

# Learn to speak Opera!

## An Operatic Glossary

**ARIA** - An extended musical piece for solo voice; in opera, it's usually when a character expresses his or her emotions in regards to a particular situation in the plot.

**CHOREOGRAPHER** - The member of an opera's production team who is responsible for the creation of dance steps and movement which will be performed as part of the opera.

**CHORUS** - An ensemble of mixed voices (soprano, alto, tenor, bass) which perform in an opera as villagers, courtiers, servants, or any group of people. Their music is frequently some of the most dramatic in the work.

**COMIC OPERA** - An opera using a light or sentimental subject with a happy ending. To be compared to, but not confused with, **OPERETTA**.

**COMPOSER** - The person responsible for the creation of the music.

**CONDUCTOR - ALSO CALLED MAESTRO** - The person responsible for rehearsing and leading performances of the work. The conductor oversees all musical details of the pieces, from the minutest rhythm questions to large-scale concepts of pacing and musical/dramatic impact.

**DIRECTOR** - The person responsible for creating the **STAGING**, as well as the overall concept and interpretation of the dramaturgical aspects of the work.

**DUET** - A section of the opera performed by two singers.

**DYNAMICS** - A term which is used to describe the range of volume of sound required by the composer; an expressive element of interpretation.

**ENSEMBLE** - A section of the opera which combines many soloists (and frequently chorus) expressing many emotions (often conflicting) simultaneously.

**LIBRETTIST** - The person or persons who create the **LIBRETTO** for an opera.

**LIBRETTO** - Literally, "little book", a term which describes the text or words of an opera.

**OPERA BUFFA** - Derived from the Italian "buffone" or buffoon, a type of opera characterized by comedy, improbable situations and general hilarity.

**OPERA SERIA** - A form of Italian opera from the 18th century, dealing largely with historical Classical figures. These works presented stories from antiquity in a comprehensible format.

**OPERETTA** - A type of comic music theatre which incorporates music, dialogue and dance. The music is frequently in a popular vein and the plot is usually stock comic situations. Operetta is the forerunner of American musical theatre.

**PRODUCTION TEAM** - The group of individuals responsible for the complete look of the show. The team is comprised of the **DIRECTOR**, **CHOREOGRAPHER**, **Set Designer**, **Costume Designer**, **Lighting Designer**, and **Make-up/Wig Designer**.

**PROPS** - Objects used or placed on the stage, excluding scenery.

**STAGING** - The "traffic pattern" through which the director moves the singers through the plot on stage. The staging can be either very literal or quite stylized. The style of staging usually relates directly to the style of the production.