



# **SALOME**

## Study Guide

2011/12 Season

Manitoba Opera gratefully acknowledges  
our *Salome* Education and Outreach partners:



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# 3 Great Resources for Teaching Your Students About Opera

## 1. Student Night

In order to expose student audiences to the glory of opera, Manitoba Opera created Student Night. It's an affordable opportunity for students to watch the dress rehearsal, an exciting look at the art and magic of opera before the curtain goes up on Opening Night, when tension is high and anything can happen. Please note:

- *Salome* is one act, with no intermission.
- *Salome* contains scenes that some people may find disturbing. Although it is a beautiful and exciting opera, there are scenes of violence that may not be suitable for all children.
- The dress rehearsal is the last opportunity the singers will have on stage to work with the orchestra before Opening Night. Since vocal demands are so great on opera singers, some choose not to sing in full voice during the dress rehearsal in order to avoid unnecessary strain.

## 2. The Study Guide

This study guide has been created to assist you in preparing your students for their visit to the opera at the Centennial Concert Hall. It is our hope that you will be able to add this to your existing curriculum in order to expand your students' understanding of opera, literature, history, and fine art.

Materials in the study guide may be copied and distributed to students. Some students may wish to go over the information at home if there is insufficient time to discuss in class.

## 3. Opera in a Trunk

Bring the magic of opera right into the classroom with our Opera in a Trunk. We provide you with all the tools you need – the music, costumes, props, story line, etc. – to recreate some of the world's greatest operas with your class.

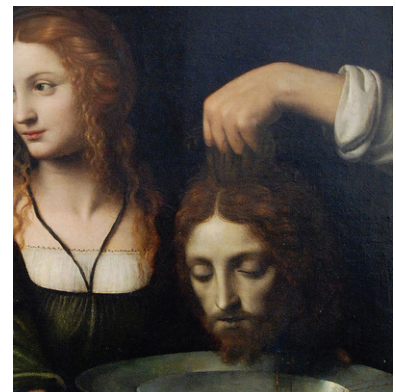
- There is no Opera in a Trunk for *Salome*, but trunks are still available for *Carmen* and *The Magic Flute*. Contact Braden Alexander for more details.

*Salome* Study Guide compiled by Manitoba Opera from sources including: ClassicalMusic.about.com; BehindTheNames.com; Bellevue University; The Billboard Illustrated Encyclopedia of Opera; The Canadian Opera Company; A Dictionary of First Names; Encyclopedia of Manitoba; Encyclopedia of the Opera by David Ewen; Fort Worth Opera 2000 Study Guide; GradeSaver.com; La Scena; Lyric Opera of Kansas City; Manitoba Archives; Masonic Interpretation of Manitoba Legislative Building; Metropolitan Opera; Mozart's Letters; Mozart's Life; musicwithease.com; Music.MSN.com; New York City Opera; Opera America Learning Centre; operabuffa.com; Opera Columbus Study Guide; Opera News; Operas Every Child Should Know; Opera Lyra Ottawa Study Guide; Opera Today; Orchestra London Study Guide; Pacific Opera; San Diego Opera Study Guide; San Francisco Opera Guild Study Guide; schubincave.com; A Season of Opera; Skeletons from the Opera Closet; timelines.com; TodaysParent.com; Tulsa Opera Study Guide; University of Chicago Press; University of Manitoba; University of Texas; University of Waterloo; Rimrock Study Guide; Virginia Opera Study Guide; Winnipeg Free Press; Wikipedia; and The World's Great Operas by John Tasker Howard.



