



Don Giovanni

STUDY GUIDE
STUDENT DRESS REHEARSAL

INSIDE THE OPERA

The Work/Cast & Creative Team	3
Who's Who	4
The Story of <i>Don Giovanni</i>	5
Conductor's Notes	6
Director's Notes	7
Opera Noir	8
The Many Masterpieces of Mozart	9

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION 10

OPERA 101

What is a Working Dress Rehearsal?	11
Who Are the People Behind the Tables?	12
Behind the Scenes—Jobs at the Opera House	13
The Language of Opera	15
Guide to the Voice Parts and Families of the Orchestra	18
Opera Omaha	19

THE WORK

Don Giovanni

Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart | Libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte

Performed in Italian with English supertitles

First performance: Estates Theater, Prague - October 29, 1787

CREATIVE TEAM



Judith Yan
CONDUCTOR



Kristine McIntyre
DIRECTOR



Marcus Dilliard
LIGHTING DESIGNER



Ronell Oliveri
WIG & MAKEUP DESIGNER

R. Keith Brumley
SCENIC DESIGNER

Mary Traylor
COSTUME DESIGNER

CAST



Craig Verm
DON GIOVANNI



Zachary Nelson
LEPORELLO



Teresa Perrotta
DONNA ANNA



Mary Evelyn Hanglely
DONNA ELVIRA



Erika Baikoff
ZERLINA



Terrence Chin-Loy
DON OTTAVIO



Markel Reed
MASETTO



Andrew Potter
COMMENDATORE

*Opera Omaha debut

WHO'S WHO

CHARACTER		VOICE TYPE	CHARACTER ARC
Don Giovanni (dohn joe-VAHN-nee)	A dashing womanizer	baritone	A notorious womanizer who constantly takes advantage of everyone in his path.
Leporello (leh-por-EHL-low)	Don Giovanni's servant and unwilling accomplice	bass	A moral foil to this master's constant crimes, he dreams of being free from Don Giovanni's servitude.
Donna Elvira (DOHN-nah ehl-VEE-rah)	A woman from Don Giovanni's past	soprano	A former conquest of Don Giovanni's that seeks to hold him accountable for his misdeeds
Donna Anna (DON-nah AHN-nah)	The Commendatore's daughter and Don Ottavio's fiancé	soprano	A victim of Don Giovanni's assault which leads to a duel between her father and Don Giovanni
Commendatore (coh-mend-a-TOR-eh)	Donna Anna's father	bass	A man of honor that refuses to let Don Giovanni continue his ways without a fight.
Don Ottavio (donn oh-TAH-vee-oh)	An honorable young man, engaged to Donna Anna	tenor	A well-meaning man who is loyal and dutiful but ineffective in dealing with Don Giovanni
Zerlina (tsair-LEE-nah)	Masetto's betrothed	soprano	A lovely girl from a lower class that catches the attention of Don Giovanni on her wedding day.
Masetto (mah-ZEHT-toh)	Zerlina's fiancé	bass	A man forced to endure many offenses by Don Giovanni because of his own lower-class status

THE STORY OF *DON GIOVANNI*

SETTING: AMERICA, 1950'S

ACT I

At night, in the street outside the Commendatore's house, Leporello bemoans his fate working for the dissolute Don Giovanni. Suddenly Giovanni runs into the street pursued by Donna Anna, the Commendatore's daughter, who accuses him of trying to attack her. The Commendatore rushes to his daughter's aid and is killed by Giovanni. Anna asks her fiancé, Don Ottavio, to avenge her father's death.

At a café the next morning, Giovanni and Leporello encounter one of Giovanni's former conquests, Donna Elvira, who is still angry at Giovanni's betrayal. Leporello tries to discourage her from pursuing Giovanni by showing her his catalogue with the name of every woman Giovanni has seduced.

Meanwhile, Masetto and Zerlina celebrate their upcoming wedding with friends. Don Giovanni asks Leporello to get rid of the groom. Alone with Zerlina, Giovanni persuades her to come away with him. Before they can leave, Elvira interrupts them and leads Zerlina away. Momentarily thwarted, Giovanni greets the mourning Anna and Ottavio, only to be embarrassed by the persistent Elvira, who denounces him as a seducer. Trying to dismiss her as a madwoman, he ushers Elvira off. Anna, in horror, recognizes him as her father's murderer and calls on Ottavio to avenge her honor.

