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Il
Trovatore
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STUDY GUIDE

2008-2009 SEASON

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IL TROVATORE

by

Giuseppe Verdi

Libretto by

Salvatore Cammarano

based on the Spanish drama *El Trovador*
by Antonio García Gutiérrez

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IL TROVATORE

Premiere

First performance at Teatro Apollo in Rome, Italy, on January 19, 1853.

Cast of Characters

Manrico , the Troubadour	Tenor
Leonora , lady-in-waiting to the Princess of Aragon	Soprano
Azucena , a Vizcayan gypsy woman	Mezzo Soprano
Count di Luna , a young nobleman of Aragon.....	Baritone
Ferrando , an officer in Count di Luna's army	Bass
Inez , confidante of Leonora.....	Soprano
An old gypsy.....	Bass
Soldiers and gypsies.....	Chorus

Brief Summary

Setting: The provinces of Vizcaya and Aragon in northern Spain in the 15th Century.

While on guard duty, Ferrando relates the history of the old Count's baby son who was thrown into a flaming pyre by a gypsy woman who was avenging her mother's death. The current Count di Luna (the brother of the long-lost baby) is in love with the noblewoman Leonora. Leonora is in love with a mysterious man who sings beneath her window, the troubadour Manrico. The Count burns with jealousy. The two men meet and fight. Manrico is severely wounded.

Manrico recuperates in the mountains with his mother Azucena and her gypsy band. Azucena is obsessed with her mother's fiery death many years earlier. She reminisces about the event and relates how she stole the old Count's baby son and threw him into her mother's funeral pyre. Lost in her thoughts she unwittingly reveals that she actually threw her own baby son into the fire by mistake. Manrico is puzzled and questions his parentage. Azucena lies to cover her slip.

Manrico departs to prevent Leonora, who believes Manrico is dead, from entering a convent. Azucena is captured by the Count and is recognized by Ferrando as the gypsy woman who years earlier had thrown the Count's baby brother into the pyre. She is sentenced to be burned at the stake. Manrico, who is about to marry Leonora, is told of his mother's capture. He rallies his men to rescue Azucena. In the rescue attempt Manrico is captured. He and Azucena both await execution. With all hope gone, Leonora takes poison and dies before the Count can claim her. In a fury the Count executes Manrico, forcing Azucena to watch. Triumphant, Azucena tells the Count that he has killed his own brother. Azucena cries out that her mother's death has finally been avenged.

Full Plot Synopsis and Musical Highlights

Act I (The Duel)

IL TROVATORE is organized into four subtitled acts, each of which has two scenes. A brief introduction sets the mood for the opening scene showing the Count di Luna's soldiers on guard duty at his fortress. To pass the time and to keep the men awake, their officer Ferrando tells them a story that is the first of many character-defining arias. Ferrando sings the narrative, "**Abbieta zingara,**" (**There stood a gypsy**), the true and grisly tale of the Count di Luna's younger brother. The melody contains two regular two-bar phrases that fall from an accented first beat. The descending line of the initial phrase conveys stealth and mystery, and the repeated thrust of the accented notes weaves the hypnotic spell of a ghost story. Ferrando relates that when the child was a baby an old gypsy hag was found one morning crouching by his cradle, staring at him with wild and bloodshot eyes. She was arrested even though she said she only wanted to cast the baby's horoscope. When the child became pale and sick within a few days, she was accused of bewitching him and was sentenced to burn at the stake. As she was dying in the flames she screamed to her horrified daughter to avenge her.

Immediately afterward the "bewitched baby" was kidnapped and later a child's bones were found smoldering in the ashes of the gypsy witch's funeral pyre. The baby's father, the old Count di Luna, refused to believe that these were the bones of his son. On his deathbed he charged his older son, the present Count, to continue searching for his younger brother and to try to find the gypsy witch's daughter who kidnapped him. Ferrando, finishing the story, vows that he would remember the woman's face even after all these years. The superstitious soldiers are horrified by the story and as midnight strikes they react in terror and curse the witch.