# Salome: Good To Know

- *Salome* is considered by many to be the greatest opera written in the 20th century.
- The opera was adapted from a controversial play by English writer Oscar Wilde in 1891 – so controversial that it was originally banned from showing in London.
- The original story of *Salome* can be found in the Bible, although it focuses less on mad obsession and violence, and Salome herself is a minor character. Artists have long been intrigued by the story, however, and before Oscar Wilde wrote his play, the story of *Salome* had been the subject of many works of art.
- Even by today's standards, *Salome* is considered to be one of the most shocking operas ever written. It includes incest, nudity, murder and a dramatic scene in which Salome kisses the lips of Jokanaan's severed head. In fact, it is so graphically violent that it was banned after one show at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, and remained banned there for decades.
- Salome demands Jokanaan's head upon a silver platter – which is where the saying originates from.
- In many ways, *Salome* is an examination of the workings of evil. What would possess a teenage girl to demand the head of the man she loves? Some argue that it is the framework in which she exists that allows such evil to occur. It has been compared to Nazi soldiers who committed acts of torture and mutilation, simply because of the system they were operating within. In this same way, Salome is capable of evil because of the environment she was raised in and has to deal with.
- Marie Wittich, the artist who played the role of Salome in the opera's debut in 1905, refused to perform the Dance of the Seven Veils (which concludes with Salome completely nude), so a dancer had to take her place for that scene. Today, some artists portray this scene in a skin-coloured body suit and some actually perform nude.
- The Dance of the Seven Veils, which first appeared in Wilde's play, but gained much more notoriety from Strauss' opera, is considered by some academics (including Toni Bentley in her book *Sisters of Salome*) to be the original modern strip tease.
- Salome is a curious character because she represents both the Lolita and the femme fatale, two well known archetypes of literature. On one hand, as the Lolita (see Nabokov's *Lolita*), she is a young, sexualized girl, the victim of an older man's desire (her stepfather, Herod). On the other hand, like the femme fatale (see *Mystique* from *Xmen*) she harnesses the power of her sexuality to extract what she wants, with deadly results.
- The vocal demands of the role of Salome are particularly great. The role itself requires the volume, stamina, and power of a dramatic soprano, yet Salome's age and appearance of innocence require the versatility of a coloratura soprano.



*Salome with the Head of John the Baptist (Benardino Luini)*

# Production Information

## *Salome*

November 19, 22 and 25  
(Dress Rehearsal / Student Night: November 17)  
Centennial Concert Hall

Music by Richard Strauss  
Libretto in German by Hedwig Lachmann

Premiere Performance: Hofoper, Dresden on December 9, 1905

Approximately 1 hour, 45 minutes with no intermission.  
Sung in German with projected English translations.

### PRINCIPAL CAST

SALOME	MLADA KHUDOLEY	SOPRANO
HEROD	JEFFREY SPRINGER	TENOR
JOKANAAN	GREGORY DAHL	BARITONE
HERODIAS	JUDITH FORST	MEZZO-SOPRANO
NARRABOTH	MICHAEL COLVIN	TENOR
PAGE OF HERODIUS	MARCIA WHITEHEAD	MEZZO-SOPRANO
FIRST NAZARENE	MARK BOODEN	BARITONE
SOLDIER 1	GERRIT THEULE	BASS
SOLDIER 2	DAVID WATSON	BASS
JEW 1	TBC	-
JEW 2	MICHEL CORBEIL	TENOR
JEW 3	PJ BUCHAN	TENOR
JEW 4	KEITH KLASSEN	TENOR

Manitoba Opera Chorus  
Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra

Conductor	Tyrone Paterson
Director	Larry Desrochers
Original Production	Robert B. Driver
Scenery and costumes provided by:	Opera Company of Philadelphia
Set designer	Boyd Ostroff
Costume designer	Richard St. Clair
Lighting designer	Bill Williams
Stage manager	Paul Skirzyk
Assistant stage managers	Kathryn Ball, Candace Maxwell

# Synopsis

## Judea, A.D. 30.

From the moonlit terrace of King Herod's palace, Narraboth, captain of the guard, gazes rapturously inside at the Princess Salome, who is feasting with her stepfather and his court. The voice of the prophet Jokanaan echoes from a deep cistern, where he is imprisoned by the king, who fears him. Salome, bored with Herod's lechery and his coarse guests, rushes out for fresh air and becomes curious when she hears Jokanaan curse Herodias, her mother. When the soldiers refuse to bring Jokanaan to her, Salome turns her wiles on Narraboth, who orders that Jokanaan be summoned. Salome is fascinated by the prophet's deathly pallor and pours out her uncontrollable desire to touch him. The prophet rejects her, speaking of the Son of God who will come to save mankind. When Salome continues to beg for Jokanaan's kiss, Narraboth stabs himself in horror, and the prophet descends into the cistern, urging her to seek salvation in the Messiah. The girl collapses in frustration and longing.