Later that afternoon, Giovanni looks forward to an evening of partying he has arranged in Zerlina's honor. Zerlina begs the furious Masetto to forgive her. Anna, Ottavio, and Elvira arrive in disguise, swearing vengeance, and Giovanni tells Leporello to invite them in.

Inside Giovanni's nightclub, Leporello distracts Masetto while Giovanni dances with Zerlina, trying to drag her into an adjoining room. When Zerlina cries for help, Anna, Elvira, and Ottavio unmask and confront Giovanni, who escapes.

INTERMISSION

ACT II

Under Elvira's balcony, Leporello exchanges clothes with Giovanni to woo the lady in his master's stead. Giovanni scares Leporello and Elvira off, leaving him free to serenade Elvira's maid. When Masetto arrives with his friends to punish Giovanni, the disguised Don tricks Masetto and beats him up. Zerlina tenderly consoles him.

Elvira follows the disguised Leporello into a dimly lit church. Leporello tries to escape, but is discovered by Anna, Ottavio, Zerlina and Masetto. Mistaking servant for master, they join in denouncing the supposed Don. Leporello reveals his identity and manages to escape. Ottavio asks Zerlina and Masetto to comfort the distraught Anna and go to the authorities for help. Left alone, Elvira thinks about her love for Giovanni in spite of everything.

Leporello finds Giovanni in a cemetery, where a statue commemorating the Commendatore warns Giovanni of his doom. The Don forces the terrified Leporello to invite the statue to dinner only to be surprised by the Commendatore himself.

Ottavio urges Anna to stop grieving and accept his love. She implores him to wait until her father is avenged.

Late that night in the empty club, Giovanni orders Leporello to serve supper. Elvira arrives and attempts to persuade Giovanni to reform his ways, but he sends her away.

In a final confrontation with the Commendatore, Giovanni is finally forced to pay for his crimes.

CONDUCTOR'S NOTE



There are few operas that have the extreme number of emotional and physical casualties as *Don Giovanni*. In under three hours, we witness one murder, two forced and unwanted attentions, three violent transgressions, and four flagrant displays of power structures of great imbalance before coming full circle with a dramatic display of supernatural retribution.

Musically, like all of Mozart's works, this opera is surprising, with an outward simplicity wrapped in deceptive complexity. Listen to his rhythmic structures: while they appear easy, straightforward, they are never, ever predictable. His setting of Da Ponte's text is at times raw and direct, and at others, filled with double meanings. Look into the pit and you will see an orchestra far less in number (and instrumental variation) than you would find in operas of later composers. Yet, Mozart creates an array of colors, emotions, and inventiveness with 40 musicians that would rival an orchestra with far greater forces.

I often thought that if one was fortunate to live long enough, one might meet or even inhabit each character in this opera. Perhaps it is that which makes *Don Giovanni* so universally revered and intriguing: in our most noble moments, we are Don Ottavio and Donna Anna; in our youthful discovery of life's mysteries, we are Zerlina and Masetto; when finding ourselves in confounding and irrational states, we are Donna Elvira; put in circumstances that drive us to shameful, obsequious behavior, we are all Leporello.

And in our darkest and most private moments, whether we are willing to admit or not..."

— Judith Yan

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

**GIOVANNI AS NOIR: MOZART AND DA PONTE'S MASTERPIECE THROUGH A MODERN LENS**

A hero we love to hate. A mysterious woman from his past. Murder and seduction. Retribution and revenge. The themes of a great Hollywood noir film – and the essence of *Don Giovanni*.

It's an opera replete with grey areas, starting with Giovanni's own moral ambiguity, his love/hate relationship with Elvira, his shifts between violence, sensuality, and humor, often in the same scene. Mozart and Da Ponte labeled it a "dramma giocoso," but these days we look at the piece rather differently, given that it begins with attempted rape and murder. We want to indulge in the guilty pleasure of rooting for the Don, though we're supposed to be rooting for those earnest characters working so hard to achieve his downfall. How perfect and how freeing, then, to reexamine this piece through the lens of film noir, a genre built on contradictions and mixed emotions.

In the noir universe, the anti-hero navigates a world built on paranoia and mistrust. Younger characters confront a loss of innocence in a world gone mad, much like Anna and Ottavio, Zerlina, and Masetto. And the city itself often becomes a character, shadowy and forbidding. The characters seem physically and emotionally lost, and so too in *Don Giovanni*, where in the second act everyone is at sea and only the Don finds the calm before the final storm. And that's in a graveyard.

