explains the difference between aria and recitative in a simple way, by the YouTube channel Music Appreciation: <https://youtu.be/zKi-XjSGDaA?si=D-6RTT1b6VydZjxq>

# Exercises & Activities

dim. mp

14 *Andante Mod<sup>to</sup>*  
*Father* mp  
I was on my way to the ci-ty, my friend, I lost it in the storm!

This musical score features a piano accompaniment at the top and a vocal line for the character 'Father' below. The piano part includes dynamic markings 'dim.' and 'mp'. The vocal line is marked 'Andante Mod<sup>to</sup>' and 'mp'. The lyrics are: 'I was on my way to the ci-ty, my friend, I lost it in the storm!'.

+ We see the outside of the Castle & the Father approach a Gardener.  
N. Y. 1424

11

*Gardener*  
That is man-y miles to the north! You are far from the ci-ty now!

*Father* *Gardener* *Father* 15  
Whose cas-tle is this? The cas-tle of my mas-ter! And who is your mas-ter?

poco accel.

This musical score contains two vocal parts: 'Gardener' and 'Father'. The 'Gardener' part is on a single staff with the lyrics: 'That is man-y miles to the north! You are far from the ci-ty now!'. The 'Father' part is on a single staff with the lyrics: 'Whose cas-tle is this? The cas-tle of my mas-ter! And who is your mas-ter?'. The piano accompaniment is shown in two staves. A 'poco accel.' marking is present at the end of the score.

These pages are reprinted with permission.

# Exercises & Activities

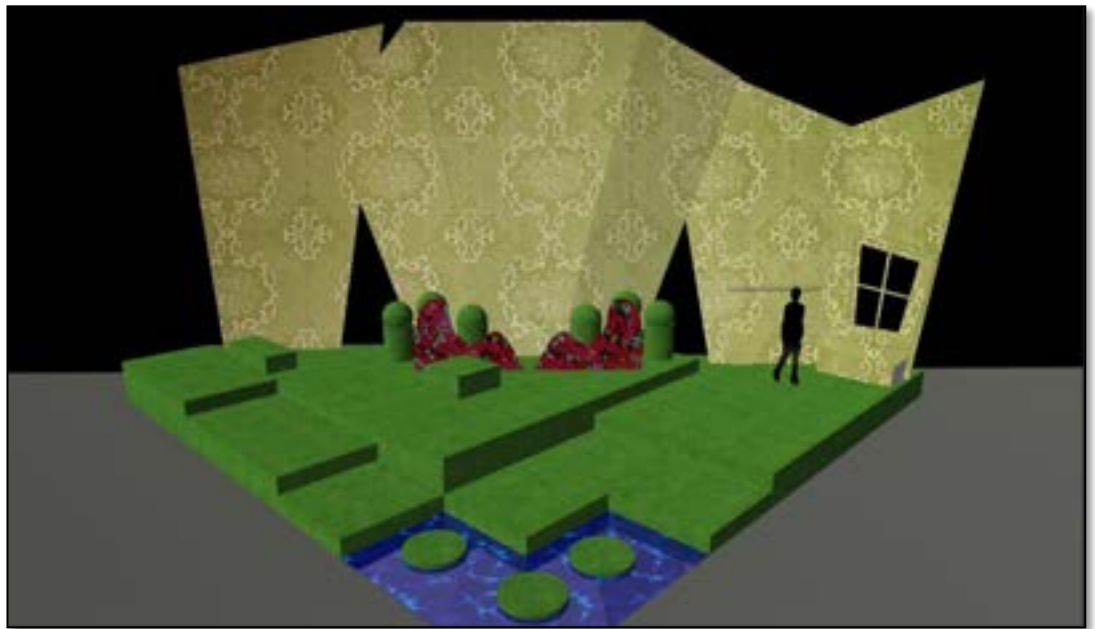
## Set Design Exercise

Our video performance was filmed in our Opera Centre here in Calgary. A large set was built and painted gray to act as a backdrop on which we projected images. These projected images act as our set. The Set Designer, Scott Reid, created these projected images or drawings, on his computer. A large light projector displayed the images onto the gray backdrop while the performers sang.

