HAMLET

Minnesota OPERA
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

OPERA BOX

Teacher's Guide

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620 North First Street, Minneapolis, MN 55401

Dear Educator,

Thank you for using a Minnesota Opera Opera Box. This collection of material has been designed to help any educator to teach students about the beauty of opera. This collection of material includes audio and video recordings, scores, reference books and a Teacher's Guide.

The Teacher's Guide includes Lesson Plans that have been designed around the materials found in the box and other easily obtained items. In addition, Lesson Plans have been aligned with State and National Standards. See the Unit Overview for a detailed explanation.

Before returning the box, please fill out the Evaluation Form at the end of the Teacher's Guide. As this project is new, your feedback is imperative. Comments and ideas from you – the educators who actually use it – will help shape the content for future boxes. In addition, you are encouraged to include any original lesson plans. The Teacher's Guide is intended to be a living reference book that will provide inspiration for other teachers. If you feel comfortable, include a name and number for future contact from teachers who might have questions regarding your lessons and to give credit for your original ideas. You may leave lesson plans in the Opera Box or mail them in separately.

Before returning, please double check that everything has been assembled. The deposit money will be held until I personally check that everything has been returned (i.e. CDs having been put back in the cases). Payment may be made to the Minnesota Opera Education Department. All forms of payment are accepted.

Since opera is first and foremost a theatrical experience, it is strongly encouraged that attendance at a performance of an opera be included. The Minnesota Opera offers Student Matinees and discounted group rate tickets to regular performances. It is hoped that the Opera Box will be the first step into exploring opera, and attending will be the next.

I hope you enjoy these materials and find them helpful. If I can be of any assistance, please feel free to call or e-mail me any time.

Sincerely,

Jamie Andrews
Community Education Director
Andrews@mnopera.org
612.342.9573 (phone)
mnopera.org
imagineopera.org

Pre-Opera Activity
The 45-Second *Hamlet*

Purpose

This activity can be used with students who are or are not familiar with Shakespeare's play.

Objective(s)

- To acquaint (or re-acquaint) students with the main ideas, themes and issues dealt with in the play.
- To give students the opportunity to physically interact with the text.

What to Do

(1) Make 10 copies of the script included here. Highlight each script according to the numbers, e.g. Actor Number One's script should have all their parts highlighted, Actor Number Two's script should have only the lines highlighted belonging to Actor Number Two, etc.

(2) Assign 10 students to read the parts, assigning the 9 students to a number and one to read Hamlet's lines.

(3) The students should stand in a circle.

(4) The goal will be to go through the entire script in 45 seconds or less.

(5) Rules:
– No overlapping, i.e. a student can't begin their line until the student speaking ahead is done
– The audience has to be able to understand the words.
– If a student's character dies, the student must fall onto the floor (carefully).

(6) Appoint a timekeeper.

(7) Allow students to read the script around once to hear it before they begin to attempt to "beat the clock."

Note

This can be done as a contest between teams of 10 to see who can do it the fastest. If you have more than one class working with *Hamlet*, they can compete against each other.

Follow-Up

If students have studied the play, have them identify the speakers and discuss the relevance of the quotations to the plot and the themes. If they are new to the play, have them attempt to construct a plot and identify possible themes.

The 45-Second *Hamlet*

ACTOR ONE: "Who's there?"

HAMLET: "Frailty thy name is woman."

ACTOR TWO: "This above all: to thine own self be true."

ACTOR THREE: "He hath … made many tenders of his affection."

HAMLET: "Be thou a spirit of health or a goblin damned?"

ACTOR FOUR: "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark."

ACTOR FIVE: "Revenge [my] foul and most unnatural murder."

HAMLET: "I … shall think meet to put an antic disposition on."

ACTOR FIVE: "Swear!"

HAMLET: "Oh cursed spite/That ever I was born to set it right."

ACTOR TWO: "Your noble son is mad."

HAMLET: "The play's the thing/Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King."

HAMLET: "To be or not to be."

ACTOR THREE: "I was the more deceived."

HAMLET: "Get thee to a nunnery."

HAMLET: "How now? A rat!"

ACTOR TWO: "O, I am slain!" (*dies*)

ACTOR SIX: "Oh Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain."

ACTOR THREE: "Tomorrow is St. Valentine's Day." (*dies*)

ACTOR SEVEN: "I'll anoint my sword."

HAMLET: "Alas, poor Yorick."

ACTOR SIX: "Sweets to the sweet."

ACTOR EIGHT: "Give them the foils."

ACTOR SIX: "The drink, the drink! I am poisoned." (*dies*)

ACTOR EIGHT: "I am but hurt." (*dies*)

ACTOR SEVEN: "Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet." (*dies*)

HAMLET: "O, I die, Horatio." (*dies*)

ACTOR NINE: "Good night, sweet prince."

PRE-OPERA ACTIVITY
COMPARISON/CONTRAST OF THE PLAY AND THE OPERA
IN ACTS I, III, IV AND V WITH DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

ACT I

PLAY

SCENE ONE
- Ramparts: "Who's there?"

SCENE TWO
- Court: coronation/ marriage.

SCENE THREE
- Polonius' family discussions including Laertes and Polonius warning Ophelia about Hamlet's dishonorable intentions.

SCENE FOUR
- Ramparts: Hamlet and Ghost in lengthy conversation regarding murder and revenge.

NOTE
- Hamlet doesn't know if the ghost is a good angel or a "goblin damned."
- We don't see Hamlet and Ophelia together.

OPERA

SCENE ONE
- Celebration at court: "Let our songs rise to the skies! Festive day! Joyful day!"
- Hamlet and Ophélie: lengthy love duet.
- Hamlet, Laerte, Ophélie: "Take my place at her side."

SCENE TWO
- Horatio and Marcellus look for Hamlet and tell others of the ghost.
- Ramparts: Hamlet and Ghost – "Avenge me."

NOTE
- No recap between Hamlet, Marcellus and Horatio.
- No announcement of putting on "antic disposition."
- Relatively short conversation between Hamlet and Ghost (four lines).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note to the teacher: If you have the libretto of the opera, let the students hear the actual words referred to before answering the questions.

(1) How do the two sets of opening lines appear to set the tone for the act? For the piece as a whole?

(2) Who is missing from the opera's act? What element of the play's plot appears to be dispensed with? What might be the reason for the librettists' choice here?

(3) What differences can you detect between the two versions re: the relationships between Hamlet and Ophelia and between Hamlet and Laertes?

(4) What might the differences between the lengths of Hamlet's conversation with the Ghost indicate about the direction each plot will take?

(5) Given these synopses, what preliminary conclusions might you draw regarding the opera's plot, character development, tone and ending?

NOTE

Act II of the play mostly deals with aspects of the plot and with characters that the opera omits. Act II of the opera deals with the staging of "The Murder of Gonzago" which is similar to the play's version with one significant difference: in this pantomime, the Queen gives the murderer the poison to administer to her husband.

ACT III

PLAY

SCENE 1:

- "To be or not to be": Have students revisit this speech and identify its main points.
- Hamlet and Ophelia (alone): "Get thee to a nunnery."

OPERA

ONLY ONE SCENE

- "To be or not to be": 10 lines only focusing on whether Hamlet should commit suicide or not without focusing on any reasons.
- Hamlet overhears a conversation between Claudius and Polonius and realizes the latter was an accomplice in the murder.
- Hamlet is tortured that the father of his love, Ophélie, was a conspirator and doesn't know now how they could be together: "The terrible truth has become a barrier between us."
- Ophélie appears and he tells her to go to a nunnery.
- Hamlet tells Gertrude he knows she too was involved in the murder: "Your hands administered the poison."

NOTE:

- This scene is considered by scholars to be the true climax of the opera.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(1) Compare and contrast the soliloquy and the aria of "To be or not to be." What differences can you identify in content and imagery? Why do you think the librettists made the choices they did? What do these choices indicate about the differences in overall focus between the playwright and the librettists?

NOTE TO TEACHER: If you don't have a copy of the libretto, here is the aria:

To be or not to be!... O mystery!
To die … to sleep … to sleep!
Ah, would it were permitted for me to come to you [his father],
to break the thread that binds me to this earth!
But then?... What is that unknown land
from which no traveller has ever returned?
To be or not to be!... O mystery!
To die!... To sleep!... To sleep!...
O mystery! O mystery!
To die!... To sleep!... Perchance to dream!

(2) Compare and contrast the scenes from the opera and the play dealing with Hamlet telling Ophelia to go to a nunnery? What appears to be his motivation in each? Why does he distance himself from Ophelia in each?

(3) Why do you think the opera has Gertrude as co-conspirator in her husband's death? How does this change our perception of her character? What might have been her motivations in each case for marrying Claudius?

ACT IV

PLAY

- Begins with Claudius to Gertrude: "There's matter in these sighs, these profound heaves."
- Details regarding what to do with Hamlet – send him to England with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.
- News about Fortinbras.
- Appearance by Ophelia, maddened by Polonius' death.
- Ophelia gives flowers to Gertrude and Laertes.
- Letters from sailors.
- Claudius and Laertes plot.
- News of Ophelia's death.

OPERA

- Begins in a pastoral spot with a lake "dotted with islets lush with vegetation and bordered with weeping willows and rushes. The rising sun bathes the whole scene in cheerful light."
- Danish peasants enter dancing: "The smiling spring is here, sweet time of nests and roses."
- Ophélie appears and wants to join them, singing, "Hamlet is my husband" and "A tender promise binds us to each other …. If he should be disloyal, it would make me mad." (NOTE: the music of her song will reprise the love duet with Hamlet in Act I.)
- Ophélie gives flowers to the peasants who remark, "Her wits have fled for ever."
- Ophélie wades into the water and floats away (on stage!).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(1) The opera's total focus in this act is on Ophélie whereas in the play she is given one short scene. What is the source of her madness in each work? How does this change the thematic emphasis of the opera as a whole in contrast to that of the play?

(2) Why do you think she gives the flowers to the peasants instead of to Gertrude and Laertes as she does in the play?

(3) What function do the beginnings of each Act IV serve? Foreshadowing? Irony? Something else?

ACT V

PLAY

SCENE ONE

- Gravediggers converse.
- Hamlet and Horatio in graveyard. They converse about mortality.
- Ophelia's funeral.
- Hamlet tells Horatio of Claudius' plots to kill him.

SCENE TWO

- Duel between Hamlet and Laertes.
- Body count: Gertrude, Claudius, Laertes, Hamlet.
- Horatio promises to tell Hamlet's story.
- Fortinbras arrives and takes over.

OPERA

ONLY ONE SCENE

- Gravediggers saying everybody dies.
- Hamlet arrives (alone) and weeps for his loss of Ophélie. He asks for her forgiveness that he had to renounce their marriage. He must have heard of her madness as he sings, "Your reason is fled."
- Laertes arrives (alone): "What have you done to Ophélie?" They duel and Hamlet is wounded.
- They hear a funeral march and the court enters (Claudius, Gertrude, Polonius, Horatio, et al.).
- Hamlet realizes the funeral is that of Ophélie and says he wants to die with her.
- The Ghost appears (visible to all) to remind Hamlet of his vow.
- Hamlet kills Claudius.
- The Ghost sends Gertrude to a cloister and tells Hamlet to be king.
- The court as chorus ends with "Long live Hamlet! Long live the king!"

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(1) Why might the librettists make the following choices:

– Changing the ending to a happier one. (NOTE: In this production, Hamlet dies.)
– Making the Ghost reappear.
– Keeping Gertrude, Polonius and Laertes alive.
– Making Hamlet the new king.

(2) How do these changes shift the focus of the opera? How do they affect our view of the characters?

(3) What would you guess are the main themes of the opera?

(4) Voltaire, a French writer and philosopher who lived before the opera was written but was familiar with Shakespeare's play, had this to say about *Hamlet*:

> In the tragedy of Hamlet, the ghost of a king appears on stage, Hamlet becomes crazy in the second act and his mistress becomes crazy in the third. The prince slays the father of his mistress on the pretense of killing a rat, the heroine throws herself into a river. In the meanwhile another of the actors conquers Poland. Hamlet, his mother and his father all carouse on the stage. Songs are sung at table. There's quarreling, fighting, killing. It is a vulgar and barbarous drama which would not be tolerated by the vilest populace of France or Italy. One would imagine this piece to be the work of a drunken savage.

What might have been his opinion of the opera?

pre-opera activity
cross that line, hamlet!

for

This activity is specifically designed for students who have not had previous in-depth exposure to Shakespeare's play, although any students can benefit from the content explored.

(*adapted from the Folger Library website*)

overview

This introduction to the opera gets students thinking about the issues in the play in ways that relate to their own lives and values, accessing prior knowledge of the themes and issues they will be seeing in the production. It asks students to voice opinions and move around the room to depict those opinions physically.

what to do

(1) Unroll a big piece of tape (e.g. duct tape) across the floor, so you divide the classroom into two equal spaces. Move all desks to the edges of the room.

(2) Tell the class that today you're going to play a "game" called "Cross that Line." You will read a statement, and the students will need to choose to stand on one side of the line depending on whether they agree or disagree with the statement. After each statement, ask two or three students on each side why they have chosen to stand where they are. You may choose to let students stand on the line if they are undecided.

(3) Ask students to react to the following statements in the course of the game. Have those who agree with the statement stand on one side of the line and those who disagree on the other.

- It is always important to have a good relationship with your parents.
- Breaking up with a boyfriend or girlfriend is difficult.
- Adultery is always wrong.
- After one's spouse dies, one should wait at least a year to remarry.
- Ghosts are real.
- Females suffer more from relationship losses than males do.
- Revenge is appropriate when one has been wronged.
- Males value "doing the right thing" for another male over valuing their girlfriends.
- Murder is always wrong.
- There is such a thing as a "perfect" family.
- You can't ever trust people in power.
- There is no way to know if a person is truly "crazy."

(4) After sharing opinions on these statements, have students return to their desks. Tell them that all of these issues appear in the opera *Hamlet*. Tell them that you might play the game again once they've finished seeing the production to determine whether their opinions have changed.

pre-opera activity
pantomime reading: act one

objective

- To familiarize students with the plot of Act I of the opera.
- To enable students to begin to identify the differences between Shakespeare's play and the opera adaptation of it.
- To give students the opportunity to practice performing in front of their classmates.

what to do

(1) Divide students into three groups – two performance groups and the audience.

(2) Give each performance group a Pantomime Pre-reading card.

(3) Assign the acting parts and select one student in each group to be the narrator. This student will read aloud the events on the card as the rest of the students create a pantomime of the events (actions without words or sounds). Ensure that the narrator reads **slowly** to allow the actors sufficient time to present their pantomime.

(4) Allow each group time to practice.

(5) Have each group perform their pantomime in the correct sequence of the act.

(6) After each of the two performances, have the students in the audience write down what they saw.

(7) If students have read Shakespeare's play, ask them to return to the original text and in small groups identify differences they find between the opera and the original. Then ask:

(a) What did the opera librettists omit from the original?
(b) What did they add?
(c) Did you see any changes in how any of the characters were portrayed?
(d) What may have been reasons for the changes made when converting the play to an opera?
(e) How might these changes affect the opera's plot?

(8) Possible follow-up: Give students a typed summary of the first act of the opera *Hamlet* for them to read and keep in their notebooks.

PANTOMIME
HAMLET, THE OPERA, ACT ONE

CARD NUMBER ONE: EIGHT ACTORS AND A NARRATOR

The New King, The Queen, The Prince, The King's Councilor, Two Courtiers (representing the entire court), The Daughter of the King's Councilor, The Son of the King's Councilor

Enter THE NEW KING followed by THE QUEEN, and THE KING'S COUNCILOR. THE NEW KING takes his seat on the throne. THE QUEEN sits beside him. THE KING'S COUNCILOR bows to THE NEW KING and then stands off to the side. THE COURTIERS applaud and look happy. THE QUEEN searches the room with her eyes and whispers something to THE KING who frowns at her and puts his finger to his lips. ALL leave the stage. THE PRINCE drags his feet into the room looking gloomy and annoyed. THE DAUGHTER OF THE KING'S COUNCILOR enters. THE PRINCE gives her a hug and then looks gloomy again and turns away. THE DAUGHTER OF THE KING'S COUNCILOR touches him on the shoulder. THE PRINCE turns to her, and they hold hands and sing to each other of their undying love. THE SON OF THE KING'S COUNCILOR enters and gives them both a hug. He tells them he must go away to a foreign land to fight, and he asks THE PRINCE to take care of his sister while he is gone. THE SON AND DAUGHTER OF THE KING'S COUNCILOR ask THE PRINCE to go with them to the banquet for the king and queen, but THE PRINCE shakes his head and declines.

PANTOMIME
HAMLET, THE OPERA, ACT ONE

CARD NUMBER TWO: FOUR ACTORS AND A NARRATOR

The Young Scholar, The Prince, A Friend of the Prince, The Ghost

THE YOUNG SCHOLAR and THE FRIEND approach THE PRINCE to share some strange news with him. THE YOUNG SCHOLAR explains that for the past few nights, they have seen a ghost who looks like the prince's dead father. THE YOUNG SCHOLAR also says that they have tried to speak to it, but it will not speak to them. THE PRINCE seems a little scared, but is very interested to see this ghost for himself. They all hear the clock strike 12, and THE GHOST appears. It beckons to THE PRINCE. He recognizes the ghost as the spirit of his dead father. THE GHOST motions the young scholar and the friend to withdraw, and THE PRINCE tells them to go away while he talks to THE GHOST. THE YOUNG SCHOLAR and THE FRIEND withdraw to a safe distance. THE GHOST tells the prince that he was murdered and that he wants the prince to avenge him. He tells the prince that he was murdered by his brother who spied on him as he rested and then poisoned him as he slept. He then tells THE PRINCE to keep his mother out of this, that heaven will punish her eventually. THE GHOST sees that dawn is about to break and he must leave. He stalks away. THE PRINCE draws his sword and vows to avenge his father's death..

Post-Opera Group Activity
Your Very Own Hamlet the Musical

Depending on how *Hamlet* was handled in your class, by this time you have become familiar with the opera and perhaps also Shakespeare's play and film variations of the play. And having seen the opera, you are aware of how important music can be in portraying characters' emotions and in setting the tone or mood of a scene.

Now it's your turn to stage the story of *Hamlet* yourself – as a musical. You can set your version anywhere you like, in any time you choose. (Think Hip-hop *Hamlet*, Sci-fi *Hamlet*, Country-western *Hamlet*, Techno *Hamlet*, Hollywood *Hamlet*, Hobbit *Hamlet*, whatever. Your only limit is your imagination.) You can change the ages, genders or even species of the characters, as long as you retain the basic plot and characterization. (Recall that the opera eliminated characters like Rosencrantz, Guildenstern and Fortinbras and yet retained the main gist of the story.) Your group will act as the directors, set and costume designers, scriptwriters, song writers and actors to produce this new version of the story of *Hamlet*.

You do not need to recreate the whole play, but you must develop a concept for how it would be staged. (Recall Thaddeus Strassberger's Cold War concept.) You will be graded on a playbill that you design for your show as well as a performance of one scene.

The Playbill (100 points)

- Design a poster to advertise your musical. This will be the cover of your playbill. (See the Minnesota Opera poster or the cover of this study guide, for examples.) (10 pts.)
- A director's page where you explain your vision and describe the challenges you faced in changing the play/opera. Where have you set your *Hamlet*? When? How have you changed the text? Walk the audience through any major changes you are making. (See this study guide's interview with Strassberger for an example.) (20 pts.)
- A sketch or computer drawing of the stage and your backdrop. (10 pts.)
- An interview with the set designer discussing how the stage is laid out, what props or special effectS are used and how the set will change over the course of the play. (10 pts.)
- Photos or sketches of at least two characters' costumes, with a note to the audience from the wardrobe designer explaining their "vision." (10 pts.)
- A cast list with photographs. For each photograph, there should be a bio for the actor (the cast members can be the people in your group, established actors, or anyone else of your choosing) as well as a brief description of the character they play. You need only provide actor photos of the major players. (See opera program for examples.) (10 pts.) →

- A clean copy of the script for the scene you perform, with stage directions. (15 PTS.)
- A complete set of lyrics for two of the songs which will appear in the show. These songs may be original creations or songs which already exist which fit the character/action. (For example, Rockabye *Hamlet*, a musical version of the story which appeared on Broadway [for seven whole performances!] included the following songs: "He Got It in the Ear" by characters named Honeybelle and Huckster, "Rockabye Hamlet" sung by Ophelia and "The Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Boogie" sung by Claudius and Chorus Girls.) (15 PTS.)

THE PERFORMANCE (50 POINTS)

- Choose one section of *Hamlet* that you can edit/revise/reconstruct to be 8–10 minutes in length.
- Rewrite/reconstruct the scene to fit the concept of your re-staging of the story. The language you choose should fit the characters and context of your new play. Your scene should include one or both of your songs.
- You will present your new version of the story to the class. (1) Tell us your concept, what you have changed, *etc.* (2) Show us the playbill. (3) Act out the scene. The members of your group will act out the scene you reworked for the class, using whatever props and costumes you need to set the stage. You do not need to be off-book, but you need to be well-rehearsed. All group members must participate in the presentation. NOTE: The scene should include one (or both) of the songs you created for your musical. It can be performed "live" or, if it's an existing song, the actor singing it can "lip synch" to a recording.

post-opera discussion questions on the production

(1) Shakespeare had to rely solely on words to paint the scenery, alert his audience to the weather conditions, convey emotions, *etc*. Opera, with singing and orchestration, is able to communicate atmosphere, emotions, i.e. meaning itself, through music. How did the music of the opera *Hamlet* inform the characters' emotions, their reactions to their situations, the overall tone of the scenes? Give specific examples. How did the massive choral and orchestral performances affect your understanding of the story?

(2) In Shakespeare's play, the lines are stated one at a time; the actors take turns so the audience can understand each word. In opera, however, some scenes have the singers singing their own words at the same time as others sing theirs. *Hamlet*'s director, Thaddeus Strassberger, states that multiple lines of text sung simultaneously "create an emotional texture that words alone simply cannot." Identify moments in *Hamlet* when this occurred. What effect did this have on your understanding of the emotional relationships between the characters?

(3) Strassberger set his *Hamlet* in the 20th century, several hundred years after the medieval setting of Shakespeare's play. The director determined that Cold War Europe encapsulates the backdrop which embodies the play's political and psychological ideas. What may have been his reasoning? What do you know about this period in history? Did the director's concept work for you? Why or why not?

(4) This concept then informed the director's vision of the set, costumes, props, *etc*. Describe the set. How did it reflect Strassberger's concept? How did the set reflect the play's themes of illusion v. reality, i.e. people playing a part and hiding their true motives and identities?

(5) What appeared to be the relationship between the music and the set itself? Were they complimentary? Contrasting? Explain.

(6) What may have been the rationale for setting Act III in King Hamlet's mausoleum? What additional insights might be shed in seeing the characters reacting in this setting? Explain.

(7) The director's concept also informed the costume designer's wardrobe choices. Describe Gertrude's costumes. How did they contrast with her surroundings? What might that contrast indicate about her personality?

(8) Describe Ophélie's costumes. What might they indicate about her personality?

(9) Overall, how did the opera's production values affect your engagement in the story?

post-opera general discussion questions

note to teacher

These questions can be handled by students individually, in small or large groups, or in a combination of the three. They can also be adapted as writing prompts and/or be modified for students unfamiliar with the play.

(1) Thaddeus Strassberger, the opera's director, believes that the core conflict of the piece is our "inability to know clearly who is a 'liberal' and who is a 'conservative' and what that brings to bear on the world." This conflict leads to the following questions:

- Was Hamlet's father a "totalitarian monster" or a "visionary thoughtfully leading his people to a future filled with prosperity and peace"?
- Is Claudius a "liberator or a tyrannical war criminal?"

Based on the production, how would the various characters answer these questions? How would you answer these questions? How do these questions inform Hamlet's indecisiveness? What is the Denmark like which we see through his eyes? What forces trap him?

(2) The audience in Renaissance England, who were by decree Protestant and thus did not believe in Purgatory, thought that ghosts were either good angels whose duty was to guide or protect, or devils who assumed the form of dead friends or relatives in order to harm the living. In Shakespeare's play, Hamlet wonders if the ghost of his father is a "spirit of health" or a "goblin damned." (It apparently was irrelevant to the Renaissance audience that the play was set in pre-Christian Denmark.) And Hamlet's confusion over the real motivation of the ghost is part of his indecisiveness in regards to going forward with his efforts to avenge his father's death. How is the ghost handled in the opera? How is its persona changed and how does this change affect Hamlet and his revenge efforts? What is the subsequent effect of this change on the plot?

