

Lyric

EXPLORE OPERA

Join us as we discover what it takes to bring a performance to life with the **Family Opera Activity Book!**

At the Lyric Opera House, we create **opera**. Opera is a play where music and singing tell the story. Opera also uses visual arts, acting, and sometimes dance to help tell the story on stage.



Opera starts with a story.

The story can come from myths or fairy tales, from literature, like storybooks and novels, or from historical or present-day events. It can even be completely made up!

What stories are in your imagination? Have you ever thought about creating an opera of your very own? What kind of stories would you like to see on Lyric's stage?

In opera, a story gets turned into a script, called a **libretto** [lih-BREH-toe]. A librettist is the person who writes the story of the opera.

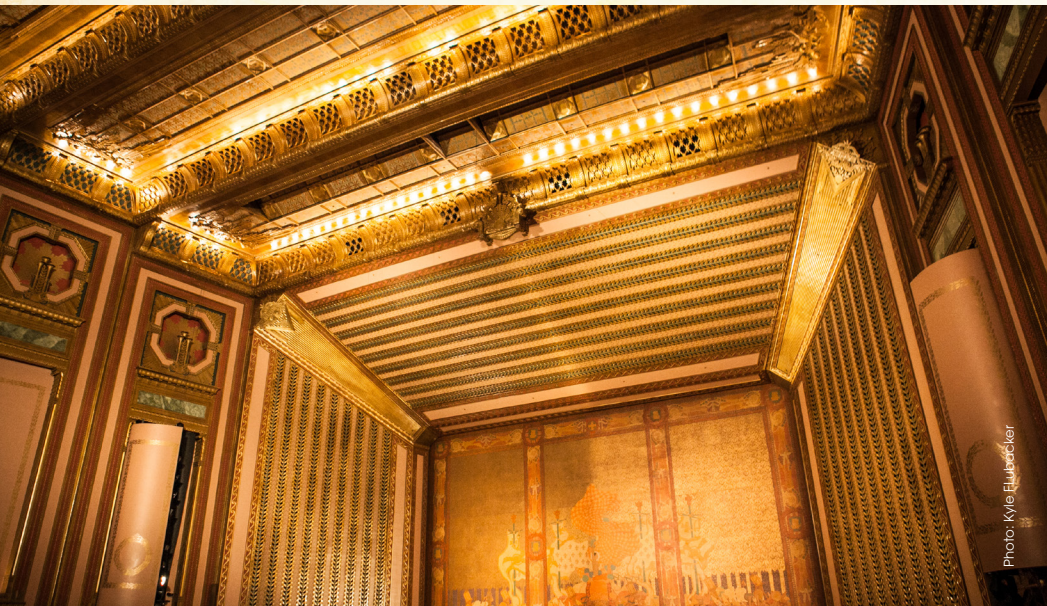


Photo: Kyle Elstobcker



Make your own story:

Some words are missing below. Fill in the blanks to finish the opera story.

Deep in the jungle, there was a smart and courageous

_____ who was exploring an ancient
(person)

_____ . _____
(place/thing) *(person)*

found a magical _____ that turned
(thing)

everything it touched into _____ .
(something valuable)

Suddenly, an evil _____ appeared
(person/animal)

to steal it. The brave _____
(person)

escaped with the _____ using their
(thing)

_____, but as soon as they got outside . . .
(skill)

(Write your own ending to the story.)



Music

The person who writes the music for an opera is called a **composer**.

In opera, the words of the story are sung by performers called **singers**. The singers have different **voices**, too. Some sing very high notes, some sing in the middle, and others sing very low notes.

The composer's music tells the singers what to sing and the **orchestra** what to play.

Music is an important part of telling the story in opera.

The four most common kinds of singers you hear in opera are:

Soprano [soh-PRAH-no]

The highest voice in opera, usually female.

Mezzo-soprano

[MET-soh soh-PRAH-no]

The middle high voice, usually female.

Tenor [TEH-ner]

Usually the highest male voice.

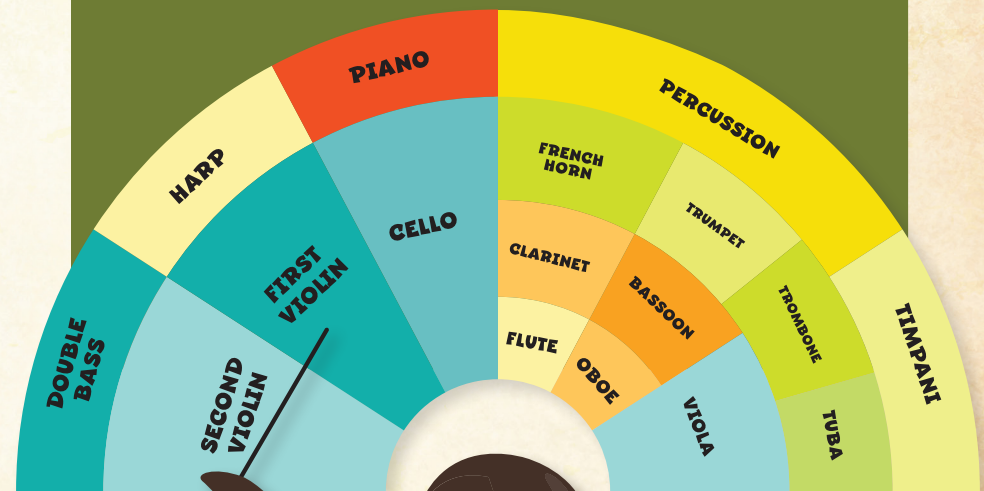
Bass [BASE]

The lowest, deepest voice, usually male.