Following are some illustrations of the projections that Mr. Reid created for our production. A big part of what a designer does, whether it is a costume, set, or even a wig designer, is to come up with many, many ideas in the beginning, then, as the designers and the Stage Director speak more and become clearer on their ideas for the final performances, some of the ideas are put aside and other ones are used. The following two are used in the video performance, see if you can spot them!

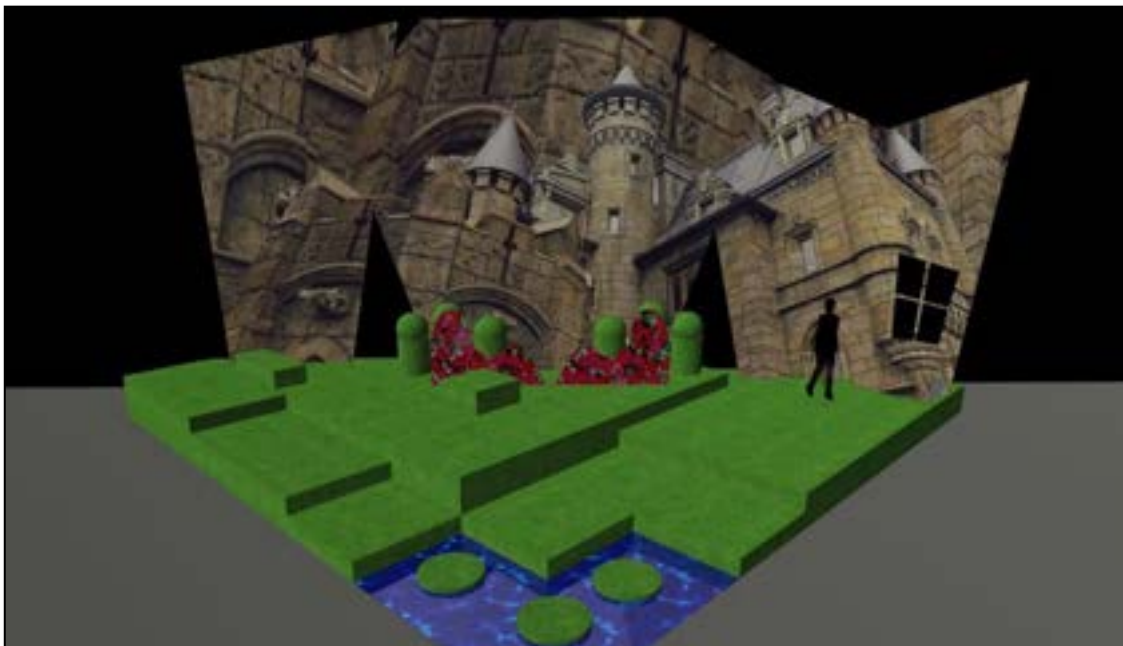
The backdrop for the inside of the house of Beauty's family

Digital illustration by Scott Reid 2023



The backdrop for the outside of the Beast's castle

Digital Illustration by Scott Reid 2023



# Exercises & Activities

In the illustrations on the previous page, the first illustration is just a design, but repeated over and over and projected on walls, it looks like wallpaper and reminds us of a living room or bedroom. The second illustration is more detailed, showing parts of a castle, the walls, the turrets, the stone, all from the outside, letting the audience know that we are outside the castle.

The size of the illustrations is also important, these are backdrops and so must be quickly understood by the audience. The drawings should not be so small that the audience doesn't clearly see what it is. Also, as audience members we usually look at the performers and we see the backdrop but we don't pay a lot of attention to it, so the illustrations have to be clear and easy to understand.