(3) One of the main themes in English literature throughout the ages has been the fragile balance between order and chaos. How is this theme reflected in the play regarding:

- What can happen to a kingdom?
- How individual characters can move from a state of order to chaos? Relate this theme to Hamlet, Ophelia, Gertrude, Claudius.
- Is this theme presented in the opera? Is its manifestation at all different from its presentation in the play?

(4) "Frailty, thy name is woman." How is this theme developed through the characters of both Gertrude in Ophelia in the play? In the opera? Are there any significant differences?

(5) The characters of Hamlet and Ophelia differ in the play and the opera as does the relationship between them. Explore the two versions of Hamlet, of Ophelia and of their relationship. Identify specific examples of these differences. Use a ven diagram for each if possible. Which aspects of their characters and of their relationshipsremain the same? Why do you think the librettists made these changes? How do they affect the characters' actions and reactions? How were the singers able to convey their emotions through the music? How did the music affect your understanding of their feelings and their relationship?

(6) Examine the "To be or not to be" speeches in each piece. What are the similarities and the differences? Again, what would be the reason for the librettists' changes? How did the music help the audience understand Hamlet's feelings in this scene?

(7) The original definition of "hamlet" was a village without a church. Relate this definition to Shakespeare's character/play and to Thomas' character/opera.

(8) Aristotle said in *The Poetics* that the tragic hero must have a flaw (often a good quality taken to excess, e.g. self-esteem becoming hubris) which causes him to make a particular choice which brings about his downfall. What would you identify as the flaw of the play's Hamlet? What was his tragic choice?

(9) The Hamlet presented in the opera doesn't die at the end in the original ending.He is able to avenge his father's death and he becomes king himself. However, he loses Ophélie and says he would have wanted to die with her. Is he still a tragic hero? Does he have a flaw? Does he make a choice? Does he have a downfall? Would Aristotle have considered the opera to be a tragedy? Do you?

(10) Aristotle also said that at the end of a tragedy, the audience should experience a catharsis, i.e. a combination of pity and fear. Its pity should be based on the feeling that the punishment the tragic hero receives is greater than he deserves, and its fear should be grounded in the belief that if we let ourselves be blinded (because of a flaw) as the hero was, we would create equal chaos in our own lives. Did you experience a catharsis from Shakespeare's play? Explain. Did you experience a catharsis from the opera? Explain. Did the opera's music bring you to an emotional level that was different from your experience with the play? If so, how would you explain that difference?

(11) If you are familiar with critical theory, how would you examine both the play and the opera through the following lenses: historical, feminist, psychological, Marxist?

(12) The story of Hamlet has survived for hundreds of years, speaking to different cultures and ages. It is considered to be universal in its characters and themes, and has been interpreted in myriad ways. (See the "Hamletology" section of this guide.) The Romantics read Hamlet as a sensitive poet, morbidly filled with thoughts of death. To the Victorians, Hamlet simply brooded too much: all he needed was a good tonic. In the age of Freud, Hamlet's failure to act was not so much explained as diagnosed: he was a neurotic, obsessed with his mother's sexuality. During the mid-twentieth century, Hamlet became an existential hero, clad in jeans and a black turtle-neck, who peered into the abyss, saw the fundamental absurdity of existence and concluded that all action, including revenge, was meaningless.

Who is the Hamlet of the 21st century? Are you? Consider the following questions:

- How do you play your role in life (or how do you even know what your role is)? Do we even have a "role" in the universal scheme of things?
- What are the "ghosts" that script our lives? Our families? Our culture? Our genetic make-up? What our mothers ate or did during pregnancy?
- Are our "quarrels" scripted by our "fathers"? Think families and cultures. (Look at the world's conflict areas.)
- Is a code of honor a good (not practical, but good) way to operate in this world?
- What relevance does Hamlet's "To be or not to be" dilemma have for us today?

As an aside, Charles, Prince of Wales, translated Hamlet's famous "To be" speech into modern clichés in order to illustrate how the glorious cadences of the English language have been reduced to flat, slangy dullness. However, his efforts do possibly shed some insight into the dilemma from a modern individual's point of view. Here it is:

Well, frankly, the problem as I see it
At this moment in time is whether I
Should just lie down under all this hassle
And let them walk all over me,
Or, whether I should just say, "OK,
I get the message," and do myself in.
I mean, let's face it, I'm in a no-win
Situation, and quite honestly,
I'm so stuffed up to here with the whole
Stupid mess that, I can tell you, I've just
Got a good mind to take the quick way out.
That's the bottom line. The only problem is:
What happens if I find out that when I've bumped
Myself off, there's some kind of a, you know,
All that mystical stuff about when you die,
You might find you're still – know what I mean?

(13) Often works of literature carry not only a title, but sub-title. What might a descriptive subtitle be for the play? The opera?

(14) What might be the sequel to the play? The opera?

QUICK FACTS

The play has been performed more than any other play in the world.

It has been translated more than any play in the world.

There have been over 45 film versions (from *Khoonka Knoon* in India to *The Tonga Hamlet* in Ghana).

"To be or not to be" is the most quoted line in literature.

There have been myriads of Hamlets including a hippie Hamlet, a dwarf Hamlet, a fat Hamlet, a female Hamlet (one with a wooden leg – Sarah Bernhardt at age 55), and twins as Hamlet (to show his divided nature). *Hamlet* has also been played by actors of all ages, from a five-year-old ("Master Betty, the Infant Phenomenon of the Regency Period") to an 80-year-old (Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson).

In addition, it has been adapted into numerous genres including 26 ballets, 6 operas, and dozens of musical works including Rockabye *Hamlet*, a Broadway show which lasted 7 performances. There have also been music hall *Hamlet*s with titles such as: "Hamlet the Ravin' Prince of Denmark!! Or the Baltic Swell!!! And the Diving Belle!!!! A Burlesque Extravanga in Three Acts," "A Thin Slice of Ham-let," "Hamlet the Hysterical: A Delirium in Five Spasms," and "Hamlet: Not Such a Fool as He Looks" in which Ophelia calls Hamlet "Hammy dear" and Hamlet sings a burlesque tune:

'Tis now the very witching hour of the night
When Ghosts begin to toddle
I'll keep my promise to the sprites
And punch my uncle's noddle.
Oh, what a row in Denmark! Oh oh heigh ho!

There has also been a G. I. Hamlet which toured the Pacific during World War II, and Richard Curtis's "Skin Head Hamlet" which condenses the entire play into four pages and very few words, one of which is the most common four-letter expletive in the English language. Its program description begins: Shakespeare's play translated into modern English. "Our hope was to achieve something like the effect of the New English Bible." Eds. Here's an example (Claudius's response to the play-within-a-play):

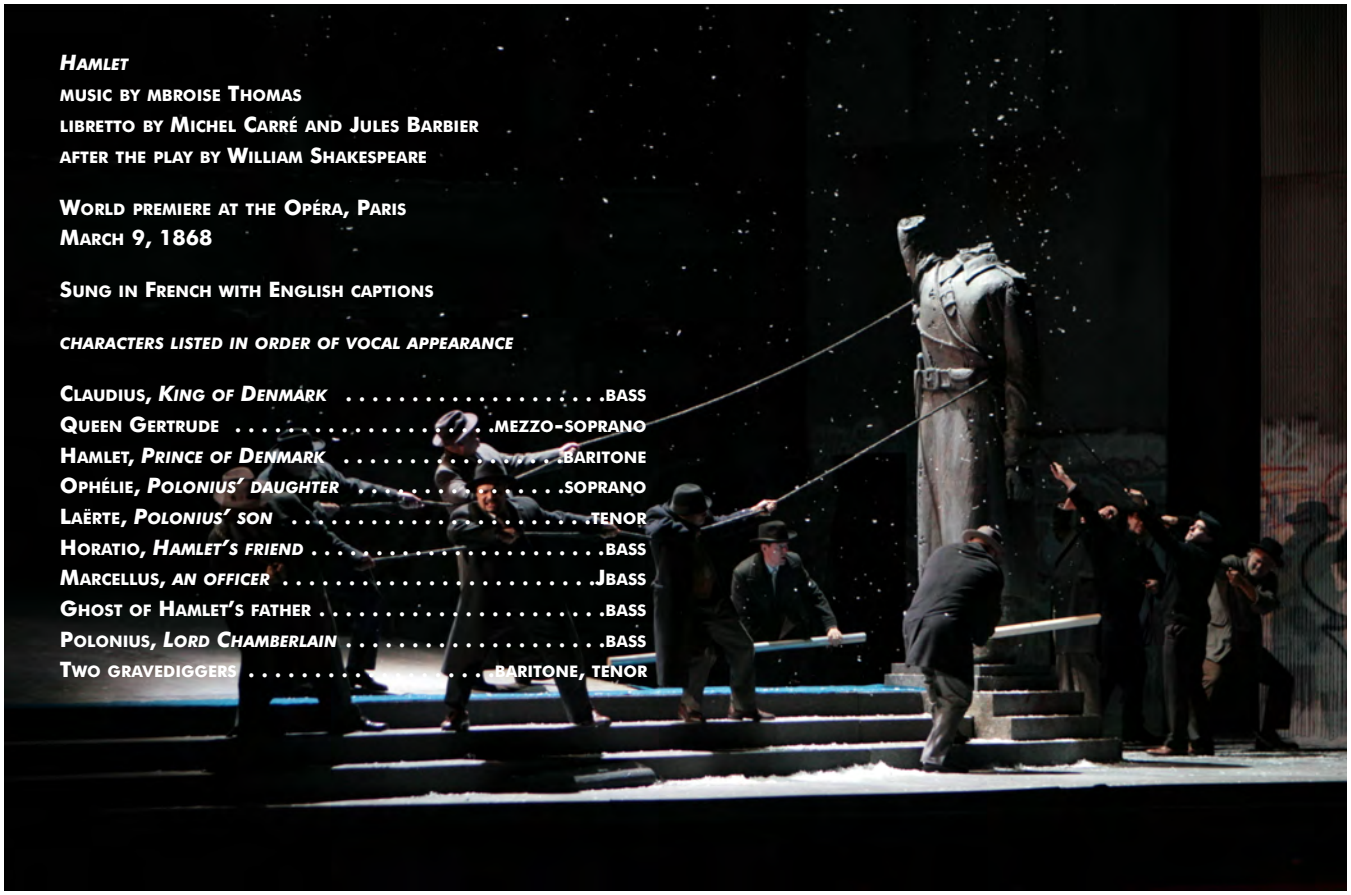
One Player: Full thirty times hath Phoebus cart ...
Claudius: I'll be f***ed if I watch any more of this crap.

There have also been product namesakes such as Hamlet cigars, bicycles, laundromats, jewelry, games, paper dolls and beer.

FROM WIKIPEDIA

The sources of *Hamlet*, a tragedy by William Shakespeare believed to have been written between 1599 and 1601, trace back as far as pre-13th century Icelandic tales. The generic "hero-as-fool" story is so old and is expressed in the literature of so many cultures that scholars have hypothesized that it may be Indo-European in origin. A Scandinavian version of the story of Hamlet, Amleth ("dull-witted") or Amlóði (Norse for "mad", "not sane") was put into writing in the 12th century by Saxo Grammaticus around 1200 AD in the Gesta Danorum (from which Shakespeare borrowed). Similar accounts are found in the Icelandic Saga of Hrolf Kraki and the Roman legend of Brutus, both of which feature heroes who pretend to be insane in order to get revenge. A reasonably accurate version of Saxo's story was translated into French in 1570 by François de Belleforest in his *Histoires Tragiques*. Belleforest embellished Saxo's text substantially, almost doubling its length, and introduced the hero's melancholy.

After this point, the ancestry of Shakespeare's version of *Hamlet* becomes more difficult to trace. Many literary scholars believe that Shakespeare's main source was an earlier play – now lost – known today as the *Ur-Hamlet*. Possibly written by Thomas Kyd, the *Ur-Hamlet* would have been in performance by 1589 and was seemingly the first to include a ghost in the story. Using the few comments available from theater-enthusiasts at the time, scholars have attempted to trace exactly where the *Ur-Hamlet* might have ended and the play popular today begins. A few scholars have suggested that the *Ur-Hamlet* is an early draft of Shakespeare's, rather than the work of Kyd. Regardless of the mysteries surrounding the *Ur-Hamlet*, though, several elements of the story changed. Unlike earlier versions, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* does not feature an omniscient narrator of events and Prince Hamlet does not appear to have a complete plan of action. The play's setting in Elsinore also differs from legendary versions.



Hamlet
music by mbroise Thomas
libretto by Michel Carré and Jules Barbier
after the play by William Shakespeare

World premiere at the Opéra, Paris
March 9, 1868

Sung in French with English captions

characters listed in order of vocal appearance

Claudius, *King of Denmark* . . . . . **.bass**
Queen Gertrude . . . . . **.mezzo-soprano**
Hamlet, *Prince of Denmark* . . . . . **.baritone**
Ophélie, *Polonius' daughter* . . . . . **.soprano**
Laërte, *Polonius' son* . . . . . **.tenor**
Horatio, *Hamlet's friend* . . . . . **.bass**
Marcellus, *an officer* . . . . . **.bass**
Ghost of Hamlet's father . . . . . **.bass**
Polonius, *Lord Chamberlain* . . . . . **.bass**
Two gravediggers . . . . . **.baritone, tenor**

HAMLET 2010 © KARIN COOPER FOR WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA

Synopsis and Musical Excerpts

SETTING

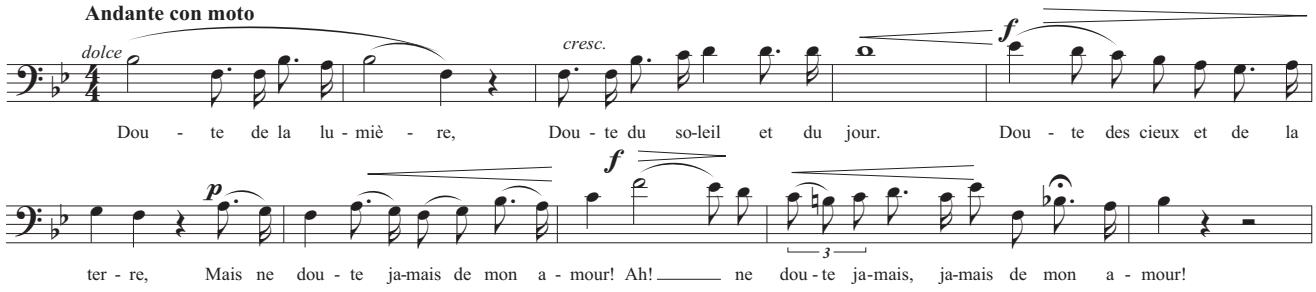
Denmark, in and around the castle of Elsinore, home of the late King Hamlet and his surviving heirs.

Shortly before the opera begins, King Hamlet has died under questionable circumstances.

ACT I

Scene one – The scene opens as the court at Elsinore is celebrating the marriage of King Claudius to Gertrude, widow of the late King Hamlet. Prince Hamlet, son of Gertrude and King Hamlet, remains stunned by his mother's hasty remarriage, merely two months after his father's death. Ophélie, daughter of the lord chamberlain, Polonius, is in love with Prince Hamlet, but is concerned that he may leave the court due to his uneasiness with his mother's actions. Feeling ignored by Hamlet, Ophelia begs him for an affirmation of his love for her.

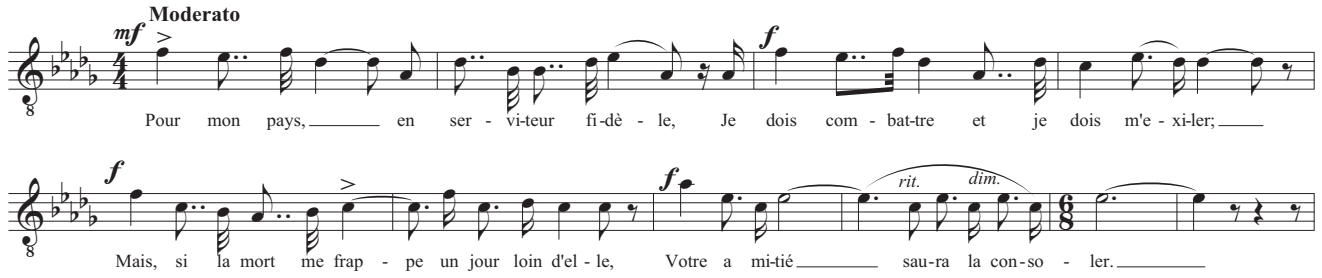
(1) DUET – DOUTE DE LA LUMIÈRE (HAMLET, THEN OPHÉLIE)



TRANSLATION: AH! MISTRUST LIGHT, MISTRUST THE SUN AND THE DAWN, MISTRUST HEAVEN AND EARTH, BUT NEVER MISTRUST MY LOVE!

Ophélie's brother Laërtes must depart on court business, so he entrusts her care to Hamlet.

(2) CAVATINE – POUR MON PAYS, EN SERVITEUR FIDÈLE (LAËRTE)



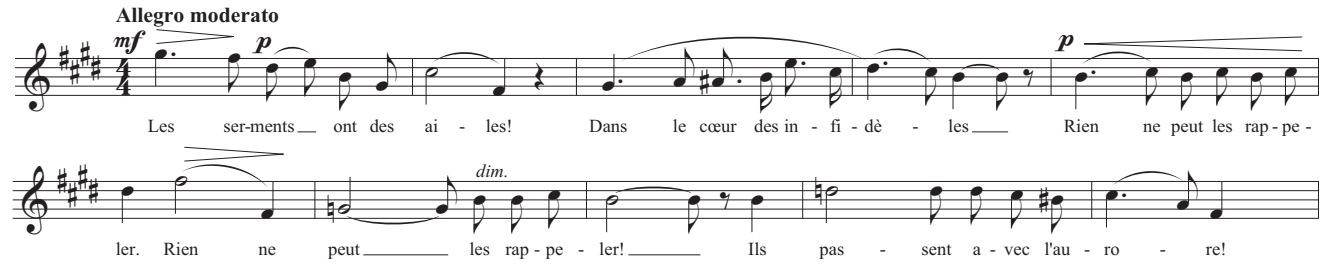
TRANSLATION: AS A FAITHFUL SERVANT TO MY COUNTRY, I MUST FIGHT AND I MUST GO FAR AWAY; BUT, IF DEATH TAKES ME ONE DAY FAR FROM HER, YOUR FRIENDSHIP WILL CONSOLE HER.

Scene two – Hamlet joins his friends Horatio and Marcellus outside the castle walls. They warn the prince they have seen a ghost they believe to be Hamlet's father. Shortly the ghost appears, charging Hamlet with avenging his father's murder, revealing that he was poisoned by his brother Claudius. The ghost urges immediate action, but warns his son not to harm his mother, as her vengeance must be left to Heaven. As the ghost vanishes, Hamlet swears to obey the command.

ACT II

Scene one – Ophélie is in distress, as the prince is shunning her. Hamlet momentarily appears, but withdraws, and she ponders the briefness of her lover's vows.

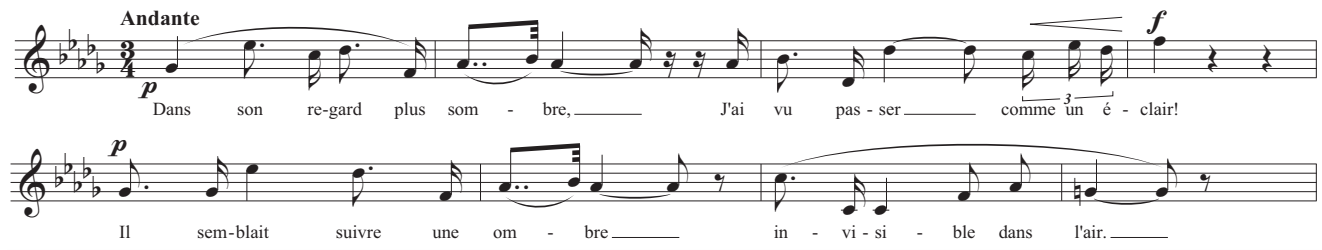
(3) ARIA – ADIEU, DIT-IL, AVEZ FOI! (OPHÉLIE)



TRANSLATION: VOWS ARE LIKE BIRDS! TO THE HEART OF THE UNFAITHFUL NOTHING CALLS THEM BACK! THEY LEAVE WITH THE DAWN!

Gertrude enters, seeking to learn from Ophélie what is happening with Hamlet, and discovers Ophélie in tears. She confides to Gertrude that she believes the prince no longer loves her and requests permission to leave the court. Gertrude pleads with her to stay, hoping she can cure Hamlet of his melancholy.

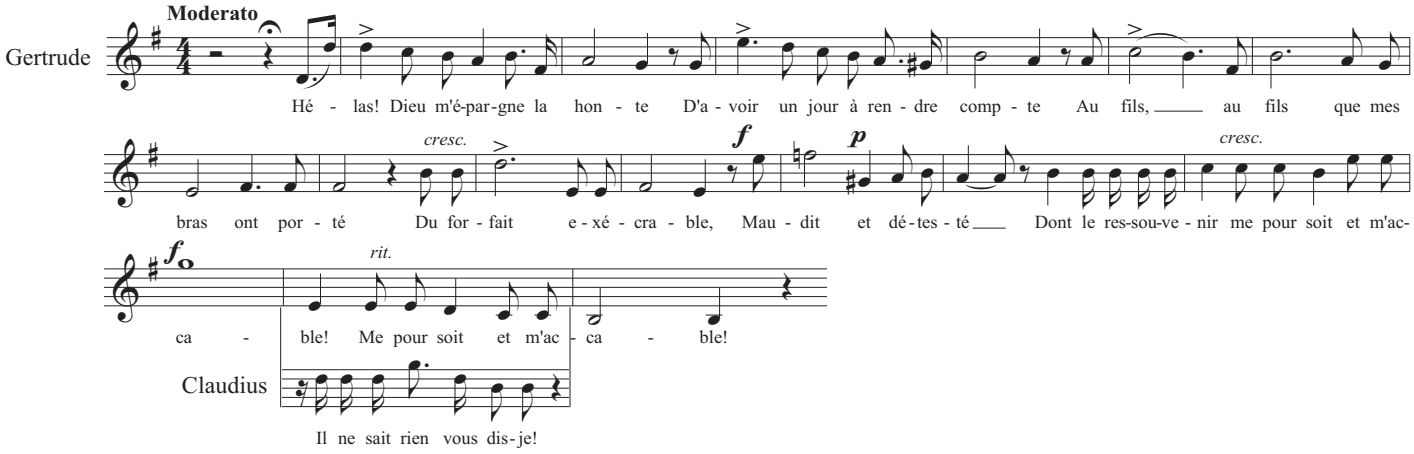
(4) ARIOSO – DANS SON REGARD PLUS SOMBRE (GERTRUDE)



TRANSLATION: IN HIS DARKEST GLANCE, I SAW A LIGHT PASS! HE SEEMS TO FOLLOW A SHADOW THAT IS INVISIBLE IN THE AIR.

King Claudius then appears, and the queen asks Ophélie to withdraw. The king wonders at Hamlet's strange behavior, and Gertrude suspects he may have learned the truth of their crime. Claudius, however, prefers to think that the prince is going mad.

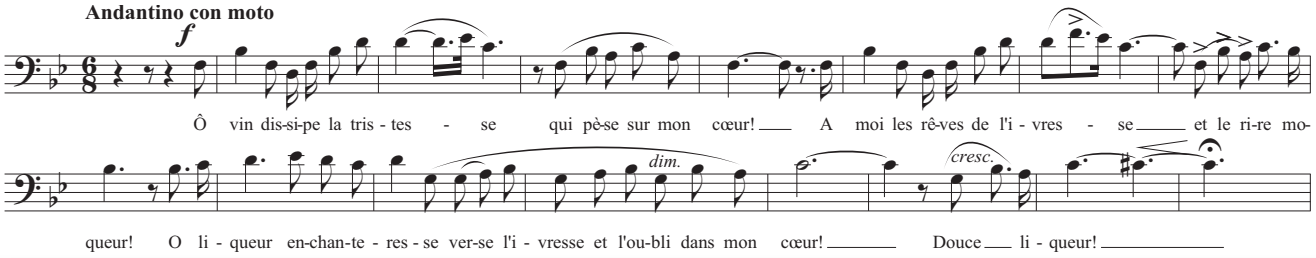
(5) DUET – HELAS! DIEU M'APARGNE LA HONTE (GERTRUDE, THEN CLAUDIUS)



TRANSLATION: **GERTRUDE:** ALAS! LORD, SPARE ME THE SHAME OF HAVING TO ONE DAY ANSWER TO THE SON, TO THE SON I ONCE CARRIED IN MY ARMS, THE HEINOUS CRIME, ACCURSED AND DESTABLE, THE MEMORY OF WHICH FOLLOWS ME AND OPPRESSES ME.
CLAUDIUS: LISTEN TO ME – HE KNOWS NOTHING.