Like any noir anti-hero, Don Giovanni knows he can't run from his past. It always catches up with you – whether in the guise of a beautiful, scorned woman, or the ghost of the father-figure you murdered in cold blood. Call it fate, call it justice, it always gets you in the end.

– Kristine McIntyre

OPERA NOIR



While the vast majorities of operas being performed today were written hundreds of years ago, and the story stays largely unchanged, that doesn't mean that there isn't room for the Director and Conductor of a show to add their own artistic vision to a piece. The setting can be taken out of its original period and reimagined throughout the ages. Set design, costuming, lighting, all these things can be used by a savvy production team to bring new life to a classic piece. Music is sometimes cut with sections removed for time or storytelling purposes. In this particular version of *Don Giovanni*, director Kristine McIntyre has opted to frame the production with a "Noir" style.

Noir is an artistic expression with roots dating back to German expressionist painters. These painters rejected the idea that you had to paint a subject as truthfully as possible to be successful. They instead focused on how to evoke emotions from colors and objects. Opposing colors and jagged lines were often found depicting over simplified subjects. The goal was not to make the audience marvel at the elegance of the subject, but instead to feel or think deeply about the subject, and often times its darker nature.

Noir spread to various other art forms, and in the 1940's many Hollywood producers and directors were using the style to explore the seedy underworld of crime fiction stories. It was particularly suited for these types of stories because of how noir had transformed into an exploration of the world through the lens of brutality, eccentricity, and

ambivalence. Film noir used the principles of stark lighting contrasts between dark and light, and the set design was often minimalistic and gritty. The idea that the story didn't have to be perfect, nor did its characters, was a driving force. There was rarely a true hero of the story, only a protagonist that fought for a good cause though the means used may have been questionable, the anti-hero. The idea of a damsel in distress was also dissolved and replaced with strong female characters that were confident, capable, and sometimes deadly—the femme fatale.

Knowing that not every story has to be pleasing to be evocative, director Kristine McIntyre saw *Don Giovanni*, a comedic opera with very dark undertones, and decided noir was the perfect interpretation. Cruel characters, stark lighting contrast, ominous music, and sharp but simplistic costumes make this a noir story. A story in which we don't know who to cheer for, only against. A story where each character's intentions are shrouded, as they are driven by primal emotions like love and revenge. A story that asks more questions than it answers.

THE MANY MASTERPIECES OF MOZART

Thirty-five years and more than eight hundred completed works, the life of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was short but incredibly prolific and touched nearly every classical genre of music in the 18th century. Born in Salzburg, Austria it wasn't long before the prodigy emerged. He played both the violin and keyboard by the age of five and had begun to compose pieces that were well beyond the skill of his age. At fourteen he toured Europe with his father, performing for nobility and royalty in what would become a fifteen-month-long romp to the most influential cities on the continent.

At seventeen he found himself as a full-time musician performing for the court of Salzburg. Despite having a steady job performing for rich and powerful people, he grew bored and knew that his talents were not being tested. He traveled to France and Germany and back to Austria performing and composing all along the way. He met contemporaries like Haydn and studied masters like Bach and Handel.

Throughout his truncated but illustrious career he composed some of the most lasting works in a wide variety of musical styles, all based on similar principles, and all containing his unique style honed through his constant quest for musical exploration. While most composers of the time found safety in sticking to a few specific genres and perfecting their craft within a narrow lens, Mozart found inspiration everywhere and translated that to a wide variety of compositions across many different genres.

SYMPHONY

An elaborate composition for a full orchestra, typically in four movements [#41 "Jupiter"](#)

CONCERTANTE

Much like the music written for the symphony but with the inclusion of soloist performing with the orchestra [Concerto No. 20 in D Minor](#)

CHAMBER

Written for smaller groups of musicians typically with one performer for each instrument. [Violin Sonata No. 18 in G Minor](#)

OPERA

Pieces that are a collaboration between a composer and librettist. A full-scale dramatic presentation including acting, dance, costuming, and scenery. ["Don Giovanni"](#) ["The Marriage of Figaro"](#)

CHORAL

Pieces that are meant to be sung with or without instrumentation and sung by a choir often times in a secular setting. ["Lacrimosa" Requiem in D Minor.](#)

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

BEFORE YOU GO:

Don Giovanni was written as an Opera Buffa (comedic opera) but was referred to by the librettist Da Ponte as a “dramma giocoso” or a playful drama. These types of operas often revolve around the eccentricity or short comings of a main character and usually include middle or lower-class characters who are mistreated by an upper-class character but ultimately vindicated.

