

Study Guide for Students

Grades 5 through 12



Così fan tutte

ossia La scuola degli amanti (Thus Do They All, or The School for Lovers) K.588

Opera in two acts by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Lorenzo Da Ponte, librettist
Premiere: January 26, 1790 in Vienna
Sung in Italian with English supertitles

This program is made possible by the generous contributions of Bucks County Opera Association, Independence Foundation, Main Line Opera Association, PECO, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, Philadelphia Cultural Fund, Pitcairn, The Presser Foundation, RBC Wealth Management, and United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania

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The Academy of Vocal Arts

In 1933, the United States was still in the grip of the Great Depression. Few people could afford any kind of higher education, especially the long and costly training needed for a career in opera. Helen Corning Warden, a prominent member of Philadelphia society, recognized the need for a school where talented singers would receive the highest quality professional training they needed to master their art. Encouraged by voice teacher Edgar Milton Cooke, Mrs. Warden and a group of her friends set out to establish a school for professional singers, a school that would provide tuition-free education.

The Academy of Vocal Arts, founded in 1934 by Helen Corning Warden, is the only program in the United States exclusively devoted to the training of young opera singers. The school's mission is to provide tuition-free vocal and opera training of the highest quality, and financial support during training, to exceptionally talented and committed young singers who have the potential for international stature, and to present them in professional performances that are accessible to a wide community.

Gifted singers from throughout the states and all over the world audition to study and perform in AVA's four-year program and to seek the exceptional guidance and training that The Academy of Vocal Arts offers. Admission is determined by competitive annual auditions. Those who are accepted receive training equivalent to more than \$70,000 per year.

The Academy of Vocal Arts is distinguished by its reputation for high quality performances that are acclaimed by critics locally, nationally and internationally. Each year AVA resident artists are presented in

four or five fully-staged opera productions accompanied by orchestra. Resident artists are cast in leading roles that they will in all likelihood continue to perform for the rest of their careers.

The objective of The Academy of Vocal Arts is to ensure that a student will be a thinking artist who is both self-sufficient musically and dramatically, knowledgeable about the field of opera and voice, well-prepared in foreign languages, and able to pursue a career in the world's great opera houses. Performances of opera, art song and oratorio give each student the opportunity to learn masterworks under the supervision of an outstanding faculty, and to perform them in venues open to the public and reviewed by music critics.



**For more information on the Academy of Vocal Arts, visit its website at:
www.avaopera.org.**

The Venue ~ The Haverford School's Centennial Hall



The Haverford School is an all-boys college preparatory day school, junior kindergarten through grade twelve. Open to qualified boys of diverse backgrounds, The Haverford School provides a superior liberal arts education in a challenging and supportive environment that emphasizes scholarship, leadership, citizenship, and high standards of character and conduct. The Haverford School strives to prepare each student for life by developing his full intellectual, moral, social, artistic, athletic and creative potential. The Haverford School offers its students an exceptional environment in which to explore their talents in art, music, and drama. While studies show that girls are more likely to be involved in the arts, it is the norm for boys to be the artists, musicians, singers, and actors at Haverford where all students have outstanding role models in their teachers, who sing, play, act, and paint right alongside them. Most teachers perform or exhibit their work professionally, providing students with a valuable window into the world of the working artist. Perhaps the best symbol of The Haverford School's commitment to the arts is Centennial Hall, a professional quality facility with art studios, multimedia labs, a darkroom, classrooms, rehearsal space, and a 600 seat theater with a full-time stage manager. Not only does Centennial Hall allow students to showcase their work, but it also draws local and national music and theater groups to campus. The gallery space and art studios regularly host professional artists who exhibit their work and conduct workshops with classes. Centennial Hall was built in 1984 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the founding of The Haverford School. The facility has helped us achieve a sense of campus community. The theatre is the one place where we can all gather together as one unit. Sharing the facilities with outside talents and professionals is also contributing to the growth of this sense of community and is broadening The Haverford School experience in ways not possible before. Centennial Hall is thriving on the campus of The Haverford School.

The Art Form ~ A Brief History of Opera

In its 400-year history, each opera has been shaped by the times in which it was created and tells us much about those who participated in the art form as writers, composers, performers, and audience members. The first works to be called operas were created in Italy at the end of the sixteenth century. They were inspired by a group of intellectuals known as the *Camerata* who, like many thinkers of their time in the late Renaissance, admired the culture of the ancient Greeks. They proposed the invention of a new type of musical theater that would imitate Greek drama's use of music. The result was a series of operas based on Greek myths, starting with *Dafne* by Jacopo Peri in 1598. The most famous work of this early period is Claudio Monteverdi's *Orfeo* (1607), based on the myth of Orpheus. These early operas had all the basic elements that we associate with opera today, including songs, instrumental accompaniments, dance, costumes, and scenery.

These early operas were performed in the courts of Italian noblemen, but soon opera became popular with the general public. Europe at the time had a growing middle class with a taste for spectacular entertainment. As opera's popularity grew, so did the complexity of operas and the level of spectacle. Many opera houses had elaborate machinery that could be used to create special effects such as flying actors and crumbling buildings. There was much debate about whether an excess of visual elements in opera detracted from the quality of the music and drama. Some people even worried that too much comedy in opera could lead to immorality among the public!

During the period from about 1600 to 1750, the Baroque period in music, Italian opera spread across Europe. In fact the Italian style of opera was so popular that even though other countries and regions often had their own traditions of musical drama, the Italian form was usually preferred. George Frederick Handel was a German-born composer who lived and worked in England, but his operas such as *Julius Caesar* (1724) were in the Italian language and used an Italian style of music. The only nation to develop a national tradition to rival the Italian was France, where operas often included ballets inserted into the story. Jean-Baptiste Lully and Jean-Philippe Rameau are the most famous French Baroque opera composers.

By the middle of the seventeenth century Europe was changing. The growing middle class was more influential than ever, and people were starting to talk about new forms of government and organization in society. Soon the American and French Revolutions (1776 and 1789) would seek to establish the first modern democracies. Music was changing, too. Composers abandoned the Baroque era's complicated musical style and began to write simpler music with more expressive melodies. Opera composers could write melodies that allowed characters to express their thoughts and feelings more believably.

One of the first operas to use this new style was Cristoph Willibald Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* (1762). With the new democratic sentiments came interest in operas about common people in familiar settings, rather than stories from ancient mythology. A good example is Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* (1786), in which a servant outsmarts a count. Several of Mozart's operas remain among the most popular today. They include *Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* (1788), *Così fan tutte* (1790), and *The Magic Flute* (1791).

In the nineteenth century operas continued to grow more diverse in their subject matter, forms, and national styles. The Italian tradition continued in the *bel canto* movement. Operas written in this style, which means “beautiful singing,” included arias with intricate ornamentation, or combinations of fast notes, in the melodies. The most famous *bel canto* composers are Vincenzo Bellini, Gaetano Donizetti and Gioacchino Rossini, whose *The Barber of Seville* (1816) is one of the most beloved comic operas.