Hamlet enters and announces he has arranged a performance for the court that evening. The king and queen, seeking to humor him, agree to attend. Hamlet sings the praises of wine's ability to dispel sadness and depression.

(6) CHANSON BACHIQUE – Ô VIN, DISSIPE LA TRISTESSE (HAMLET)



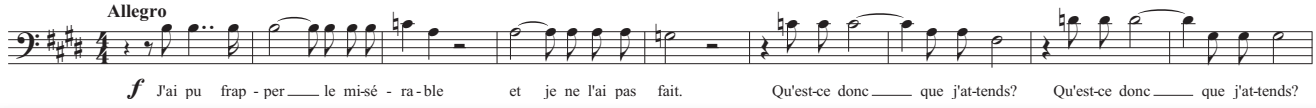
TRANSLATION: O WINE, DO AWAY WITH SADNESS THAT WEIGHS ON MY HEART! MINE ARE THE DRUNKEN DREAMS AND THE MOCKING LAUGHTER! O ENCHANTED LIQUOR, POUR INTOXICATION AND FORGETFULNESS INTO MY HEART!

Scene two – The play, *The Murder of Gonzago*, is presented. Hamlet narrates the story of King Gonzago, who is lured by the queen to a lonely spot, where her lover administers a lethal dose of poison to the king. At the moment in the play when the murderer places the king's crown on his own head, Claudius nearly betrays himself. Hamlet boldly accuses the King of murder, and the court erupts in pandemonium.

ACT III

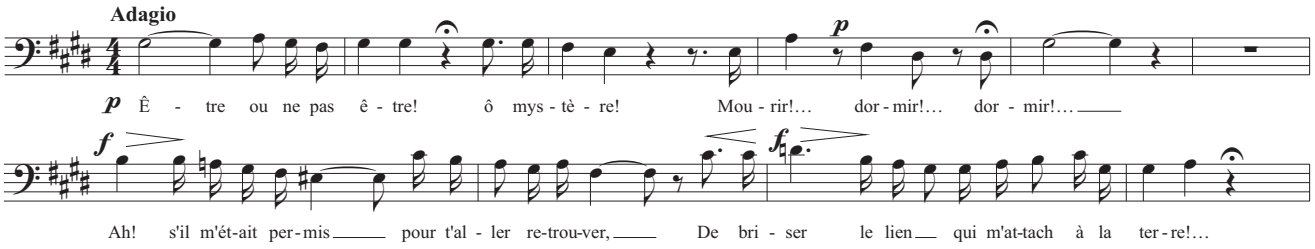
Seeking a connection with his father in the castle's mausoleum, Hamlet is angry with himself for not having killed Claudius outright. However, he ponders the possibility of taking his own life in order to escape the responsibility his father's ghost has burdened him with, if only suicide were not forbidden, and a person's fate after death could be known.

(7A) MONOLOGUE – J'AI PU FRAPPER LE MISERABLE (HAMLET)



TRANSLATION: I COULD HAVE STRUCK THE SCOUNDREL AND I DIDN'T DO IT. WHAT AM I WAITING FOR? WHAT AM I WAITING FOR?

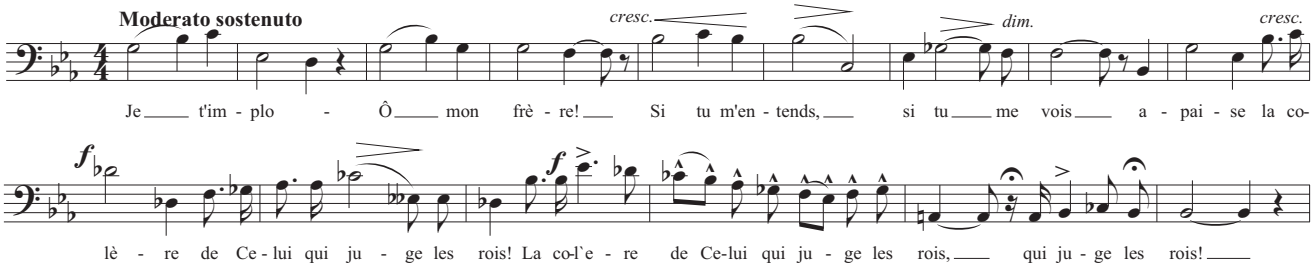
(7b) MONOLOGUE – ÊTRE OU NE PAS ÊTRE (HAMLET)



TRANSLATION: TO BE OR NOT TO BE! O MYSTERY! TO DIE! TO SLEEP! TO SLEEP! AH! IF I WERE ALLOWED TO FIND YOU AGAIN, AND BREAK THE BONDS KEEPING ME ON EARTH!

Hamlet hides when Claudius enters and begins praying to the spirit of his dead brother to appease God.

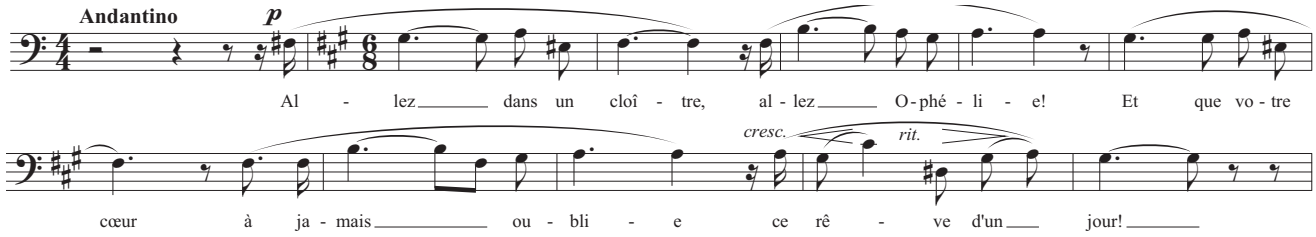
(8) ARIA – JE T'IMPLORE, Ô MON FRÈRE (CLAUDIUS)



TRANSLATION: BROTHER, I IMPLORE YOU! IF YOU HEAR ME, IF YOU SEE ME, CALM THE ANGER OF THE ONE WHO JUDGES KINGS.

The king then calls for Polonius, and Hamlet learns that Ophélie's father was an accomplice in the murder. Gertrude and Ophélie enter and Hamlet's mother urges her son to marry. However he again rejects his fiancé.

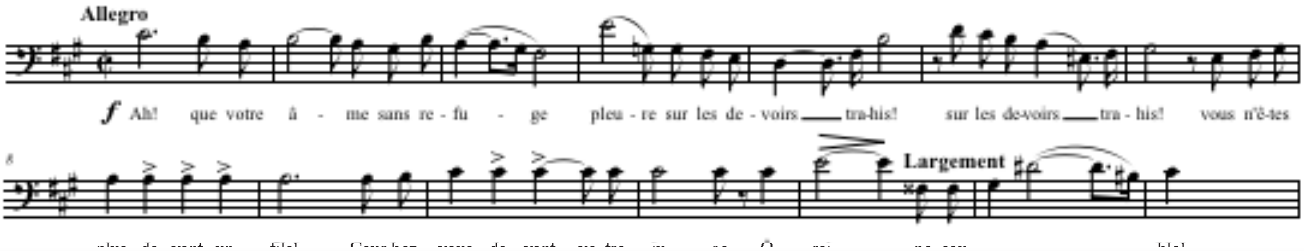
(9) TRIO – ALLEZ DANS UN CLOÎTRE (HAMLET, THEN GERTRUDE AND OPHÉLIE)



TRANSLATION: GET THEE TO A NUNNERY, GO, OPHELIA! AND MAY YOUR HEART FOREVER FORGET THIS DAY'S DREAM!

Hamlet violently turns on his mother. In a rage Hamlet reveals to Gertrude that he knows of the murder and Gertrude fears for her life. The ghost appears to Hamlet, reminding him that his mother must be spared. The queen, not seeing the specter, believes Hamlet to be mad. He exhorts her to repent and pray.

(10) DUET – AH! QUE VOUS ÂME SANS REFUGE (HAMLET, THEN GERTRUDE AND THE GHOST)

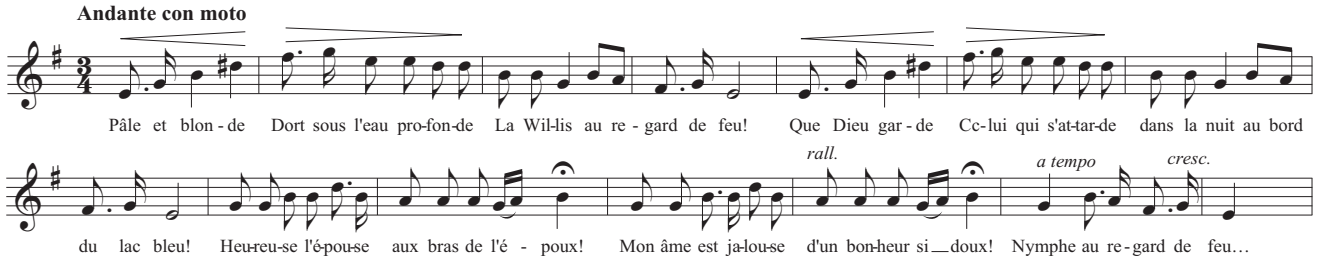


TRANSLATION: AH! MAY YOUR EMPTY SOUL WEEP OVER YOUR BETRAYAL! YOU NO LONGER STAND BEFORE YOUR SON! BOW DOWN BEFORE YOUR JUDGE, O GUILTY QUEEN!

ACT IV

Ophélie, looking disheveled and vague, has been driven insane by Hamlet's rejection.

(11) BALLADE – PÂLE ET BLONDE ... (OPHÉLIE)

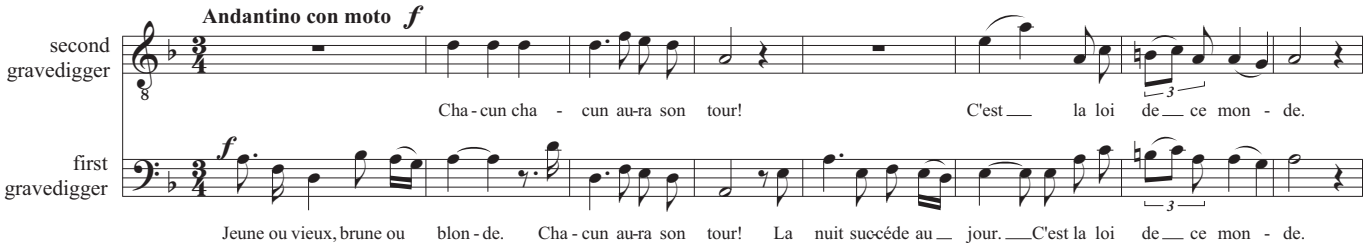


TRANSLATION: PALE AND BLONDE SLEEPING IN DEEP WATER, THE WILLIS' FIERY GLANCES! MAY GOD PROTECT THE ONE WHO WAITS AT NIGHT ON THE BANKS OF THE BLUE LAKE! LUCKY WIFE IN THE ARMS OF HER HUSBAND! MY HEART IS JEALOUS OF SUCH SWEET HAPPINESS! NYMPH WITH FIERY GAZE …

ACT V

In the cemetery two gravediggers are preparing for a burial ceremony.

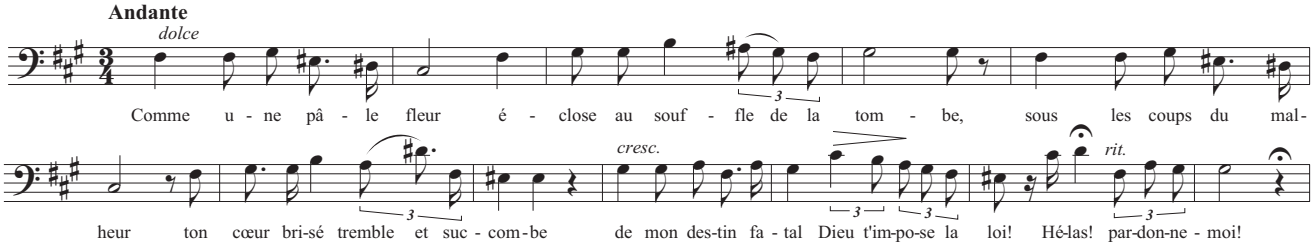
(12) CHANT DES FOSSOYEURS – JENUE OU VIEUX, BRUNE OU BLONDE (GRAVEDIGGERS)



TRANSLATION: YOUNG OR OLD, BRUNETTE OR BLONDE, EVERYONE IN TURN! NIGHT FOLLOWS DAY, IT IS THE LAW OF THE WORLD!

Hamlet asks the men whose grave it is, but they do not know.

(13) ARIOSO – COMME UNE PÂLE FLEUR (HAMLET)



TRANSLATION: LIKE A PALE FLOWER BLOOMING FROM INSIDE THE TOMB, BENEATH THE BLOWS OF MISFORTUNE, YOUR BROKEN HEART TREMBLES AND DIES! MY FATAL DESTINY WAS MADE YOURS BY GOD! ALAS! FORGIVE ME!

Laërtes arrives, having returned from abroad after learning of his sister's madness. A funeral procession arrives, and it is only now that Hamlet learns of Ophélie's death. Hamlet finally avenges his father's death.

Ambroise Thomas

b Metz, August 5, 1811; *d* Paris, February 12, 1896

Nearly forgotten today, Ambroise Thomas was a central figure in the mid- to late-19th-century Parisian operatic scene. Born to a musical family, Thomas entered the Paris Conservatoire in 1828, studying piano and composition. Winning the Prix de Rome four years later, he triumphed upon his return to Paris at the Opéra-Comique with the one-act *La double échelle*, which achieved 247 performances.

Several less-successful opéra-comiques followed, as well as a few shorter works for the Opéra until 1849, when the composer unveiled *Le caïd*, an Orientalist opera with a Rossinian flare. It was a genuine hit, generating more than 400 presentations. *Le songe d'une nuit d'été* (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*; 1850) was also popular, although it had little to do with Shakespeare's play. *Raymond, ou Le secret de la reine* (1851) was based the French legend of The Man in the Iron Mask, recently made topical by the serialized three-part novel *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne ou Dix ans plus tard* by Alexandre Dumas père. Other operas from this period include *La cour de Célimène* (1855; after Molière's *Le Misanthrope*), *Psyché* (1857), *Le carnaval de Venise* (1857) and *Le roman d'Elvire* (1860).

Thomas would find one of his greatest triumphs on the heels of his contemporary, Charles Gounod. Intrigued by the popularity of the younger composer's *Faust* (1859), he turned to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* and produced *Mignon* (1866). In spite of a change to the original tragic ending in order to satisfy the bourgeois audience of the Opéra-Comique, *Mignon* became a staple of the theater, achieving some 1,200 performances by the end of the century. As a result, he was soon afforded a prestigious premiere at the Opéra, an arguably loose adaptation of the Bard's classic drama *Hamlet*. His final work, *Françoise de Rimini* (1882), based on a canto from Dante's *Inferno*, was also performed at Paris' theater of first rank.

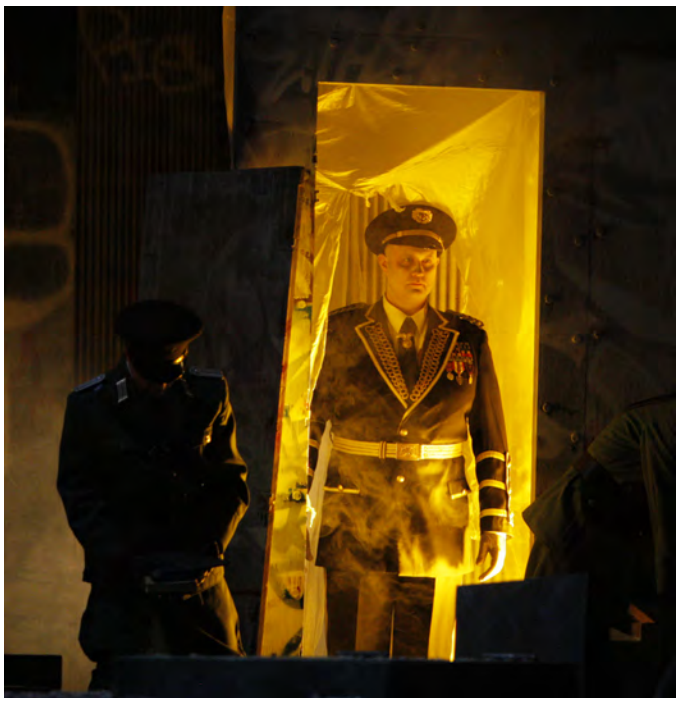
Thomas married later in life and had no children. In 1848, he served in the French National Guard during the February Revolution that deposed King Louis-Philippe, and later, fought in the Franco-Prussian War. In 1851, Thomas was granted a seat in the Académie des Beaux Arts and began to teach composition at the Conservatoire thereafter. He eventually assumed directorship of the institution upon the death of Daniel-François-Esprit Auber in 1871. It was here that the professor/composer held court, greatly influencing and assisting the next generation, (which included Jules Massenet) until his death in 1896. Two years earlier, he had been awarded the Grand Croix de Légion d'honneur to mark his life achievements, the first composer to receive such a tribute. Today, Thomas is vaguely remembered for only two works, yet he was an astute and flexible composer whose remarkable legacy remains incontrovertible.

Ambroise Thomas – Catalogue of Operas

TITLE	PREMIERE
Le double échelle	Paris, Opéra-Comique, August 23, 1837 *opéra comique* in one act; libretto by Eugène de Planard
Le perruquier de la régence	Paris, Opéra-Comique, March 30, 1838 *opéra comique* in three acts; libretto by Eugène de Planard and Paul Dupont
Le panier fleuri	Paris, Opéra-Comique, May 6, 1839 *opéra comique* in one act; libretto by Adolphe de Leuven and Léo Lévy Brunswick
Carline	Paris, Opéra-Comique, February 24, 1840 *opéra comique* in three acts; libretto by Adolphe de Leuven and Brunswick
Le comte de Carmagnola	Paris, Opéra, April 19, 1841 *opéra* in two acts; libretto by Eugène Scribe
Le guérillero	Paris, Opéra, June 22, 1842 *opéra* in two acts; libretto by Théodore Anne
Angélique et Médor	Paris, Opéra-Comique, May 10, 1843 *opéra bouffon* in one act; libretto by Thomas Sauvage
Mina, ou Le ménage à trois	Paris, Opéra-Comique, October 10, 1843 *opéra comique* in three acts; libretto by Eugène de Planard
Le caïd	Paris, Opéra-Comique, January 3, 1849 *opéra bouffe* in two acts; libretto by Thomas Sauvage
Le songe d'une nuit d'été	Paris, Opéra-Comique, April 20, 1850 *opéra comique* in three acts; libretto by Joseph Rosier and Adolphe de Leuven
Raymond, ou Le secret de la reine	Paris, Opéra-Comique, June 5, 1851 *opéra comique* in three acts; libretto by Joseph Rosier and Adolphe de Leuven
La Tonelli	Paris, Opéra-Comique, March 30, 1853 *opéra comique* in two acts; libretto by Joseph Rosier and Adolphe de Leuven
La cour de Célimène	Paris, Opéra-Comique, April 11, 1855 *opéra comique* in two acts; libretto by Joseph Rosier
Psyché	Paris, Opéra-Comique, January 26, 1857 *opéra comique* in three acts; libretto by Jules Barbier and Michel Carré
Le carnaval de Venise	Paris, Opéra-Comique, December 9, 1857 *opéra comique* in three acts; libretto by Thomas Sauvage
Gille et Gillotin	Paris, Opéra-Comique, April 22, 1874 *opéra comique* in one act; libretto by Thomas Sauvage (written in 1859 as *Gillotin et son père*)

Le roman d'Elvire	Paris, Opéra-Comique, February 4, 1860 *opéra comique* in three acts; libretto by Alexandre Dumas *père* and Adolphe de Leuven
Mignon	Paris, Opéra-Comique, November 17, 1866 *opéra comique* in three acts; libretto by Jules Barbier and Michel Carré
Hamlet	Paris, Opéra, March 9, 1868 *opéra* in five acts; libretto by Joseph Rosier
Françoise de Rimini	Paris, Opéra, April 14, 1882 *opéra* in four acts with prologue and epilogue; libretto by Jules Barbier and Michel Carré

Hamlet – Background Notes



Hamlet – both title and character are replete with meaning. The quantity of commentary dedicated to William Shakespeare's play is second only to that devoted to Jesus Christ. It is the Bard's longest play, with nearly 4,000 lines, carefully spun into three simultaneous plots, with seven soliloquies given by the title character (and two more by Claudius), 22 scenes and more than 600 new words that would be incorporated into the English lexicon. Shakespeare's brooding, existential, verbose and most human protagonist is at the very root of literary and social thought, and ingrained in our common consciousness. The play is Shakespeare's most quoted drama and most frequently adapted. Hamlet is a challenging role for any actor and director, and significantly, the drama was chosen to open Tyrone Guthrie's new Minneapolis theater in 1963, a venue that also first hosted then-Center Opera. It is only fitting that the operatic version is a part of the now-Minnesota Opera's 50th anniversary season.

However, none of this reverence was observed when the play traveled to France in the 18th century. The eight-person body count was perhaps too gruesome for French classicists (Voltaire once remarked "One would think this is the work of a drunken savage"). In 1769, Jean-François Ducis made considerable adjustments. Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, Marcellus, Fortinbras and others were eliminated from the drama and there were no players or gravediggers. The final duel was also missing, and Hamlet didn't die, nor did Ophelia. This became the standard performance edition until an English troupe brought *Hamlet* to the Théâtre de l'Odéon in 1827. The city went mad for Ophelia's flower scene and composer Hector Berlioz was infatuated with the leading lady, Harriet Smithson. The *Symphonie fantastique* became a calling card for their courtship, and they eventually married, with dubious results. Also in the audience was a young Alexandre Dumas *père*, who later provided his own adaptation (aided by Paul Meurice), a little truer to the source, but still lacking the Fortinbras-Norway angle (one of the subplots to be discussed below) and Hamlet's trip to England (nor do Rosencrantz and Guildenstern perish). There is an added love scene for Ophelia and Hamlet, and the Ghost of Hamlet's father reappears at the end to condemn each of the dying characters (Claudius, Gertrude and Laertes). Hamlet, however, lives on to become King of Denmark.

Dumas' version, which opened at the Comédie-Française in 1847, was likely known to librettists Michel Carré and Jules Barbier. It is for this reason Ambroise Thomas' *Hamlet* differs considerably from the original work. For the purposes of dramatic necessity (as action tends to take longer when sung), minor characters and dramatic action was removed. Polonius' famous stabbing while spying behind the

arras does not occur (though the scene will be recreated in this production). In fact, we learn he was a willing accomplice in the conspiracy to kill Hamlet's father, a detail that further dampens the prince's affections toward Ophélie. Hamlet's drinking song, presumably to underscore his feigned madness, was a tradition included to appeal to French audiences. The love duet between Hamlet and Ophélie is carried over from Dumas as is the third appearance of the Ghost in the final scene, again bowing to French traditions. Hamlet doesn't die in the original ending, but when the production premiered at London's Covent Garden, an alternate outcome had to be composed. English purists couldn't see their national treasure adulterated, so Hamlet apparently expired of a broken heart from the grief he feels over Ophélie's passing. Only one performance took place.

Little is known about the composition of Thomas' *Hamlet*, other than it was conceived in the French Grand Opera tradition, in five acts with a ballet, and huge choruses enclosed in large tableaux. The proximity to Charles Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*, which premiered just one year earlier, is merely coincidental. The title role was quite naturally originally to be a tenor. Given the singer availability at the time, Thomas recast it for a talented baritone, Jean-Baptiste Faure, and he had the good fortune to have Christine Nilsson as his Ophélie – the fully staged suicidal mad scene à la Lucia di Lammermoor or Lady Macbeth became a signature piece. The opera was enthusiastically received at its premiere in 1868 and generated more than 300 performances by the end of the century.

