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Opera is for Everyone!

Courtney Caston

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Welcome!

“Seguidilla” from *Carmen* by Georges Bizet



Act III Quartet from *Rigoletto* by Giuseppe Verdi



Opera is for Everyone!

Presentation by Courtney Caston

What is opera

Opera is a form of theater in which music is a fundamental component and dramatic roles are taken by singers.

Such a "work" (the literal translation of the Italian word "opera") is typically a collaboration between a composer and a librettist and incorporates a number of the performing arts, such as acting, scenery, costume, and sometimes dance or ballet.

The performance is typically given in an opera house, accompanied by an orchestra or a smaller musical ensemble, which since the early 19th century has been led by a conductor.

Who wrote the first op

Jacopo Peri's *Dafne* of **1597** with a libretto by Ottavio Rinuccini, was the earliest composition considered opera, as understood today.

Dafne, however, is lost.

A later work by Peri and Rinuccini, *Euridice*, dating from **1600**, is the first opera score to have survived until the present day.

However, the honour of being the first opera still to be regularly performed goes to Claudio Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, composed for the court of Mantua in **1607**.

Who was opera created

Jacopo Peri was employed by the Medici court as a composer, and wrote a number of pieces, including his operas, for various court entertainments.

As mentioned before, Claudio Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* was composed for an exclusive audience at the court of Mantua in 1607.

The Mantua court of the Gonzagas, employers of Monteverdi, played a significant role in the origin of opera employing not only court singers, but also one of the first actual "opera singers", Madama Europa.

You know more
opera than you
think...

Opera's Greatest

“Der Hölle Rache”
from
Die Zauberflöte
by W.A. Mozart



“Habanera”
from
Carmen
by Georges Bizet



“Libiamo, ne' lieti
calici”
from
La Traviata
by Giuseppe Verdi



“La donna è
mobile”
from
Rigoletto
by Giuseppe Verdi



Expanding Our Understanding of Opera

Expanding Our Understanding of

Cruzar la Cara de la Luna (To Cross the Face of the Moon)

Composed by José “Pepe” Martínez
Libretto by Leonard Foglia

A Mariachi opera that Houston Grand
Opera commissioned and premiered in
2010.



Expanding Our Understanding of



X, The Life and Times of Malcolm X

Composed by Anthony Davis
Libretto by Thulani Davis

Originally premiered in 1986 at the New York City Opera. A new production is coming, as part of Michigan Opera Theater's 2021-22 season.

Ben Holt, center, in the title role of "X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X" at New York City Opera in 1986.

Expanding Our Understanding of

Susannah

Music and Libretto by Carlisle Floyd

Susannah first premiered in 1955 at Florida State University.

Susannah is one of the most performed American operas, second to *Porgy and Bess*



Expanding Our Understanding of



The Silver River

Composed by Bright Sheng
Libretto by the playwright David Henry Hwang

The Silver River is a chamber opera combining Western opera, drama, and dance with Chinese opera and virtuosic solo playing of the pipa (Chinese lute).

Premiered at the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival
in 1997,

A scene from Bright Sheng's opera, "The Silver River," presented by the Lincoln Center Festival 2002. Photo: Stephanie Berger.

Expanding Our Understanding of

Frida

Composed by Robert Xavier Rodriguez

Book by Hilary Blecher

Lyrics and monologues by Migdalia Cruz

Frida was commissioned by the American Music Theater Festival (now Prince Music Theater) and premiered in Philadelphia in 1991.



In this scene, Frida Kahlo arrives to the U.S. and attends her first party wearing a traditional Mexican "Tehuana" dress. Photo: Cris Kakol.

Expanding Our Understanding of



Fire Shut Up in My Bones

Composed by Terence Blanchard
Libretto by filmmaker Kasi Lemmons
Based on the book by Charles M. Blow

Opening Night of the Metropolitan Opera's
2021-22 season will be a historic occasion—the
Met's first performance of an opera by a Black
composer.

Operas Based on Literary Works

Operas Based on Shakespeare

There are 200-odd operas based on Shakespeare's plays, about half a dozen of which are among the rare monuments of operatic achievement.

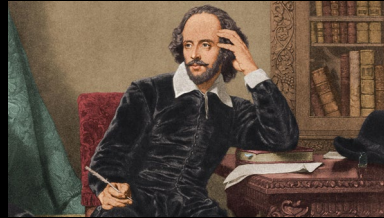
The Fairy Queen (1692)
by Henry Purcell

Macbeth (1847)
by Giuseppe Verdi

The Merry Wives of Windsor (1849)
by Carl Otto Ehrenfried Nicolai

Roméo et Juliette (1867)
by Charles-François Gounod

Hamlet (1868)
by Ambroise Thomas



Otello (1887)
by Giuseppe Verdi

Falstaff (1893)
by Giuseppe Verdi

A Midsummer's Night Dream (1960)
by Benjamin Britten

Antony and Cleopatra (1966)
by Samuel Barber

The Tempest (2004)
by Thomas Adès

Operas Based on Other Literary

Opera has always maintained a very close relationship with literary works.
Many of our most famous operas are based on books!

La Traviata (1853) by Giuseppe Verdi

(Based on romantic novel, *La Dame aux Camélias* by Alexandre Dumas fils.)

Eugene Onegin (1879) by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

(Based novel in verse, *Eugene Onegin* by Alexander Pushkin.)

Manon (1884) by Jules Massenet

(Based on the novel *L'histoire du chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut* by the Abbé Prévost.)

La Bohème (1896) by Giacomo Puccini

(Based on *Scènes de la vie de bohème* by Henri Murger.)

Porgy and Bess (1935) by George Gershwin

(Adapted from Dorothy Heyward and DuBose Heyward's play *Porgy*; itself an adaptation of DuBose Heyward's 1925 novel of the same name.)

Albert Herring (1947) by Benjamin Britten

(Based on Guy de Maupassant's novella *Le Rosier de Madame Husson*)

Billy Budd (1951) by Benjamin Britten

(Based on the short novel *Billy Budd* by Herman Melville.)

Wuthering Heights (1982) by Bernard Herrmann

(Based on the first part of Emily Brontë's novel of the same name.)

Little Women (1998) by Mark Adamo

(Based on Louisa May Alcott's novel of the same name.)

Moby Dick (2010) by Jake Heggie

(Adapted from Herman Melville's 1851 novel *Moby-Dick*.)

“Summertime”

from *Porgy and Bess*
by George Gershwin

Courtney Caston, soprano
Cortez Daniel, piano

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Thank you!