Later in the century the Romantic Movement led many composers to take an interest their national identities. As a result, operas in languages other than Italian became more common, and new works often reflected pride in a country’s people, history and folklore. Among the operas that show the growth of national traditions are Carl Maria von Weber’s *Der Freischütz* (Germany, 1821), Mikhail Glinka’s *Ruslan and Lyudmilla* (Russia, 1842) and Georges Bizet’s *Carmen* (France, 1875). In Italy Giuseppe Verdi composed in a bold, direct style; his operas, such as *Nabucco* and *Macbeth*, often included elements of nationalism. In Germany Richard Wagner took the Romantic style to the extreme in an ambitious series of operas known collectively as *The Ring of the Nibelung* (1876) based on Norse mythology.

In the twentieth century opera became even more diversified and experimental, to the point that it sometimes became difficult to distinguish it from other forms of musical theater. Some composers such as Giacomo Puccini (*La bohème*, 1896), Claude Debussy (*Pelléas et Mélisande*, 1902), Richard Strauss (*Salome*, 1905), and Benjamin Britten (*Peter Grimes*, 1945) continued to write operas that were similar in many ways to those of the nineteenth century. Others, horrified by the destructive effects of World War I (1914-1919) and other aspects of modern life, created works with radically experimental and dissonant music. These operas often explored topics that were either disturbing (*Wozzeck* by Alban Berg, 1925) or absurdist (*The Rake’s Progress* by Igor Stravinsky, 1951).

American opera also came into its own in this century, beginning with George Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess* (1935) which incorporated jazz and blues styles of music. In the latter part of the century a repetitive and hypnotic style known as minimalism was exemplified in Phillip Glass’s *Einstein on the Beach* (1976), a piece that would hardly be recognized as an opera by earlier standards. The late twentieth century even saw a return to some of the traits of Romantic opera in works such as John Corigliano’s *The Ghosts of Versailles* (1991).

Today, opera is a living art form in which both new works, such as Margaret Garwood’s *The Scarlet Letter* and those by composers of the past continue to be performed. It remains to be seen what the future of opera will be, but if history is any indication, it will be shaped by the creativity of librettists, composers and other artists responding the changing times in which they live.

(Reprinted from the Study Guide of the Sounds of Learning Education Program,
Opera Company of Philadelphia)

The People ~ Characters

Fiordiligi, a wealthy socialite.....Jessie Nguenang, soprano
Dorabella, her sister.....Alexandra Schenck, mezzo-soprano
Despina, their housemaid.....Anush Avetisyan, soprano
Ferrando, NROTC Marine Officer..... Alasdair Kent, tenor
Guglielmo, NROTC Marine Officer.....Jared Bybee, baritone
Don Alfonso, a retired Marine Colonel..... André Courville.bass-baritone
Ensemble: Socialites, Marine Officers, Cabana Boy

The Time & The Place

Martha's Vineyard at an exclusive seaside resort during the late 1960s.
(Original setting: Naples, Italy, during the late 18th century)

The Singers ~ AVA Resident Artists



The Conductor ~ Christofer Macatsoris

CHRISTOFER MACATSORIS (Music Director and Conductor) began his conducting career in Italy at the Conservatory in Milan, and went on to study conducting privately with such famed maestri as Fausto Cleva, Max Rudolf, and Tullio Serafin. He has also studied composition with Vincent Persichetti. Among his many performance credits are appearances with Philadelphia Lyric Opera Company, Pennsylvania Opera Company, San Francisco Opera, and numerous regional opera companies. In 1970, Max Rudolf invited him to The Curtis Institute of Music, where he taught and conducted for seven years and was music director of the opera department. For several years Mr. Macatsoris was on the faculty of Johns Hopkins University.



Mr. Macatsoris was the music director of the weekly NBC-TV program, *Opera Theatre*, and was music director and conductor for two seasons with the Opera at Ambler Festival. As a pianist, he toured with Metropolitan Opera singers in recital programs and collaborated with a virtual who's who of legendary opera singers such as Tebaldi, Corelli, Vickers, Sutherland, Pavarotti just to mention a few. A composer himself, Mr. Macatsoris has been drawn to contemporary works, and has become widely noted for his outstanding conducting of numerous local and regional opera premieres. In 1976, he conducted the premiere of *The Last of the Mohicans*, a work which was commissioned by the U.S. Government to celebrate the

country's 200th birthday. In 1983, as the highlight of Philadelphia's Tricentennial celebration, he conducted the world premiere of Cascarino's opera *William Penn*. Mr. Macatsoris conducted the American premiere of Lee Hoiby's *The Scarf*, and has also premiered many works by Margaret Garwood.

As music director of The Academy of Vocal Arts since 1977, he has led critically acclaimed performances of Puccini's *Il trittico* and *Madama Butterfly*, Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, and Britten's *Albert Herring*, which was broadcast over PBS. In addition, many operas received their Delaware Valley premieres at AVA under his baton, including Mozart's *Idomeneo* and *La Finta Giardinera*, Handel's *Deidamia*, Strauss's *Capriccio*, Verdi's *Un giorno di regno*, and Richard Wargo's *A Chekhov Trilogy*. Mr. Macatsoris has appeared at The International Corfu Festival, Greece, in 1981 and 1982, leading performances of *The Rape of Lucretia*, *La sonnambula*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, and *Così fan tutte*.

The Story ~ Synopsis

A posh cocktail party is being held to celebrate the graduation of Guglielmo and Ferrando from Officer's training school at Harvard. In the midst of the celebration the two young men surprise their girlfriends by proposing marriage: Guglielmo to Fiordiligi and Ferrando to Dorabella. Friends and fellow officers toast the future of the happy couples.

After the ladies retire to plan the wedding shower, the men are left to enjoy a bachelor party, during which an assertion is made about the fidelity of their women. This sparks a heated argument between the two young officers and their mentor, Alfonso. Finally, the older Colonel proposes a wager: he will prove, within a single day that Fiordiligi and Dorabella are unfaithful, as all women are. During that time, the two soldiers must do exactly, and absolutely everything, that Alfonso says. The young officers accept the bet.

The following morning, basking in the sparkle of their engagement rings, the young ladies dream of their husbands-to-be and the perfect lives they will soon enjoy. Alfonso enters to drop a bomb: the boys have been deployed to Vietnam. Shock and grief grip the ladies as they say their farewells.

To implement the remainder of his plan Alfonso realizes he will have to employ the talents of Despina, keeping her in the dark just enough to ensure that his plot runs smoothly. He introduces two "friends" he hopes can distract the ladies from their grief; in reality they are Guglielmo and Ferrando in disguise, who have come to test their fiancées' fidelity.

The ladies meet the exotic strangers, who profess their make-love-not-war approach to life, and after numerous diversions, soundly reject their advances. But Despina convinces the ladies that a harmless flirtation is in order, arguing that the modern woman takes matters into her own hands without sacrificing what she already has. The ladies decide to "experiment".

The experiment soon turns into a bad trip as both couples experience intense emotions that spiral out of their control, as the women succumb to the men's advances. Can the heart change so much in just one day? Or are women just like that?

The men concede they have lost the wager, cursing their fate and the women who betrayed them. Alfonso responds with a radical solution: marry them just as they are. But the ladies have beaten them to it, sending Despina to propose marriage on their behalf. In their shock, the men join in the ceremony; unsure of whom they are actually marrying. At the completion of the ritual, a familiar military march is heard. Guglielmo and Ferrando unexpectedly return from their "deployment".