The original play screams for the operatic stage, but incorporating Shakespeare's dramas into music has always been challenging to composers. Verdi was perhaps the best, but had to make some radical changes. He executed his first Macbeth with ruthless efficiency, only to revise it later for Paris in 1865. With *Otello*, he lopped an entire act to make it fit in the required time. *King Lear* becoming a lifelong obsession, he would never be able to bring himself to set it. Other composers were less successful. Gounod's rendering of *Roméo et Juliette* adds a character (Stéphano), a public wedding ceremony and alters the final scene so the two singers can have a final duet in order to please his Parisian audience. Rossini's *Otello* is a mere shadow of the Bard's original drama. Other Italian composers have taken a stab at *Hamlet* (*Am(b)leto*), including Francesco Gasparini (1706), Domenico Scarlatti (1715) Saverio Mercadante (1822) and Franco Faccio (1865), among others.

SHAKESPEARE'S SOURCES

The foundations of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* are as complex as the drama itself. Like many of his plays, it is a drama of variation and adjustment rather than one of outright planning. The ultimate root is the 12th-century folktale of Amleth found in Saxo Grammaticus' *Historiae Danicae*. It contains all the basic elements: Amleth's father has defeated the King of Norway in a single combat and is murdered by his brother Feng, who takes the widow Gerutha as his wife. Her young son Amleth pretends to be mad to avoid being eliminated (in European thought at that time, if one was to kill a lunatic, one would become a lunatic). This situation endures for many years during which time his sanity is tested by the courtiers. A councilor close to the king eavesdrops on a conversation between the queen. He is killed by Amleth, chopped up, cooked and fed to the pigs. Feng sends his nephew to Britain with secret execution orders, and Amleth alters the communiqué, requesting his escorts be killed instead. Upon his return to Denmark, Amleth sequesters the courtiers as they are reveling and sets fire to the room. Feng is murdered in his own bed after the prince has exchanged weapons, rendering the king's useless, and Amleth is crowned king – a tale of noble success rather than one of horrendous tragedy.

A later French version found in the *Histoires tragiques* by François de Belleforest, published in 1570, follows Saxo, but introduces two new misogynist elements to the character of Geruth – she and Fengon have had an adulterous affair prior to the old king's death, and she is duplicitous in his murder. She later switches her allegiance after a talk with Hamblet, promising not to disclose his plan and supporting his seizure of the throne. Belleforest's lineage is apparent in two other Shakespearian works, namely *Romeo and Juliet* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, so the Bard may have known this narrative as well; however, *Hamblet* was not translated into English until 1608. Also, the same material may have been known to another playwright, Thomas Kyd, who could read French and who produced a revenge drama, *The Spanish Tragedy*, which featured a ghostly presence as well as 19 other similarities. Although knowledge of this play may have inspired Shakespeare to write his drama, it is supposed there was a companion work, referred to as the *Ur-Hamlet*, that may have been authored by Kyd, one of his contemporaries or even Shakespeare himself, and may have preceded (and influenced) Kyd's tale of revenge†. The Bard is believed to have worked off this copy, providing his First (or "Bad") Quarto, a sort of dry run at the subject matter written in the last decade of the 1500s. (There is speculation that this was a pirated version of the play, possibly taken from the memory of an actor and perhaps abridged). He later expanded and edited his material quite extensively, yielding what is known as the Second "Good" Quarto (1604). A third edition, the First Folio, was published in 1623.

† A later German play, *Der Bestrafte Brudermord*, suggests the existance of this earlier *Ur-Hamlet*.

Comparisons have been made between *Hamlet* and then-current events. During the 1580s, negotiations were in progress for the marriage of Scottish King James VI (English Queen Elizabeth I's presumed successor) and Anne of Denmark, thus a Danish piece might have had certain topicality. Also, it has been noted that James' father, Henry Lord Darnley, had been assassinated in 1567, after which Mary Queen of Scots hastily married his murderer, James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell three months later. Now in his 20s, James may have harbored some resentment – certainly the family thirsted for vengeance – and with Mary's execution in 1588, many nobles even tried to incite a rebellion against Elizabeth. Some have tried to link the characters of *Hamlet* to the Elizabethan court, namely the queen's chief minister, William Cecil, Lord Burghley to that of Polonius, and his two children, Anne and Robert, to Ophelia and Laertes. Cecil was known to be overly verbose, and Polonius' original name, Corambis, reads in Latin as "reheated cabbage," or better, "a boring old man." All of these people and events were on the minds of the audiences of the day.

Belleforest's new feature, Gertrude's culpability in the plot, is never fully resolved in the play, but rings true in the opera. "The lady doth protest too much, methinks" is her well-known remark while viewing the "Mousetrap" play[††] Hamlet has engineered to draw out her guilt as much as that of Claudius. The opera has an entire duet devoted to the conspiratorial couple. There is the thought that in the play's finale scene, she drinks the poisoned wine to save her son and to assuage her remorse, but again ambiguity exists. Shakespeare leaves her fate in the hands of God (at the Ghost's request), and in the opera, the spirit consigns her to a convent. In Belleforest, she is the daughter of the former king and therefore the prototypes for Old Hamlet and later Claudius are royal consorts, another factor fueling the jealousy, murder and hasty "improper" second match (marrying one's brother-in-law in that era was considered taboo). Gertrude's morality is harshly called into question when confronted by her son in the infamous Closet Scene (the second part of Act III in the opera). It appears he is more concerned about the adultery than about his father's death, and after delivering about 150 lines of abuse, can only be brought back to task by a second appearance of the Ghost.

There is the growing fear that Claudius may be usurped by the younger Hamlet. As in Saxo and Belleforest, Shakespeare has the prince acquire an "antic disposition," attempting to prove he is crazy while he gathers evidence. Though the play is more about an internal struggle rather than outward action, Hamlet is the supreme puppet master. In *The Murder of Gonzago*, where "the play is the thing, wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king," he has the nephew rather than the brother orchestrate the murder. It is an indication that Hamlet knows the details of the crime and his intentions toward Claudius. The play hinges on Hamlet's delay – why doesn't he simply kill Claudius after the Ghost's initial visit? There are signs in the drama he doesn't trust the supernatural being's identity. He requires "ocular proof," which he receives with the king's reaction to Gonzago's poisoning. Then he very conveniently has a chance, finding Claudius alone deep in prayer. But murdering the king while observing religious piety would guarantee his soul would be carried to heaven, and that is not where Hamlet wishes it to go. ("Thus conscience does make cowards of us all"). Only after the "accidental" murder of Polonius, an act that appears to have been meant for the king himself, does justice become swift. It is clear Hamlet now has a taste for the kill, and he is quickly dispatched to

[††] The play is based on an actual murder in 1538 of the Duke of Urbino by Luigi Gonzaga, who poured poison in his ears. Another Renaissance murder was in 1596 of Marchese Alfonso Gonzaga. He was set upon by assassins hired by his nephew, the Marchese Rodolfo di Castiglione.

England in the interest of public safety. Thanks to his own wily intelligence, the prince intercepts the execution orders, and still in possession of the royal seal, is able to revise them, leading to the ultimate demise of the unwitting Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. He is "rescued" by pirates (the convenience of their chance appearance is often overlooked), and brought back, fully matured, now able to take on his father's commission.

The original work also involves several subplots not fully realized in the opera. We have Polonius and his two children, Laertes and Ophelia. The former he cautions to be frugal and tame, to the latter he recommends no further love interest in Hamlet – he of royal birth, she merely a commoner, there can be no lasting future. Laertes becomes a true foil in the tradition of the Senecan revenge drama. Rather than being thoughtful and hesitant like the title character, he is rash and decisive. When he learns his father has been killed (a parent for which he has very little regard, but the family's honor is at stake), he organizes an uprising. Cooled by Claudius' artful promises, he is drawn into a conspiracy to eliminate Hamlet, which will ultimately result in the death of all the principals. Sadly, the doubly poisonous dueling scene (by cup and by blade) did not make it into the opera's finale.

Meanwhile, Fortinbras of Norway is seeking to reclaim lands lost by his father of the same name to the departed King of Denmark. In a parallel situation, his uncle is currently the ruler, and as in Hamlet's case, primogeniture has also been set aside. His story rather awkwardly fits into the main action of the play (and is perhaps a remnant of the lost *Ur-Hamlet*), but does draw everything full circle when, on a corpse-strewn stage, the dying Hamlet leaves to him the leadership of Denmark, acreage that formerly belonged to his country. Like Laertes, Fortinbras is a man of conflict, a capable warrior in contrast to Hamlet's softer intellectual temperament.

Ophelia's character must also be examined. She is the ultimate *femme fragile*. In the play, she is warned against receiving any of Hamlet's love but is then used as a pawn by Polonius and Claudius to obtain information. Hamlet treats her poorly, alternately affectionate and cruel. Unlike the opera, they never have a truly romantic moment in Shakespeare. Hamlet's "Get thee to a nunnery" speech, showing his antipathy toward women, reaches its peak, as he derides both Ophelia/Opélie and his mother,

as the cloister at that time was thought to be a place of corruption in the Catholic Church (England had just recently become Protestant). In the original play, Ophelia's final scene is a distribution of flowers to members of the court. Each has significance – rosemary for Hamlet for remembrance (he has abandoned her); pansies for Laertes denoting pensiveness and grief; fennel and columbines for Claudius, symbolic of deceit, ingratitude and faithlessness; and rue for Gertrude suggesting repentance. Even in her madness, Ophelia clearly knows what is going on. Her suicide (which occurs offstage and is reported by Gertrude) is inconclusive, but suspicious enough to deny her a proper funeral, for she is buried in unconsecrated ground, attended by a doctor of divinity rather than an ordained priest.

Claudius is likewise enigmatic. Given to the sensations of power, lust and alcohol, we see another more tender side in the prayer scene. He obviously has some remorse, and if one takes into account the fascist interpretation of this particular production, it is very possible Claudius eliminated King Hamlet because he was a cruel totalitarian, rather than a progressive ruler (there is the question of why he is languishing in purgatory rather than a place better befitting a hero). The opening of the play would indicate Claudius is capably governing Denmark when he receives a diplomatic mission from Norway in an effort to maintain peace. *Hamlet* is a very different tragedy from those written before or since, and Claudius is hardly as villainous as the purer examples of Macbeth, Edmund (*King Lear*) or Iago (*Othello*).

In Saxo's original story, the cause of the elder Hamlet's murder is openly known, and therefore, requires no ghost. The junior Hamlet must pretend to be a fool for many years. Shakespeare has translated this into a sort of super-sanity – at every juncture he is one step ahead, and he uses subtle and persistent humor, crafting a world of riddles. A revenge tragedy is conducive to introspection, and we are subjected to Hamlet's innermost thoughts; indeed his remarkable self-consciousness is proto-Romantic, to be diagnosed two hundred years later. The audience never loses its sympathy for the prince, even though he is directly or indirectly responsible for the deaths of five people. The Ghost expects his namesake to be an imprint of himself – heroic, brave and noble. But nothing could be further from the truth – while Old Hamlet displays bravado on the battlefield in a single combat with Old Fortinbras, his son achieves superiority by using his wits, an honest version the Machiavellian prince if ever there was one. He is a student rather than a general. Further dynamics between father and son become evident when viewed in light of real events. Shakespeare had a son, Hamnet, who died young in 1596; he lost his father a few years later. Both of these terrible events give the play an elegiac quality.

Only after Claudius tries to have him killed is Hamlet's resolve steeled, yet Shakespeare's final act plays out as a tragedy of circumstance rather than the execution of any actual architectural plan, resulting in the deaths of the remaining four principals instead of just one. The drama that boldly features regicide, fratricide, suicide and homicide eliminates two entire families. Famously retaining its most familiar quotation, "Être ou ne pas être," the operatic version also plainly confronts issues of life and death. Thomas and his librettists were faced with an enormous challenge, and in spite of their digressions and eliminations, they still managed to produce an effective, concise piece of theater, even if hampered by the antiquated practices of the day. If one is not expecting a musical interpretation of the Bard's masterpiece, they should be fully satisfied by Thomas' *chef-d'oeuvre grand opéra*.

LITERARY LINEAGE OF HAMLET

THE CHARACTERS	SAXO	BELLEFOREST	GERMAN PLAY	"BAD" QUARTO	"GOOD" QUARTO	THOMAS' OPERA
THE MURDERED KING	HORWENDIL	HORVENDILE	GHOST	GHOST (KING HAMLET)	GHOST (KING HAMLET)	L'OMBRE DE FEU ROI
THE WIDOWED QUEEN	GERUTHA	GERUTH	THE QUEEN (SIGRIE)	THE QUEEN (GERTRED)	THE QUEEN (GERTRARD)	LA REINE GERTRUDE
THEIR SON	AMLETH	HAMBLET	HAMLET	PRINCE HAMLET	PRINCE HAMLET	HAMLET
THE USURPING KING	FENG	FENGON	ERICO	THE KING	THE KING (CLAUDIUS)	CLAUDIUS, ROI DE DANEMARK
LORD CHAMBERLAIN	UNNAMED	UNNAMED	CORAMBUS	CORAMBIS	POLONIUS	POLONIUS
HIS SON			LEONHARDUS	LEARTES	LAERTES	LAËRTE
THE WOMAN DECOY	AMLETH'S FOSTER-SISTER	LA SŒUR-DE-LAIT	OPHELIA	OFELIA	OPHELIA	OPHÈLIE
FRIEND OF HAMLET	AMLETH'S FOSTER-BROTHER	LE FRÈRE-DE-LAIT	HORATIO	HORATIO	HORATIO	HORATIO
ENGLISH TRIP COMPANIONS	FENG'S COURTIERS	FENGON'S COURTIERS	BANDITS	ROSENCRAFT/GUIDERSTONE	ROSENCRAUS/GUYLDENSTERNE	
LEADER OF THE PLAYERS			CARL	PLAYER	PLAYER	MUTE PLAYER
PLAYER KING			KING	DUKE	KING	MUTE PLAYER
PLAYER QUEEN			QUEEN	DUTCHESSE	QUEENE	MUTE PLAYER
PLAYER VILLAIN			KING'S BROTHER	LUCIANUS	LUCIANUS	MUTE PLAYER
OFFICER OF THE WATCH			FRANCISCO	MARCELLUS	MARCELLUS	MARCELLUS
DUKE OF NORWAY			FORTEMPRAS	FORTENBRASSE	FORTINBRASSE	
CAPTAIN				CAPTAIN	CAPTAIN	
CLOWNS			PHANTASMO	GRAVEDIGGERS	GRAVEDIGGERS	DEUX FOSSOYEURS
SOLDIERS			TWO SENTRIES	BERNARDO, CENTINAL	BERNARDO, FRANCISCO	
AMBASSADORS				VOLTEMAR, CORNELIA	VOLTLMAND, CORNELIUS	
COURTIER				BRAGGART GENTLEMAN	OSTRICKE	
PEASANT			JENS			PAYSANS DANOIS
SERVANT TO CHAMBERLAIN				MONTANO	REYNALDO	
CHURCHMAN				PRIEST	PRIEST/DOCTOR OF DIVINITY	

An Interview with Director and Designer Thaddeus Strassberger

Adapting Shakespeare will always be a challenge, and Ambroise Thomas made many changes when taking the play *Hamlet* and creating the opera. Thaddeus Strassberger offers his interpretation of Thomas' adaptation, and explains how the visual landscape puts us inside Hamlet's state of mind.

Q. *What is the biggest difference between Shakespeare's Hamlet and Thomas' operatic adaptation?*

In Thomas' adaptation, though the text is pared down and characters streamlined in the process of transforming the original masterpiece into an opera, the composer is able to evoke a palpable atmosphere in a just a few bars of music. Multiple lines of text being sung at the same time creates an emotional texture that words alone simply cannot.

In studying both works in preparation for this production, I'm fascinated by the ways in which Shakespeare and Thomas' *Hamlet*s illuminate each other. In going back to the source text, I read it with new insights that are actually inspired by some of Thomas' ideas. The focus is usually on the disappointments of trying to adapt Shakespeare, but for me it has simply deepened my appreciation for both.

Q. *You've described the setting for your production as "Denmark, fallen behind the Iron Curtain." How did you arrive at this concept?*

Before designing the physical production, I concentrate on discovering the core conflict within Hamlet. This production centers on Hamlet's – and our own – inability to know clearly who is a "liberal" and who is a "conservative" and what that brings to bear on the world. Was Hamlet's father a totalitarian monster who had to be brought down at any cost, or rather, a visionary thoughtfully leading his people to a future filled with prosperity and peace? Is his successor Claudius a liberator or a tyrannical war criminal? The question resounds loudly from the very first scene.

Hamlet doesn't see his glass as either half-full or half-empty – but rather frozen, stagnant and undrinkable. Everything that he encounters is so fraught with doubt and anxiety that action becomes impossible. The Denmark that we see through his eyes – cold, unrelenting, moribund – is filled with scheming characters who incessantly demand love, political loyalty and filial devotion. Trapped not only by the forces around him but also by his own ambivalent reaction to them, he becomes the eye of an increasingly violent storm icily swirling around him.

Q. *How do you transform these abstract political and psychological ideas into a physical production?*

After being immersed in the soul of the piece, the seed of the idea usually arrives as a gut instinct rather than having to seek it out. The Cold War era encapsulates a lot of these feelings – and the images are recent enough to have a visceral impact. Even though the world has undergone massive changes in the past twenty-odd years, the era when its ultimate outcome was far from certain is still engraved in our living memories. We know from history books that medieval times were rife with tyranny and violence, but the memories of Cold War era "duck and cover" exercises are direct physical and emotional connections to our collective history. The images that we evoke in this production aren't that of a documentary of an actual time and place, but rather an emotional landscape of memories and associations. Every decision for material, structure, silhouette, fabric and so forth then grows out of the original idea.

Q. *How do the sets and costumes play out these feelings and associations?*

The story is set "in and around the castle of Elsinore." In this production, the plinth of a major building is still visible, but the larger structure has already been destroyed, wiped clear away – the very foundation of the king's seat of power has been unsettled. Also, the conceit that perhaps everyone is "only playing their part" in an elaborate psychodrama and

that their true motives and identities may not be genuine is strengthened by the suggestion that they are living their lives in the burned out shell of a once-opulent theater. Cult-like devotion to and the veneration of deceased leaders inspired my decision to set Act III in King Hamlet's mausoleum.

In Mary Traylor's costume designs, Queen Gertrude's indifference to the suffering of her people is betrayed by her extravagant fashion choices that are clearly oblivious and impervious to the gray coldness of their surroundings. While their world is cut off in so many ways from the modern world, Ophélie clearly has been influenced by foreign fashions, but perhaps the styles have arrived decades too late.

Q. *What have you enjoyed most about creating this production?*

I like the fact that the design and concept don't do all the work. As with a piece of jewelry, these elements provide only the setting, while the true gems of the evening are the performers onstage and in the pit. The massive choral, orchestral and solo performances required by this impressive score have room to expand in. The color and the sparkle of the human energy onstage is only intensified by the brutality of the background against which they play; the spirit, bile and blood which flow through these characters cannot ultimately be repressed.

1.1 – Francisco, Barnardo, Horatio, Marcellus – they discuss previous sitings of the ghost. The ghost appears and quickly vanishes. Horatio discusses the story of Old Hamlet and King Fortinbras, including the current military ambitions of Prince Fortinbras. The ghost appears again and vanishes. There is more talk of the ghost. Horatio decides to tell Hamlet.

1.2 – Claudius and the court – the military situation in Norway is discussed. Laertes' desire to return to the university in France is decided upon. Hamlet's melancholy is discussed. It is decided Hamlet shall not return to Wittenberg and shall stay at court. Hamlet's FIRST SOLILOQUY of despair is expressed. Horatio and the others discuss the sightings of the old ghost with Hamlet. He decides to join them and swears them to secrecy.

1.3 – Laertes cautions Ophelia about her affections over Hamlet. Polonius gives advice to Laertes, who then departs for France. Polonius discusses with Ophelia her feelings for Hamlet and forbids her from seeing him.

1.4 – Hamlet is on the ramparts with Horatio. They comment on Claudius' excessive drinking. The ghost appears and beckons to Hamlet. Horatio and Marcellus warn Hamlet not to approach the ghost, but he ignores them. They follow Hamlet.

1.5 – The ghost claims to be the spirit of Old Hamlet and entreats Hamlet to exact revenge on Claudius, his murderer. He describes the details of his murder. The ghost vanishes and Hamlet swears vengeance. He does not reveal the contents of the conversation to Horatio and Marcellus, but swears them to secrecy about the event. He decides to feign madness (2ND SOLILOQUY).

2.1 – Polonius gets Reynaldo to spy on Laertes in France. Ophelia enters, upset by her recent encounter with Hamlet. He has entered her chamber dirty and in a state of partial undress. Polonius concludes that Hamlet's madness is the result of Ophelia's rejection. He decides to go to the king.

2.2 – The king and queen ask Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to discover the cause of Hamlet's dementia. Polonius offers his explanation. Ambassadors arrive to announce the success of their Norweigen mission. Claudius and Polonius decide to hide behind the arras while Ophelia talks to Hamlet to see if Polonius' theory is correct.

2.3 – Hamlet "babbles" at Polonius. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern enter, and Hamlet uncovers their motivations. They tell him of the players. At Hamlet's request, one player reads the fall of Troy. Hamlet requests a performance of *The Death of Gonzago*. He has a soliloquy of self-admonishment (3RD SOLILOQUY). He decides to use the play as a trap for Claudius.

not in opera

1.1 – The court celebrates the marriage and coronation of Claudius and Gertrude. Hamlet has his suspicions. He encounters Ophélie. She tells him the king has ***granted permission for him to leave court*** and she's upset. He doesn't want to leave because of her, but because of the inconsistency at court (**LOVE DUET: "DOUTE LA LUMIÈRE"**). Laërte enters and **says he is being sent to Norway ("POUR MON PAYS EN SERVITEUR FIDÈLE").** He entrusts his sister to Hamlet. Horatio, Marcellus and other soldiers discuss the ghost that has been sited resembling the dead king.

not in opera

1.2 – Horatio and Marcellus have brought Hamlet to the ramparts to see the ghost. The ghost appears and speaks to Hamlet alone. It asks to be avenged for his murder by his brother's hand (poisoned as he slept). It asks that Gertrude be spared, her fate left to be settled in heaven. It disappears. Hamlet agrees to obey the command.

2.1 – **(There is no Polonius scene in opera.) Ophélie is reading a book about false promises and lost love ("ADIEU DIT-IL AVEZ FOI"). Hamlet enters, but says nothing to her. Gertrude enters and Ophélie confides that Hamlet shuns her. She asks to be allowed to leave court to go in service to God. Gertrude tries to reassure her ("DANS SON REGARD PLUS SOMBRE"). Ophélie agrees to stay and leaves. Claudius enters, stating that he believes Hamlet is disturbed. When Hamlet arrives, Claudius offers a hand in friendship, but he refuses. Gertrude tries to distract him with thoughts of Ophélie's love. Claudius suggests he travel to France and Italy. Festive music is heard. Hamlet invites them to attend a performance of players and they accept.**

Shakespeare's 2.2, 2.3 not in opera

The play occurs later in opera; no* Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*; no Polonius spying

2.1 – *continued*. Hamlet organizes the players. **He sings a drinking song ("Ô VIN, DISSIPE LA TRISTESSE"), presumably to show his madness.**

2.2 – **MARCHE DANOISE** with the entrance of the king and queen. Hamlet sits at Ophélie's feet, with eyes fixated on the royal couple. The players pantomime the story while Hamlet narrates. **The Queen Guinivere gives King Gonzago the cup for the fatal poison (her feeble wits seduced). The murderer seizes the crown and puts it on his head.** Claudius explodes, demanding the players leave court. Hamlet berates Claudius, implying that he killed the king, but everyone thinks he's crazy. **(Claudius does not leave the room; general consternation among the court; reprise of the drinking song).**

3.1 – Rosencrantz and Guildenstern report back to the king and queen that they were unsuccessful in their suit. Claudius and Polonius move into position for Ophelia's encounter with Hamlet. Hamlet has his "To be or not to be" soliloquy (4TH SOLILOQUY). Ophelia returns Hamlet's love tokens. He response is alternately caustic and cryptic ("GET THEE TO A NUNNERY"). He leaves, and Ophelia despairs over the loss of a noble mind. Claudius rejects Polonius' theory. Polonius still believes he is correct and devises another plan.