**Activity:** Using a story that you already know, like a fairytale, or even using the short script that you wrote for the Recitative exercise, imagine where such a story would take place. Everything that you see and hear on the stage tells a piece of the story. The words, or the music and singing in the case of opera, tell a lot of the story. Also, the lighting tells us if it's day or night, cloudy or sunny, inside or outside, and the costumes of the characters tell us about who they are. The set or projected backdrops like in our production, tell you about the space in which the story takes place.

Think about a design that could work for a backdrop of the particular story you are working with.

1. Where would the story be taking place?
2. Is it inside? Outside? What kind indoor or outdoor place? A garden? A street? A kitchen?
3. How can you make the design clear and understandable without complicating it too much? We want the audience to look at our performers, not be trying to figure out what the backdrop is.
4. Draw it on a piece of paper or illustrate on a computer program and present it to the class.
5. Explain why you made the choices that you did.

<i>Beginner</i>	Draw the background illustration on paper. Suggest clear locations such as "a park on a sunny day" or "your kitchen at home"
<i>Advanced</i>	Illustrate the backdrops using computer programs such as Photoshop or Microsoft Paint. Suggest that students be more surreal and suggestive in their designs, like working with a feeling rather than a place

Students can draw this on a plain piece of paper, or use the free Drama Theatre colouring page printout from Crayola, shown on the page 20 and available online here:

[www.crayola.com/free-coloring-pages/print/drama-theatre-coloring-page/](http://www.crayola.com/free-coloring-pages/print/drama-theatre-coloring-page/)

# Exercises & Activities

**Story Exercise:** To support the learning outcomes of K-6 English Language Arts curriculum, students work with analyzing how the structure of a work helps to support the ideas and give context to the story. In order for students to arrive to the moral lessons of *Beauty and the Beast*, namely that getting to know someone for who they are and not how they look reveals their true beauty, kindness and love, they must understand the story.

Thanks to the great colouring page people at Crayola.com, we have access to this free Drama Theatre activity page for working with story. Here are several suggestions for activities that can be done with the page shown below. The website where you can access the free reproducible page is also listed below.

**Activities:**

**What is your favourite part of the story?:** Have the students pick their favourite part of the story and illustrate it either using the Drama Theatre page below, or the blank colouring page on pg. 23 of this guide. Have them then present to the class and explain their choice. What about the part stuck out to them? Why? Was it an emotional connection or was it the look of the scene or character?

**Beginning, Middle, End:** The story of *Beauty and the Beast* has a clear arc of Beginning: Beauty must go to the Beast’s castle to save her family, Middle: she gets to know the Beast for who he is, End: she learns to love the kindness and beauty within him despite his frightening appearance, at which point he is released from his curse and returns as the Prince.

Have the students identify the Beginning, Middle and End of the opera and have them draw them on the three section papers photocopied from the stage illustration on the handout below.

<i>Beginner</i>	Draw a simple image representing the beginning, middle, end. Have them explain their choices.
<i>Advanced</i>	Draw a more complex image, multiple characters, or write out what the beginning, middle, ending would be, and have them explain and elaborate on their choices.