Now all will be as it was...

The Composer ~ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

On January 27th, 1756 in the beautiful town of Salzburg in western Austria, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born. Mozart was born into a family of musicians and flourished as a child prodigy. He began writing music at the age of five.

Timeline

Age 4 Takes first music lessons from his father.

Age 5 Writes his first short musical pieces called *minuets*.

Age 6 Tours European capitals performing for kings and queens.

Age 8 Writes his first symphony.

Age 12 Writes his first opera.

Teens Works for Archbishop of Salzburg for very little money.

20's Marries Constanza Weber. Writes *The Marriage of Figaro*.

30's Lives in Vienna, sick and penniless. Continues to compose

Age 35 Dies a poor man, but has written over 600 compositions.

Major Operas

1782 *Abduction from the Seraglio*

1785 *The Marriage of Figaro*

1787 *Don Giovanni*

1789 *Così fan tutte*

1791 *The Magic Flute*

Other Genres

Mozart composed symphonies from age eight until his death at the age of 35. In addition to symphonies, he composed piano concertos, marches, songs (lieder), string quartets, organ music and church masses.

Contemporary Composers

Joseph Haydn

Christoph Willibald von Gluck

Johann Christian Bach

Ludwig van Beethoven

Carl Maria von Weber

Major American Events, During Mozart's Life

1756 French and Indian War between Britain and France

1763 Mason-Dixon Line drawn

1775 American Revolution begins, George Washington is Commander-in-Chief

1776 Declaration of Independence signed

1783 Treaty of Paris ends the American Revolution

1789 Washington inaugurated as first president of the United States

1790 Washington D.C. founded as Capital of the United States

1791 First 10 Amendments to the U.S. Constitution ratified

Biography

Probably the greatest genius in Western musical history, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) was born in Salzburg, Austria, Jan. 27, 1756, the son of Leopold Mozart and his wife, Anna Maria Pertl. Leopold was a successful composer, violinist and assistant concertmaster at the Salzburg court.



Wolfgang began composing minuets at age five and symphonies at age nine. When he was six, he and his older sister, Maria Anna (who was nicknamed "Nannerl"), performed a series of concerts to Europe's courts and major cities. Both children played the keyboard, but Wolfgang became a violin virtuoso as well.

In 1762, the Mozart children played at court in Vienna; the Empress Maria Theresa and her husband, Emperor Francis I, received them. From 1763 - 66, the Mozart children displayed their talents to audiences in Germany, Paris, at court in Versailles, and London (where Wolfgang wrote his first symphonies and began a friendship with Johann Christian Bach, whose became a great musical influence on Wolfgang). In Paris, the young Mozart published his first works, four sonatas for clavier with accompanying violin (1764). In 1768, he composed his first opera, *La Finta Semplice*, which had its premiere in Salzburg. In 1769-70, Leopold and Wolfgang undertook a tour through Italy. This first Italian trip culminated in a new opera, *Mitridate, re di Ponto*, composed in Milan. In two further Italian journeys he wrote two more operas for Milan, *Ascanio in Alba* (1771) and *Lucio Silla* (1772).

In 1772, Archbishop von Schrattenbach died, to be succeeded by Hieronymus von Colloredo. The latter, at first sympathetic to the Mozarts, later became irritated by Wolfgang's prolonged absences and stubborn ways. In 1772, von Colloredo retained Wolfgang as concertmaster at a token salary. In this capacity Mozart composed a large number of sacred and secular works. Wishing to secure a better position outside Salzburg, he obtained permission to undertake another journey in 1777. With his mother he traveled to France, where he composed the Paris Symphony (1778), but he was unable to find a permanent position. His mother died in Paris.

When he returned to Salzburg he was given the position of court organist (1779) and produced a splendid series of church works, including the famous "Coronation" Mass. He was commissioned to compose a new opera for Munich, *Idomeneo* (1781). It was *Idomeneo* that proved he was a consummate master of opera seria. Summoned by von Colloredo to Vienna in 1781, he was dismissed after a series of arguments.

Mozart's career in Vienna began promisingly, and he was soon commissioned to write *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (1782). His concerts were a great success, and the emperor, Joseph II, encouraged him, later engaging him as court composer. In 1782, the now-popular Mozart married Constanze Weber from Germany, much to his father's dismay. The young pair visited Salzburg in 1783; there, the *Kyrie* and *Gloria* of Mozart's great Mass in C Minor, composed in

Vienna and never finished, were performed. Mozart's greatest success was *Le Nozze di Figaro* (The Marriage of Figaro) in 1786, composed for the Vienna Opera. The great piano concertos and the string quartets dedicated to his "dear friend" Josef Haydn were also composed during this period.

Mozart's fame began to disappear after *Figaro*. The nobility and court grew increasingly nervous about his revolutionary ideas as seen in *Figaro*. He sank into debt and was assisted by a brother Freemason, Michael Puchberg (Mozart had joined the Masons in 1784 and remained an outspoken member until his death). His greatest operatic success after *Figaro* was *Don Giovanni* (1787), composed for Prague, where Mozart's art was especially appreciated. This was followed in 1790, by *Così fan tutte*, the third and final libretto provided by the Italian poet Lorenzo Da Ponte.

In 1791, *Die Zauberflöte* (The Magic Flute) was produced by a suburban theater in Vienna. During this period of financial strain, Mozart composed his last three symphonies (E flat, G minor, and the "Jupiter" in C) in less than 7 weeks during the summer of 1788. These had been preceded by a great series of string quintets, including the two in C and in G minor (1787).

In 1791, Mozart was commissioned to write a requiem (unfinished). He was at the time quite ill—he had never known very good health—and imagined that the work was for himself, which it proved to be. His death, on Dec. 5, 1791, which gave rise to false rumors of poisoning, is thought to have resulted from rheumatic fever, a disease which he had suffered from repeatedly throughout his life. After a cheap funeral at Saint Stephen's Cathedral, he was buried in an unmarked grave at the cemetery of Saint Marx, a Viennese suburb. Much has been made of this, but at that time such burial was legally required for all Viennese except those of noble or aristocratic birth.



Mozart excelled in every form in which he composed. His contemporaries found the restless ambivalence and complicated emotional content of his music difficult to understand. Accustomed to the light, superficial style of rococo music, his aristocratic audiences could not accept the music's complexity and depth. Yet, with Josef Haydn, Mozart perfected the grand forms of symphony, opera, string quartet, and concerto that marked the classical period in music. In his operas, Mozart's uncanny psychological insight is unique in musical history. His music influenced the work of the later Haydn and of the next generation of composers, most notably Beethoven. The brilliance of his work continued until the end, although darker themes of poignancy and isolation grew more marked in his last years. His compositions continue to exert a particular fascination for musicians and music lovers.

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The Librettist ~ Lorenzo Da Ponte

Lorenzo Da Ponte, né Emanuele Conegliano, was a Jewish-born Catholic priest, a poet, a gambler, and a womanizer. He wrote libretti for a number of composers including Salieri and Martin y Soler. He was also a friend of the notorious adventurer and real-life counterpart of Don Giovanni, Casanova (who in fact attended the Prague premiere of *Don Giovanni* and may have inspired or possibly lent a hand with the libretto). One commentator noted that much of Da Ponte's life was *what one might call protracted field research for his future work on Don Giovanni*.