3.2 – Hamlet gives directions to the players. He asks Horatio to watch Claudius closely. He further jests at Polonius' expense and makes double-entendre comments to Ophelia. The play begins, but Hamlet interrupts it, asking his mother if she likes it. She responds: "THE LADY PROTEST TOO MUCH, METHINKS." The play resumes, but Hamlet pauses it at the moment of poisoning. Claudius stops any further performance and leaves the room. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern ask why Hamlet is so distempered. Polonius informs Hamlet that the queen wishes to see him. Hamlet has another moment alone (5TH SOLILOQUY).

3.3 – Claudius tells Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to escort Hamlet to England. Polonius tells Claudius he intents to hid in Gertrude's room and spy on Hamlet and her. Claudius has a soliloquy of resentence. Hamlet enters, but doesn't kill him because he is praying (6TH SOLILOQUY). Claudius realizes his prayers are useless.

3.4 – Polonius hides behind the arras with Gertrude's consent. Hamlet argues with Gertrude. She tries to leave. Hamlet hears Polonius, and thinking it is Claudius, stabs him through tapestry. He further bullies Gertrude, comparing the portraits of the two brothers. The ghost appears and admonishes Hamlet. He adopts a gentler tone, telling Gertrude not to return the king's affections and not to reveal his true sanity. He tells her of his plan to trick Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in their own trap. He drags Polonius' body out of the room.

4.1 – Claudius enters and sees Gertrude upset. He asks Hamlet's whereabouts and she tells him he has killed Polonius. Claudius realizes the death blow was meant for him and that he should not have let Hamlet roam free. Gertrude says that Hamlet is disposing of Polonius' body. Claudius tells R and G to find Hamlet.

4.2 – Hamlet has stowed away Polonius' body. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern find him and ask where the body is. Hamlet is flip. R is insulted, yet Hamlet warns him of Claudius' intentions. He will not reveal the location of the body, so he is brought before the king.

4.3 – Claudius realizes how dangerous Hamlet has become and hastens to send him to England. Hamlet is brought before the king and is again flip when asked about the body. He finally reveals that Polonius is buried under the steps in the lobby. Claudius tells him, for his own safety, he must go to England. Hamlet seems pleased, yet still continues to sass the king. In a second soliloquy, Claudius reveals his plans to have Hamlet executed in England.

4.4 – Fortinbras orders his captain to tell Claudius that the Norweigen army will be crossing through Denmark. Hamlet enters and asks the captain about their mission, which is to recover disputed Polish land. Hamlet resolves to have the same intensity as Fortinbras with regard to his more significant mission. (7TH SOLILOQUY)

4.5 – Horatio tells Gertrude of Ophelia's madness and that she would like to speak to her. Gertrude is reluctant. Ophelia enters and sings about stolen virginity, unrequited love and funerals. Claudius enters, and they both lament her pitiable condition. Ophelia leaves. Laertes enters with

3.0 – Here is Hamlet's"ÊTRE OU NE PAS ÊTRE" soliloquy. After that, Claudius enters the room and says his prayer of repentence ("JE T'IMPLORE, Ô FRÈRE"). Hamlet considers killing him, **but doesn't explain why he doesn't use the opportunity (no fear of entering heaven because he was slain in prayer). Polonius enters, revealing his role in the plot (these are his only lines; no spying or murder scene).** Hamlet then has a conversation with his mother, and she tempts him with a marriage to Ophélie to improve his mood. Hamlet is angered that her father was part of the crime. ("ALLEZ DANS UN CLOÎTRE, ALLEZ, OPHÉLIE"). He says she's mad to believe he loved her. Ophélie returns his ring. Gertrude fears he's mad.

Gertrude and Hamlet are left alone (in this production, Polonius is spying and will be killed as a result – in the original score, this does not happen. Hamlet confronts his mother with the truth and she tries to leave. (Gertrude: "WOULD YOU KILL ME?" Hamlet: "TO COMMIT PARRICIDE IS AS CRIMINAL AS TO KILL A KING AND MARRY HIS BROTHER!"). **Her hands administered the poison.** He compares the portraits of the two brothers. She begs for mercy and then collapses. The ghost appears and reminds him to spare his mother. Gertrude takes his remarks to the unseen ghost as further proof of his madness. He asks if she sees "Ce spectre! cette ombre". He leaves, saying: "Repentez-vous, priez, dormez en paix, ma mère."

4.0 – **Country dance with peasants (BALLET: LA FÊTE DU PRINTEMPS). Ophélie enters, asking to join them. She sings of betrayed love.** She hands out her flowers: some rosemary, **a periwinkle** (see Shakespeare 4.5). She then sings of the **Willis, of being beneath the sleeping waves ("PÂLE ET BLONDE DORT SOUS L'EAU PROFONDE"). Among her final words are: "TO PUNISH HIM FOR HAVING MADE ME WAIT, YOU WILLIS, WHITE WATER NYMPHS, HIDE ME AMONG YOUR REEDS." She is seen leaning over the water, then floating on the water before the current bears her away (according to stage directions).**

Shakespeare's 4.1–4.4, parts of 4.5 and 4.6 not in opera

a small army and demands to know who killed his father. Claudius denies any involvement and promises to prove it. Ophelia re-enters and passes out flowers, each of which has a significant meaning. Laertes is disturbed by her condition. Claudius proposes a council of peers to judge their disagreement.

4.6 – Horatio is informed that some sailors have a letter for him. He guesses the letter is from Hamlet. The sailors believe Hamlet to be an ambassador to England. The letter asks Horatio to bring the sailors to the king. It tells of his adventure on the high seas and his return to Denmark.

4.7 – Claudius and Laertes reconcile. Claudius reveals that he couldn't punish him out of love of Gertrude. The messenger brings the letter that tells of Hamlet's return to Denmark. Laertes agree to take part in a plot to kill Hamlet. Claudius tells a story of the Norman who had Laertes' skill with a rapier. He asks how far Laertes would go, and he says he would slit Hamlet's throat in a church. They devise a plan to poison the tip of a rapier and have a fencing match. The backup plan is to have a cup of poison handy. Gertrude enters, announcing the death of Ophelia. Laertes laments his sister's untimely demise.

5.1 – Two gravediggers discuss their profession and how the person whom they are burying liking committed suicide, but is still able to be buried on consecrate earth. The first gravedigger leaves the second alone for a moment to get some libations. Hamlet enters and they talk about the person whose grave it is about to be (he doesn't know Ophelia has died). The first gravedigger says he's been at the profession since Hamlet's birth (he doesn't know to whom he is speaking). Hamlet sees the skull of the jester Yorrick and recalls fond memories. Ophelia's funeral cortege enters. Laertes berates Hamlet and they fight. Gertrude says Hamlet is not responsible for his behavior. Claudius urges Laertes to be patient.

5.2 – Hamlet relays his journey on the seas, with his seizure of the pirates and the switching of the notes, resulting in the execution of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. He regrets his behavior with Laertes at the funeral. Osric enters with an invitation to compete in a fencing match against Laertes. Hamlet and Horatio joke at Osric's expense, and Hamlet agrees to the event, though with some trepidation as he is an interior fencer

Hamlet apologizes to Laertes, who pretends to forgive him. They choose their weapons. Claudius promises to toast if Hamlet does well and poisons the cup of wine. Hamlet scores the first point and Claudius offers him the cup. He refuses. He scores again and Gertrude offers to wipe his face, then grabs the cup. Claudius tries to stop her, but she drinks the poison accidentally. They fight again – it is a draw, but Laertes cuts Hamlet with the poisoned rapier. In the ensuing scuffle, the rapiers are switched. Hamlet cuts Laertes. Gertrude falls dead, poisoned. Laertes realizes he has been cut by his own rapier and reveals Claudius' plot. Hamlet stabs the king, then forces him to drink the remaining poison. Laertes dies after they forgive each other. Horatio tries to kill himself, but is stopped by Hamlet, who asks him to tell his story. Fortinbras approaches, and dying Hamlet gives him control of Denmark.

5.0 – Two gravediggers **drink ("LA VIE EST DANS LE VIN!").** Hamlet appears and asks who the grave is for. They don't know. He then sings of Ophélie and her madness: "COMME UNE PÂLE FLEUR". He then encounters Laërte, who berates him. Hamlet is confused. Laërte draws his sword and wounds Hamlet. A funeral cortege approaches with a chorus: "Comme la fleur, comme la fleur nouvelle." The cortège includes the entire court **(including Polonius)**. Hamlet expresses remorse and the court still thinks he's crazy. **The ghost reappears and is now visible to all. It speaks: "TOI, MON FILS, ACCOMPLIS TON ŒUVRE COMMENCÉE."** Hamlet runs Claudius through with his sword. **The ghost says: "LE CRIME EST EXPIÉ! LE CLOÎTRE ATTEND TA MÈRE ... VIS POUR TON PEUPLE, HAMLET! C'EST DIEU QUI TE FAIT ROI!" All rejoice the new king.**

In the later tragic ending of 1869 for Covent Garden, there is no ghost and Hamlet dies (no circumstance given; perhaps from his earlier wound from Laërte, perhaps from a broken heart). He falls dead next to Ophélie. Chorus extols: "Ô CIEL", then the curtain falls.

Most of Shakespeare's Act V not in opera.

World Events in 1868

History and Politics

- A British armed expedition is dispatched to Ethiopia; Magdala is captured.
- Shogun Kekei of Japan abdicates. The shogunate is abolished and the Meiji dynasty is restored. The city of Edo is renamed Tokyo.
- United States President Andrew Johnson is impeached for violating the Tenure of Office Act, but is acquitted by the Senate.
- Benjamin Disraeli become prime minister of the United Kingdom.
- Prussia confiscates territory from the King of Hanover.
- Russia occupies Samarkand
- King Michael III of Serbia is assassinated. He is succeeded by Milan IV.
- A revolution in Spain deposes Queen Isabella II, who flees to France.
- Ulysses S. Grant is elected president of the United States.
- The Eastern Nian rebels are annihilated by the imperial Qing forces near Yangzhou, China, and Lai Wenguang is captured.
- The 14th Amendment to the Constitution giving full citizenship to African Americans is passed.
- Czech deputies withdraw from the Austro-Hungarian parliament after being accorded only a minor role in the *Augsleich*.
- Sioux native people led by Chief Red Cloud sign a peace treaty with General William Sherman at Fort Laramie, ending two years of fighting between the gold miners and the Sioux.
- A treaty is signed granting unrestricted Chinese immigration into the United States.

Literature

- Louisa May Alcott writes *Little Women*.
- Fyodor Dostoevsky writes *The Idiot*.
- Stefan George, German poet, is born.
- Maxim Gorki, Russian author, is born.
- Edmond Rostand, French dramatist, is born.
- Adalbert Stifter, Austrian novelist, dies.

Visual Art

- Edgar Degas paints *L'orchestre de l'Opéra.*
- Auguste Renoir paints *The Skaters*.
- Édouard Manet paints a portrait of author Émile Zola.
- The French Impressionist style is developed.

Music

- Johannes Brahms writes *Ein deutsches Requiem.*
- Modest Moussorgsky begins to work on *Boris Godunov*.
- Gioachino Rossini, opera composer, dies. His *Guillaume Tell* (*William Tell*) achieves its 500th performance at the Paris Opéra.
- Richard Wagner premieres *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* in Munich. Cosima von Bülow moves in and becomes his mistress.
- Pyotr Ill'yich Tchaikovsky writes his *Symphony No. 1*.
- Edvard Grieg completes his *Piano Concerto*.
- Arrigo Boito premieres his monumental *Mefistofele* at Milan's Teatro alla Scala. It is a colossal failure.
- Bedrich Smetana presents his opera *Dalibor* in Prague.

Daily Life

- The Armour meat-packing factory opens in Chicago.
- Badminton is introduced at the Duke of Beaufort's Badminton Hall in Gloucestershire.
- The earliest recorded bicycle race takes place at the Parc de St. Cloud in Paris
- Susan B. Anthony begins the publication of a weekly Suffragist journal called *The Revolution*.
- The first patent is granted for a typewriter.
- Wyoming officially becomes a territory.
- An earthquake in San Francisco causes $3 million in damages.
- The world's first railway dining car, invented by George Mortimer Pullman, comes into service.
- Charles Darwin publishes *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication.*
- The skeleton of Cro-Magnon man (successor of Neanderthal man) from the Upper Paleolithic Age is found in France by Louis Lartet.

A scene from Minnesota Opera's 1971 production of Monteverdi's L'incoronazione di Poppea

In the beginning …

JACOPO PERI 1561–1633
CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI 1567–1643

Although often considered an Italian innovation, OPERA had its debut in Ancient Greece, where drama frequently incorporated singing, declamation and dance to tell a narrative tale. Ecclesiastical music dramas of the Middle Ages were also important precursors. But the operatic art form familiar to us today has its roots in Florence, between 1580 and 1589, where a group of musicians, poets and scholars explored the possibility of reviving tragic drama of the ancients.

The circle was known as the CAMERATA and consisted of writers, theorists and composers, including GIULIO CACCINI, OTTAVIO RINUCCINI and VINCENZO GALILEI (father of the famed astronomer). Their efforts exacted musical compositions that took special care to accentuate the dramatic inflection of their chosen text, to evoke its precise emotional shading and to find the ideal marriage between words and music. JACOPO PERI, a rival of Caccini and a collaborator with Rinuccini, produced the first known (but no longer existing) opera, *Dafne*, in 1597.

The Camerata met at the home of the nobleman GIOVANNI DE' BARDI. Thus, no sooner had opera had made its first appearance than it became a court activity, which fit the social and political conditions of the day. As a result of Bardi's influence, these composers were hired by the Grand Duke of Tuscany Ferdinand I, who gave them their first wide exposure. When his daughter, Marie de' Medici, married Henry IV of France, Peri's *Euridice* was produced at the ceremony, and Italian opera gained its first international premiere. Even though *Euridice* was a simply staged production accompanied by a small group of strings and flute, in 1600 this type of musical drama was considered revolutionary.

CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI'S *Orfeo* (1607) is the most significant opera of this period, more so than those works of the Florentines. The boldness of his harmonies and the richness of his orchestration dramatically developed the art form, and this work, along with *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (1642) are still popular pieces performed today.

Opera in Venice

FRANCESCO CAVALLI 1602–1676
ANTONIO CESTI 1623–1669

The new art form quickly spread to other Italian cities. By 1636, the first public opera house was opened in Venice and opera became quite popular among the people. *Le nozze di Teti e di Pele*, the first of FRANCESCO CAVALLI'S thirty-plus operas for the Venetian stage, premiered two years later. Competing with Monteverdi and ANTONIO CESTI (who took a post in Innsbruck after producing only two works for Venice), Cavalli quickly rose to the top.

At the same time, Italian stage designers were fast improving their techniques and were able to produce stupendous special effects, a happy coincidence for the new operatic art form. The use of the proscenium arch allowed the spectator to view the stage from a narrower angle, thus producing a better illusion of perspective. The proscenium also hid elaborate flying apparatus, and allowed for quick and seamless scene changes with drops from the top and flaps from the side wings. Spectacular stage effects became a speciality of French opera, and with the inclusion of ballet, became the part of established style of France by the 18th century.

North of Italy, Hamburg composer REINHARD KEISER (1694 – 1739) became the director of one of the first public opera houses in Germany. He often set libretti by Venetian librettists.

A scene from Minnesota Opera's 2008 production of Keiser's The Fortunes of King Croesus

Baroque Opera in France, England and Germany

JEAN-BAPTISTE LULLY 1632–1687
HENRY PURCELL 1658/59–1695
GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL 1685–1759
CHRISTOPH WILLIBALD GLUCK 1714–1787

In 1646, Giovanni Battista Lulli arrived in France from Florence and tried to establish Italian opera in the French Court. He was unsuccessful because the reigning monarch, Louis XIV, preferred dance. Nonetheless, JEAN-BAPTISTE LULLY, as he became known, rose in royal favor by composing ballets for the king and eventually gained control of the Académie Royale de Musique, the official musical institution of France. Through Lully's influence in this important position, and by way of his own compositions, a distinctive French operatic form began to emerge and thrive on its own.

The Italian and French forms of opera were slow to catch on among the English, who preferred spoken theater. A compromise was reached in a form referred to as SEMI-OPERA, featuring spoken dialogue alternated with musical MASQUES (which often included dance). HENRY PURCELL's *The Fairy Queen* (1692) is one popular example from this period. Purcell's first opera, *Dido and Aeneas* (1689), is his only opera in the Italian style and continues to be occasionally revived in modern times.

A scene from The Minnesota Opera's 1994 production of Handel's Julius Caesar

A major player in the early part of the 18th century was GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL, who began his career in Hamburg. As early as 1711, Handel enjoyed success in England and would remain there for the next forty years. During that time, he wrote 35 operas (many in the Italian style), most of which focused on historical, classical or romantic subjects. His inventive musical style began to set new standards for the art form, and his works redefined the dramatic potential of opera as a vital and vivid experience.

Another German, CHRISTOPH WILLIBALD GLUCK, arrived in England on the heels of Handel's last London operas, and later moving to Vienna, he began to see what he found to be flaws in the conventional Italian opera of the day. Singers had taken control of the productions, demanding solo arias and sometimes adding their own pieces to show off their vocal technique. Operas were turning into a collection of individual showpieces at the sacrifice of dramatic integrity. Although Gluck wrote some operas which shared these flaws, one work, *Orfeo ed Euridice* (1762), reasserted the primacy of drama and music

Costume sketch for Minnesota Opera's 2010 production of Gluck's Orfeo ed Euridice

A scene from Minnesota Opera's 2009 production of Argento's Casanova's Homcoming *{which included a scene from Metastasio's opera seria* Demofoonte *(1733)}*

by removing the DA CAPO (repeated and embellished) part of the aria, by using chorus and instrumental solos only to reinforce the dramatic action, and by not allowing the singers to insert their own music. Gluck completed his career in Paris, where he became a master of French opera's serious form, the TRAGÉDIE LYRIQUE.

During the 18th century, opera began to fall into two distinct categories: OPERA SERIA and OPERA BUFFA. Opera seria (serious opera) focused on historical, religious or Greco-Roman subjects. The glorification of saints, kings and gods went hand-in-hand with the grandiose baroque style and the spectacular stage effects of court opera. Librettist Pietro Metastasio provided 28 libretti that continued to serve composers again and again well into the 19th century. Opera buffa (comic opera) had its roots with the popular audience, each country specializing in its own distinct form. In France, CHARLES-SIMON FAVART'S operas of the 1740s parodied the serious tragédie lyriques of Lully (the Opéra-Comique, the Paris theater for comic opera, would later be named after him). In Naples, Italy, the INTERMEZZI (short comic works inserted in between acts of a serious opera), of GIOVANNI BATTISTA PERGOLESI paved the way to the development of opera buffa in the latter half of the 18th century. His masterpiece, *La serva padrona* (1733), is considered a milestone in the development of comic opera.

A scene from Minnesota Opera's 1996 production of Mozart's Don Giovanni

Opera during the Classical Period

GIUSEPPE SARTI 1729–1802
FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN 1732–1809
GIOVANNI PAISIELLO 1740–1816
DOMENICO CIMAROSA 1749–1801
ANTONIO SALIERI 1750–1825
VICENTE MARTIN Y SOLER 1754–1806
WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART 1756–1791

Two composers are invariably linked to the Classical Period – FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN and WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART. Of the former, few of his operas are produced today even though he wrote over 25, most of which were created and performed for his employer, Prince Nikolaus Esterházy. Mozart's operas, however, remain in repertory as some of the most frequently produced works. Of the five most favorite – *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (1782), *The Marriage of Figaro* (1786), *Don Giovanni* (1787), *Così fan tutte* (1790), *The Magic Flute* (1791) – two are SINGSPIELS (a popular German form, replacing sung recitative with spoken dialogue), two opera buffas and one opera "semi-seria." Two opera serias (the form Mozart preferred, incidently) frame his adult career – *Idomeneo* (1781) was his first mature opera and *La clemenza di Tito* (1791) was his last commission.

Artist rendering of Minnesota Opera's 2008 production of Mozart's The Abduction from the Seraglio

Lesser composers of this period include ANTONIO SALIERI (born in Legnago, settling later in Vienna), who served the court of Emperor Joseph II. Through the emperor's influence with his sister, Marie Antoinette, Salieri made headway in Paris as well, establishing himself as a worthy successor of Gluck in the serious vein of his tragédie lyriques. Returning to Vienna in 1784, Salieri found himself in strict

competition with other leading composers of the day, GIOVANNI PAISIELLO and VINCENTE MARTÍN Y SOLER. These two composers were known partly from their brief service to Catherine the Great of Russia, along with several other advanced Italian composers including GIUSEPPE SARTI and DOMENICO CIMAROSA.

After the Revolution – French Grand Opera

LUIGI CHERUBINI 1760–1842
FERDINANDO PAER 1771–1839
GASPARE SPONTINI 1774–1851
DANIEL-FRANÇOIS-ESPRIT AUBER 1782–1871
GIACOMO MEYERBEER 1791–1864

In the decades following the French revolution, FRENCH GRAND OPERA developed extensively, moving from a private entertainment for royalty to an art form eagerly consumed by the upwardly mobile bourgeoisie. Opera in France at the turn of the 19th century was dominated by expatriate Italian composers. First and most notable was LUIGI CHERUBINI, who established residence in Paris in 1785. Eventually rising to the position of director of the national conservatory, he virtually ceased composing operas in 1813. The most lasting work in his oeuvre is *Médée* of 1797.

Paris Opéra – Palais Garnier (completed in 1875; still in use)
The old Opéra on the Salle de la Petelier, birthplace of French Grand Opera, burned down in 1873

FERDINANDO PAER came to prominence during the first empire of Napoleon I – he was engaged as the Emperor's *maître de chapelle* in 1807 and later became the director of the Opéra-Comique. Just before Napoleon's abdication, Paer assumed directorship of the Théâtre Italien, a post he held until it was yielded to Rossini in 1824. None of his many operas survive in the modern repertory, although the libretto he wrote for one, *Leonora* (1804), served to inspire Ludwig van Beethoven's only opera, *Fidelio* (1805). GASPARE SPONTINI was another Italian who moved to Paris and eventually ran the Théâtre Italien, a theater devoted to producing Italian works in their native language. Most popular among his repertoire were *La Vestale* (1807) and *Fernand Cortez* (1809).

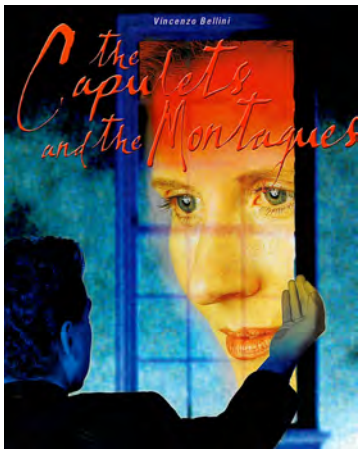
Today's Opéra National de Paris
at the Place de la Bastille (completed in 1989)

French grand opera came into its own through the efforts of two composers: DANIEL-FRANÇOIS-ESPRIT AUBER and GIACOMO MEYERBEER. Collaborating with Eugène Scribe (whose plays would later serve as inspiration for a number of Verdi operas), Auber produced *La muette de Portici* (1828), the first definite *grand opéra* of this period, which proved extremely popular with French audiences. Characteristic of the genre was a five-act framework that incorporated spectacular stage effects, large crowd scenes and a ballet. A specific, mannered formula for the drama's unfolding was also inherent in the art form.

Meyerbeer brought grand opera to fruition first with *Robert le diable* (1831), then with *Les Huguenots* (1836), and with these works, also established a close relationship with Scribe. Two later works of note include *La prophète* (1849) and *L'Africaine* (1865), also cast in the grand opera schema.