The following scene instantly contrasts with the first, introducing the noblewoman Leonora with lush, sustained strings. Lady Leonora, a beautiful lady-in-waiting to the Princess of Aragon, is strolling in the garden with her companion Inez. She sings of her love for a troubadour - a mysterious man in black armor whose name she does not know - in the aria, "**Tacea la notte,**" (**Twas night and all was still**). The aria demonstrates her romantic character with its long, calm, sustained lines and regular accompaniment. She talks rapturously of the man she loves. He is a wandering troubadour who serenades frequently under her window. She muses on the first time she met him. He took part in a court tournament, dressed mysteriously, wearing black armor, and when he won, it was Leonora who placed the victor's wreath on his brow. From that moment on she has been in love with him and has been thrilled to hear her name in his troubadour's songs sung beneath her window.

Leonora and Inez go inside and the Count di Luna appears in the garden. Insanely in love with Leonora, he keeps a nightly vigil outside her window hoping for a glimpse of her. We are introduced to Manrico as he serenades Leonora from afar in the romantic aria, "**Deserto sulla terra,**" (**Lonely I wander the earth**). His off-stage voice, accompanied by harp, creates a plaintive sound that clearly identifies him as the troubadour. The simple phrases of his song are elaborated with melismatic figures in the vocal line that is suggestive of a Moorish influence. Leonora rushes outside, initially mistakes the Count for the troubadour in the shadows, and then announces before both men that it is the troubadour she adores. Once Leonora announces her love for Manrico, the scorned Count reacts forcefully and demands he reveal his name. The troubadour then reveals his identity as Manrico, a civil war foe of the Count. He is, in fact, leader of the opposing troops.

Infuriated, the Count challenges Manrico to a duel and is joined by a musically-united Leonora and Manrico in an impassioned trio. The trio ends the first act as the men rush off to fight.

Act II (The Gypsy)

The first scene of the second act takes place in the gypsy camp. The gypsies greet daybreak with a drinking song, the rousing and well-known **Anvil Chorus**. The hammer blows on the anvil occur on the second and fourth beats of the choral measure. As finish, a gypsy woman named Azucena begins to sing, as though remembering past events, of the horrible burning death of an old gypsy woman. She murmurs the words, "Avenge me." Her son, Manrico the troubadour, has been resting by the fire recovering from wounds he received in his duel with the Count di Luna. He moves closer and asks Azucena to tell him more about the gypsy who burned to death. She tells the full story, revealing that it was her own mother who was burned. These past events are brought into sharper focus by Azucena's next aria, "**Condotta ell'era in ceppi,**" (**In chains they bound her**), a trance-like narrative accompanied by the piercing sound of the oboe and a stabbing, repeated figure in the strings. This aria, sung to Manrico, identifies Azucena's mother as the gypsy put to death by the old Count and relates how Azucena retaliated. The same story was told by Ferrando early in the first act. Musically the two arias resemble one another, accented in the same manner and containing similar rhythmic turns. Their diverse points of view define crucial aspects of two characters and illuminate the underlying psychology and irony of the plot.

In a desperate attempt to avenge an unjust execution, Azucena had kidnapped the Count's baby son, planning to throw him into the flames. She continues, in a trance-like state, saying that in her hysterical confusion she threw her own baby son into the fire. Manrico becomes suspicious at once of his true relationship to Azucena, but she hastily covers up the revelation she has made, insisting that he is indeed her own son. Changing the subject, she chides him for not killing the Count di Luna when he had the chance. A messenger suddenly arrives to say that Leonora, believing Manrico to be dead in the duel with the Count, is about to enter a convent and take the veil. Even though Manrico is still weak from his wounds, he rushes off to stop her before she takes her vows.

The Count di Luna, Ferrando and a few soldiers have just arrived at the convent to prevent Leonora from taking her vows in the second scene of Act II. The Count sings "**Il balen del suo sorriso,**" (**Ah could I behold those glances**), another character-defining aria which reveals the extent of Count di Luna's jealous rage. The aria and the following *cabaletta* show a combination of romantic love (in the aria) and irrational passion for Leonora that borders on insanity (in the *cabaletta*). As the Count tries to pull Leonora away from the altar, Manrico and some of his soldiers appear. Leonora is overwhelmed with joy that her beloved is still alive and leaves with Manrico after the Count and his men are driven back. Di Luna is now almost senseless with jealousy and anger.