Eventually Da Ponte became bankrupt and moved to the New World, where, unable to write opera libretti (there was no opera in America), he worked as a grocer, a distiller, and a teacher. Through his friendship with Clement Clarke Moore, best known as the author of *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*, he became the first professor of Italian Literature at what is now Columbia University. In 1833 he helped establish New York City's first opera house.

reprinted from Pacific Opera Victoria online resources

Così ~ The Background

Così fan tutte, ossia La scuola degli amanti (Thus Do All Women, or The School For Lovers); Da Ponte wanted the latter title, but Mozart's preference for the former won out) is an *opera buffa*, the last of three Mozart operas for which Lorenzo Da Ponte wrote the libretto. It was written and composed at the suggestion of the Emperor Joseph II (some scholars insist that it is based on an actual contemporary scandal, but there is no definitive evidence to support this tantalizing claim). The libretto was originally offered to Mozart's contemporary Antonio Salieri who began but then broke off work on the opera.

The first performance of Mozart's setting took place at the Burgtheater in Vienna on January 26, 1790 and was conducted by the composer. The subject matter seems not to have offended Viennese sensibilities of the time, but the 19th and early 20th centuries considered it frivolous and/or amoral, and the comparatively few performances given during those years were frequently presented with severely edited texts.

During the late 1930s and after World War II, *Così fan tutte* began to establish itself in the standard operatic repertoire, until Opera America could place it 15th on their list of the 20 most-performed operas in North America (ironic considering that its first American performance was not given until 1922).

Mozart and Da Ponte took as a theme "fiancée swapping" which dates back to at least the 13th century, with notable earlier versions being those found in Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Shakespeare's play *Cymbeline*. Elements from Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* are also present. Furthermore, it incorporates elements of the myth of Procris as found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Book vii. The libretto is, however, considered an original one in that it is not based on a single source, and as such is one of only two original libretti amongst Da Ponte's output.

The Context ~ Original & Updated Settings

The Enlightenment (about 1750-1850)

The composition and original setting of *Così fan tutte* was in the middle of what is known as The Enlightenment. It is the period in the history of western thought and culture, stretching roughly from the mid-decades of the seventeenth century through the eighteenth century, characterized by dramatic revolutions in science, philosophy, society and politics; these revolutions swept away the medieval world-view and ushered in our modern western world.

Enlightenment thought culminates historically in the political upheaval of the French Revolution, in which the traditional hierarchical political and social orders (the French monarchy, the privileges of the French nobility, the political power and authority of the Catholic Church) were violently destroyed and replaced by a political and social order informed by the Enlightenment ideals of freedom and equality for all, founded, ostensibly, upon principles of human reason.

The Sixties

The updated setting of the opera aligns with another important cultural and political period known as The Sixties. This "cultural decade" is more loosely defined than the actual decade, beginning around 1963 and ending around 1974. It was an era denoting the complex of inter-related cultural and political trends across the globe.



"The Sixties" is a term used by historians, journalists, and other objective academics; in some cases nostalgically to describe the counterculture and revolution in social norms about clothing, music, drugs, dress, formalities and schooling. Conservatives denounce the decade as one of irresponsible excess and flamboyance, and decay of social order. The decade was also labeled the Swinging Sixties because of the fall or relaxation of social taboos especially relating to racism and sexism that occurred during this time.

When people think of America in the 1960s, they often have a romanticized idea of a decade of great music, liberal idealism, and Flower Power. The 1960s became synonymous with the new, radical, and subversive events and trends of the period. It was the time when the post war baby boomers were in their adolescence, embracing counter culture ideals, expanding their minds through all kinds of drugs, and truly, living life to the fullest. The Flower Power movement reached its climax at the Woodstock Festival held in upstate New York in 1969 when an estimated 500,000 people lived in peace and harmony for three unforgettable days. But, as much as the 1960s was a time of longer hair, shorter skirts, and new kinds of music, it was also a time of tensions between world powers, races, and generations. These tensions only seemed to increase as the decade came to a close.



What happened in The Sixties ~ A Timeline

- February 24 1960 **The first submarine to circle the world (February 24 - May 10, 1960).** The U.S.S. Triton circles the globe underwater. The nuclear sub completes the journey in 84 days.
- September 1960 **First televised presidential debate.** For the first time in history, the nation watches two presidential candidates debate on television. Republican Richard Nixon and Democrat John F. Kennedy meet in Chicago and debate live. Radio listeners think Nixon won, while television viewers choose Kennedy.
- January 1961 **John F. Kennedy becomes president.** On January 20th, John Fitzgerald Kennedy becomes the 35th President of the United States. At age 43, he is not only the youngest president, but also the first Roman Catholic to be sworn into office.
- August 1961 **Berlin gets a new wall.** In order to stop refugees from leaving communist East Germany and heading for freedom, the East Germans start building a huge wall in Berlin to separate themselves from the West German side. The wall, over 100 miles long, stays up until November of 1989.
- October 1962 **Cuban Missile Crisis.** Spy photographs taken over Cuba show Soviet missile sites already built. With only a distance of about 91 miles from Cuba to the U.S., President Kennedy issues a blockade to keep cargo ships out of Cuba. The Soviets eventually back down and Kennedy removes the blockade.
- August 28, 1963 **Marching on Washington.** Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. and over 200,000 supporters march to Washington, D.C. in support of civil rights for blacks. As he stands in front of the Lincoln Memorial, he gives his famous "I have a dream..." speech.
- November 22, 1963 **President Kennedy is assassinated.** While traveling in a convertible motorcade in Dallas, Texas, President Kennedy is shot and killed. Vice President Lyndon Johnson is sworn in as the 36th President of the United States as he flies back to Washington, D.C.
- February 1964 **The Beatles appear on Ed Sullivan.** An estimated 70 million American viewers watch the Beatles on their first live television appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show. Their song, "I Want to Hold Your Hand," has already hit number one on the music charts.
- July 3, 1964 **President Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964.**
The president signs into law the Civil Rights Act of 1964, making it illegal to discriminate against African Americans and women in the workplace and other arenas.
- 1965 **U.S. plunges into the Vietnam War.** Vietnam to help keep the communist North Vietnamese from invading South Vietnam. This very unpopular war will last until 1975.
- 1965 **Flower Power (Mid-1960s).** During the 1960s the younger generation starts protesting because they don't like how the older generation is doing things. Long hair, peace marches, peace signs, and flower power are the new fads for the youth. Many popular songs of the day are about peace.
- June 5, 1967 **The Six Day War (June 5 - June 10, 1967).** Egypt, Syria, and Jordan attack Israel with the hopes of destroying it. However, the Israeli air force destroys 400 Egyptian planes and takes control of the entire city of Jerusalem. The war lasts only six days.
- 1968 **Violence spreads.** On April 4th, Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. is shot and killed in Memphis, Tennessee. Riots break out in many cities in protest. On June 5th, presidential candidate Senator Robert Kennedy is shot and dies the next day.
- July 1969 **"One small step..."** Neil Armstrong becomes the first person to walk on the moon. His famous words, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind," is heard live as millions of viewers watch from earth. Although the 1960s was a time of turmoil and unrest, it ended with a bit of hope as a new frontier, outer space, was conquered.