Early 19th-century Italy – The Bel Canto composers

GIOACHINO ROSSINI 1792–1868
GAETANO DONIZETTI 1797–1848
VINCENZO BELLINI 1801–1835



Promotional material for Minnesota Opera's 2001 production of Bellini's The Capulets and the Montagues

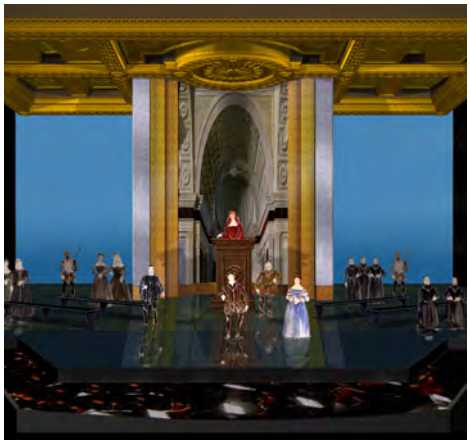
Back in Italy, opera saw the development of a distinctive style known as BEL CANTO. Bel canto (literally "beautiful singing") was characterized by the smooth emission of tone, beauty of timbre and elegance of phrasing. Music associated with this genre contained many TRILLS, ROULADES and other embellishments that showed off the particular singer's technique. Traditionally, a bel canto aria begins with a slow, song-like CANTABILE section followed by an intermediate MEZZO section with a slightly quicker tempo. It ends with a dazzling CABALETTA, the fastest section, where the singer shows off his or her talents. Often these were improvised upon, or replaced with "suitcase" arias of the singers' own choosing, much to the consternation of the composer.

A scene from Minnesota Opera's 2000 production of Rossini's Semiramide

GIOACHINO ROSSINI was the first and perhaps best known of the three composers associated with this style. In his early years, between 1813 and 1820, Rossini composed rapidly, producing two or three operas a year. The pace slowed after he moved to France in 1824 – there he produced five works for the Paris Opéra, several of which show tendencies of the French grand opera style. *William Tell* was his last opera – Rossini retired at age 37 with 39 more years to live.

A scene from Minnesota Opera's 2004 production of Donizetti's Lucrezia Borgia

GAETANO DONIZETTI and VINCENZO BELLINI were two other Italian Bel Canto composers who premiered operas in both Paris and Italy. A tendency that began with Rossini and continued into their works was the practice of accompanied recitatives. Opera to this point had been organized in a very specific manner with more elongated "numbers" (arias, duets, ensembles) alternated with recitative (essentially dialogue set to music, intended to move the action along). In Mozart's day, these recitative would be played by a harpsichord or fortepiano (sometimes doubled with cellos and basses) and was known as RECITATIVO SECCO. As Rossini's style progressed, the orchestra took over playing the recitatives which became known as RECITATIVO ACCOMPAGNATO. The practice continued into Verdi's day.



Set model for Minnesota Opera's 2010 production of Donizetti's Roberto Devereux

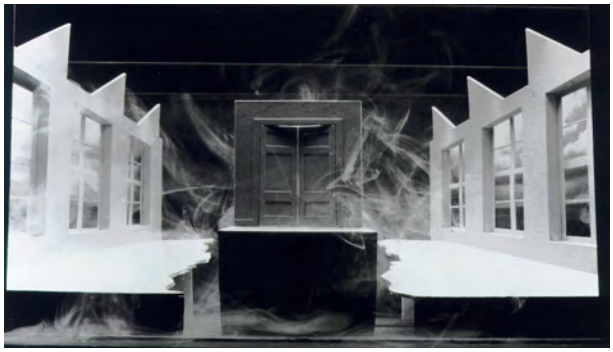
Three Masters of Opera

GIUSEPPE VERDI 1813–1901
RICHARD WAGNER 1813–1883
GIACOMO PUCCINI 1858–1924

A scene from Minnesota Opera's 1998 production of Verdi's Aida

GIUSEPPE VERDI's roots began in bel canto but the composer transformed the Italian style into a more fluid, less structured form. With a legacy of 26 operas, Verdi is never out of the repertory and four of these (*Rigoletto*, 1851; *Il trovatore*, 1853; *La traviata*, 1853; *Aida*, 1871) are some of the most familiar of the art form.

Verdi's contemporary, RICHARD WAGNER, is also considered one of the greats. Taking the idea of "fluidity" one step further, Wagner developed his operas into freely flowing MUSIC-DRAMAS united by melodic motifs that become associated with persons, places and things. Taking the grandeur of French opera one step further, he crafted his own libretti out of Nordic legends and created spectacular operatic moments. Wagner also greatly expanded the orchestra and developed his own particular brass instruments for greater impact. A Wagnerian singer is one with great stamina – they must sing over a large orchestra in an opera that can be up to four hours long.



Set model for Minnesota Opera's 1992 production of Wagner's The Flying Dutchman

Italian opera's successor to Verdi turned out to be GIACOMO PUCCINI. With a gift of popular melody and musical economy, his operas *La bohème* (1896), *Tosca* (1900) and *Madame Butterfly* (1904) remain at the top of the standard repertory.

Costume sketch for Minnesota Opera's 1994 production of Verdi's Il trovatore

A scene from Minnesota Opera's 2004 production of Puccini's Madame Butterfly

A scene from Minnesota Opera's 2002 production of Verdi's Don Carlos

Later French Opera

HECTOR BERLIOZ 1803–1869
CHARLES-FRANÇOIS GOUNOD 1818–1893
JACQUES OFFENBACH 1819–1880
EDOUARD LALO 1823–1892
CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS 1835–1921
LÉO DELIBES 1836–1891
GEORGES BIZET 1838–1875
JULES MASSENET 1842–1912
GUSTAVE CHARPENTIER 1860–1956

A scene from Minnesota Opera's 2009 production of Bizet's Les pêcheurs de perles

The grand opera schema continued into the latter half of the 19th century in such works as HECTOR BERLIOZ's *Les Troyens* (composed 1856 – 58), and CHARLES-FRANÇOIS GOUNOD's *Faust* (1859) and *Roméo et Juliette* (1867). An element of realism began to slip into the French repertoire, seen in works by GEORGES BIZET (*Carmen*, 1875) and GUSTAVE CHARPENTIER (*Louise*, 1897). JACQUES OFFENBACH revolutionized the art of comic operetta in such works as *Orphée aux enfers* (1858), *La belle Hélène* (1864) and *La Périchole* (1868). Other composers of this period include CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS (*Samson et Dalila*, 1877), EDOUARD LALO (*Le Roi d'Ys*, 1875) and JULES MASSENET (*Manon*, 1884; *Werther*, 1892; *Cendrillon*, 1899).

A scene from Minnesota Opera's 2009 production of Gounod's Faust

A scene from Minnesota Opera's 2008 production of Gounod's Roméo et Juliette

Verismo in Late 19th-century Italy

RUGGERO LEONCAVALLO 1857–1919
PIETRO MASCAGNI 1863–1945
UMBERTO GIORDANO 1867–1948

A realist vein began to penetrate Italian opera toward the end of the 19th century, influenced in part by naturalism in French literature of the period and by the writings of an Italian literary circle, the SCAPIGLIATURA. Translated as the "dishevelled ones," the Scapigliatura displayed their distaste for bourgeois society in works of gritty realism, often bordering on the morbid and the macabre. Nearly all the members of the group (lead by GIOVANNI VERGA) led tragic lives ending in early death by alcoholism and suicide.

Operas to come out of the resulting VERISMO school include PIETRO MASCAGNI's *Cavalleria rusticana* (1890), RUGGERO LEONCAVALLO's *Pagliacci* (1892) and UMBERTO GIORDANO's *Mala vita* (1892). Other works are attributed to this movement by nature of their rapid action with passionate tension and violence quickly alternating with moments of great sentimentality.

A scene from Minnesota Opera's 2001 production of Leoncavallo's Pagliacci

Opera in Russia

MIKHAIL IVANOVICH GLINKA 1804–1857
PYOTR IL'YICH TCHAIKOVSKY 1840–1893
NIKOLAY ANDREYEVICH RIMSKY-KORSAKOV 1844–1908
MODEST PETROVICH MUSORGSKY 1839–1881
SERGEI PROKOFIEV 1891–1953
DMITRI SHOSTOKOVICH 1906–1975

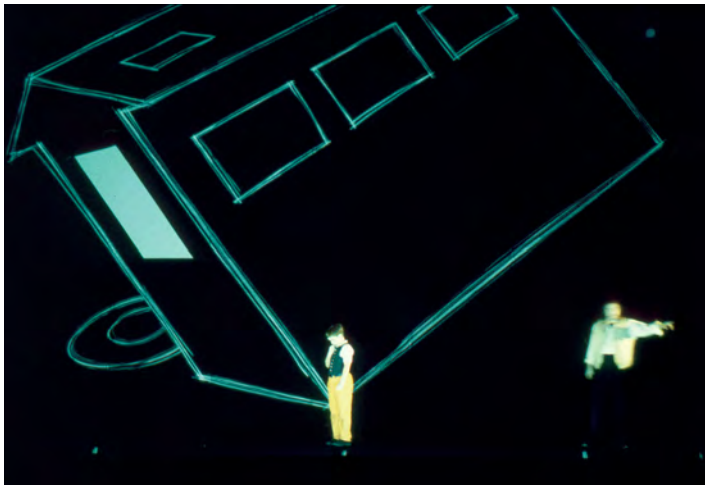
Opera was introduced in Russia during the succession of powerful czarinas that culminated in the reign of Catherine the Great (ruled 1762 – 1796). She employed a number of important Italian composers (see above) and established St. Petersburg as a major city for the production of new opera, later to be elevated to the same par as London, Paris and Vienna by her descendent, Nicholas I (ruled 1825 – 1855). Of native Russian composers, the first to come to prominence was MIKHAIL GLINKA with *A Life for the Tsar* (1836), and later, *Ruslan and Lyudmila* (1842). PYOTR TCHAIKOVSKY, now known more for his ballets and symphonies, was a prolific composer of opera. His best works include *Eugene Onegin* (1879), *Mazepa* (1884) and *The Queen of Spades* (1890). Other Russian composers of the latter 19th century include NIKOLAY RIMSKY-KORSAKOV (*The Snow Maiden*, 1882; *The Tsar's Bride*, 1899; *The Golden Cockerel*, 1909) and MODEST MUSORGSKY (*Boris Godunov*, 1874).

A scene from Minnesota Opera's 1978 production of Prokofiev's The Love for Three Oranges

Russian opera continued into the 20th century with works by SERGEI PROKOFIEV composed *The Love for Three Oranges* (1921) and *The Gambler* (1929), among others. His crowning achievement, written toward the end of his life, was *War and Peace* (1948), based on the novel by Leo Tolstoy. DMITRI SHOSTOKOVICH's most notable work is *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1934). Both artists suffered censure from the Soviet government.

Into the 20th Century

CLAUDE DEBUSSY 1862–1918
RICHARD STRAUSS 1864–1949
PAUL DUKAS 1865–1935
ARNOLD SCHOENBERG 1874–1951
IGOR STRAVINSKY 1882–1971
ALBAN BERG 1885–1935
DARIUS MILHAUD 1892–1974
PAUL HINDEMITH 1895–1963
KURT WEILL 1900–1950
BENJAMIN BRITTEN 1913–1976



A scene from Minnesota Opera's 1996 production of Debussy's Pelléas et Mélisande

A scene from Minnesota Opera's 2010 production of Strauss' Salome

CLAUDE DEBUSSY's impressionist score for *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1902) paved the way for the radical changes in 20th-century opera. Also based on a Symbolist text by Maurice Maeterlinck was PAUL DUKAS' *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue* (1907), an opera about the notorious Bluebeard and his six wives. But causing the most sensation was RICHARD STRAUSS' *Salome* (1905), which pushed both tonality and the demands on the singers to the limits. He followed that opera with an even more progressive work, *Elektra* (1909), drawn from the Greek tragedy by Sophocles.

Important innovations were taking place in Vienna. ARNOLD SCHOENBERG made a complete break with tonality in his staged MONODRAMA *Erwartung* (1909), giving all twelve tones of the chromatic scale equal importance. He codified this approach in his TWELVE-TONE SYSTEM where a theme is created with a row of notes using all twelve notes of the chromatic scale. This "row" can be played in transposition, in reverse, upside-down, or in any combination of the three. Schoenberg also evolved a particular style of singing, SPRECHSTIMME, an intoned speech halfway between singing and speaking.

Sprechstimme was well suited to the expressionist nature of operas being produced at this time. Schoenberg's student, ALBAN BERG, employed it in *Wozzeck* (1925) and used the serialized twelve-tone method in his opera *Lulu* (1937). Another avant-garde composer, PAUL HINDEMITH, created a series of expressionist one-act operas that shocked audiences of the day: *Murder, Hope of Women* (1921), *Das Nusch-Nuschi* (1921) and *Sancta Susanna* (1922). Two later operas include one based on a short story by E.T.A. Hoffmann (*Cardillac*, 1926) and a satire on modern social behavior (*News of the Day*, 1929). At about the same KURT WEILL was causing an uproar with his new works: *The Threepenny Opera* (1928), *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* (1930) and *Der Silbersee* (1933). The up-and-coming Nazi party did not favor his works, and he was forced to leave the country, eventually to settle in America.

In Paris, Russian IGOR STRAVINSKY was shocking audiences and causing riots with his ballet music. His early operas include *The Nightingale* (1914) and *Mavra* (1922). *Oedipus Rex* (1927) is representative of his first neoclassical works, using forms from the 18th century with modern tonality and orchestration. His later (and longest) opera, *The Rake's Progress* (1951), is a culmination of this neoclassical style. French composer DARIUS MILHAUD was extremely prolific in all genres of music. In opera, he produced the one-act *Le pauvre matelot* (1927) and a large-scale work in the tradition of grand opera, *Christophe Columbe* (1930). Later in his life he composed *La mère coupable* (1966), based on the Beaumarchais Figaro trilogy (which includes *The Barber of Seville* and *The Marriage of Figaro*).

A scene from Minnesota Opera's 1999 production of Britten's The Turn of the Screw

In England, BENJAMIN BRITTEN emerged as one of Britain's foremost composers of opera since Henry Purcell. Out of his 16 original works for the stage the most popular include *Peter Grimes* (1945), *Billy Budd* (1951), *Gloriana* (1953) and *The Turn of the Screw* (1954).

20th- and 21st-century American Composers of Opera

VIRGIL THOMSON 1896–1989
GEORGE ANTHEIL 1900–1959
SAMUEL BARBER 1910–1981
GIAN CARLO MENOTTI 1911–2007
CARLISLE FLOYD 1926–
DOMINICK ARGENTO 1927–
CONRAD SUSA 1935–
PHILIP GLASS 1937–
JOHN CORIGLIANO 1938–
JOHN ADAMS 1947–

A scene from Minnesota Opera's 1998 American premiere of Antheil's Transatlantic

Paris in the 20s served to inspire the next generation of composers, several of which were expatriates from America. GEORGE ANTHEIL was the first American composer to have an opera premiered in Europe – his work, *Transatlantic*, was written in France but premiered in Frankfurt in 1930. Compatriot VIRGIL THOMSON studied with famed teacher Nadia Boulanger and later produced *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1934) and *The Mother of Us All* (1947), both to texts by Gertrude Stein. SAMUEL BARBER stayed on American soil, studying at the newly founded Curtis Institute in 1935. He went on to compose *Vanessa* (1958), and to open the new Metropolitan Opera House at Lincoln Center, *Antony and Cleopatra* (1966).

On *Vanessa*, Barber collaborated with another composer, GIAN CARLO MENOTTI, who wrote the libretto. Also the author of 25 libretti for his own operas, Menotti is best known for *The Medium* (1946), *The Consul* (1950), *Amahl and the Night Visitors* (1951) and *The Saint of Bleecker Street* (1954). Another American composing at about the same time was CARLISLE FLOYD, who favored American themes and literature. His most important works include *Susannah* (1955), *Wuthering Heights* (1958), *The Passion of Jonathan Wade* (1962) and *Of Mice and Men* (1970).

A scene from Minnesota Opera's 1989 production of Glass' The Juniper Tree

During the sixties and seventies, THE MINNESOTA OPERA was the site of many world premieres of lasting significance: CONRAD SUSA's *Transformations* (1973) and *Black River* (1975), and DOMINICK ARGENTO's *The Masque of Angels* (1964), *Postcards from Morocco* (1971), *The Voyage of Edgar Allen Poe* (1976), *Miss Havisham's Wedding Night* (1981) and *Casanova's Homecoming* (1985; revived in 2009). Other Argento works of merit include *Miss Havisham's Fire* (1979) and *The Aspern Papers* (1988).

Other composers currently at the fore include PHILIP GLASS, JOHN CORIGLIANO and JOHN ADAMS. The Minimalist music of Philip Glass has won popular acclaim among even non-opera-going audiences – his oeuvre includes *Einstein on the Beach* (1976), *Ahknaten* (1984), and most recently, *The Voyage* (1992), commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of America. The Met also commissioned *The Ghosts of Versailles* from JOHN CORIGLIANO in 1991 – like Milhaud's opera of 1966, its text involves Beaumarchais' third part of the Figaro trilogy with the playwright himself appearing as the lover of 18th-century Queen of France Marie

A scene from Minnesota Opera's 2005 production of Adams' Nixon in China

Antoinette. JOHN ADAMS' focus on contemporary events lead him to compose *Nixon in China* (1987) and *The Death of Klinghoffer* (1991).

Opera continues to be a living and vital art form in the revival of many of these works as well as the commissioning of new pieces. Among world premieres in the last two decades include TOBIAS PICKER's *Emmeline* (1996) by Santa Fe Opera, DANIEL CATÁN's *Florencia en el Amazonas* (1996) by Houston Grand Opera, MYRON FINK's *The Conquistador* (1997) presented by San Diego Opera, ANTHONY DAVIS' *Amistad* (1997) presented by Lyric Opera of Chicago and *Central Park* (1999) by Glimmerglass Opera, a trilogy of short operas set by three composers. Recent seasons included such new works as POUL RUDERS' *The Handmaid's Tale* (Royal Danish Opera; 2000), BRIGHT SHENG's *Madame Mao* (Santa Fe Opera; 2003), DANIEL CATÁN's *Salsipuedes* (Houston Grand Opera; 2004), RICHARD DANIELPOUR's *Margaret Garner* (Michigan Opera Theatre; 2005), RICKY IAN GORDON's *The Grapes of Wrath* (Minnesota Opera; 2007), JONATHAN DOVE's *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (Opera North, Leeds; 2008), HOWARD SHORE's *The Fly* (Los Angeles Opera; 2009), JAKE HEGGIE's *Moby Dick* (Dallas Opera; 2010), KEVIN PUTS' *Silent Night* (Minnesota Opera; 2011) and Douglas J. Cuomo and John Patrick Shanley's *Doubt* (Minnesota Opera; 2013).

A scene from Minnesota Opera's 2003 American premiere of Ruders' The Handmaid's Tale

A scene from Minnesota Opera's Pulitzer Prize-winning 2011 world premiere of Puts' Silent Night

Costume sketch for Minnesota Opera's 2009 American premiere of Dove's The Adventures of Pinocchio

Minnesota Opera combines a culture of creativity and fiscal responsibility to produce opera and opera education programs that expand the art form, nurture artists, enrich audiences and contribute to the vitality of the community.

Minnesota Opera's roots were planted in 1963 when the Walker Art Center commissioned Dominick Argento to compose an opera (*The Masque of Angels*) for its performing arts program, Center Opera. Center Opera focused on the composition and performance of new works by American composers, and, under the influence of the Walker Art Center, emphasized visual design. The company grew steadily, and in 1969 became an independent entity, changing its name in 1971 to The Minnesota Opera.

Throughout the first 12 years of its history, The Minnesota Opera was known as a progressive, "alternative" opera production company, a complement to the traditional orientation of the annual Metropolitan Opera tour and the productions of the St. Paul Opera. In 1976, The Minnesota Opera merged with the St. Paul Opera, adding a focus on traditional repertory to its program of contemporary opera.

Set design for Minnesota Opera's 1971 production of Dominick Argento's Postcard from Morocco

In January 1985, The Minnesota Opera entered a new era with the opening of the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts in St. Paul, one of the nation's most respected performance halls. Today, the company presents its entire season at the Ordway.

In September 1990, the company moved its scenic and costume shops, rehearsal facilities and administrative offices to the 51,000 square-feet Minnesota Opera Center, which comprises three renovated warehouses on the Mississippi riverfront in Minneapolis. Winner of a 1990 Preservation Alliance of Minnesota Award, the Minnesota Opera Center is one of the finest opera production facilities in the nation and has served to strengthen the company both artistically and institutionally.

Throughout the 1990s, the company gained a national reputation for its high-quality, innovative productions of standard repertoire operas like *Aida*, *Carmen* and *Turandot*, which were seen on stages across the nation, and firmly established Minnesota Opera's reputation as a lead coproducer in the industry. In that decade, Minnesota Opera also grew institutionally, launching an artistic development campaign to establish a foundation for the expansion of its season and increased artistic quality.

In 1997, the company launched its Resident Artist Program to bridge the gap between an artist's academic training and their professional life on the world stage. The RAP is acclaimed for its exceptional, intense and individualized training as well as the elite group of young artists it produces. Alumni have earned engagements at prestigious houses such as the Metropolitan Opera, the Salzburg Festival and Covent Garden.

In 2000, Artistic Director Dale Johnson articulated a new artistic vision for the company inspired by bel canto ("beautiful singing"), the ideal upon which Italian opera is based. Bel canto values, which emphasize intense emotional expression supported by exquisite technique, inform every aspect of the company's programs, from repertoire selection, casting and visual design to education and artist training. As one manifestation of its philosophy, Minnesota Opera is committed to producing one work from the early 19th-century Bel Canto period each season, attracting luminary singers like Bruce Ford, Vivica Genaux, Brenda Harris and Sumi Jo to its stage.

A scene from Minnesota Opera's 1984 production of Peter Schickele's The Abduction of Figaro

Minnesota OPERA CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

Minnesota Opera is also recognized for its progressive and far-reaching educational programs. Residencies in schools, opera education classes and pre-performance discussions are building an audience for tomorrow and enhancing the enjoyment of audiences today.

A scene from Minnesota Opera's 2000 production of Gioachino Rossini's Semiramide

Throughout its history, Minnesota Opera has attracted international attention for its performances of new operas and innovative productions of masterworks. Among its most renowned world and American premieres are: Dominick Argento's *Postcard from Morocco*, *The Voyage of Edgar Allan Poe* and *Casanova's Homecoming*, William Mayer's *A Death in the Family*, Libby Larsen's *Frankenstein, The Modern Prometheus*, Oliver Knussen and Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, Conrad Susa's *Transformations* and *Black River*, PDQ Bach's *The Abduction of Figaro*, Robert Moran's *From the Towers of the Moon*, Gioachino Rossini's *Armida*, Evan Chen's *Bok Choy Variations*, George Antheil's *Transatlantic*, Poul Ruders' *The Handmaid's Tale*, Laurent Petitgirard's *Joseph Merrrick dit Elephant Man*, Saverio Mercadante's *Orazi e Curiazi*, Ricky Ian Gordon's *The Grapes of Wrath*, Reinhard Keiser's *The Fortunes of King Croesus*, Jonathan Dove's *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, Kevin Puts' Pulitzer Prize-winning *Silent Night* and Douglas J. Cuomo's *Doubt*.

Building on the legacy of its commitment to new work and following the overwhelming success of its commission of *The Grapes of Wrath* in 2007, Minnesota Opera launched the New Works Initiative, a landmark program designed to invigorate the operatic repertoire through the production and dissemination of new commissions and revivals of contemporary American works. The seven-year, $7 million program includes an international coproduction (*The Adventures of Pinocchio*, 2009), three revivals (*Casanova's Homecoming* in 2010; *Wuthering Heights* in 2011 and a third to be announced) and three commissions (*Silent Night* in 2012; *Doubt* in 2013 and a third to be announced).

On the Minnesota Opera stage, talented national and internationally known artists are brought together to create productions of the highest artistic integrity, emphasizing the balance and total integration of theatrical and musical values. Throughout the past five decades, the company has presented such artists as Tim Albery, Isabel Bayrakdarian, John Lee Beatty, Harry Bicket, Richard Bonynge, William Burden, John Conklin, Roxana Constantinescu, David Daniels, Bruce Ford, Elizabeth Futral, Vivica Genaux, Colin Graham, Denyce Graves, Greer Grimsley, Nancy Gustafson, Brenda Harris, Jason Howard, Judith Howarth, Robert Indiana, Robert Israel, Sumi Jo, Kelly Kaduce, Antony McDonald, Catherine Malfitano, Daniel Massey, Johanna Meier, Suzanne Mentzer, Erie Mills, Sherrill Milnes, Julia Migenes, Fernando de la Mora, James Morris, Suzanne Murphy, Maureen O'Flynn, Susanna Phillips, Ashley Putnam, Patricia Racette, James Robinson, Neil Rosenshein, William Shimell, James Valenti, David Walker and Keith Warner.

