



OPERA GLOSSARY

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Accompaniment | An instrumental or vocal part designed to support or complement a principal voice, instrument, or group of voices and instruments. In an aria, the voice is the primary focus and the orchestra is the accompaniment. |
| Baritone | A baritone is a male singer who sings neither as high as a tenor nor as low as a bass. Like a bass, a baritone will often play a villain. Composers might also write the part of a trusted friend of the main character for a baritone. The important role of mastersinger Hans Sachs will be played by a baritone. The roles of Sixtus Beckmesser, Fritz Kothner are also played by baritones. |
| Bass | A bass is a male singer who sings in the lowest vocal range. They often play villains or authority figures, like kings or priests. The roles of mastersingers Veit Pogner, Konrad Nachtigall, Hermann Ortel, Hans Foltz, Hans Schwarz in <i>Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg</i> are bass roles. |
| Bravo [brah-voh] | “Brave” or “courageous” in Italian. You may hear it shouted by members of the audience at the end of an especially pleasing performance. “Bravo” is used for a single man, “brava” for a woman, and “bravi” for more than one performer. |
| Choreographer | The person who designs the steps of a dance. |
| Composer | The person who writes the music of an opera (or other musical work). |
| Concertmaster | The “first chair” violinist who plays occasional solos and is responsible for coordinating all the stringed instruments. He or she will walk out into the orchestra pit right before the conductor enters. |
| Curtain Call | At the end of a performance all of the members of the cast and the conductor take bows. Sometimes this is done in front of the main curtain, hence the name. |
| Dramaturg | A literary adviser within a theatre or opera company who deals mainly with research and development of plays or operas. |
| Finale [fi-nal-ee] | “The end” in Italian. The ending segment/song of an act or scene. It usually involves many singers and is very dramatic. |
| Gesamtkunstwerk | (German, from <i>gesamt</i> whole + <i>kunst</i> art + <i>werk</i> work) an art work produced by a synthesis of various art forms (such as music and drama) |
| heldentenor | (German, from <i>Held</i> hero + <i>Tenor</i> tenor) a tenor with a powerful dramatic voice well suited to heroic (as Wagnerian) roles. Walter von Stolzing is a heldentenor role. |
| Intermission | A break between acts of an opera. The lights go on and the audience is free to move around. Intermissions usually last between fifteen and twenty-five minutes. |
| Libretto [li-bret-oh] | “Little book” in Italian. The text of an opera. The libretto is always shorter than a normal play because it takes so much longer to sing a line than to say it. The action is often interrupted for an aria which limits the length of the text even more. |

| | |
|--|---|
| Librettist [li-bret-ist] | The person who writes the libretto, often a poet or playwright. |
| March | A piece of music with a strong regular rhythm that is written to accompany marching. |
| Meistersinger | A mastersinger, a member of one of the guilds, chiefly of workingmen, established during the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries in the principal cities of Germany, for the cultivation of poetry and music. |
| Mezzo-soprano | A mezzo-soprano is a female singer who sings in a vocal range that is lower than a soprano's. A mezzo-soprano will often play a friend of the main character, or possibly a villainess. In <i>Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg</i> , the role of Magdalena played by a mezzo-soprano. |
| Motif | A short rhythmic or melodic passage that is repeated or evoked in various parts of a composition. |
| Opera [op-ruh] | "Work" in Italian. Most likely this word was used to indicate that operas contained many different kinds of art forms or work: musical composition, writing, set design, etc. |
| Orchestra | The group of musicians who are led by the conductor and accompany the singers. Orchestras vary in size depending on how many instruments the score requires. |
| Orchestra Pit | The sunken area in front of the stage where the orchestra plays. |
| Overture | An orchestral piece several minutes in length played before the beginning of an opera. Usually, but not always, it contains some themes from the music of the main part of the opera. |
| Prelude | A piece of music that serves as an introduction to an act in an opera. |
| Props | Shortened from the word properties. Small items carried or used by singers during a performance, such as fans, letters, or a book. |
| Recitative [rech-i-tah-teev] | Sung dialogue that moves the action along by providing information. It usually has no recognizable melody and the singing is generally faster with a rhythm more like normal speech. |
| Score | The written music for a piece or group of pieces with separate lines for each instrument and each singer's voice. |
| Set | The decoration on stage that indicates the place and overall world of the opera. |
| Soprano | A female singer who sings the highest vocal range. They usually play the lead female character in an opera, but they will also play friends and villains on occasion. In <i>Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg</i> , the role of Eva is played by a soprano. |

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Supertitles | Translations into English of the original words of the opera projected on a screen above the stage. |
| Synopsis | A short version of the story of the opera, usually one or two pages. |
| Tenor | A male singer who sings the highest male vocal range. Tenors usually play the lead male character in an opera, often the hero. The roles of the young knight Walther von Stolzing and David, Hans Sachs' apprentice in <i>Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg</i> are sung by tenors. In addition, the roles of mastersingers Kunz Vogelgesang, Balthasar Zorn, Augustin Moser, and Ulrich Eisslinger are played by tenors. |
| Usher | The person at an opera house or theater who will direct you to your seats and hand you a program. You can often identify ushers because they are dressed in all black or in formal attire. They are very helpful and can usually answer any questions you have. |