



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA EDUCATION

WHAT TO EXPECT AT AN OPERA

Many people like to dress up for the opera, but you can wear whatever you like. A good rule of thumb might be to wear what you wear to school.

Try to arrive early to the opera so that you can take a look around the building before the performance begins. Opera houses are usually very beautiful theaters.

When you are ready to enter the auditorium, you will hand your tickets to an usher who will direct you to your seats and give you a program that will tell you more about the performance.

Once in your seat, make sure to turn off your cell phones (or any other devices that might make noise) so as not to disturb the performers. It's also important for you to try and stay quiet during the performance, so the other audience members can fully enjoy the opera.

The orchestra will already be seated in the orchestra pit, testing out their instruments and practicing a bit. The concertmaster will enter and play a note so that all the musicians can tune their instruments to match that note.

The conductor will enter and step up onto a pedestal facing the orchestra. Usually the audience applauds the conductor's entrance.

The conductor will signal to the musicians to start playing. If there is an overture, the curtain will usually stay down until the main part of the opera begins. Otherwise, the curtain will rise.

Often the audience will applaud after especially good performances. For example, the audience might clap and yell brava! if a female singer has sung an especially difficult and beautiful aria.

When intermission arrives (usually at the end of the first act, but it could come after the first two acts), the audience will applaud, the curtain will go down, and lights in the auditorium will be turned on. This is your signal to stand up, stretch, explore the opera house a little, and go to the bathroom. You will hear some tones like a musical scale when it is time for you to go back to your seats so the performance can resume.

At the end of the opera, the curtain will lower, and then rise again for the curtain call. The performers, conductor, and orchestra (and sometimes a director and choreographer) will take several bows, depending on how long the audience applauds. The lights in the auditorium will come on so that everyone can find their way out after the curtain call is over.