A scene from Minnesota Opera's 2001 production of Carl Orff's Carmina burana

Minnesota Opera, now the 13th largest opera company in the nation with an annual budget of $10.2 million (Fiscal Year 2012), is guided by President and General Director Kevin Ramch and Artistic Director Dale Johnson.

Today Minnesota Opera is enjoying unprecedented stability and unity of mission, working toward its vision to create a new, dynamic opera company model based upon innovation, world-class artistic quality and strong community service.

Minnesota Opera Repertoire – 1963–2014

2013–2014
Manon Lescaut (Puccini)
Arabella (Strauss)
Macbeth (Verdi)
The Dream of Valentino (Argento)
Die Zauberflöte (Mozart)

2012–2013
50TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON
Nabucco (Verdi)
Anna Bolena (Donizetti)
§ † *Doubt* (Cuomo)
Hamlet (Thomas)
Turandot (Puccini)

2011–2012
Così fan tutte (Mozart)
§ † *Silent Night* (Puts)
Werther (Massenet)
Lucia di Lammermoor (Donizetti)
Madame Butterfly (Puccini)

2010–2011
Orfeo ed Euridice (Gluck)
La Cenerentola (Rossini)
Maria Stuarda (Donizetti)
La traviata (Verdi)
Wuthering Heights (Herrmann)

2009–2010
Les pêcheurs de perles (Bizet)
Casanova's Homecoming (Argento)
Roberto Devereux (Donizetti)
La bohème (Puccini)
Salome (R. Strauss)

2008–2009
Il trovatore (Verdi)
Die Entführung aus dem Serail (Mozart)
Faust (Gounod)
* *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (Dove)
Il barbiere di Siviglia (Rossini)

2007–2008
Un ballo in maschera (Verdi)
L'italiana in Algeri (Rossini)
Roméo et Juliette (Gounod)
* *Croesus* (Keiser)
Rusalka (Dvořák)

2006–2007
La donna del lago (Rossini)
Les contes d'Hoffmann (Offenbach)
§ † *The Grapes of Wrath* (Gordon)
Lakmé (Delibes)
Le nozze di Figaro (Mozart)

2005–2006
Tosca (Puccini)
Don Giovanni (Mozart)
* *Orazi e Curiazi* (Mercadante)
* *Joseph Merrick dit Elephant Man* (Petitgirard)

2004–2005
Madama Butterfly (Puccini)
Maria Padilla (Donizetti)
Carmen (Bizet)
Nixon in China (Adams)

2003–2004
Rigoletto (Verdi)
Lucrezia Borgia (Donizetti)
Passion (Sondheim)
Die Zauberflöte (Mozart)

2002–2003
Die lustige Witwe (Lehár)
Norma (Bellini)
Der fliegende Holländer (Wagner)
La traviata (Verdi)
* *The Handmaid's Tale* (Ruders)

2001–2002
Lucia di Lammermoor (Donizetti)
La clemenza di Tito (Mozart)
La bohème (Puccini)
Little Women (Adamo)
Don Carlos (Verdi)

2000–2001
Turandot (Puccini)
I Capuleti ed i Montecchi (Bellini)
Street Scene (Weill)
Il barbiere di Siviglia (Rossini)
Pagliacci/Carmina burana (Leoncavallo/Orff)
❧ *The Barber of Seville* (Rossini)

1999–2000
Der Rosenkavalier (R. Strauss)
Macbeth (Verdi)
Semiramide (Rossini)
Le nozze di Figaro (Mozart)
❧ *The Marriage of Figaro* (Mozart)

1998–1999
Otello (Verdi)
Madama Butterfly (Puccini)
The Turn of the Screw (Britten)
Faust (Gounod)
❧ *Madame Butterfly* (Puccini)

1997–1998
Aida (Verdi)
La Cenerentola (Rossini)
* *Transatlantic* (Antheil)
Tosca (Puccini)
❧ *Cinderella* (Rossini, Massenet)

1996–1997
La traviata (Verdi)
Die Zauberflöte (Mozart)
The Rake's Progress (Stravinsky)
Carmen (Bizet)
❧ *Carmen* (Bizet)

1995–1996
La bohème (Puccini)
Don Giovanni (Mozart)
Pelléas et Mélisande (Debussy)
Les contes d'Hoffmann (Offenbach)
❧ *The Bohemians* (Puccini)

1994–1995
Turandot (Puccini)
Il barbiere di Siviglia (Rossini)
Rigoletto (Verdi)
§ † *Bok Choy Variations* (Chen and Simonson)
❧ *Figaro's Revenge* (Rossini, Paisiello)

§ World Premiere
* American Premiere
† Commissioned by The Minnesota Opera or by The Minnesota Opera Midwest Tour
▲ Tour production
❧ Outreach/Education tour
• New Music-Theater Ensemble production

Minnesota OPERA
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

1993–1994
Julius Caesar (Handel)
* *Diary of an African American* (Peterson)
Il trovatore (Verdi)
§ *The Merry Widow and The Hollywood Tycoon* (Lehár)
▲ *Don Giovanni* (Mozart)

1992–1993
Der fliegende Holländer (Wagner)
* *Armida* (Rossini)
Madama Butterfly (Puccini)
The Pirates of Penzance (Gilbert & Sullivan)

1991–1992
Tosca (Puccini)
Les pêcheurs de perles (Bizet)
Le nozze di Figaro (Mozart)
§ † *From the Towers of the Moon* (Moran & La Chiusa)
▲ *The Magic Flute* (Mozart)
Carousel (Rodgers & Hammerstein)

1990–1991
Norma (Bellini)
The Aspern Papers (Argento)
Carmen (Bizet)
Così fan tutte (Mozart)
▲ *Così fan tutte* (Mozart)
▲ *Swing on a Star* (Winkler)

1989–1990
La bohème (Puccini)
A Midsummer Night's Dream (Britten)
Roméo et Juliette (Gounod)
§ † *Frankenstein, The Modern Prometheus* (Larsen)
My Fair Lady (Lerner & Loewe)
• § *Snow Leopard* (Harper & Nieboer)
▲ *Madame Butterfly* (Puccini)
Where the Wild Things Are (Sendak/Knussen)

1988–1989
Don Giovanni (Mozart)
Salome (R. Strauss)
The Mikado (Gilbert & Sullivan)
The Juniper Tree (Glass & Moran)
Show Boat (Kern & Hammerstein)
§ † • *Without Colors* (Wellman & Shiflett)
§ † • *Red Tide* (Selig & Sherman)
§ † • *Newest Little Opera in the World* (ensemble)
▲ *Cinderella* (Rossini)
▲ *Tintypes* (Kyte, Marvin, Pearle)

1987–1988
Die Fledermaus (J. Strauss)
Rigoletto (Verdi)
Rusalka (Dvorak)
• *Cowboy Lips* (Greene & Madsen)
§ † • *Fly Away All* (Hutchinson & Shank)
• *Book of Days* (Monk)
Oklahoma! (Rodgers & Hammerstein)
▲ *Carmen* (Bizet)
▲ *Jargonauts, Ahoy!* (McKeel)

1986–1987
Les pêcheurs de perles (Bizet)
The Postman Always Rings Twice (Paulus)
Ariadne auf Naxos (R. Strauss)
South Pacific (Rodgers & Hammerstein)
▲ *Hansel and Gretel* (Humperdinck)
§ † ▲ *Jargonauts, Ahoy!* (McKeel)

1985–1986
* *Where the Wild Things Are/Higglety Pigglety Pop!* (Knussen/Sendak)
La traviata (Verdi)
L'elisir d'amore (Donizetti)
The King and I (Rodgers & Hammerstein)
§ † *Opera Tomorrow*
▲ *The Fantasticks* (Schmidt)
▲ *The Magic Flute* (Mozart)
§ † ▲ *The Music Shop* (Wargo)

1984–1985
* *Animalen* (Werle)
§ † *Casanova's Homecoming* (Argento)
The Magic Flute (Mozart)
▲ *La bohème* (Puccini)
▲ *Meanwhile, back at Cinderella's* (Arlan)

1983–1984
Hansel and Gretel (Humperdinck)
Madama Butterfly (Puccini)
La Cenerentola (Rossini)
§ *The Abduction of Figaro* (PDQ Bach)
▲ *The Boor* (Argento)
▲ *Chanticleer* (Barab)
▲ *Don Pasquale* (Donizetti)

1982–1983
Hansel and Gretel (Humperdinck)
Lucia di Lammermoor (Donizetti)
§ *A Death in the Family* (Mayer)
Kiss Me, Kate (Porter)
▲ *The Barber of Seville* (Rossini)
▲ *The Frog Who Became a Prince* (Barnes)
▲ *Zetabet* (Barnes)

1981–1982
Hansel and Gretel (Humperdinck)
The Village Singer (Paulus)
Gianni Schicchi (Puccini)
The Barber of Seville (Rossini)
§ *Feathertop* (Barnes)
§ *The Mask of Evil* (Mollicone)
▲ *Hansel and Gretel* (Humperdinck)
§ *Rosina* (Titus)

1980–1981
The Merry Widow (Lehar)
Black River (Susa)
Carmen (Bizet)
A Water Bird Talk (Argento)
§ *Miss Havisham's Wedding Night* (Argento)
▲ *The Marriage of Figaro* (Mozart)
▲ *The Threepenny Opera* (Weill)

1979–1980
The Abduction from the Seraglio (Mozart)
The Pirates of Penzance (Gilbert & Sullivan)
La bohème (Puccini)
§ † *Rosina* (Titus)
▲ *A Christmas Carol* (Sandow)

1978–1979
The Love for Three Oranges (Prokofiev)
§ *The Jealous Cellist* (Stokes)
The Passion According to St. Matthew (J.S. Bach)
La traviata (Verdi)
The Consul (Menotti)
▲ *Viva la Mamma* (Donizetti)

1977–1978
* *Christopher Columbus* (Offenbach)
The Mother of Us All (Thomson)
The Marriage of Figaro (Mozart)
§ *Claudia Legare* (Ward)

1976–1977
The Bartered Bride (Smetana)
The Passion According to St. Matthew (J.S. Bach)
Candide (Bernstein)
Mahagonny (Weill)

1975–1976
§ † *Black River* (Susa)
El Capitan (Sousa)
Così fan tutte (Mozart)
§ † *The Voyage of Edgar Allan Poe* (Argento)

1974–1975
§ † *Gallimaufry* (Minnesota Opera)
§ *Gulliver* (Blackwood, Kaplan, Lewin)
The Magic Flute (Mozart)
Albert Herring (Britten)

1973–1974
El Capitan (Sousa)
Transformations (Susa)
Don Giovanni (Mozart)
§ † *The Newest Opera in the World* (Minnesota Opera)

1972–1973
The Threepenny Opera (Weill)
Postcard from Morocco (Argento)
The Barber of Seville (Rossini)
§ † *Transformations* (Susa)

1971–1972
§ † *Postcard from Morocco* (Argento)
§ † *The Business of Good Government* (Marshall)
The Good Soldier Schweik (Kurka)
The Marriage of Figaro (Mozart)

1970–1971
§ † *Christmas Mummeries & Good Government* (Marshall)
§ † *Faust Counter Faust* (Gessner)
The Coronation of Poppea (Monteverdi)
The Mother of Us All (Thomson)

1969–1970
§ † *Oedipus and the Sphinx* (Marshall)
* *Punch and Judy* (Birtwistle)
* *17 Days and 4 Minutes* (Egk)
§ † *The Wanderer* (Paul and Martha Boesing)

1968–1969
Così fan tutte (Mozart)
§ † *Horspfal* (Stokes)
The Wise Woman and the King (Orff)

1967–1968
The Man in the Moon (Haydn)
A Midsummer Night's Dream (Britten)

1966–1967
The Mother of Us All (Thomson)
The Sorrows of Orpheus (Milhaud)
* *The Harpies* (Blitzstein)
Socraties (Satie)
Three Minute Operas (Milhaud)

1965–1966
The Abduction from the Seraglio (Mozart)
The Good Soldier Schweik (Kurka)

1964–1965
The Rape of Lucretia (Britten)
The Wise Woman and the King (Orff)

1963–1964
§ † *The Masque of Angels* (Argento)
The Masque of Venus and Adonis (Blow)
Albert Herring (Britten)

§ World Premiere
* American Premiere
† Commissioned by The Minnesota Opera or by The Minnesota Opera Midwest Tour
▲ Tour production
❧ Outreach/Education tour
• New Music-Theater Ensemble production

Minnesota OPERA
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart 1756–1791
- *The Abduction from the Seraglio 1782*
- *The Marriage of Figaro 1786*
- *Don Giovanni 1787*
- *Così fan tutte 1790*
- *The Magic Flute 1791*

NINETEENTH CENTURY

Ludwig van Beethoven 1770–1827
- *Fidelio 1805*

Gioachino Rossini 1792–1868
- *The Barber of Seville 1816*
- *La Cenerentola 1817*

Gaetano Donizetti 1797–1848
- *The Elixir of Love 1832*
- *Lucia di Lammermoor 1835*
- *Don Pasquale 1843*

Vincenzo Bellini 1801–1835
- *Norma 1831*

Richard Wagner 1813–1883
- *The Flying Dutchman 1843*
- *Tannhäuser 1845*
- *Lohengrin 1850*
- *Tristan und Isolde 1865*
- *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg 1868*
- *The Ring Cycle 1876*
  - *—Das Rheingold, Die Walküre, Siegfried and Götterdämmerung*
- *Parsifal 1882*

Giuseppe Verdi 1813–1901
- *Rigoletto 1851*
- *Il trovatore 1853*
- *La traviata 1853*
- *La forza del destino 1862*
- *Don Carlos 1867*
- *Aida 1871*
- *Otello 1887*
- *Falstaff 1893*

Charles-François Gounod 1818–1893
- *Faust 1859*
- *Roméo et Juliette 1867*

NINETEENTH CENTURY (CONTINUED)

Jacques Offenbach 1819–1880
- *Les contes d'Hoffmann 1881*

Georges Bizet 1838–1875
- *Carmen 1875*

Modest Musorgsky 1839–1881
- *Boris Godunov 1874*

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky 1840–1893
- *Eugene Onegin 1879*

Engelbert Humperdinck 1854–1921
- *Hänsel und Gretel 1893*

Ruggero Leoncavallo 1857–1919
- *Pagliacci 1892*

Pietro Mascagni 1863–1945
- *Cavalleria rusticana 1890*

TWENTIETH CENTURY

Giacomo Puccini 1858–1924
- *Manon Lescaut 1893*
- *La bohème 1896*
- *Tosca 1900*
- *Madama Butterfly 1904*
- *Turandot 1926*

Claude Debussy 1862–1918
- *Pelléas et Mélisande 1902*

Richard Strauss 1864–1949
- *Salome 1905*
- *Elektra 1909*
- *Der Rosenkavalier 1911*
- *Ariadne auf Naxos 1912*

Alban Berg 1885–1935
- *Wozzeck 1925*
- *Lulu 1937*

Benjamin Britten 1913–1976
- *Peter Grimes 1945*
- *Albert Herring 1947*
- *Billy Budd 1951*
- *The Turn of the Screw 1954*

Often called "all the arts in one" opera includes the Aristotelian elements of drama: theme, spectacle, plot, diction, movement and music. A production is truly successful only when these components work together. Many individuals are engaged to accomplish this purpose.

IN THE BEGINNING

A subject is selected by a COMPOSER. It may be mythical, biblical, historical, literary or based on current events. A LIBRETTIST is employed to adapt the story into poetic verse and the composer then writes the music (or SCORE).

THE OPERA COMPANY

An opera company's ARTISTIC DIRECTOR agrees to stage the work. In many cases, an opera has already been written and staged many times.

ADMINISTRATION

The company's MARKETING department sells tickets and the DEVELOPMENT department raises funds through donations to cover the costs of the production. The FINANCE department controls costs and balances the production's budget. The EDUCATION department prepares the audience for what they are going to see on stage.

CASTING

The opera company's ARTISTIC DIRECTOR selects performers from auditions. These performers are divided into PRINCIPALS, COMPRIMARIOS (singers in secondary roles), CHORISTERS, and players for the ORCHESTRA. Often in a production, SUPERNUMERARIES are employed (people who act but do not sing). Sometimes the opera has a BALLET which requires dancers, or a BANDA which requires orchestra members to play on stage.

SETS AND COSTUMES

A design team is assembled consisting of a STAGE DIRECTOR, SET DESIGNER and COSTUME DESIGNER. They agree on a visual concept for the opera and sets and costumes are created.

REHEARSAL

The production goes into REHEARSAL. Principals, choristers and the orchestra often rehearse separately until the director begins staging. The CONDUCTOR of the orchestra attends staging rehearsals which are accompanied by a RÉPÉTITEUR, or rehearsal pianist. The orchestra joins the singers for the first time at the SITZPROBE. During TECH WEEK, sets and lighting are put into place at the theater. Several DRESS REHEARSALS (with the performers in costume and the orchestra in the pit) occur before the first performance of the opera. Sometimes these rehearsals are attended by a select audience.

THE PREMIERE

The first presentation of the opera to the general public is known as the PREMIERE. Long before the curtain goes up, preparations are being made.

6:00 PM **Continuity**
STAGEHANDS (1) set the scenery for the first act of the production.

6:15 PM **Makeup calls**
PRINCIPALS and COMPRIMARIOS (2) begin to arrive at the theater to be put into costume by DRESSERS, then are wigged by the WIGMASTER (1A) and made up with theatrical makeup.

6:30 PM **House opens**
Opera patrons are admitted to the AUDITORIUM (4) and seated by USHERS (5). The HOUSE MANAGER (6) oversees the activities in the front of the house, including the ushers and concession sales. The BOX OFFICE MANAGER (7) takes care of any last minute ticket purchases. Patrons may remain in the LOBBY (8) to attend an informational session of *Opera Insights,* led by the Opera's music staff.

6:45 PM **Notes**
The STAGE DIRECTOR may give last minute instructions to the cast before the performance begins.

7:00 PM **Warm-ups**
PRINCIPALS and COMPRIMARIOS (2) warm-up in their dressing rooms.

7:15 PM **Chorus and orchestra warm-ups**
The CHORUS (10), who have already put on their costumes, warms up with the CHORUSMASTER. The ORCHESTRA warms up in the ORCHESTRA PIT (11).

7:25 PM **Places**
The PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER (12) calls places. Two other STAGE MANAGERS (13) are posted stage left and stage right to cue the entrances of the singers and choristers.

7:28 PM **Orchestra tune**
The principal oboe gives a concert "A" to which the ORCHESTRA tunes. The SURTITLE PROMPTER (15) cues the preshow titles. The CONDUCTOR shakes the CONCERTMASTER's hand and mounts the podium.

7:30 PM **Curtain**
The house lights goes out, and the FLYMAN (1A) raises the CURTAIN (16). The show begins.

8:25 PM **Intermission**
The audience returns to the LOBBY (8) for refreshments while the STAGEHANDS (1) reset the STAGE (14) for the next act.

10:15 PM **Curtain calls**
The performance ends, and the STAGE DIRECTOR, DESIGNERS, CONDUCTOR and SINGERS get to take a bow for all their hard work.

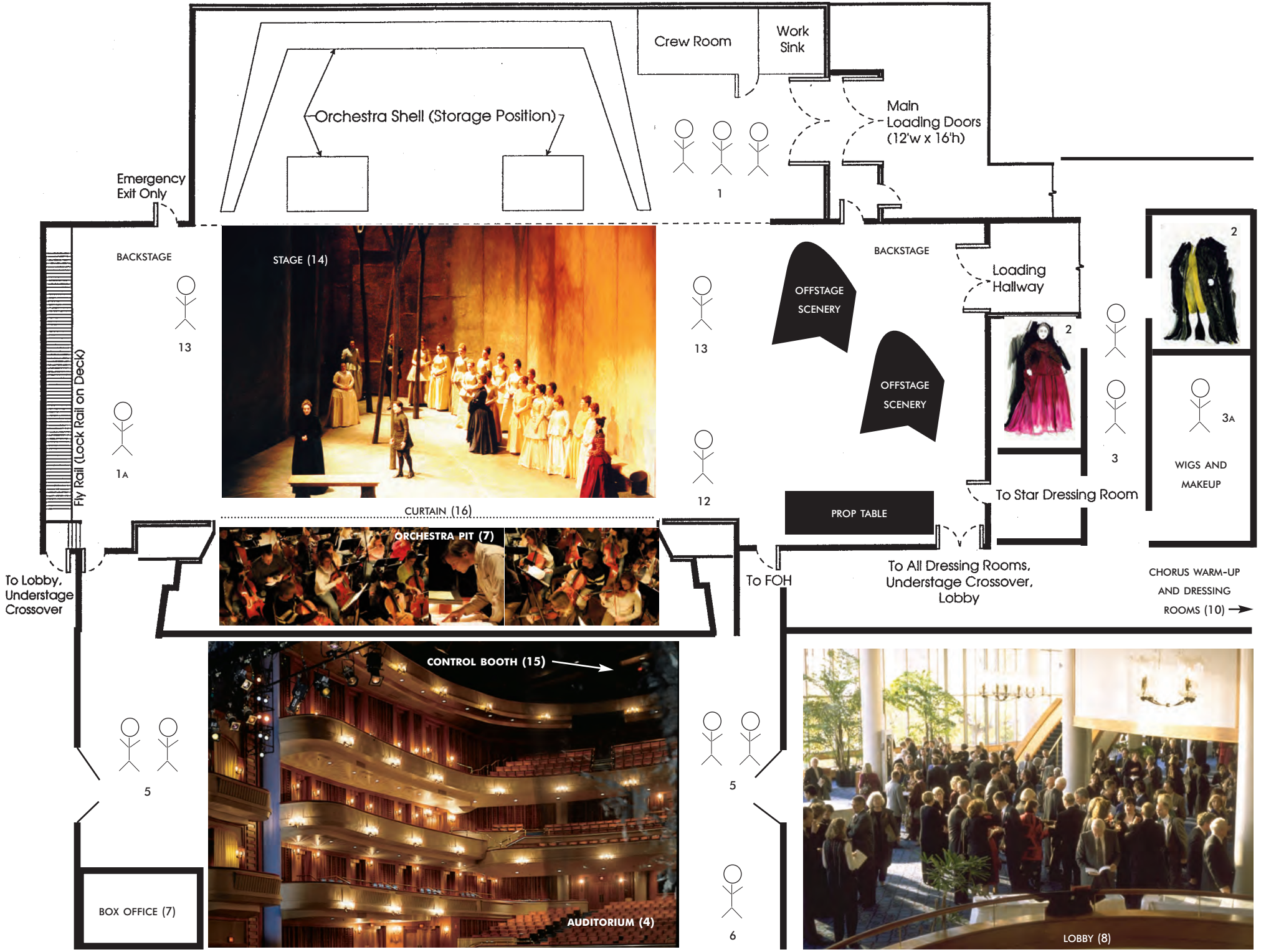
STAGEHANDS move scenery and props and handle lighting. DRESSERS help the cast into their often elaborate costumes.

PRINCIPALS sing the major roles. COMPRIMARIOS sing minor named roles. CHORISTERS make up the rest of the singing cast and are prepared by the CHORUSMASTER.

The CONDUCTOR leads the orchestra. The STAGE DIRECTOR instructs the cast where to move onstage. He or she generally stays only for the PREMIERE.

The ORCHESTRA rehearses several times independently from the singers. The first rehearsal during which singers and orchestra perform together is called a SITZPROBE. The CONCERTMASTER is the first violin and is responsible for "bowing" the string parts so the performers all move their bows together.

The PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER "calls" the show, announcing entrance and lighting cues. Two other STAGE MANAGERS assist in getting the cast and chorus on and off the stage. The SURTITLE PROMPTER cues the English translations projected above the stage from the control booth.