Herod appears, followed by his court. When he slips in Narraboth's blood, he becomes unnerved and begins to experience hallucinations, which Herodias scorns. Herod's thoughts turn to Salome, who spurns his attentions. Renewed abuse from Jokanaan's subterranean voice harasses Herodias, who demands that Herod turn the prophet over to the Jews. Herod's refusal incurs an argument among several Jews concerning the nature of God, and a narrative of Christ's miracles by two Nazarenes.

Herod begs Salome to divert him by dancing and offers her anything she might wish in return. Salome makes him swear he will live up to his promise, then dances, slowly shedding seven veils and finishing her performance at his feet. Salome demands the head of Jokanaan on a silver platter, ignoring Herod's desperate alternatives - jewels, rare birds, a sacred veil. The terrified king finally gives in. After a tense pause, the arm of the executioner rises from the cistern, offering the head to Salome. As clouds obscure the moon, Salome seizes her reward passionately, addressing Jokanaan as if he lived and triumphantly kissing his lips. Overcome with revulsion, Herod orders the soldiers to kill Salome.

*- courtesy of Opera News*



*Salome Presented with the Head of St John the Baptist (Leonaert Bramer)*

# Salome Principal Characters

## Herod, Tetrarch of Judea (HARE-ed)

Herod is based on the historical figure who, as the son of Herod the Great, ruled Judea from 4 B.C. to 39 A.D.. Herod is married to Herodias, the widow of his brother, whom he held captive for 12 years and eventually strangled to death. Herod controls a vast court and is entertaining a diverse group of international guests, including Jews, Nazarenes, Greeks and Romans. He has the Christian prophet Jokanaan imprisoned in his palace cistern. To his wife's disapproval, he sexually desires his step-daughter and niece, the princess Salome.

## Herodias, Wife of the Tetrarch (hare-OH-dee-us)

Herodias is based on the historical figure who was married to Herod Antipas during his reign over Judea. Prior to this marriage, Herodias was the wife of Herod's brother, whom Herod had imprisoned and slain, and who was the father of her daughter, Salome. She is upset about her husband's explicit attraction to Salome and the prophet Jokanaan's claims that her marriage is incestuous and thus unholy. While the relation is not mentioned, historical writings indicate that in addition to being Herodias's brother-in-law, Herod was also her half-uncle, and that this formed the basis for the prophet's disapproval.

## Salome, Daughter of Herodias (SAH-loh-may)

Salome is based on the historical figure best known from the New Testament (Mark 6:21-29), where she is referred to only as "the daughter of Herodias." The name Salome is attributed to her by historian Flavius Josephus. In biblical legend, Herodias offers her as a dancer to Herod in exchange for John the Baptist's murder; in Strauss's opera, the murder is presented as Salome's idea. Often referred to as "the Princess of Judea," Salome desires Jokanaan and rejects the advances of both her stepfather Herod and Narraboth throughout the course of the play.

## Jokanaan, the Prophet (YOH-kah-non)

Jokanaan is based on the historical figure more commonly referred to as "John the Baptist," who prophesied the coming of Christ the Messiah. Jokanaan is captured by Herod's forces in the desert and imprisoned in the palace cistern until he is beheaded for rejecting Salome's advances. In the play, Jokanaan prophesies the bloodshed at the end of the narrative and condemns Herodias for having married her husband's brother.

## Narraboth, Captain of the Guard (NERR-ah-both)

Narraboth is Herod's top-ranked soldier. The young Syrian is infatuated with Salome, and he allows her access to Jokanaan the prophet in exchange for a glance from her. When he sees that she desires Jokanaan, he kills himself.



*Theda Bara in the 1918 silent film adaptation of Salome*



# The Principal Artists

## **Mlada Khudoley** *Salome*

*"...Khudoley delivers the supremely demanding role of Salome..." - Globe and Mail*

Born in Moscow, Ms. Khudoley graduated from the Russian Academy of Performing Arts, as an actor and solo vocalist. She was the diploma winner of numerous international vocal competitions and, in 1998, she received the stipendium from the Wagner International Society in Bayreuth. Also in 1998, Ms. Khudoley made her Mariinsky Theatre stage debut in the title role of *Salome* and as Senta in *Der fliegende Holländer*.