Act III (The Gypsy's Son)

Count di Luna's forces are preparing for battle with their enemies in the civil war, led by Manrico. However, Di Luna is far more preoccupied with thoughts of Leonora than with concern for the up-coming battle. At that moment the gypsy Azucena is brought in. As she is questioned she explains that she is simply wandering about looking for her son, Manrico. Ferrando suddenly recognizes her as the daughter of the gypsy witch burned at the stake long ago. The Count places her under arrest, delighted at the thought that he can now use the life of Azucena as a weapon against her son, and his rival, Manrico.

Manrico and Leonora are about to be married in the chapel of the convent. Manrico's aria, **"Ah sì, ben mio," (Ah, yes! Thou'rt mine)**, a refined and elegant expression of his joy at the upcoming nuptials has the mood, elegance, phrase structure and accompaniment of a Mozart aria. He sings joyously of their love, claiming it will sustain him in the battles to come. Manrico's aria is followed by a short sequence between Manrico and Leonora voicing the joys of pure love. The sequence is interrupted by news of Azucena's capture by the Count's men. The wedding immediately takes second place to the rescue attempt. In Manrico's words, "I was her son before I was your lover." The finale of this tumultuous scene is the famous *cabaletta*, **"Di quella pira," (Of that pyre)**, Manrico's cry of war against his enemy, the Count di Luna. The emphatically repeated notes in the vocal line show his determination and explosive rage. The aggressive accompaniment displays an accented military effect as Manrico rallies his men and rushes off in an attempt to save his mother. Manrico and Leonora are fated never to marry but enjoy only the idealized form of love championed by medieval troubadours in their songs.

Act IV (The Ordeal)

The deep tones of low clarinet and bassoon open Act IV to a scene of night and gloom. Manrico's capture and imminent execution has brought Leonora to Count di Luna's fortress determined to save him. Leonora begins with the aria, **"D'amor sull'ali rosee," (Breeze of the night)**, invoking the soft breezes to convey her presence to Manrico in his prison cell. As she finishes the aria the bell tolls and monks intone their prayers for the condemned prisoners. Thus begins the great **"Miserere" (Mercy)** scene, an extended ensemble between Leonora, a chorus of monks, and the voice of Manrico heard from his prison cell. Leonora expresses her anguish and fear accompanied by a throbbing ostinato in the orchestra and punctuated by the voice of Manrico bidding farewell to Leonora. Verdi weaves all three separate elements and the orchestra together into one of the most musically dramatic high points in opera.

The Count di Luna, giving orders for the double execution of Manrico and Azucena, enters and is stopped by Leonora. She begs him to release Manrico. When he refuses she offers the one thing remaining that might change his mind - herself. Exultantly the Count agrees to release Manrico. As he turns aside to give new orders, Leonora secretly swallows poison from a suicide ring she is wearing. The two leave together and enter the tower prison.

The final scene of the opera moves quickly in through-composed fashion. Azucena and Manrico await execution in their prison cell. Azucena cannot sleep and is tormented by visions of her mother's fiery death. Manrico soothes her gently and urges her to sleep. They sing of the tranquility and peace of their home in the mountains, **"Ai nostri monti," (To our mountains)**. Leonora enters suddenly but interrupts Manrico's joyous greetings by urging him to leave quickly and save himself. When she will not go with him, he suspects that she has made a bargain with the Count, giving herself in return for his life. Furious that she has betrayed his love, even to save his life, he curses her. She explains that the Count will never have her for she has taken poison. As the poison takes effect she falls lifeless on the floor. The Count di Luna rushes in and realizing what has happened, wildly orders Manrico to the execution block at once. Azucena awakens just as Manrico is about to be executed. She cries out to the Count to spare him, but it is too late. In a hysterical combination of grief and exultation, she tells him that he has executed his own brother. With a wild cry that reaches a high B-flat, Azucena exclaims loudly, **"Sei vendicata, o madre!" (You are avenged, oh mother!)**.

Historical Background

After the Venice premiere of the enormously successful *Rigoletto* in 1851, Verdi turned his attention to a Spanish play written in 1836 by Antonio Garcia Gutiérrez called *El Trovador*. The people and culture of Spain had always fascinated Verdi and this particular play had appeal because it seemed to be a natural sequel to the drama of *Rigoletto*. IL TROVATORE would feature an unconventional female character at the center of the drama that, like *Rigoletto*, was driven by the conflicting emotions of filial love and desire for vengeance.