Can you think of any modern stories or shows that would fall into this category?

What do you think the benefit of adding humor to a dramatic piece is? Or drama to a humorous piece?

Why do you think so many operas fall under this category and take to the task of exposing the indiscretions of nobility or commenting on the morals (or lack thereof) in society at the time?

For this staging of *Don Giovanni*, director Kristine McIntyre has decided to take the opera out of its original time and place and instead will use a “Noir” setting made popular by 1940s and 50s Hollywood crime dramas. Noir is best known for its stark contrast of color, morally ambiguous characters, and dark and ominous lighting.

Why do you think a director might decide to change the time and place an opera was originally set for?

If you could see one of your favorite stories take a more serious and dramatic tone, which would it be and why?

If you could change the setting of one of your favorite stories, where would you put the characters in both time and location?

AFTER THE SHOW:

While Don Giovanni is the main character, he is the most hated person in the opera. His many abuses against women and lower-class people finally catch up to him but even then, he doesn't see the need to repent or apologize.

Who were the heroes in this opera and who were the villains? Does the ambiguity of characters make them more or less interesting?

What is the benefit of having a charismatic but ultimately evil main character?

Are there any modern stories of someone who abused their social status or charisma to take advantage of those less fortunate?

Film Noir has a distinct style, both in its storytelling and visuals.

What elements of noir did you recognize in this production?

Where there any specific moments of the opera that stuck with you?

WHAT IS A WORKING DRESS REHEARSAL?

Whether an opera is an original Opera Omaha production, a co-production with one or more companies, a rental from another company, or a revival or remount of an Opera Omaha production, each production must be adjusted for the Orpheum Theater stage. While each department works independently to learn and produce their aspect of the show, it takes tremendous coordination and expense to run through the show with everyone involved.

The final working dress rehearsal is the last time all the elements of the production are brought together before the opening night performance, and the final opportunity for the staff and cast to make adjustments to the on-stage performances, orchestration, sets, costumes, lighting and other technical aspects of the opera. When you attend a dress rehearsal you will see some of the artistic, production, and administrative staff stationed behind computers and other equipment in the seats in front of the orchestra. Occasionally they may stop the performance to give notes to the singers, coordinate with the orchestra conductor, or address a staging or technical concern.

Another characteristic of a working dress rehearsal is that singers sometimes “mark” portions of their vocal parts. This means the singer may not sing out completely through the entire rehearsal. This could be because he or she wants to preserve his/her voice for opening night. In most cases, however, if the dress rehearsal is open to the public, the singers treat the occasion as a performance for the audience present.

On the day of the dress rehearsal, the staff sits in the theater and monitors the performance. Each department is responsible for specific aspects of the production, but there are basic skills that are important for everyone:

TIME MANAGEMENT

Planning well and using time efficiently to accomplish one's goals

A STRONG WORK ETHIC

The desire to work hard and do well in one's job

LIFELONG LEARNING

Continued study in one's chosen field

CREATIVE THINKING

The ability to solve problems as they arise

WHO ARE THE PEOPLE WORKING BEHIND THE TABLES?

ARTISTIC STAFF

This could be the director of artistic administration, the director of production and the artistic planning staff. They act in a supervisory role, in case something goes wrong and a problem needs to be solved.

STAGE DIRECTOR AND ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

The stage director is responsible for the dramatic interpretation of the opera. They will give notes to the assistant director about anything that needs to be changed and will refer to the notes in communicating with the performers.

PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER

The production stage manager communicates all the cues throughout the production including lighting changes, the movement of set pieces, and when the performers enter the stage.

TECHNICAL STAFF

The technical director and their staff supervise the physical elements on stage, such as sets, lights, sound, communications, and video.

LIGHTING DESIGNER AND ASSISTANT LIGHTING DESIGNER

As with the directors, the lighting designer oversees the lights and gives notes to the assistant lighting designer, who is also communicating with the follow spot operators.

COSTUME STAFF

The costume director and wardrobe assistants are present to make any last-minute costume adjustments.