[www.mladakhudoley.com](http://www.mladakhudoley.com)

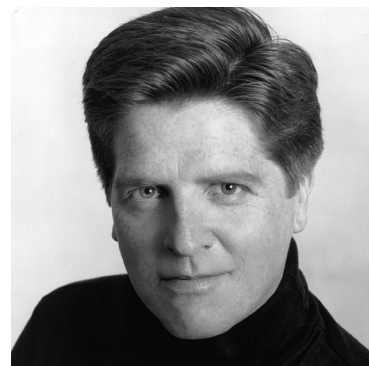


## **Jeffrey Springer** *Herod*

*"...his expansive voice and expressive execution thrilled listeners..." - Opera Today*

A graduate of Indiana University, Jeffrey Springer moved into the tenor repertoire under the instruction of the legendary helden-tenor, James King. He was honoured as being one of this generation's Emerging Wagner Artists by the famous duo, Thomas Stewart and Evelyn Lear, and the Washington DC Wagner Society. In addition, he is the winner of the Concours International de Chant de Festival Atlantique in Nantes, France, the José Carreras Prize in Pamplona, Spain, and the Third Prize in the Concours International de Chant in Toulouse, France. He is also a grant recipient from the New York City Wagner Society and from the prestigious Gerda Lissner Foundation in New York.

[www.seidelartistsmgmt.com/artist.asp?ID=49](http://www.seidelartistsmgmt.com/artist.asp?ID=49)



## **Gregory Dahl** *Jokanaan*

*"He has great stage presence - totally commanding..." - Winnipeg Free Press*

Gregory Dahl has boldly staked his claim to a position of prominence among baritones of his generation with performances notable for richness of characterization and a remarkable vocal authority. The imposing Winnipegger studied at the University of Manitoba, The Banff Centre for the Arts and the University of Toronto Opera Division.

[www.gregorydahl.com/](http://www.gregorydahl.com/)



## Judith Forst *Herodias*

*“...a penchant for making difficult roles look easy...” – Reviewvancouver.com*

Canadian born mezzo-soprano Judith Forst has been highly acclaimed for her operatic and concert performances throughout North America and in Europe in many of the world’s most prestigious theatres including the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Bavarian State Opera, Netherlands Opera, Dallas Opera, Washington Opera, Vancouver Opera, and the Santa Fe Opera among many others. In 2006 she made her debut at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan as the Kabinicha in Janacek’s *Katya Kabanova*. Recognized as one of Canada’s most distinguished artists, she has been honoured with the Order of Canada.



## Michael Colvin *Narraboth*

*“His voice is both powerful and beautiful...” – San Francisco Classical Voice*

Hailed in Opera News as possessing “one of the most beautiful young lyric tenor instruments around,” Irish-Canadian tenor Michael Colvin has appeared to critical acclaim on opera and concert stages throughout Canada, the USA, UK and Europe. Born in Ballymena, Northern Ireland, and raised in Toronto, Mr. Colvin began his musical studies at St. Michael’s Choir School in Toronto and returned to music after attaining his Bachelor of Science in Immunology from the University of Toronto. A graduate of the U. of T. Opera Division, Mr. Colvin has also trained with the Canadian Opera Company’s Ensemble Studio, the Britten-Pears School in Aldeburgh, England and Canada’s Banff Centre for the Arts. He has been the recipient of numerous awards and scholarships, most notably the Canadian Opera Foundation Award, Chalmers Performing Arts Award and a Canada Council Artist Grant.

<http://www.michaelcolvin.com/>



# The Composer

## Richard Strauss

Born: June 11, 1864

Died: September 8, 1949

In addition to being perhaps the most important composer of the first half of the 20th century, Richard Strauss was a conductor of vast skill and reputation. He was the first composer of note – and the only composer of his standing – to leave behind his own recordings of virtually all of his major orchestral works. Also, one leading critic remarked that if Strauss had never written a note of his own music, his conducting would still have placed him among the most important musicians of his generation.

Strauss was born in Munich, the first child of the second marriage of Franz Joseph Strauss. He could read music before he could read words. He received one of the finest and most comprehensive musical educations that was possible at the time. He learned the piano and later the violin, and was a first-chair player by the time he was in his early teens, with an amateur orchestra which he occasionally conducted. He wrote a considerable amount of music while still in his teens, including a symphony, a serenade for 13 wind instruments, and a violin concerto.