The well-known librettist Salvatore Cammarano began to set the text, but Verdi's work on the opera was complicated by a variety of personal matters. His mother's death, a prolonged trip to Paris, his father's illness and ultimately, the illness and death of his librettist Cammarano contributed to the slow pace. The poet Leone Emanuele Bardare was engaged to complete the libretto for the unfinished Act III and Act IV and Verdi himself is said to have written the whole of the music in November 1852. The premiere was set for January 19, 1853, in the Teatro Apollo in Rome. Verdi was such an established success he could negotiate for the theater of his choice. He chose the Teatro Apollo because he wanted to be assured of the availability of the best possible mezzo-soprano to sing the pivotal role of Azucena.

The premiere itself was a monumental success even though the audience had to wade through the water and mud of a flooded Tiber River to enter the theater. Any inconvenience the audience might have felt was forgotten once the opera began. The public broke into applause at every opportunity and ultimately insisted that the third act finale and the entire fourth act be repeated before they would allow the curtain to fall!

The popular success of IL TROVATORE has not diminished through succeeding generations and has remained one of the three most popular Verdi operas. The main reason for this seems to be the explosive nature of its dramatic power, seemingly restrained by the formality of its musical structure, but in actuality progressing through the plot with unrelenting focus punctuated by sudden, intense outbursts. The rhythm in both vocal line and accompaniment is compelling, propelling us forward, and anticipating the next stage in the drama. The work has an internal energy that is kindled by the quality and depth of its impassioned music.

IL TROVATORE is an opera of Verdi's "middle period" and was written just after *Rigoletto* and just before *La Traviata*. He was at the height of his powers. The three operas are often compared because IL TROVATORE is considered very conventional in its musical structure while *Rigoletto* and *La Traviata* are considered innovative. It displays a more traditional use of the *bel canto* style in a framework formally composed of separate musical numbers. It also contains great narratives, great contrasts and great passions. The music is so powerful and the sheer wealth of melody so abundant that Verdi seemed to give the *bel canto* style one last magnificent encore. The debate over each opera's relative merit will continue unabated, but it is clear that after IL TROVATORE the *bel canto* style could progress no further. It had seen its finest hour.

The Life of Verdi

Giuseppe Verdi was born in the small village of Le Roncole, Italy, in 1813. His parents belonged to a middle class family of innkeepers, not the illiterate peasant class from which Verdi later liked to present himself. Carlo Verdi was enthusiastic about his son's education. From an early age Giuseppe studied with local teachers, received an old spinet as a gift from his father, and was eventually made the town's official organist. He also entered the *ginnasio* (high school) to study humanities and began formal music lessons with the director of the local Philharmonic Society. Antonio Barezzi, a wealthy merchant and musician, recognized Verdi's musical talent and became his patron, providing financial support and encouragement for many years. With his aid, Verdi applied to the Milan Conservatory, but was refused, partly because he was past the entering age, but mostly for his unorthodox piano technique. Instead, Verdi became the pupil of Vincenzo Lavigna, a former principal conductor at La Scala Opera House in Milan. Beyond this he considered himself largely self-taught.

After completing his studies in 1835, Verdi was appointed *maestro di musica* in Busseto, near his hometown of Le Roncole. He held the post for three years, during which time he also composed, gave private lessons and married his benefactor's daughter. Verdi soon wrote his first opera, *Oberto*, in 1839, and began a professional career marked by continual rounds of negotiations with theaters and librettists, and intense periods of composition and preparation for the production of his work. Tragedy struck with the deaths of his wife and two children, causing him to nearly renounce composition altogether. However *Nabucco*, his next premiere, was an unprecedented success. In what is referred to as his "galley slave" years (1842-1853), Verdi arduously wrote sixteen operas--an average of one every nine months. *Rigoletto*, *Il Trovatore*, and *La Traviata* from the end of this period soon became cornerstones of the Italian operatic repertory.

Verdi's accumulated wealth granted him greater artistic freedom. In the second half of his life he would only compose eight more operas. He spent most of his time away from the theater, now married to his companion of many years, the former soprano Giuseppina Strepponi. In 1859 the public honored Verdi's patriotism by using his name as an acronym to spell out *V*ittorio *E*manuele *R*e *D'*Italia, king of the newly united independent Italy.