MUSIC STAFF

Because the conductor is working and cannot tell how the orchestra sounds from outside the orchestra pit, one or more music assistants are seated in the theater to monitor the sound and balance from within the house.

EFFECTS AND ANIMATION

If the production has special visual effects, there will be staff to oversee those elements as well.

BEHIND THE SCENES – JOBS AT THE OPERA HOUSE

Opera is one of the most popular forms of art in the world and is growing in popularity in the United States—particularly among young people. The combination of spectacle, music, and drama continues to thrill audiences. Opera is truly an international art form. While each company has its own orchestra and chorus, or group of singers, opera companies all over the world share opera productions (the sets and costumes of opera), and singers travel all over to sing the roles that made them famous. But there is more to opera than famous singers, orchestra, and spectacle. Many people work hard behind the scenes to make each opera performance happen. Opera companies employ administrators and production personnel who are responsible for the productions you see. If you wish to explore careers in the arts, here are some professions at an opera company that might interest you.

CONDUCTOR

Opera companies may have their own resident conductor or may invite guest conductors to conduct specific operas. Conductors are accomplished and highly trained musicians, who often play several instruments and must be able to read music with the fluency of their native language. Not every conductor wants to conduct opera; conducting for the voice is a highly specialized skill. Conductors also specialize in different kinds of music; some conductors are known for early music, others specialize in composers, like Mozart or Rossini, while some are skilled in conducting contemporary or new music. The conductor may have an assistant who accompanies in rehearsals. A chorus master works with the chorus, conducting them in rehearsals and supervises them while they learn the music.

STAGE DIRECTOR

The director is responsible for the overall concept of the production, for the performers' interpretations of their roles, and for moving the action on the stage. Directors choose to set operas in a different time or place or modernize the setting. Directors are usually hired for a specific production, and like conductors, they specialize in different styles. Opera directors often work internationally. The director often works with an assistant who, among other duties, takes staging notes during rehearsals.

SET DESIGNER

The set designer works closely with the director to create the look of the opera. The director determines where and when the opera will take place, and the designer will sketch the locations. They might do this after extensive research. A set designer must know a great deal about construction and materials, for the set must be created to be lightweight, sturdy, and practical. They must also know about light, for the colors for the set must work with the lights illuminating the stage.

COSTUME DESIGNER

The costume designer works closely with both the director and set designer to create the costumes for every character in the opera. The costume designer will draw their ideas for each character. Costume constructors build (or sew) the costumes. Some characters change their costumes many times—a young girl in Act One may be portrayed as an old woman in Act Three—and the designer must develop specific details, down to the kind of fabric to be used, for each costume.

LIGHTING DESIGNER

The lighting designer must be knowledgeable about electricity, color, and theater techniques to create a design that will work for the opera. A lighting designer must be a good draftsman, for they will draw the "light plot," a rendering of every light to be used and its placement in the theater. The lighting designer creates mood, atmosphere, and locale through the clever use of light and color.

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

The technical director oversees all the technical aspects of the company's production. They work with the designers and with the stage crew to make sure the sets, props, and lights are effective and work together.

COSTUME DIRECTOR

The costume director supervises all aspects of costumes working with the costume designer to make sure all requests are met. They also supervise construction of costumes or arrange to buy or rent costumes the company doesn't make, make sure all the costumes fit the singers, and supervise the wardrobe staff who ensure the costumes are kept clean and in good condition.

PRODUCTION MANAGER

The production manager supervises all other aspects of the production, including the stage management staff (see below), wig, make-up, rehearsal schedules, and more.

STAGE MANAGER

Stage managers are responsible for "calling" the show; during the rehearsals and performances, they tell the person who controls the lights when to change them; they tell the person who opens and closes the curtains when to do their job; they tell the performers when to enter and exit stage. They are the boss of the production during performances. There is a team of stage managers for opera productions, and usually a PSM, or production stage manager leads that team with at least one ASM, or assistant stage manager.

WIG AND MAKE-UP MASTER

Just like in the movies, opera singers wear make-up on stage. Sometimes the make-up is elaborate (a young singer must be made-up to look old, for example) and sometimes it is simple. In order for the singers' faces to be seen under bright

lights and in a large auditorium, all must wear make-up. Wigs are often used, even when the singers' own hair will look fine, because it is easier for the wig master to set the wig than it is to set the singer's own hair.