Così fan tutte ~ A Timeless Opera

Many recent productions, all over the world, are given updated settings, either in recent decades or the current time. David Shefsiek (former Director of Pacific Opera Victoria, Canada, and my former Ithaca College School of Music classmate) says it well:

“*Così fan tutte* is unique among Mozart’s operas. While most of his works are based on straightforward narrative, *Così* is more adventurous in its dramaturgical approach. The characters begin as archetypes, and end as fully etched individuals. The story is intentionally absurd. Of course, the women would recognize the men and their fake moustaches; of course, they would realize that they are faking the reaction to poison. They may even know the men’s real identity as they succumb to the seduction. Critics who question the work’s realism are missing the point. It is not intended to be realistic.

Così’s theatrical glory is watching the transformation and revelation of the characters. And while the theatrical form is not based in realism, the characters most assuredly are, making *Così* Mozart’s most contemporary work by today’s theatrical standards. For this reason, *Così* is often given an extreme theatrical treatment to highlight its dramatic nature. It is fascinating that while more than 200 years have passed since *Così*’s premiere, its questions of love, fidelity and human relationships are as pertinent today as ever before.

The Operatic Voice ~ Professional Singing

Operatic singing, which was developed in Europe during the 17th century, places far greater vocal demands on an opera singer than on any other type of singing. Opera singers rarely use microphones, and therefore must develop their voices to make a sound that will project and be heard above an orchestra and be heard throughout a large theatre.

After years of practice and study, an opera singer learns to use his or her body as an amplification device. By controlling the muscles of the diaphragm (a muscle beneath the lungs and above the stomach) the singer can regulate the amount of breath used. The diaphragm expands and contracts, regulating the air that passes through the vocal cords, which, in turn, causes them to vibrate. The speed at which the cords vibrate determines the pitch. As the sound passes through the mouth, it resonates in the upper chest cavities and the sinus cavities of the face and head. These cavities act as small echo chambers and help amplify the sound. The shape of the mouth and the placement of the tongue near the lips contribute to the tone and sound of the words.

Many singers begin their operatic training in university. Opera students study singing, music history, composition and vocal pedagogy (voice teaching). In addition to music classes, they study diction and often study at least one foreign language. After university, singers begin to work in the professional world. Their first roles are usually small parts, but if they continue to study and train, they may move on to the bigger principal roles.

Professional singers develop a number of roles in their repertoire. Since the principal artists are required to have their parts memorized before rehearsals begin, singers must prepare well in advance of each contract. Singers have voice teachers who help them refine their singing techniques and many will also have an acting coach. Even a well established singer will have a vocal coach to teach singing and acting techniques for specific roles.

Each person's vocal tract is constructed differently. The roles that a singer performs are dependent mostly upon their vocal range, but within the vocal ranges, there are many colors and weights of voice that further determine which roles he or she can sing safely. Vocal color refers to the richness of the sound and vocal weight refers to how powerful a voice sounds.

After the role has been studied intensely and the singer is hired to perform, they arrive at the opera company for the rehearsals. This time is spent refining the music with the conductor and staging the action with the stage director. Each director has a different idea of how the character should be played, and each conductor has a different idea of how the character should sound, therefore the singer must modify his or her techniques to reach the desired result.

Physical health is a major priority to a singer. Contrary to popular belief not all opera singers are overweight. Conventional wisdom used to state that excessive weight gave added volume and richness to the voice however, in recent years people have discovered that physical fitness can give similar benefits to a voice. Plus, the overall health benefits of being in shape overshadow any loss of vocal power. Most singers, like professional athletes try to avoid such substances as tobacco, alcohol and caffeine.

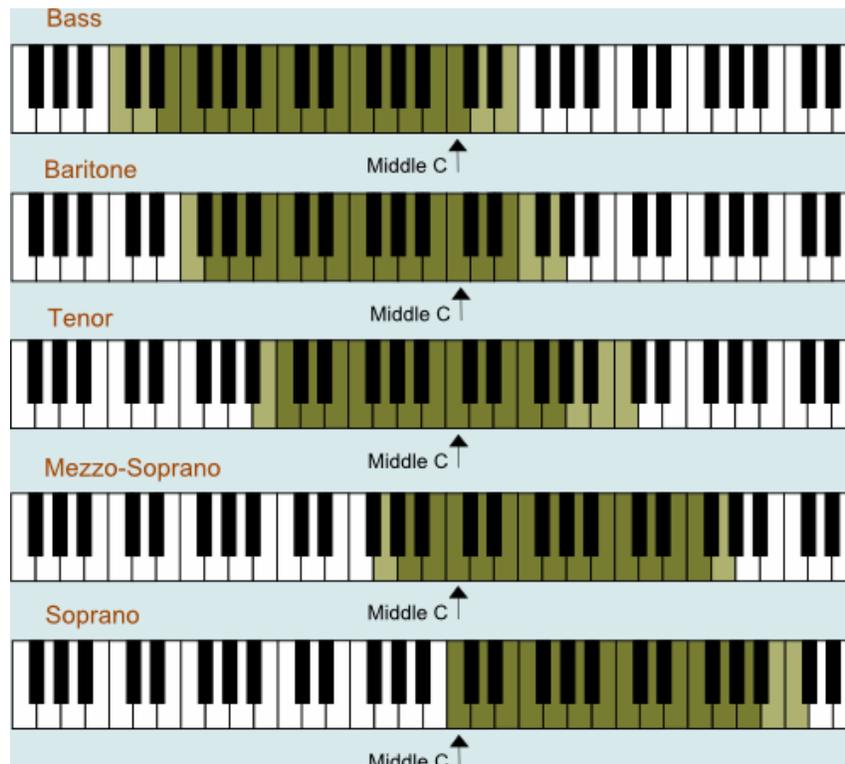
Vocal Categories

Women

Soprano: The highest female voice, similar to a flute in range and tone color. Usually plays the heroine in the opera since a high, bright sound can easily suggest youth and innocence.

Mezzo-Soprano: The middle-range female voice, similar to an oboe in range and tone color. Called an alto in choral arrangements, the mezzo-soprano can play a wide variety of characters including gypsies, mothers and even the part of a young man (trouser role).

Contralto: The lowest female voice, similar to an English horn in range and tone color. Usually play unique roles including fortune-tellers, witches and older women. Contraltos are not very common.



The vocal parts overlap each other. The notes that are high for baritone to sing are low for a tenor. The notes that are low for a baritone to sing are high for a bass. For this reason you may see a high range mezzo-soprano singing a soprano's role or a low range baritone singing a bass' role.

Men

Tenor: The highest male voice, similar to a trumpet in range, tone color and acoustical “ring.” Usually plays the hero or the romantic lead in the opera.

Baritone: The middle-range male voice, similar to a French horn in tone color. Often plays the leader of mischief in comic opera or the villain in tragic opera, sometimes even the hero.