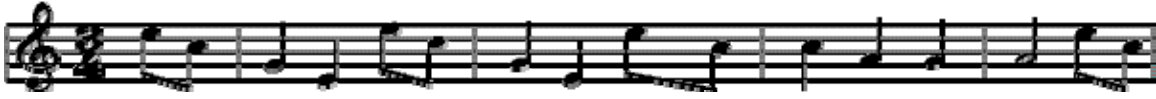
He was nearing the age of sixty when he produced *Aida* in 1871 to commemorate the opening of the Suez Canal. With *Aida*, Verdi achieved that fusion of French and Italian opera traditions that he had long desired. The death of his friend, the great writer Alessandro Manzoni, would inspire him to write the magnificent *Messa da Requiem* in 1874. After a period of general disillusionment and unhappiness, Verdi regained the will to compose during his later years. He subsequently composed two of his greatest masterpieces, *Otello* in 1887 and *Falstaff* in 1893.

Although many of Verdi's operas had disappeared from the repertory by the time of his death in 1901, he had nevertheless become a profound artistic symbol of Italy's achievement of statehood. It is said that during Verdi's funeral thousands of mourners paid homage by spontaneously singing "Va pensiero," a chorus from *Nabucco* written some sixty years earlier. "Va pensiero" expressed the public's deep feelings and the extent to which Verdi's music had been assimilated into the Italian consciousness.

Discussion Questions

1. In an opera full of contrasts, discuss the contrast between the two female leading roles – Leonora and Azucena.
2. Leonora’s signature music is lyrical and romantic with long phrasing. Azucena’s signature music is characterized by short punctuated phrases – how does this musical treatment help define their characters?
3. Discuss the contrast between two male leading roles – Manfredo and Count di Luna.
4. Did Azucena care more for Manfredo as a son or as a tool of revenge?
5. Was Manfredo more loyal to his “mother” Azucena or to his love, Leonora?
6. What is the name of the chorus that opens Act II? Why has the tune remained so recognizable and popular over the years?
7. IL TROVATORE is one of the most parodied operas in the operatic repertoire. Why do you think this is so?
8. The great Act IV ensemble scene called the “Miserere” is comprised of four elements skillfully combined by the composer, Giuseppe Verdi. What are these four elements?

(the orchestra, the chorus of monks, Leonora, and the voice of Manfredo)
9. The overall tone, or color of the music, called *tinta*, contributes to the general mood of the opera. How would you characterize the *tinta* of IL TROVATORE?
10. Manfredo is a troubadour. How does the romance and postponed marriage between Manfredo and Leonora reflect the ideals of the troubadour?
11. The story of IL TROVATORE contains multiple ironies. Name some of them.
12. The opera is rife with the imagery of fire and burning. This can be a description of events or can describe feelings and emotions. How many instances of this imagery can you recall and which characters are most associated with this practice?
13. In the storyline of the opera how do the events of the past impact the present?
14. There is much use of narrative to provide context and background information. Which characters use narrative and what information is provided?



A Short History of Opera

The word *opera* is the plural form of the Latin word *opus*, which translates quite literally as *work*. The use of the plural form alludes to the plurality of art forms that combine to create an operatic performance. Today we accept the word *opera* as a reference to a theatrically based musical art form in which the drama is propelled by the sung declamation of text accompanied by a full symphony orchestra.

Opera as an art form can claim its origin with the inclusion of incidental music that was performed during the tragedies and comedies popular during ancient Greek times. The tradition of including music as an integral part of theatrical activities expanded in Roman times and continued throughout the Middle Ages. Surviving examples of liturgical dramas and vernacular plays from Medieval times show the use of music as an “insignificant” part of the action as do the vast mystery and morality plays of the 15th and 16th centuries. Traditional view holds that the first completely sung musical drama (or opera) developed as a result of discussions held in Florence in the 1570s by an informal academy known as the *Camerata* which led to the musical setting of Rinuccini’s drama, *Dafne*, by composer, Jacopo Peri in 1597.

The work of such early Italian masters as Giulio Caccini and Claudio Monteverdi led to the development of a through-composed musical entertainment comprised of *recitative* sections (*secco* and *accompagnato*) which revealed the plot of the drama; followed by *da capo arias* which provided the soloist an opportunity to develop the emotions of the character. The function of the *chorus* in these early works mirrored that of the character of the same name found in Greek drama. The new “form” was greeted favorably by the public and quickly became a popular entertainment.