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Opera companies are usually headed by a General Director. There may also be a Chief Operating Officer or Managing Director who oversees operations and functions of marketing and fundraising. Other members of the staff include the Director of Artistic Administration, who casts singers in their roles and negotiates with their agents, the Marketing Director who is in charge of advertising, public relations, and selling tickets, the Development Director who is in charge of raising money (operas are very expensive to produce—ticket sales cover less than half of the what it actually costs!), the Finance Director who oversees budgets and money, and the Engagement Programs Director who is in charge of programs for schools and the community. The number and roles of artist administrative staff vary widely from company to company.

THE LANGUAGE OF OPERA

Acoustics	The science of sound; the qualities of sound in an enclosed space.
Act	Main sections of a play or opera.
Aria	A song for solo voice in an opera used to express feelings or comment on the story.
Baritone	The middle male voice; often cast as kings, priests, and villains. This voice type is higher than a bass but lower than a tenor.
Bass	The lowest male voice; often cast as comic roles and older men.
Bel Canto	A genre and style of opera most popular in the early 19th century that has long flowing melodies and lots of vocal embellishment.
Bravo	Italian meaning “well done”; opera tradition calls for the audience to shout “bravo!” at the end of an excellent performance.
Choreography	A dance or the making of a dance; some operas include dance sequences.
Chorus	A group of singers usually divided into sections of sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses; the opera chorus often represents the general community, who comments on the story and sometimes voices the thoughts, fears and suspicions of the audience.
Composer	The person who writes the music of an opera or other musical compositions.
Conductor	As the musical director of the opera, the conductor leads both the orchestra and the singers.
Contralto	The lowest female singing voice.
Cover	A replacement for a singer in case of illness; an understudy.
Crescendo	Meaning “growing,” used as a musical direction to indicate that the music is to get gradually louder.
Director	The person responsible for the dramatic interpretation of opera.
Duet	A song for two voices.
Dynamics	The degree of loudness and softness in music.
Ensemble	A French word that means “together”; a group performing together.
Finale	The ending segment of an act or scene, often very lively.
Forte (f)	Italian for “strong” or “loud.” An indication to perform at a loud volume, but not as loudly as fortissimo.
Fortissimo (ff)	Very loudly. The trombones love this.

Grand Opera	Popular from the 19th century through the present, grand opera combines chorus and ballet with other elements of spectacle.
Intermission	A break between the acts of an opera. The lights go on and the audience is free to move around.
Leitmotif	A recurring musical theme, often a short melody (but also can be a chord progression or rhythm), associated with a particular character, place or idea.
Libretto	The text of an opera; literally, "a little book."
Librettist	The person who writes the libretto.
Melody	A succession of musical tones (i.e., notes not sounded at the same time), often prominent and singable.
Mezzo-soprano	Middle range female voice.
Musical	A staged story told by interweaving songs and music with spoken dialogue.
Opera	A play which is sung.
Opera Buffa	A comedic style of Italian Opera that dominated the early 18th century.
Opera Seria	The noble and "serious" style of Italian opera that rivaled the less-serious Opera Buffa.
Operetta	A light opera, whether full-length or not, often using spoken dialogue. The plots are romantic and improbable, even farcical, and the music tuneful and undemanding.
Orchestra	The group of musicians and trombonists who, led by the conductor, accompany the singers.
Orchestra Pit	The sunken area in front of the stage where the orchestra plays.
Overture	An introduction to the opera played by the orchestra.
Play	A staged story told through spoken dialogue.
Pianissimo (pp)	Very softly. The trombones usually ignore this instruction.
Piano (p)	Meaning "flat," or "low". Softly, or quietly, but not quite as much as pianissimo.
Pitch	The highness/lowness of a sound or tone.
Prima donna	The leading woman singer in an operatic cast or company.
Plot	The story or main idea.
Production	The set, costumes, and other physical elements.
Proscenium	The architectural "frame" of the stage space. The areas hidden from the audience's view, behind the proscenium are called the "wings".

Recitative	A sung speech that moves the action along by providing information.
Score	The written music of the opera or other musical compositions.
Set	The structures, furniture and decoration on stage.
Solo	Music sung by one performer.
Soprano	Highest female voice.
Tempo	The speed of the music.
Tenor	Highest male voice; young men and heroes are often tenors.
Timbre	Quality of a tone, also an alternative term for "tone-color."
Tone-color	The characteristic quality of tone of an instrument or voice.
Trio	Three people singing together; a song for three people.
Verismo	A type of "realism" in Italian opera during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, in which the plot was on a contemporary, often violent, theme.
Volume	A description of how loud or soft a sound is. The trombones do not understand this.
Zarzuela	Popular Spanish opera style that mixes dialogue with music, similar to American musical theater.