The orchestra is the group of people who play instruments for the opera.

Usually they play in front of the stage in the **orchestra pit**. The **conductor** makes sure the singers and orchestra perform at the right times. Sometimes the orchestra plays along with the singers, but other times they play alone to help tell the story.

This is how Lyric musicians are arranged in the orchestra pit. The conductor stands at the front of the orchestra in the center. Their job is to help make the story and music move along.



Which voice type do you think these animals might have based on how LOW or HIGH they are?



Visual Arts

The location of the opera is called the **setting**. **Scenery, props, lighting, costumes, wigs and makeup** help create the opera's setting.

The people who come up with the ideas for how the opera should look are called **designers**.

Scenery & Props

The **scenery**, or set, shows the location of the story. Sometimes opera stories happen in a house, or on a street, or out in the woods. **Props** are the objects performers use on stage to tell the story. Props can be anything: swords, candles, fake food, bicycles, and more.

Lighting

Sometimes the story in an opera takes place at different times of day. While opera usually happens indoors, **lighting** can create a sunny day or a dark, cloudy night.

Costumes

Costumes are the clothes performers wear in an opera. The costumes help tell about the character - whether they are shy or bold, funny or serious, nice or mean, young or old, or where they might live.

Wigs & Makeup

We use **wigs** and **makeup** in opera to change the performers into different characters. Makeup and wigs can make a performer look younger, older, like a princess, a witch, a magical creature, or anyone else you can imagine.



Draw a setting for these characters. Don't forget to include the scenery and props.



All of these parts come together to complete the look of the opera.

Acting & Drama

There are two main types of operas — **comedy** and **tragedy**. Comedies usually have a happy ending. Tragedies can be very sad.

Which one of these masks is comedy?

Which one is tragedy?

How can you tell?



Opera singers change their faces, bodies, and voices to show how their character is feeling. This is called acting.

Each one of these faces is acting out a feeling. Match each face to its feeling.



ANGRY
CRYING
LOVE
LAUGHING
HAPPY
SAD



Your turn to try some acting!

Read the line in the bubble below 3 times:

1. Read it like a robot with **no emotion**.
2. Read it like you are **very sad**.
3. Read it like you are **very happy**.

There are hidden treasures inside the ancient ruins.

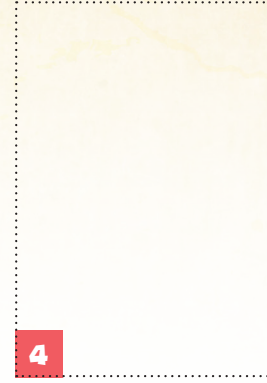
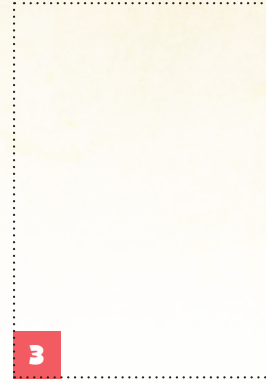
What did you do to your **voice**, **face**, and **body** to act out the line differently each time?



Movement & Dance



Look at the dancing hippo and notice the sequence of dance steps. Something is missing — the middle! Draw dance moves 3 and 4 to connect the beginning and end of the dance.



Movement and **dance** are sometimes part of an opera. Dance helps tell a story without words by using only the body. In opera, movement and dance can show dreams, fights, imaginary journeys, and more.

The Stage

Performers use **stage directions** to help them know where to go during the opera.



Help the monkey move around the stage.

Put a dot on the stage for each of these stage directions. Connect the dots with lines and arrows so the monkey knows where to move during the opera.

- ① **Downstage right**
- ② **Center stage**
- ③ **Upstage left**
- ④ **Downstage left**
- ⑤ **Downstage center**



Stage Right
the right side from the performer's point of view

①

Center

②

Stage

Upstage
farthest from the audience

Downstage
closest to the audience

Stage Left
the left side from the performer's point of view



Test your opera knowledge!

DOWN:

1. a person who writes the words or script of an opera
2. ____ - soprano, the middle high voice, usually female
4. a story told through music
5. the lowest, deepest voice
6. a person who writes music
10. also called the set, this is art onstage that shows the location of the story

ACROSS:

3. a person who makes sure the singers and orchestra perform at the same time
7. the highest voice type
8. the highest male voice
9. the clothes singers wear in an opera
11. the group of people who play instruments for the opera