Strauss made his professional conducting debut with his own Serenade in 1884, at the podium before Munich's Meiningen Orchestra. Originally the performance was to have been conducted by the orchestra's own chief conductor, Hans Von Bulow – the most renowned conductor of his generation – but Von Bulow insisted that the composer lead the orchestra in the work. Despite his unease and reluctance, Strauss got through the experience and earned a recommendation from Von Bulow to fill the assistant conductor's post with the orchestra. Within a month, following Von Bulow's resignation, Strauss found himself as chief conductor, and six months after that, he was working at the Court Opera, where he quickly became a major force in the musical life of Germany. Among his many achievements was the restoration to the repertory of Mozart's neglected opera *Così fan tutte*, which he accomplished almost single-handedly. For much of the rest of his life, he balanced his tandem careers as a composer and conductor, reserving special attention in the latter capacity for the works of Mozart.

Richard Strauss knew how to test the limits of an orchestra to their fullest, and shape its sound into something unbelievably delicate. His rules for conducting, written down in 1925, included instructions for the doubling of tempos where it hardly seemed possible and the careful muting of the winds and horns. He also gave one piece of obvious but oft-overlooked advice to conductors of his own work, which applied equally well to any part of the repertory: "Above all, don't be dull."



*A portrait of Richard Strauss by Max Lieberman*

Strauss' role during World War II should be mentioned, if only for the controversy that it has engendered through the decades. At the time that the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933, Richard Strauss was 68 years old. A humble man by nature, he had seen his music acclaimed at the turn of the century as the finest produced in Germany since the days of Wagner, and his symphonic poems and early operas were among the most popular works of their eras. But by the 1920's, with the growth of modernism, especially in the guise of atonalism, and the reality of his own advancing age, he saw his position and security as increasingly precarious.

Additionally, as is little known, Strauss had a Jewish daughter-in-law whom he loved dearly, and grandchildren who, under the Nazi regime, were regarded as non-Aryan. He was also extremely naive where political matters were concerned – any political thoughts that he had were shaped during the end of the century. He and his family might have left Germany in 1933, except that this was inconceivable for the aging Strauss, and evidently wasn't considered necessary by his family. By the time he realized what he had gotten himself into, it was too late – Strauss, as the most exalted composer in Germany, had joined the Reichsmusikkammer upon invitation from the new government, and was declared its president by Joseph Goebbels without Strauss being consulted first.

Strauss, as a result of his naiveté, was not suited to the position. He insisted upon using the services of his Jewish librettist, Stefan Zweig, for his opera *Die Schweigsame Frau*. Additionally, he was found by the government (which was opening his mail) to have told Zweig in a letter of his belief and hope that the National Socialist Party would soon be out of power. Strauss was forced out of a position that he hadn't asked for, and quietly retired to Bavaria. He continued to write music, including one opera, the beautiful and haunting *Daphne*, with a politically acceptable librettist, Dr. Joseph Gregor, and one with a libretto coauthored by the conductor Clemens Krauss.

Even so, by the early 1940's, Strauss and his family found themselves in considerable jeopardy. He was denied a passport to travel to Switzerland to conduct, and was under threat of arrest for his refusal to follow the Nazi Party line. He and his family left Germany for Austria, where he resided in Vienna for the remainder of the war, conducting the Philharmonic on occasion and living under the protection of Baldur von Schirach, the appointed governor of Vienna. After the war, Strauss spent much of the postwar period in exile in Switzerland, and was vilified in various quarters for his decision to participate in the cultural life of Nazi Germany. He died in Germany in the late summer of 1949, after completing his final works, the *Four Last Songs*, which are considered among the most beautiful works of his entire career. Richard Strauss was, arguably, the last great composer/conductor.