Crew Room
Work Sink
Orchestra Shell (Storage Position)
Main Loading Doors (12'w x 16'h)
1
Emergency Exit Only
BACKSTAGE
STAGE (14)
13
13
1A
12
Fly Rail (Lock Rail on Deck)
CURTAIN (16)
ORCHESTRA PIT (7)
To Lobby, Understage Crossover
BACKSTAGE
OFFSTAGE SCENERY
OFFSTAGE SCENERY
Loading Hallway
2
2
3
3A
WIGS AND MAKEUP
PROP TABLE
To Star Dressing Room
To FOH
To All Dressing Rooms, Understage Crossover, Lobby
CHORUS WARM-UP AND DRESSING ROOMS (10)
CONTROL BOOTH (15)
AUDITORIUM (4)
5
5
6
BOX OFFICE (7)
LOBBY (8)

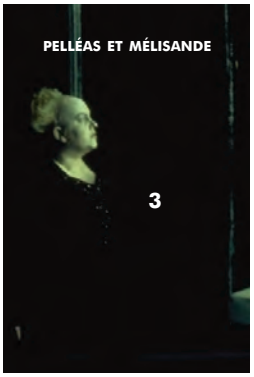
The most important part of the opera is the singers. They are categorized into six different voice types.

THE SOPRANO

High-voiced woman. Voted "Most Likely to Die Before the Curtain Goes Down." Putty in the hands of the TENOR, BARITONE and occasionally even the MEZZO (especially if she is in pants).

THE MEZZO-SOPRANO

Middle- to lower-voiced woman. Nobody's pawn. May hook up with the BARITONE, unless she's playing a young man, in which case she usually gets the SOPRANO.



THE CONTRALTO

Lowest-voiced woman. Usually the mother, maid or duenna (an older woman charged with monitoring the virtue of the impressionable SOPRANO). Generally the CONTRALTO calls herself a MEZZO in order to get more work.

THE TENOR

High-voiced man. Whether comic or tragic, most often the misunderstood romantic role. Often kill themselves; almost always get the girl.

THE BASS AND BARITONE

Middle- to lowest-voiced man. Usually the bad guy, the father or guardian, or the hero's best friend. If he hooks up with another singer, it's usually a MEZZO.

THE FAT LADY

There is no fat lady in helmet and horns—that is a myth. It ain't over till the curtain goes down for the last time and everyone around you is clapping.

CLOCKWISE, LEFT TO RIGHT: ÉLISABETH; EBOLI; GIULIETTA, ROMEO; MIMÌ, RODOLFO; EDGARDO, ENRICO; LUCIA; HANNA; PHILIPPE, GRAND INQUISITOR; GENEVIÈVE; SERVILIA, ANNIO

Minnesota OPERA CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

1 - SOPRANO; 2 - MEZZO; 3 - CONTRALTO; 4 - TENOR; 5 - BARITONE; 6 - BASS

acoustics	The science of sound; qualities which determine hearing facilities in an auditorium, concert hall, opera house, theater, etc.
act	A section of the opera, play, etc. usually followed by an intermission.
area lights	Provide general illumination.
aria	(*air, English and French; ariette, French*). A formal song sung by a single vocalist. It may be in two parts (binary form), or in three parts (see da capo) with the third part almost a repetition of the first. A short aria is an arietta in Italian, ariette or petit air in French.
arioso	Adjectival description of a passage less formal and complete than a fully written aria, but sounding like one. Much recitative has arioso, or songlike, passages.
azione teatrale	(*It.: 'theatrical action', 'theatrical plot'*). A species of Serenata that, unlike many works in this genre, contained a definite plot and envisioned some form of staging.
atonality	Lack of a definite tonal focus, all sharps and flats being applied in the score when necessary. With no key and therefore no sense of finality, such music sounds odd to the conservative ear, but with practice the listener can find pleasure in it.
artistic director	The person responsible for the artistic concept of the opera – the overall look and "feel" of the production.
backdrop	A large, painted surface at the rear of the stage, associated with old-fashioned stage settings, two-dimensional, but often striving with painted shadows and perspective to suggest a third dimension.
backstage	The area of the stage not visible to the audience, usually where the dressing rooms are located.
ballad opera	A play with many songs; the number has ranged from fifteen to seventy-five. In the early eighteenth century its music was drawn from popular folk song or quite sophisticated songs appropriated from successful operas.
banda	A group of musicians who perform onstage or slightly offstage.
baritone	The male singing voice which is higher than a bass but lower than a tenor.
baroque	A style of art and music characteristic in particular of the Louis xiv period in France and the Charles II period and after in England. Baroque pictorial art is associated with theatrical energy and much decoration but nevertheless respects classical principles. The music theater of the Baroque, highly pictorial, developed the opera seria, with comic intermezzi between the acts.
bass	The lowest male singing voice.
bel canto	Although meaning simply "beautiful song," the term is usually applied to the school of singing prevalent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Baroque and Romantic) which gave much attention to vocal purity, control, and dexterity in ornamentation.
bravo (a) (i)	An acknowledgement of a good performance shouted during moments of applause (the ending is determined by the gender and the number of performers).
bravura	Implying brilliance and dexterity (bravura singing, a bravura aria, etc.). Intended for display and the technical execution of difficult passages.

CABALETTA	A fast, contrasting short aria sung at the close of or shortly following a slower aria (called a *cantabile*, often for vocal effect only but sometimes dramatically motivated.
CADENCE	A resting place or close of a passage of music, clearly establishing tonality.
CADENZA	An elaborate passage near the end of an aria, which shows off the singer's vocal ability.
CAMERATA	A group of musicians, poets and scholars who met in Florence in 1600 and created opera.
CANTILENA	Originally a little song, but now generally referring to smooth cantabile (*It: 'singable,' or 'singing'*) passages.
CAVATINA	Originally an aria without a repeated section. Later used casually in place of aria.
CHORUS	A group of singers (called choristers) who portray townspeople, guests or other unnamed characters; also refers to the music written for these people.
CHORUS MASTER	Person who prepares the chorus musically (which includes rehearsing and directing them).
CLAQUE	A group attending performances in the larger opera houses and paid by leading singers to encourage and direct applause (a member of which is a claqueur).
COLORATURA	A voice that can sing music with many rapid notes, or the music written for such a voice.
COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE	Masked comedy or improvised Italian comedy of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. A popular theatrical form with a sketched-out plot and stock characters, a pair of lovers without masks surrounded by comedians—Arlecchino, Brighella, Pantalone, Dottore, etc. Some of Mozart's and Rossini's operas retain the vestiges of these characters. Strauss, Busoni, and other recent composers have deliberately used them.
COMPRIMARIO	A small singing role, often a servant or other minor character.
CONDUCTOR	The person who supervises all musical detail, rehearsals and leads the orchestra and advises the artistic director about the hiring of singers and musical staff (also called the music director).
CONTRALTO	The lowest female singing voice.
COUNTERTENOR	The highest natural male voice, not a castrato. True male altos may be heard in choirs. The term falsettist is sometimes used but disputed.
CYCLORAMA	A curved curtain or wall enclosing the playing area of the stage and hiding the work areas behind it.
DA CAPO	(*It: 'from the top, or back to the beginning'*). A familiar direction in music. A da capo aria of the Baroque period repeats the first part of the aria, with different embellishments, after the singing of a contrasting second part.
DESIGNER	The person who creates the lighting, costumes or sets.
DIAPHRAGM	The muscle which separates the chest cavity from the abdominal cavity. It is used by singers for breath control and it allows them to "project" their voices to the back of the auditorium.
DIRECTOR	The person who instructs the singer/actors in their movements on stage and in the interpretation of their roles.
DOWNSTAGE	The front of the stage nearest the audience.
DRAME LYRIQUE	(*It: dramma lirico*). Modern term for opera, not necessarily of a lyrical character. The English term "lyrical drama" is used in the same way.

DRAMMA PER MUSICA	A term that refers to text expressly written to be set by a composer and by extension also to the composition. The term was the one most commonly used for serious Italian opera in the 18th century (as opposed to the modern term opera seria, with which it is in effect interchangeable).
DUET	Music written for two people to play or sing together.
EMBELLISHMENT	Decoration or ornament. A grace-note addition to the vocal line (also instrumental) of any kind, a four-note turn, or a trill.
ENSEMBLE	Three or more people singing at the same time, or the music written for such a group.
FALSETTO	The falsetto voice is of high pitch and produced by the vibrations of only one part of the vocal folds. The normal male voice sounds strained and effeminate in falsetto, but a natural alto or high tenor can produce effective vocal sound by this method. It is a singing mannerism to produce high tenor notes in falsetto.
FESTA TEATRALE	(*It.: 'theatrical celebration'*). A title applied to a dramatic work. Feste teatrali fall into two quite distinct classes: opera and serenatas.
FINALE	The last musical number of an opera, or of an act of an opera.
FIORITURA	(*It: 'flowering', 'flourish'; plural fioriture*). When a composition for the voice contains decorative writing such as scales, arpeggios, trills and gruppetti (the groups of notes sometimes known in English as 'turns'), it is described as 'florid' and the decorations themselves will be described collectively as 'fioritura'. It is a more accurate term than 'coloratura', which is frequently used as an alternative.
FLATS	Stretched canvas and wood panels on which scenery is painted.
FLIES	The space above a stage where scenery is "flown" when not in use. A counterweight system simplifies raising and lowering flats, larger set pieces, and back drops.
FULL DRESS REHEARSAL	The final rehearsal before opening night with all singers present in full costume.
GRAND OPERA	Traditionally, a serious epic or historical work in four or five acts which makes extensive use of the chorus and also includes a ballet. Also contains magnificent special effects.
GRID	Gridiron. Framework from which lines are hung and battens attached for the "flying" of scenery. The grid is situated high in the flies just beneath the ceiling of the fly loft.
HANDLUNG FÜR MUSIK	(*Ger: 'action in music'*). Term used by Wagner to describe the libretto for *Lohengrin* and *Tristan und Isolde*; it has occasionally been used since.
INTERLUDE	A short piece of instrumental music played between scenes or acts to fill in delays brought about by scenery changes.
INTERMEZZO	An instrumental interlude played between acts, or short two-act comic opera played between the acts of an opera seria.
LEITMOTIV	A recurring musical figure used to identify a person, event or idea.
LEGATO	A smooth, flowing line. In vocal music it demands steadiness of emission and a sensitivity to phrasing.
LIBRETTO	The words of an opera.

MASKING — A scenic frame or device to prevent the audience from seeing into the wings of the stage. Door and window openings are usually masked, often with realistic backings.

MASQUE — An entertainment popular in the late sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth. A form of "total theater," it combined music, scenic splendor, poetry, and some drama. Milton's *Comus*, with music by Henry Lawes, is the most celebrated.

MELODRAMA — A basically serious play, frequently using comedy for relief, it only outwardly resembles tragedy. The conflicts and calamities are more interesting in themselves than are the characters, who tend to be stereotyped, good and bad. Passion, excitement, and action, often unmotivated, are emphasized. Intended for undiscriminating audiences, it uses much music to stimulate the emotions and much scenic effect to please the eye.

MÉLODRAME — In addition to being the French word for melodrama, this term refers to a technique, which became popular during the eighteenth century, of playing orchestral music under or between the phrases of spoken dialogue.

MELODRAMMA — Dramma per musica (drama for music) and Melodramma (sung drama) antedate by many years the term opera, now in general use for works of this kind.

MEZZA VOCE — Half-voice, with reference to a passage required to be sung softly throughout. A similar term, messa di voce, has the different meaning of beginning a tone softly, swelling it gradually, and then softening it again.

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

MOTIVE — A short musical idea on which a melody is based.

MUSICAL PLAY — A convenient but inexact designation which has become popular in English-speaking countries to distinguish the more ambitious works in the popular field of lyric theater from (a) European operetta or imitations thereof, (b) musical comedy of the vaudevillian sort, and (c) opera, especially in New York where the form is supposed to belong to the Metropolitan and the New York City Opera Company and is somewhat provincially considered "poison at the box office." David Ewen regards *Show Boat*, 1927, as the first work of the new genre, the musical play. By the 1930s, this term had become a catchall.

OPERA — A term now used to cover musical-dramatic pieces of all kinds except musical comedy and operetta, although comic opera comes very close to these forms. The seventeenth-century Italian term for opera was Dramma per musica or Melodramma.

OPERA BUFFA — A precise Italian definition, meaning Italian comic opera of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Musical numbers are strung along a continuum of dry recitative.

OPÉRA COMIQUE — French light opera of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Strictly speaking, any theater piece written with spoken dialogue between the musical numbers (*Faust, Carmen*, and *Manon*) whether a comedy or not. The Paris Opéra Comique is also called the Salle Favart and was originally the home of all works using spoken dialogue, while the Opéra confined itself to through-composed works.

OPERA SERIA — Literally "serious opera." An opera form of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries which uses historical, biblical or mythological subjects with a focus on revenge, danger and death.

OPERETTA	A loosely used term, often used interchangeably with comic opera, opéra bouffe, and musical comedy. In Italian it originally meant "little opera," a short, light musical work. It has come to mean a full-length piece on a light subject, with musical numbers and spoken dialogue, and characterized by ingratiating tunes, decorative dances, colorful settings, social irresponsibility, a slender dramatic line, and the requirement of at least two well-trained voices.
ORATORIO	A musical-dramatic work originating in the twelfth century, now generally performed, in contradistinction to opera, without action, costumes, and scenery. They are invariably associated with sacred subjects.
ORCHESTRA PIT	The sunken area in front of the stage where the orchestra sits.
OVERTURE	An orchestral introduction to the opera, usually played before the acting begins.
PARLANDO	(*It: 'in speaking style'*). An informal and realistic technique occasionally used in Italian opera, bringing singing close to speaking.
PORTAMENTO	An Italian singing term, asking the voice to glide from one note to another at some distance. An authentic and effective device, to be distinguished from the mannerism of scooping.
PRINCIPAL	A major singing role, or the singer who performs such a role.
PROSCENIUM	The stage opening, resembling a three-sided picture frame. Immediately behind it and concealing the acting areas is the curtain. The proscenium arch was originally created in the 1700s to conceal the machinery used to create special stage effects.
QUARTET	Four singers, or the music written for that group.
RECITATIVE	Musical singing in the rhythm of speech.
RECITATIVO ACCOMPAGNATO	A sung passage with orchestral accompaniment, lacking the formality of an aria, yet more declamatory and agitated than recitativo secco.
RECITATIVO SECCO	Dry recitative. A sung passage so close to everyday speech that although the pitches and time values are respected, a conversational quality prevails. A keyboard instrument generally supplies the sketchy accompaniment. Commonly used in Italian opera seria and opera buffa.
REPERTORY	A system of stage production in which a number of works are played, virtually in rotation, by a resident company throughout a season.
RÉPÉTITION	French term for "rehearsal." A répétition générale is a dress rehearsal to which critics and guests are invited.
REVOLVE	Revolving stage. Turntable. A section of the stage floor (permanently established) or a circular construction on a central pivot which revolves, to change scenery or supply movement of objects as well as people.
RITORNELLO	A short instrumental piece, literally meaning repetition or refrain. In Monteverdi's works it usually consists of a few bars played between the verses of a strophic song.
ROCOCO	In art, associated with the late Baroque period and the late eighteenth century. In contrast to the dignity, heaviness, and occasional pomposity of Baroque, Rococo art is playful, lighter in tone and color, and adorned with scrolls, acorns, and shells.
ROLE	The character that a singer portrays.

ROMANTICISM	The movement strongly associated with nineteenth-century Germany, but felt through all Europe and responsible for far-reaching changes in all forms of art. Rebels against the establishment (which was founded on a deep respect for the classics), the romanticists opposed authority and advocated freedom from formal regulations. They encouraged a subjective, strongly emotional approach as an antidote to classical decorum.
SCORE	The music of an opera or other musical work in which the parts for different performers appear vertically above one another.
SCRIM	A thin curtain, often painted. When lit from behind, one can see through it.
SERENATA	A dramatic cantata, normally celebratory or eulogistic in intent, for two or more singers with orchestral accompaniment. In dramaturgical respects the serenata most closely resembles the Baroque oratorio.
SINFONIA	A symphonic work the precedes an opera (English: overture); a shorter version is referred to as a *prelude*.
SINGSPIEL	A German form of comic opera with spoken dialogue.
SITZPROBE	A sit-down rehearsal where the performers sing with the orchestra for the first time.
SOPRANO	The highest female singing voice.
SPRECHSTIMME	A form of declamation halfway between speech and song. Instead of exactly notated pitch an approximation is given. The time, however, is given exactly and the singer is not allowed absolute license. Notations up and down are also meant to be respected. This style of singing is found in the works of Schoenberg and Berg.
STAGE LEFT	The left side of the stage from the performer's perspective as s/he faces the audience.
STAGE RIGHT	The right side of the stage from the performer's perspective as s/he faces the audience.
STRETTA	An accelerated passage at the end of an aria, scene, or act.
TENOR	The highest male singing voice.
TESSITURA	Literally "texture." The approximate range of a role or an aria.
THROUGH-COMPOSED	Through-composed opera is a continuous music drama uninterrupted by spoken dialogue or obviously recognizable recitative.
TRAGÉDIE LYRIQUE	A French term associated mainly with Lully and Rameau. Tragédie lyrique comes somewhat closer to the spoken play in dramatic expressiveness than does the Italian opera seria of the same period, which may exceed it in vocal expressiveness.
TRILL	A musical ornament requiring the rapid alternation of two adjacent notes.
TROUSER ROLE	Also called "pants role." The part of a male character sung by a woman, usually a mezzo-soprano.
UNDERSTUDY	A replacement for a particular role in case of illness or emergency (also called a "cover").
VERISMO	A type of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Italian opera that emphasized realistic subjects.
WANDELPROBE	Musical rehearsal which allows the conductor to hear what the singers sound like when they perform on the set.
WINGS	The sides of the stage where the performers wait before making their entrances.

Sources: *Opera: Dead or Alive*, by Ronald E. Mitchell. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970.
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New York City Opera Education Department, Edmonton Opera

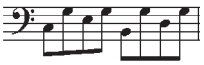
ADAGIO — Slowly and smoothly.

AD LIBITUM — As you please; freely.

AFFECTUOSO — Expressively; tenderly; lovingly.

AGITATO — Agitated.

ALBERTI BASS — Stereotyped figures of accompaniment, consisting of broken chords.



ALLARGANDO — Slowing and broadening.

ALLEGRETTO — Fairly lively; not as fast as allegro.

ALLEGRO — Lively; fast.

A MEZZO VOCE — With half the voice.

ANDANTE — Going; moving; at a moderate rate.

ANDANTINO — Sightly faster than andante.

ANIMATO — With spirit; animated.

APPOGGIATURA — An extra or embellishing note preceding a main melodic note or tone. Usually written as a note of smaller size, it shares the time value of the main note.

ARPEGGIO — Producing the tones of a chord in succession but not simultaneously.

ASSAI — Very; very much.

A TEMPO — At the preceding rate of speed.

ATONAL — Music that is not anchored in traditional musical tonality; it uses the chromatic scale impartially, does not use the diatonic scale and has no keynote or tonal center.

AUGMENTATION — The presentation of a melody in doubled values so that, e.g. the quarter notes become half notes.

BAR — A vertical line across the stave that divides the music into units.

BUFFO, BUFFA — Comic.

CADENZA — A flourish or brilliant part of an aria commonly inserted just before a finale.

CANTABILE — Songlike; singingly.

CANTATA — A choral piece generally containing scriptural narrative texts.

CON BRIO — With spirit.

CONTINUO — A bass part (as for a keyboard or stringed instrument) that was used especially in baroque ensemble music; it consists of a succession of bass notes with figures that indicate the required chords. Also called figured bass, thoroughbass.

COUNTERPOINT — Music consisting of two or more lines that sound simultaneously.

CRESCENDO — Gradually getting louder.

DIATONIC — Relating to a major or minor musical scale that comprises intervals of five whole steps and two half steps.

DIMINUENDO — Gradually getting softer.

DIMINUTION — The presentation of a melody in halved values so that, e.g. the quarter notes become eighth notes.

DISSONANCE — A mingling of discordant sounds that do not harmonize within the diatonic scale.

DOLOROSAMENTE — Sadly; grievingly.

DOMINANT	The fifth tone of the diatonic scale: in the key of C, the dominant is G.
FERMATA 	Pause sign; prolonged time value of note so marked.
FORTE *f*	Loud.
FORTISSIMO *ff*	Very loud.
FURIOSO	Furious; violent.
GIOCOSO	Playfully.
GIUSTO	Strict; exact.
GLISSANDO	A rapid sliding up or down the scale.
GRANDIOSO	With grandeur; majestically.
GRAVE	Slow; heavy; solemn.
GRAZIOSO	Elegantly; gracefully.
LAMENTOSO	Mournfully.
LARGHETTO	Somewhat less slowly than largo.
LARGO	Broadly and slowly.
LEGATO	Smoothly and connectedly.
LEGGIERO	Light; airy; graceful.
LENTO	Slow.
MAESTOSO	Majestic; stately; grand.
MAESTRO	From the Italian "master": a term of respect to conductors, composers, directors, and great musicians.
MARCATO	Marked.
MEZZO	Half; middle; medium.
MISTERIOSO	With mystery.
MODERATO	Moderately; at a moderate rate.
MOLTO	Much; very.
MORENDO	Dying away.
MOSSO	Moved; agitated; lively.
MOTO	Motion; movement.
OBBLIGATO	An elaborate accompaniment to a solo or principal melody that is usually played by a single instrument.
OCTAVE	A musical interval embracing eight diatonic degrees: therefore, from C^1 to C^2 is an octave.
ORNAMENTATION	Extra embellishing notes – appoggiaturas, trills, roulades, or cadenzas – that enhance a melodic line.
OVERTURE	An orchestral introduction to an act or the whole opera. An overture can appear only at the beginning of an opera.
OSSIA	Or; or else; an alternate reading.
PENTATONIC	A five-note scale, like the black notes within an octave on the piano.
PIACERE	To please.
PIANO *p*	Soft.
PIANISSIMO *pp*	Very soft.
PITCH	The property of a musical tone that is determined by the frequency of the waves producing it.
PIÙ	More.
PIZZICATO	For bowed stringed instruments, an indication that the string is to be plucked with a finger.
POCO	Little.
POLYPHONY	Literally "many voices." A style of musical composition in which two or more independent melodies are juxtaposed in harmony; counterpoint.

POLYTONAL	The use of several tonal schemes simultaneously.
PORTAMENTO	A continuous gliding movement from one tone to another.
PRESTO	Very fast; lively; quick.
QUAVER	An eighth note.
RALLENTANDO	Gradually slower.
RITARDANDO	Gradually slower.
RITENUTO	Held back; slower.
RITORNELLO	A short recurrent instrumental passage between elements of a vocal composition.
ROMANZA	A solo song that is usually sentimental; it is usually shorter and less complex than an aria and rarely deals with terror, rage and anger.
ROULADE	A florid vocal embellishment sung to one syllable.
RUBATO	A way of playing or singing with regulated rhythmic freedom.
SEMITONE	One half of a whole tone, the smallest distance between two notes in Western music. In the key of C, the notes are E and F, and B and C.
SEMPLICE	Simply.
SEMPRE	Always.
SENZA	Without.
SERIAL MUSIC	Music based on a series of tones in a chosen pattern without regard for traditional tonality.
SFORZANDO *sf*	With accent.
SORDINO	Muted.
SOSTENUTO	Sustained.
SOTTO	Under; beneath.
STACCATO	Detached; separated.
STRINGENDO	Hurried; accelerated.
STROPHE	Music repeated for each verse of an aria.
SYNCOPATION	Shifting the beat forward or back from its usual place in the bar; it is a temporary displacement of the regular metrical accent in music caused typically by stressing the weak beat.
TACET	Silent.
TEMPO	Rate of speed.
TONALITY	The organization of all the tones and harmonies of a piece of music in relation to a tonic (the first tone of its scale).
TRISTE	Sad.
TWELVE-TONE	The 12 chromatic tones of the octave placed in a chosen fixed order and constituting with some permitted permutations and derivations the melodic and harmonic material of a serial musical piece. Each note of the chromatic scale is used as part of the melody before any other note gets repeated.
VELOCE	Rapid.
VIBRATO	A "vibration"; a slightly tremulous effect imparted to vocal or instrumental tone for added warmth and expressiveness by slight and rapid variations in pitch.
VIVACE	Brisk; lively.

ambroise thomas and hamlet

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DISCOGRAPHY

EMI CLASSICS	Thomas Hampson, June Anderson, Samuel Ramey (compact disc) London Philharmonic Orchestra and Ambrosian Singers; Antonio de Almeida
EMI CLASSICS	Simon Keenlyside, Natalie Dessay (DVD) Symphony Orchestra and Chorus of the Gran Teatre del Liceu; Bertrand de Billy