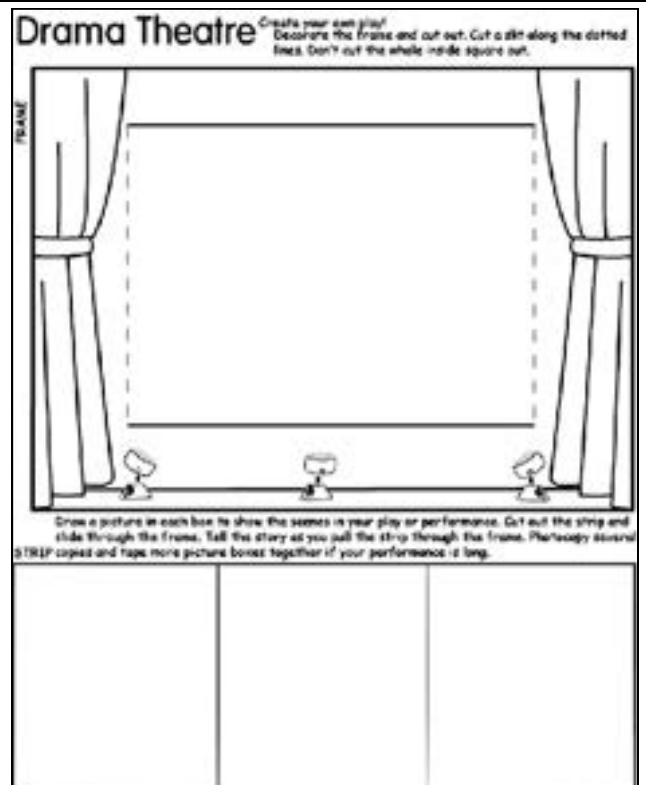
**Set Design:** Use this Drama Theatre activity page to complete the set design exercise from pg. 19.

Cut the rectangle that is between the curtains on the sides only. Photocopy and cut out the three section strip on the bottom without separating the sections. Tape as many of the strips together as is needed and have them slide the strip through the slits and present their story findings. It works best if they do the drawing on the central rectangle and leave the two side ones blank so that when they are pulling the strip through at the end, only one image is visible at a time.

To print out the following page, go to the Crayola website here:

[www.crayola.com/free-coloring-pages/print/drama-theatre-coloring-page/](http://www.crayola.com/free-coloring-pages/print/drama-theatre-coloring-page/)

These exercises were inspired by opera exercises from the blog *Becca’s Music Room*: <https://beccasmusicroom/music-lesson-ideas-opera-stories/>

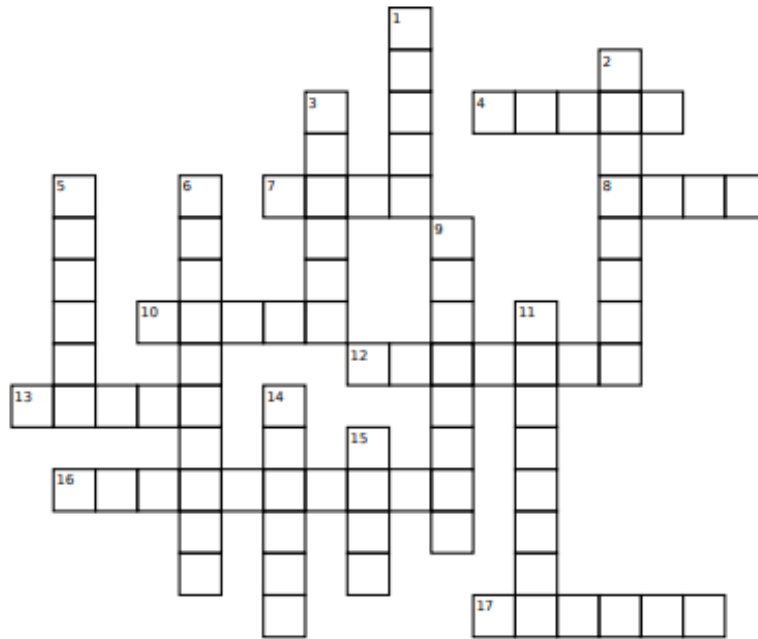


# Exercises & Activities

## Beauty & the Beast Crossword Puzzle

### WORD BANK

Beauty  
Opera  
Rose  
Beast  
Ring  
Baritone  
Castle  
Aria  
Composer  
Libretto  
Statue  
Recitative  
Soprano  
Crown  
Music  
Librettist  
Garden



### Down:

1. a musical performance with non-stop singing
2. the words of the opera
3. a piece of land where flowers, plants or vegetables grow
5. a large building made of stone that is home to Kings, Queens, Princes and Princesses
6. a person who writes the words for an opera
9. a person who composes music
11. the middle register of the male voice
14. a stone or metal representation of a person and/or animal
15. a piece of jewelry you wear on your finger

### Across:

4. something that is created with instruments that we listen to or sing along with
7. a long beautifully-sung song with orchestral accompaniment
8. a flower with sharp thorns
10. a metallic head piece worn by Kings and Queens
12. the highest female voice type
13. cursed prince
16. sing-speaking in order to move the story along
17. youngest daughter

Answer key on page .....