### STRAUSS' OPERAS

1884	GUNTRAM
1901	FEURSNOT
1905	SALOME
1909	ELEKTRA
1911	DER ROSENKAVALIER
1912	ARIADNE AUF NAXOS
1919	DIE FRAU OHNE SCHATTEN
1924	INTERMEZZO
1928	DIE AEGYPTISCHE HELENA
1933	ARABELLA
1935	DIE SCHWEIGSAME FRAU
1938	FRIEDENSTAG
1938	DAPHNE
1939	MIDAS
1940	DIE LIEBE DER DANAE
1942	CAPRICCIO



# The Librettist

## Hedwig Lachmann

Born: August 29, 1865

Died: February 21, 1918

Hedwig Lachmann was a German author, translator, and poet. She was born in Stolp, Pomerania (a historic region between Germany and Poland) in 1865 and was the daughter of a Jewish cantor. She spent her childhood in Stolp and a subsequent seven years in Hürben (Swabia). At the age of 15, she passed exams in Augsburg to become a language teacher. Two years later she became a governess in England.

From 1899 until 1917 she belonged to both the Friedrichshagener and Pankower poetry societies. She met her future husband, Gustav Landauer, in 1899 at the house of Richard Dehmel (a notorious German poet). One of their grandchildren, Mike Nichols, grew up to be a notorious director (The Graduate, The Birdcage, Closer).

She contributed to poetry collections, including one of her own works, and translated many English, French, and Hungarian works into German. Her translation of *Salome* is considered to be an improvement upon Oscar Wilde's French original.



Hedwig Lachmann (1885)

## What is a Libretto?

Libretto means little book in Italian. It refers to the written text of an opera set to music by the composer. Today, we commonly refer to an opera as being 'by' the composer of the music, but the text is a vital component and is normally written first. In earlier times it was often regarded as more important than the music, and it was common for audience members to purchase the libretto to read.

Early composers were usually contracted to set music to a pre-existing text. Only later did composers (such as Mozart and Verdi) work in close collaboration with their librettists. A few composers – notably Wagner – wrote their own texts.



# The Playwright

## Oscar Wilde

Born: October 16, 1854

Died: November 30, 1900

“A man who does not think for himself does not think at all.”

Oscar Fingal O’Flahertie Wills Wilde was a famous Irish intellectual, playwright and author living in London in the 1890’s. The works he is best known for are his only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and his masterpiece play *The Importance of Being Earnest*, but it was his decadent lifestyle and colourful bon mots for which he is remembered.

Wilde completed his undergraduate degree at Trinity College of Oxford. He dressed in an unusual, “dandified” manner and was famous for his sharp wit. When he landed in the United States to give lectures on the English Renaissance and Decorative Arts, he told customs officials that he “had nothing to declare but his genius.”

Although he was married to a wealthy woman named Constance Lloyd, it was well known that Wilde was a homosexual and conducted an on-again, off-again relationship with a poet named Lord Alfred Douglas, 16 years his junior. Douglas’ father, the Marquess of Queensberry, caught wind of the relationship and immediately began bullying Wilde with threats of prosecution. Finally he got his wish, and in 1895 Wilde was convicted of “gross indecency with other men” and imprisoned for two years. He never returned to his homes in Ireland or England, fleeing to the more liberal France instead, where he died, destitute, at the age of 46.



Oscar Wilde by Napoleon Sarony

Wilde’s one-act play, *Salome*, is a loose interpretation of the account of the beheading of St. John the Baptist in the 1st century A.D. as recorded in the New Testament (Gospel of Mark 6:15-29 and Gospel of Matthew 14:1-12). While *Salome* is in fact a minor character in the biblical tale, she was the focus of fascination for many late 19th century artists, who found in her character a unique vehicle for exploring the shifting significance of female sexuality. Wilde’s treatment of *Salome* extends this focus, portraying the Judaic princess as the main reason for the beheading of John the Baptist (Jokanaan). While the New Testament depicts *Salome* as a pawn of her mother’s plan to eliminate the prophet, Wilde re-imagines John’s execution as the direct and deliberate result of *Salome*’s unrequited sexual desire for him.

Wilde’s *Salome* was born at a Paris café in 1891, and he quickly became obsessed with the title character; in her he created a fascinating fusion of light and dark.

On the one hand, Wilde thought she was the embodiment of sensuality—he claimed that while writing *Salome* he would pass by jewelry shops on the streets of Paris and contemplate just how to adorn her. He saw her as aggressive and cruel, with an insatiable lust. But he also envisioned Salome as divine and pure. To Wilde, Salome became a combination of sensual being, child, divinity, and destructive force of nature.