Bass: The lowest male voice, similar to a trombone or bassoon in tone color. Usually portrays old, wise men, or foolish, comic men.

The following terms can be used to describe special characteristics in a vocal range:

Coloratura: A light, bright voice that has the ability to sing many notes quickly, usually with an extended upper range.

Lyric: A light to medium weight voice, often singing beautiful sweeping melodies.

Dramatic: Dark, heavy and powerful voice, capable of sustained and forceful singing.

Opera Comprehension Tests

General Opera

1. _____ A theatrical production incorporating both vocal and instrumental music, drama, and sometimes dance.
2. _____ The lowest male vocal range.
3. _____ An instrumental introduction to an opera.
4. _____ The area where the orchestra is seated.
5. _____ The female vocal range lying between soprano and contralto.
6. _____ A song for solo voice in an opera.
7. _____ The highest female vocal range.
8. _____ A song for two voices.
9. _____ The lowest female vocal range.
10. _____ The Italian word meaning "little book."
11. _____ The middle male vocal range.
12. _____ He/she has the artistic view for the performance of the opera.

Plot Comprehension: How well do you know the story?

Identify the following main characters according to what they do, and their relationship to each other:

Don Alfonso: _____

Ferrando: _____

Guglielmo: _____

Despina: _____

Fiordiligi: _____

Dorabella: _____

Be able to answer these questions:

1. What is being celebrated at the beginning of the opera? _____
2. How do Ferrando and Guglielmo surprise their girlfriends? _____
3. Who questions the ladies' faithfulness? _____
4. What does Alfonso bet? _____

5. Do Ferrando and Guglielmo accept the bet? _____
6. The next day, the ladies get a big shock. What is it? _____
7. Who does Alfonso get to help him with his plot? _____
8. Alfonso introduces two "friends" to distract the ladies from their grief. Who are they really?

9. Do the ladies initially accept their advances? _____
10. Who changes their minds? _____
11. What happens when the ladies spend time alone with the new guys? _____
12. Marriage is again proposed, but who is marrying who? _____
13. Ferrando and Guglielmo then unexpectedly return from their deployment. What happens?

The Activities ~ On Your Own

Creating a Character Sketch

Now that you know the synopsis of the opera, create a character sketch for one of the characters. Consider the following questions: What can be assumed about this person? What is the character's relationship with the other characters? Why does the character make the choices he or she does? Include evidence from the opera to support your claims.

Include the following information:

- Character's physical characteristics (style and physical attributes)
- Psychological Characteristics (mental aspects of character, how does he/she think?)
- Emotional Characteristics (is he/she generally cheerful, sad, snobbish, "off-balance" etc.?)
- Other interesting facts.

After seeing the opera, look at your character sketch again. Does any aspect of the performance or the music you heard change your view of the character you have profiled? Why? Do the emotions conveyed through the music fit the character sketch?

Creating a Journal from the Point of View of a Character

Write a journal for the character you chose for your character sketch, describing the events of the opera from the character's point of view, using the character profile for assistance.

Take on the persona of that character and refer to the character in the first person. Remember to express only information that your character would know.

Listen and Compare

One of the famous arias in *Così fan tutte* is "Come scoglio immoto resta" ("As the rock remains unmoved") It has been recorded by *hundreds* of sopranos.. Listen to various recordings, made over the span of a century, and compare and contrast the different performances of this aria.

You will find over 14,600 videos available on YouTube. There are current performances that have taken place in many countries, both professionally and non-professionally. You will also find many historical recordings for which there are no videos available. Consider the difference of experiencing this aria with *and* without seeing the artist singing and performing it. Do you hear the aria differently when there is only sound? Which artists move and impress you most? Why?

Questions for Review

1. What does the word prodigy mean? You may want to look it up in a dictionary. Does the term only apply to the arts or could it be used in other fields? What characteristics make a child a prodigy?
2. Compare Mozart to the child stars of today. How are their lives different from yours? How might success alter their lives?
3. At what age did Mozart start composing?
4. How did he earn a living?
5. How do composers earn a living today?
6. What other music besides opera did Mozart write?
7. When did he compose *Così fan tutte*?
8. Can you name some of the most popular composers and contemporaries of Mozart?
9. What important historical events took place during Mozart's life?
10. On a map or globe locate the countries that Mozart visited while on tour. What cities do you think Mozart visited? What do you think it was like to travel in the 1700's?
11. Can you name some famous living composers?

Questions for Discussion and Writing

After seeing the AVA's production of *Così fan tutte*, discuss the stage director's interpretation of the work. What ideas were brought out? How did the sets and costumes contribute to this?

Discuss and compare other stories that incorporate disguises such as Shakespeare's plays. How are they similar? How are they different?

How clearly did the singers portray and differentiate their characters?

With whom did you identify? The men, their fiancées or the conspirators?

Does the story *Così fan tutte* have any relevance to your lives today? In what ways?

What issues brought up or discussed in class came out most strongly in your experience of the performance?

Be a Music Critic

*Now is your chance to critique our performance of Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. Provided below are some focus questions to guide you through the process. Read the questions BEFORE the Student Matinee Performance so that you have specific things to focus on for your critique.*

Be honest and always support your opinions with examples. For instance, if you didn't like the sets, give specific reasons (i.e. not realistic scenery, too stark and drab, etc.). If you LOVED the way Ferrando sang, you might want to remark on the tone quality of his voice, or how he made it seem effortless to sing so dramatically or emotionally. If a character seemed to not be too believable, you might want to comment on his/her stiff acting.

These are all personal critical reactions on which music critics elaborate after experiencing a performance. Sometimes they are not so kind. It is best to remain respectful and err on the side of kindness and consideration. The following questions will help you in writing your review.

- Did you enjoy the singing of any one character in particular?
- How did you feel that the lighting effects enhanced the drama of any given scene?
- Did you think the staging (how the characters moved on stage in each scene) was believable?
- How did the costumes enhance the production? Did they seem to reflect the time period of the opera?
- What impressed you about the pianist that played the entire orchestral score for this performance?
- Were the Supertitles helpful to you in comprehending the text and the continuity of the plot?
- Would you recommend this production to others? Why or why not?
- Was this your first time attending a live opera performance?
- Overall, did you enjoy your experience? Would you attend another opera if you could?

Careers in Opera

Under the Lights

Opera singers clearly have great talent. They also need the following: ability to master the music, rhythms, and words of multiple languages, memorize challenging passages of music, acting ability, and amazing physical stamina to perform for hours in hot, heavy, bulky costumes. They are as highly trained as any star athlete: they are fit, disciplined, and dedicated to their art. Let's not forget the other performers. Many operas have a large chorus of singers who sing together as one unit and often appear in crowd scenes. They can also appear in costume, representing soldiers, townspeople and the like. Other non-speaking, non-singing people paid to appear in crowd scenes on stage are called supernumeraries. In some instances, operas will also have dancers. They can be part of a crowd scene or featured in solo roles. In some operas there are ballet performances as part of the production. The orchestra: talented musicians all. The blending of the composer's music with the action and singing is key to keeping the opera on track. Again, these people are hard-working, highly trained, and constantly practicing to hone their skills. The conductor keeps everyone in the orchestra on task, guiding the musicians, timing the music, but never overpowering the action on stage. That's in addition to coordinating the singers, choruses and other musical actions on the stage.