# Exercises & Activities

Crossword puzzle answer key:

## Beauty & the Beast Crossword Puzzle



### Down:

1. a musical performance with non-stop singing
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## Beauty and the Beast–Calgary Opera Digital School Tour 2024

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

My favourite part of the opera is: \_\_\_\_\_

A large, empty rounded rectangular box intended for students to write their response to the question about their favourite part of the opera.

Original worksheet provided by Tylene Malkin

# Language of Opera

- ACT:** A portion of an opera designated by the composer, which has a dramatic structure of its own, not unlike a chapter in a novel, a way of splitting up the story into parts
- ARIA:** Italian for an ‘air’ or ‘song’. The big number where the singer expresses feelings and shows off the voice
- BEL CANTO:** Italian for “beautiful singing”, refers to a style of opera that developed in Italy and was characterized by a small but dynamic vocal range requiring much vocal control
- BUFFA/O:** 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
- CHORUS:** A group of singers, singing together, who sometimes portray servants, party guests or other unnamed characters who usually comment on the action and help to support the storyline
- COMPOSER:** The person who writes the music for the opera
- DIVA:** A famous female opera singer, sometimes used to denote one who is demanding or difficult
- DUET:** An extended musical passage performed by two singers. They may or may not sing simultaneously or on the same musical line
- DRESS REHEARSAL:** A final working rehearsal where all characters are in full costume with full set and live musical accompaniment
- ENCORE:** Literally, French for “again”- Is shouted from the audience after a particularly well sung passage or, more commonly, at the end of a well-done performance
- ENSEMBLE:** Principal singers singing mostly together, expressing similar or different opinions and emotions
- LIBRETTIST:** The person who writes the text for the opera, known as the Libretto
- LIBRETTO:** Italian for “little book”, the written text of the opera without music
- MAESTRO:** The conductor of the orchestra
- OPERA COMIQUE:** A French genre of opera, contains spoken dialogue and arias. Need not be funny or shallow, can be dramatic as well
- OVERTURE:** An orchestral piece at the beginning of the opera, a musical introduction to the opera
- PREMIERE:** Opening night of a performance, the first public performance in the theatre
- OPERA SERIA:** “Serious” opera, a term developed in Italy to refer to operas from the 17th century with themes of mythology, ancient history and no comedic elements
- OPERETTA:** A short opera usually of a light and amusing character, often with patriotic themes
- RECITATIVE:** Speech-singing where the singer chants the words in rhythm of free speech, used to further the plot or set up an aria
- SUPERNUMERARIES:** Extra, small, supporting roles in the opera in which the characters do not sing, such as people in a crowd
- SITZPROBE:** The first rehearsal where the orchestra and singers rehearse together with the purpose of focusing attention on integrating the two groups

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# Language of Opera

(Opera Terminology continued)

**THROUGH-COMPOSED:** A piece of music that has no repetition of musical passages throughout, but has different music for each ensuing section

**TOI TOI TOI:** An expression used in the performing arts to wish the performers a good performance which exists because of the superstition that to wish a performer good luck is actually bad luck

**TRAGÉDIE LYRIQUE:** A completely sung tragic opera, developed by French librettists, in which the music plays a central role, with a heroic and tragic storyline

**VERISMO:** An artistic style from 19th Century Italy that dealt with themes of common people and daily lives set in a dramatic style

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