Opera has flourished throughout the world as a vehicle for the expression of the full range of human emotions. Italians claim the art form as their own, retaining dominance in the field through the death of Giacomo Puccini in 1924. Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, Verdi, and Leoncavallo developed the art form through clearly defined periods that produced *opera buffa*, *opera seria*, *bel canto*, and *verismo*. The Austrian Mozart also wrote operas in Italian and championed the *singspiel* (sing play), which combined the spoken word with music, a form also used by Beethoven in his only opera, *Fidelio*. Bizet (*Carmen*), Offenbach (*Les Contes d’Hoffmann*), Gounod (*Faust*), and Meyerbeer (*Les Huguenots*) led the adaptation by the French which ranged from the *opera comique* to the grand full-scale *tragedie lyrique*. German composers von Weber (*Der Freischütz*), Richard Strauss (*Ariadne auf Naxos*), and Wagner (*Der Ring des Nibelungen*) developed diverse forms such as *singspiel* to through-composed spectacles unified through the use of the *leitmotif*. The English *ballad opera*, Spanish *zarzuela* and Viennese *operetta* helped to establish opera as a form of entertainment, which continues to enjoy great popularity throughout the world.

With the beginning of the 20th century, composers in America diverged from European traditions in order to focus on their own roots while exploring and developing the vast body of the country’s folk music and legends. Composers such as Aaron Copland, Douglas Moore, Carlisle Floyd, Howard Hanson, and Robert Ward have all crafted operas that have been presented throughout the world to great success. Today, composers John Adams, Philip Glass, and John Corigliano enjoy success both at home and abroad and are credited with the infusion of new life into an art form, which continues to evolve even as it approaches its fifth century.



The Operatic Voice

A true (and brief) definition of the “operatic” voice is a difficult proposition. Many believe the voice is “born,” while just as many hold to the belief that the voice is “trained.” The truth lies somewhere between the two. Voices that can sustain the demands required by the operatic repertoire do have many things in common. First and foremost is a strong physical technique that allows the singer to sustain long phrases through the control of both the inhalation and exhalation of breath. Secondly, the voice (regardless of its size) must maintain a resonance in both the head (mouth, sinuses) and chest cavities. The Italian word “*squillo*” (squeal) is used to describe the brilliant tone required to penetrate the full symphony orchestra that accompanies the singers. Finally, all voices are defined by both the actual voice “type” and the selection of repertoire for which the voice is ideally suited.

Within the five major voice types (*Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, Tenor, Baritone, Bass*) there is a further delineation into categories (*Coloratura, Lyric, Spinto, and Dramatic*) which help to define each particular instrument. The *Coloratura* is the highest within each voice type whose extended upper range is complimented by extreme flexibility. The *Lyric* is the most common of the “types.” This instrument is recognized more for the exceptional beauty of its tone rather than its power or range. The *Spinto* is a voice which combines the beauty of a lyric with the weight and power of a *Dramatic*, which is the most “powerful” of the voices. The *Dramatic* instrument is characterized by the combination of both incredible volume and “steely” intensity.

While the definition presented in the preceding paragraph may seem clearly outlined, many voices combine qualities from each category, thus carving a unique niche in operatic history. Just as each person is different from the next, so is each voice. Throughout her career Maria Callas defied categorization as she performed and recorded roles associated with each category in the soprano voice type. Joan Sutherland as well can be heard in recordings of soprano roles as diverse as the coloratura Gilda in *Rigoletto* to the dramatic Turandot in *Turandot*. Below is a very brief outline of voice types and categories with roles usually associated with the individual voice type.