Behind the Scenes

There are many, many other careers in theater besides those on stage. Putting together a major production like an opera requires a vast number of people in a variety of interesting jobs, requiring many skill sets.

Besides all the business people that run the company, raise money, hire staff and artists, etc., there's also:

- The construction crew: Today's performances require carpenters, painters, electricians, lighting and sound designers, set and costume designers, and make-up artists. A great costume designer, for example, has to clearly understand the story and time period of the opera, so the costumes appear authentic and are made sturdy enough to withstand the rigors of the performance.
- The scenery or set designers are like architects: They create detailed blueprints of the sets, making models to ensure that all the scenery will fit properly on the stage. The lighting designer underscores the actions and emotions of the opera with the use of lights that affect the appearance of the characters, the sets, the props, and the mood of the performance.
- The technical director orchestrates all of these people: He/she manages the construction crew, the stagehands, the building of the sets and scenery – anything to do with the physical make-up and logistics of the staging.
- Let's not forget the choreographer: This artist designs and creates the steps of the dances and trains the dancers in the performance. He/she can recreate the original choreography of an opera or interpret the music and story with his own unique style.
- The stage manager: This is the person who coordinates everybody involved in the opera. This person tells the crew when to raise and lower the curtain, when to change the lighting, scenery, sets, and sound effects. She/he keeps everyone in the loop on their places and parts to keep the performance flowing smoothly.

Opera Audience Etiquette

Remember: the opera is a live performance. You can hear the performers on stage and that means that they can hear you too! Unlike actors on television or in the movies, performers onstage are VERY aware of the audience. Everything you do in the audience affects what happens on stage.

Do dress in whatever you are comfortable in. However, going to the opera can be an opportunity to get dressed in formal attire.

Do be on time. Latecomers disturb the rest of the audience and the singers. They will only be seated at suitable breaks- often not until intermission.

Do turn off cell phones, pagers, digital watch alarms and all electronic devices.

Do get settled and comfortable prior to the performance beginning. Check your program before the performance because rustling through the program during the show can disrupt everyone.

Do CLAP as the lights are dimmed and the conductor appears and bows to the audience. Watch as the conductor turns to the orchestra and takes up his or her baton to signal the beginning of the opera.

Do listen to the prelude or overture before the curtain rises. This is part of the performance and an opportunity to identify common musical themes that may reoccur during the opera.

Do sit still, only whisper when it is absolutely necessary, as a whisper is heard all over the theatre, and NEVER (except in an emergency) stand during the performance.

Do laugh when something is funny.

Do read the English surtitles projected above the stage. Most operas are not sung in English, and even if they are, surtitles are still used). Use the surtitles to understand the story.

Do listen for subtleties in the music. The tempo, volume and complexity of the music and singing often depict the “feeling” or “sense” of the action or character. Also, notice repeated words or phrases; they are usually significant.

Do let the performers know if you like what you have seen and heard! It is okay to applaud at the end of arias, and at the end of a scene. If you really liked what you heard, call out “bravo” (to the men on stage), “brava” (to the women) and “bravi” (for all on stage). And, of course, a standing ovation is always welcome!

Finally, **Do** have fun and enjoy the show!!!

As an audience member, you are a very important part of the process taking place.

Without you there is no show.

It's up to YOU!

Glossary of Terms

A

ACCELERANDO: An acceleration or speeding up of the tempo of a particular aria, chorus or ensemble.

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

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

ASIDE: A comment from an actor directly to the audience that the other characters cannot hear.

B

BALLET (French): A form of dance that tells a story.

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

BASS: The lowest male singing voice.

BATON: A short stick that the conductor uses to lead the orchestra.

BEL CANTO: An Italian phrase literally meaning 'beautiful singing.' A traditional Italian style of singing that emphasizes tone, phrasing, coloratura passages and technique. Also refers to opera written in this style.

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

BLOCKING: Directions given to actors for on-stage movements and actions.

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

C

CABALETTA (cah-bah-LEHT-tah) (Italian): Second part of a two-part aria, always in a faster tempo than the first part.

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

CANON: A musical device in which a melody is stated in one voice and then repeated by one or more other voices. The popular round, "Row, Row, Row Your Boat," is a simple example.

CANZONE, CANZONETTA (Cahn-TSOH-neh, cahn-tsoh-NEHT-tah) (Italian): A folk-like song commonly used in opera buffa.

CARPENTER: The carpenter works on the construction of the sets. Production Carpenter is the title given to the one in charge of the backstage crew, even though working with wood may not be involved.

CAVATINA (cah-vah-TEE-nah) (Italian): The meaning of this term has changed over the years. It now usually refers to the opening, slow section of a two part aria.

CHORD: Three or more notes sounding together. Do not mistake with vocal cord.

CHOREOGRAPHER: The person who designs the motions of a dance.

CHOREOGRAPHY: The act of setting movement to create a dance.

CHORUS: A group of singers, singing together, who sometimes portray servants, party guests or other unnamed characters; also the music written for them.

CHORUS MASTER: The one in charge of choosing chorus members and rehearsing them for performance. If there is a back-stage chorus, it is usually conducted by the chorus master who is in communication with the conductor of the orchestra.

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

COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE (cohm-MEH-dee-ah dehl-AHR-teh) (Italian): A type of comic opera popular in Italy in the 16th to 18th centuries that involved improvisation using stock characters and gestures. The characters were often masked to represent certain archetypes.

COMPOSER: A person who writes music.

COMPRIMARIO (cohm-pree-MAH-ree-oh)(Italian): A secondary or supporting role or a person singing such a role.

CONCERTATO (cohn-chehr-TAH-toh) (Italian): A large ensemble of soloists and chorus generally found in the second movement of a central finale, to which it forms the lyrical climax.

CONCERTMASTER: The first-chair violinist who plays occasional solos and is responsible for coordinating all of the stringed instruments. The concert master decides on the bowing, so that all of the string players' bows move in unison.

CONDUCTOR: The leader of the orchestra, sometimes called maestro.

CONTINUO (cohn-TEE-noo-oh) (Italian): An extemporized chordal accompaniment for recitativo secco, usually by a harpsichord, cello or double bass. Opera seria continuo often used an ensemble of harpsichord and theorbo (member of the lute family). Opera buffa continuo used a single keyboard and string bass.

CONTRALTO: The lowest female singing voice.

COSTUME DESIGNER: Works with the set designer to prepare costumes that are appropriate for the rest of the production. Often oversees the preparation of the costumes.

COSTUME SHOP: A special area set aside for the making of the costumes or for adjusting those that are rented.

COUNTERTENOR: The countertenor is a natural tenor (or sometimes baritone) with an elevated range. With training and practice this higher range, similar to that of a woman alto, becomes the natural voice.

COVER: The name given to an understudy in opera; someone who replaces a singer in case of illness or other misfortune.

CRESCENDO (Italian): A gradual increase in volume. Orchestral crescendos were one of Rossini's trademarks.

CUE: In opera, a signal to a singer or orchestra member to begin singing or playing.