A GUIDE TO VOICE PARTS & ORCHESTRA FAMILIES

VOICE PARTS

SOPRANO

Sopranos have the highest voices, and usually play the heroines of an opera. This means they often sing many arias and fall in love and/or die more often than other treble voice types.

MEZZO-SOPRANO OR MEZZO

This is the middle treble voice, and has a darker, warmer sound than the soprano. Mezzos often play mothers and villainesses, although sometimes they are cast as seductive heroines. Mezzos also play young men on occasion, aptly called “pants roles” or “trouser roles.”

CONTRALTO OR ALTO

Contralto, or alto, is the lowest treble voice. Contralto is a rare voice type. Altos usually portray older females, or witches.

COUNTERTENOR

This is the highest non-treble voice, and another vocal rarity. Countertenors sing in a similar range as a contralto. Countertenor roles are most common in baroque opera, but some contemporary composers also write parts for countertenors.

TENOR

If there are no countertenors on stage, then the highest non-treble voice in opera is the tenor. Tenors are usually the heroes who win their love’s heart or die horribly in the attempt.

BARITONE

The middle non-treble voice. In comic opera, the baritone is often a schemer, but in tragic opera, they are more likely to play the villain.

BASS

The lowest non-treble voice. Low voices usually suggest age and wisdom in serious opera, and basses usually play kings, fathers, and grandfathers. In comic opera, basses often portray old characters that are foolish or laughable.

FAMILIES OF THE ORCHESTRA

STRINGS: violins, violas, cellos, double basses

WOODWIND: piccolos, flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons

BRASS: trumpets, trombones, French horns, tubas

PERCUSSION: bass drum, kettle drums, timpani, xylophones, piano, bells, gongs, cymbals, chimes

OPERA OMAHA HISTORY

For over 60 years Opera Omaha has brought audiences outstanding production quality, artistry, and educational opportunities. Today, a strong blend of traditional and innovative programming continues to engage the Omaha community through opera.

Opera Omaha began in 1958 as the Omaha Civic Opera Society, an all-volunteer community opera association. By the early 1970s, the company became fully professional, and its name was changed to Opera Omaha. In 1975, Opera Omaha moved performances to the historic Orpheum Theater.

The company holds a commitment to high production standards. Throughout the years, Opera Omaha has commissioned numerous new productions utilizing innovative production techniques and engaging visual artists such as Jun Kaneko. These productions have garnered interest from other opera companies and have raised Opera Omaha's artistic profile nationally and internationally. From 2018-2020, Opera Omaha produced the ONE Festival. With an emphasis on continual experimentation and new work, the ONE festival fostered an environment that encouraged and celebrated bold risks and transformative storytelling with familiar stories and new realms of cinema, poetry, costume design and interactive, participatory music-making.

Opera Omaha has also presented educational and engagement programming in schools and communities throughout the region for the last three decades. With a vision for the company that includes a balanced program of operas annually with an expansion of the company's civic footprint beyond the doors of the Orpheum Theater, the Holland Community Opera Fellowship was created in 2017. The Holland Community Opera Fellowship works collaboratively with community partners to co-create programming that helps individuals, organizations, and communities reach their goals, serving as a creative and artistic resource to the community. Through its extensive programming, Opera Omaha serves individuals from eastern Nebraska, western Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and the southeastern Dakotas, while also drawing national visitors.

MISSION STATEMENT

Opera Omaha is a growth-minded, high energy, and innovative company with a demanding mission: producing opera performances in multiple formats and styles and co-creating artist-led programs for a variety of community service organizations. We believe the power of opera is transformational, and as a result supports the creation of an inventive, creative, empathetic, and inclusive community that inspires joy, self-discovery, kinder discourse, and opportunity for all.

Since 1958 Opera Omaha has been led by devotion to two elements: Art and Community. Everything we've done, and continue to do, is guided by the hope that through this work we can ask questions, enrich lives and uplift our city.

Learn more about Opera Omaha and educational opportunities at operaomaha.org