The play was eventually premiered on February 11, 1896, in Paris at the Comédie-Parissienne, while Wilde was in prison. The original play was written in French, even though Wilde's grasp of the language was less than perfect.

## A Connection to Canada

The first publication of Wilde's masterpiece, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, is dedicated to Robert Baldwin Ross, the grandson of the Prime Minister of Upper Canada (Robert Baldwin, 1843–1848) and allegedly the first man to seduce Wilde. The two were long-time friends, even after Wilde was imprisoned and abandoned by many of his hangers-on. In fact, it was Ross who secured the publishing of many of Wilde's works in order to pay off the debts Wilde left behind after his death and provide for his two sons.

## Oscar Wilde Quotes

"A dreamer is one who can only find his way by moonlight, and his punishment is that he sees the dawn before the rest of the world."

"A gentleman is one who never hurts anyone's feelings unintentionally."

"A man can't be too careful in the choice of his enemies."

"A true friend stabs you in the front."

"All women become like their mothers. That is their tragedy. No man does. That's his."

"Always forgive your enemies – nothing annoys them so much."

"Experience is simply the name we give our mistakes."

"I can resist everything except temptation."

"It is what you read when you don't have to that determines what you will be when you can't help it."

"Life imitates art far more than art imitates life."

"There are only two tragedies in life: one is not getting what one wants, and the other is getting it."

"There is only one thing in life worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about."

"We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars."

"Who, being loved, is poor?"



## The Selected Works of Oscar Wilde

### Prose

- *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890)
- *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime* (1891)
- *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888)
- *A House of Pomegranates* (1915)
- *The Canterville Ghost* (1887)
- *The Sphinx Without A Secret* (1891)
- *The Model Millionaire* (1887)

### Plays

- *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892)
- *Salome* (1894)
- *A Woman of No Importance* (1893)
- *An Ideal Husband* (1895)
- *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895)

### Poems

- "The Ballad of Reading Gaol"
- "Les Ballons"
- "Charmides"
- "De Profundis"
- "The Harlot's House"
- "Helas!"
- "Impression du Matin"
- "Pan — Double Villanelle"
- "The Sphinx"
- "Symphony In Yellow"



Oscar Wilde by Napoleon Sarony

# The Music of *Salome*

According to some, *Salome* was possibly the most important event in German opera since the work of Richard Wagner (pronounced VOG-ner). Critics say its concentrated power, eerie and sinister harmonies, and extraordinarily exotic orchestration marked a new development in opera music. Critics praise Strauss for composing the music of *Salome* so delicately and thoughtfully that it communicated the complex emotions of its characters in a way that words never could.

The music of *Salome* includes a system of **leitmotifs**, or short melodies with symbolic meanings. Some are clearly associated with people such as Salome and Jokanaan. Others are more abstract in meaning. Some leitmotifs, especially those associated with Herod, change frequently in form and symbolic meaning, making it futile to pin them down to specifics. Strauss provided names for some of the leitmotifs, but not consistently, and other people have assigned a variety of names. These names often illustrate the ambiguity of certain leitmotifs. For example, some labels tend to be abstract (such as “Yearning,” “Anger,” and “Fear”), while some are more concrete (“Herod’s Scale”).

The harmony of *Salome* makes use of extended tonality, chromaticism, a wide range of keys, unusual modulations, tonal ambiguity, and polytonality. Some of the major characters have keys associated with them, such as Salome and Jokanaan, as do some of the major psychological themes, such as desire and death.

Strauss called for a 105-piece orchestra for *Salome*, not only for its weight and power, but for the variety of tone color such a large body of diverse instruments could provide, and to extend the range of possibilities available to him in each family of instruments. The orchestration is glittering and colourful, with occasional exotic instruments or strange uses of traditional instruments.

The string section is the backbone of the orchestra, providing more than half of more than 100 instruments needed. Strauss called for a large-sized string section, modeled after the orchestral size of the late 19th century romantic era. For Manitoba Opera’s production, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra will expand to 75 musicians.