CURTAIN CALL: At the end of a performance, all of the members of the cast and the conductor take bows. Sometimes this is done in front of the main curtain, hence the name curtain call. Often, however, the bows are taken on the full stage with the curtain open.

CUT: To omit some of the original material from the score.

D

DA CAPO ARIA (DAH CAH-poh) (Italian): An aria in the form ABA. A first section is followed by a shorter second section. Then the first is repeated, usually with added ornamentation.

DESIGNER: A person who creates the lighting, costumes and/or sets.

DIAPHRAGM: A muscle beneath the lungs and above the stomach which acts as a trampoline does, pushing the air from the lungs at a desired rate.

DIRECTOR (STAGE DIRECTOR): A person who instructs the singer-actors on their on-stage movements and in the interpretation of their roles.

DIVA (Italian): Literally "goddess," it refers to an important female opera star. The masculine form is divo.

DRAMATIC (Voice type): The heaviest voice, capable of sustained declamation and a great deal of power, even over the largest operatic orchestra of about 80 instruments. This description applies to all voice ranges from soprano to bass.

DRESSER: A member of the backstage staff who helps the artists change their costumes. The principal singers usually have their own dresser. Supers and chorus members share dressers.

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

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

DYNAMICS: The degree of loudness and quietness in music. See **PIANO** and **FORTE**.

E

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

F

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

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

FLY, FLY TOWER: A high space above the stage where pieces of the set are often raised up or flown out of sight when not in use.

FORTE (FOHR-teh), FORTISSIMO (Italian): Loud, very loud.

G

GENERAL DIRECTOR: The head of an opera company. The one ultimately responsible for all artistic and financial aspects of everything in which the company is involved.

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

H

HELDEN (German): Prefix meaning "heroic." It is applicable to other voices but usually used in Heldentenor.

I

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

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

K

KEY: In tonal music, an arrangement of notes and note intervals indicating the tonal center in music.

L

LEGATO (Italian): A smooth line of music with no noticeable breaks.

LIBRETTO: The text or words of an opera.

LIGHTING DESIGNER: One who designs and coordinates the hundreds of light changes that help create and opera's overall affect. Much of this is now computerized.

M

MAESTRO (mah-EHS-troh) (Italian): Literally "master;" used as a courtesy title for the conductor. The masculine ending is used for both men and women.

MAKEUP DESIGNER: One who designs and applies make-up to actors in order to appear properly under stage lighting, or to appear older, younger, as a creature, etc.

MELODY: The tune of the music.

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

MUSICAL COMEDY: See **OPERETTA**.

N

NUMBER OPERA: An opera composed of individual numbers such as recitative, arias, duets, ensembles, etc. Between the numbers there is often a chance for applause.

O

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

OPERA BUFFA (OH-peh-rah BOOF-fah) (Italian): An opera about ordinary people, usually, but not always comic, which first developed in the 18th century.

OPERA SERIA (OH-peh-rah SEH-ree-ah) (Italian): A "serious" opera. The usual characters are gods and goddesses, or ancient heroes. Rossini was one of the last to write true opera serie.

OPERETTA or **MUSICAL COMEDY:** A play, much of which is spoken but with many musical numbers. See also **SINGSPIEL**.

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

ORCHESTRATION: The art of applying orchestral color to written music by assigning various instruments different parts of the music. This requires a complete knowledge of instrumentals and their timbre, range, etc.

OVERTURE: An orchestral introduction to an opera. (French: ouverture; German: ouverture; Italian: sinfonia).

P

PARLANDO (pah-LAHN-doh) (Italian): A style of singing like ordinary speech. It can occur in the middle of an aria.

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

PIANO, PIANISSIMO: Quiet, very quiet.

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

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

PITCH: The highness/lowness of a sound or tone.

PIZZICATO (pit-tsee-CAH-toh) (Italian):): Playing a string instrument by plucking the strings instead of using the bow.

PRIMA DONNA (Italian): Literally “first lady;” the leading woman singer in an opera. Because of the way some have behaved in the past, it often refers to someone who acts in a superior and demanding fashion. The term for the leading man is primo uomo.

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

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

PRODUCTION CARPENTER: Carpenter in charge of organizing and handling all aspects of the sets and equipment.

PRODUCTION MANAGER: The administrator responsible for coordinating the sets, costumes, rehearsal facilities and all physical aspects of a production. Often, the person who negotiates with the various unions representing stage hands, musicians, etc.

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

PROPS (PROPERTIES): Small items carried or used by performers on stage.

Q

QUARTET: Four singers or the music that is written for four singers. Also quintet, sextet, etc

QUINTET: Piece for five singers.

R

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

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

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

RÉPÉTITEUR (reh-peh-ti-TEUR) (French): A member of the music staff who plays the piano for rehearsals and, if necessary, the piano or harpsichord during performances. They frequently coach singers in their roles and assist with orchestra rehearsals.

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

S

SCENA (SCHAY-nah) (Italian): Literally “a scene;” a dramatic episode which consists of a variety of numbers with a common theme. A typical scena might consist of a recitative, a cavatina and a cabaletta.

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

SET, SET DESIGNER: The background and furnishings on the stage and the person who designs them.

SEXTET: A piece for six singers.

SITZPROBE (ZITS-proh-bah): Literally, “seated rehearsal,” it is the first rehearsal of the singers with the orchestra and no acting.

SOPRANO: The highest female singing voice.

SOUBRETTE (French): A pert, young female character with a light soprano voice.

SPINTO (Voice type): A lyric voice that has the power and incisiveness for dramatic climaxes.

STAGE AREAS: The various sections of the stage. Left and right are as seen by those on stage, not in the audience. Since many stages are raked, that is higher in back than in front, upstage is at the back and downstage at the front. If an actor stays upstage, all the others have to turn their backs to the audience when speaking to him. This is the origin of the phrase “to upstage someone.”

STAGE DIRECTOR: The one responsible for deciding the interpretation of each character, the movements of the singers on stage, and other things affecting the singers. s in charge at rehearsals.

STAGE MANAGER: The person in charge of the technical aspects of the entire opera, including light changes, sound effects, entrances (even of the conductor) and everything else that happens.

SUPERNUMERARY: Someone who is part of a group on stage but doesn't sing. It is usually shortened to Super.

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

SYNOPSIS: A shortened telling of an opera's plot, usually one or two pages.

T

TEMPO: The speed of the music.

TENOR: The highest common adult male singing voice. (Countertenors are uncommon.)

TESSITURA (Italian): Literally “texture,” it defines the average pitch level of a role. Two roles may have the same range from the lowest to the highest note, but the one with a greater proportion of high notes has the higher tessitura.

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

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

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

V

VERISMO (Italian): Describes the realistic style of opera that started in Italy at the end of the nineteenth century. Although the peak of the movement was past by the time of Puccini, his operas are a modified form of verismo.

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

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

VOCAL CORD: Wishbone-shaped edges of muscles in the lower part of the throat whose movements create variations in pitch as air passes between them. It is often spelled incorrectly as "chord".

W

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



This Study Guide is a compilation of material drawn from numerous resources, including Opera News, Opera Philadelphia, Pacific Opera Victoria, Portland Opera, Virginia Opera, Wikipedia, Khan Academy and numerous other on-line articles.