	<i>Coloratura</i>	<i>Lyric</i>	<i>Spinto</i>	<i>Dramatic</i>
<i>Soprano</i>	Norina (Don Pasquale) Gilda (Rigoletto) Lucia (Lucia di Lammermoor)	Liu (Turandot) Mimi (La Bohème) Pamina (Magic Flute)	Tosca (Tosca) Amelia (A Masked Ball) Leonora (Il Trovatore)	Turandot (Turandot) Norma (Norma) Elektra (Elektra)
<i>Mezzo-Soprano</i>	Rosina (Barber of Seville) Angelina (La Cenerentola) Dorabella (Così fan tutte)	Carmen (Carmen) Charlotte (Werther) Giulietta (Hoffmann)	Santuzza (Cavalleria) Adalgisa (Norma) The Composer (Ariadne auf Naxos)	Azucena (Il Trovatore) Ulrica (A Masked Ball) Herodias (Salome)
<i>Tenor</i>	Count Almaviva (Barber of Seville) Don Ottavio (Don Giovanni) Ferrando (Così fan tutte)	Alfredo (La Traviata) Rodolfo (La Bohème) Tamino (Magic Flute)	Calaf (Turandot) Pollione (Norma) Cavaradossi (Tosca)	Dick Johnson (Fanciulla) Don Jose (Carmen) Otello (Otello)
<i>Baritone</i>	Figaro (Barber of Seville) Count Almavira (Marriage of Figaro) Dr. Malatesta (Don Pasquale)	Marcello (La Bohème) Don Giovanni (Don Giovanni) Sharpless (Madama Butterfly)	<i>Verdi Baritone</i> Germont (La Traviata) Di Luna (Il Trovatore) Rigoletto (Rigoletto)	Scarpia (Tosca) Jochanaan (Salome) Jack Rance (Fanciulla)
<i>Bass</i>	Bartolo (Barber of Seville) Don Magnifico (Cenerentola) Dr. Dulcamara (Elixir of Love)	Leporello (Don Giovanni) Colline (La Bohème) Figaro (Marriage of Figaro)	<i>Buffo Bass</i> Don Pasquale (Don Pasquale) Don Alfonso (Così fan tutte)	<i>Basso Cantate</i> Oroveso (Norma) Timur (Turandot) Sarastro (Magic Flute)

Opera Production

Opera is created by the combination of myriad art forms. First and foremost are the actors who portray characters by revealing their thoughts and emotions through the singing voice. The next very important component is a full symphony orchestra that accompanies the singing actors and actresses, helping them to portray the full range of emotions possible in the operatic format. The orchestra performs in an area in front of the singers called the orchestra pit while the singers perform on the open area called the stage. Wigs, costumes, sets and specialized lighting further enhance these performances, all of which are designed, created, and executed by a team of highly trained artisans.

The creation of an opera begins with a dramatic scenario crafted by a playwright or dramaturg who alone or with a librettist fashions the script or libretto that contains the words the artists will sing. Working in tandem, the composer and librettist team up to create a cohesive musical drama in which the music and words work together to express the emotions revealed in the story. Following the completion of their work, the composer and librettist entrust their new work to a conductor who with a team of assistants (repetiteurs) assumes responsibility for the musical preparation of the work. The conductor collaborates with a stage director (responsible for the visual component) in order to bring a performance of the new piece to life on the stage. The stage director and conductor form the creative spearhead for the new composition while assembling a design team which will take charge of the actual physical production.

Set designers, lighting designers, costume designers, wig and makeup designers and even choreographers must all be brought “on board” to participate in the creation of the new production. The set designer combines the skills of both an artist and an architect using “blueprint” plans to design the actual physical set which will reside on the stage, recreating the physical setting required by the storyline. These blueprints are turned over to a team of carpenters who are specially trained in the art of stage carpentry. Following the actual building of the set, painters following instructions from the set designers’ original plans paint the set. As the set is assembled on the stage, the lighting designer works with a team of electricians to throw light onto both the stage and the set in an atmospheric as well as practical way. Using specialized lighting instruments, colored gels and a state of the art computer, the designer along with the stage director create a “lighting plot” by writing “lighting cues” which are stored in the computer and used during the actual performance of the opera.

During this production period, the costume designer in consultation with the stage director has designed appropriate clothing for the singing actors and actresses to wear. These designs are fashioned into patterns and crafted by a team of highly skilled artisans called cutters, stitchers, and sewers. Each costume is specially made for each singer using his/her individual measurements. The wig and makeup designer, working with the costume designer, designs and creates wigs which will complement both the costume and the singer as well as represent historically accurate “period” fashions.

As the actual performance date approaches, rehearsals are held on the newly crafted set, combined with costumes, lights, and orchestra in order to ensure a cohesive performance that will be both dramatically and musically satisfying to the assembled audience.