## The Role of Salome

The vocal demands of the Salome role require the volume, stamina, and power of a true dramatic soprano. The common theme of these four roles is the difficulty in casting an ideal soprano that has a truly dramatic voice as well as being able to register as a young woman. Perhaps the most famous recording of the opera is Sir Georg Solti’s Decca recording with Birgit Nilsson as Salome.

In addition to the vocal and physical demands, the role also calls for the agility and gracefulness of a prima ballerina when performing the opera’s famous Dance of the Seven Veils. Finding one individual with all of these qualities is extremely daunting. Due to the complexity of the role’s demands, some of its performers have had a purely vocal focus by opting to leave the dancing to stand-ins who are professional dancers. Others have opted to combine the two and perform the dance themselves, which is closer to Strauss’s intentions. In either case, at the end of the Dance of the Seven Veils, some sopranos (or their stand-ins) wear a body stocking under the veils, while others have appeared nude at the conclusion of the dance.

The combination of the biblical theme, the erotic and the murderous which so attracted Wilde to the tale shocked opera audiences from its first appearance. The original performers were very reluctant to handle the material as written, it was banned in London by the Lord Chamberlain’s office until 1907, and Gustav Mahler could not gain the consent of the Vienna censor to have it performed, but it was eventually premiered in 1918. When it did premiere in London under Thomas Beecham, it was modified, much to Beecham’s annoyance and later amusement. In New York, the premiere was suppressed by wealthy patrons, who entreated the visiting Edward Elgar to lead the objections to the work. Elgar refused point-blank, stating that Strauss was “the greatest genius of the age.”

# What's in a Name?

**Salome: Greek form of an unrecorded Aramaic name which was related to the Hebrew word shalom, meaning peace.**

*Pronounced: SAL-oh-may*

The name Salome was commonly used at the time of Christ, and was the name of one of the women who were at his tomb and witnessed the Resurrection (Mark 16: 1-8). This would normally have led to its common use as a Christian name, and this was the case in medieval times.

However, according to the Jewish historian Josephus, this was the name of King Herod's step-daughter (c AD 14 – approx. 65), the daughter of Queen Herodias. In the New Testament, the specific name is not given, but it was a daughter of Herodias, and is generally identified as Salome, who danced for Herod and so pleased him she was rewarded with anything she wanted. Prompted by her mother, she asked for (and got) the head of John the Baptist. According to Mark's gospel Herodias bore a grudge against John for stating that Herod's marriage to Herodias was unlawful; Herodias encouraged Salome to demand that John be executed.

Christian traditions depict Salome as an icon of dangerous female seductiveness, or concentrate on her lighthearted and cold foolishness that led to John the Baptist's death. This story so gripped medieval imagination that the name Salome became more or less taboo until the end of the 19th century, when Oscar Wilde's play, *Salome*, captured the imagination of the more unconventional who began choosing it for their daughters.

According to the Romanized Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, Salome lived long enough to marry twice and raise several children.



Alla Nazimova in "Salomé," 1923



# The Setting

*Salome* is set in the year AD 29 in the palace of Herod Antipas, who is known as the ruler of Judea. In fact, Herod was only the ruler of the regions called Galilee and Perea. His father, Herod the Great, promised him all of Judea but only left him in charge of the two smaller regions. All three of these regions are located in what's now known as Israel. Although it is not mentioned specifically, it's most likely that *Salome* takes place in Herod's palace in Tiberias, on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. Tiberias is still a city in Israel today.

Herod was a tetrarch, which means a ruler of one quarter. In AD 29, Judea was a client state of the Roman empire, so Herod ruled under Tiberius, the emperor of Rome at the time. At this time in history, Jesus lived and, like Jokanaan (aka John the Baptist), he worked to bring the word of God to the people.



Webster's Dictionary

# Themes

## Unfulfilled Desire

The narrative arc of *Salome* is guided by the sexual desire of the characters. Notably, each character's desire goes unfulfilled, with tragic results. We can identify three different instances of unfulfilled desire in *Salome*: the Young Syrian's for Salome, Herod's for Salome, and Salome's for Jokanaan. In each case, the character's awareness that his or her affection is unrequited is a moment of profound sorrow and, in the cases of Salome, Jokanaan, and the Young Syrian, the situation leads to death.

## Spiritual and Political Revolution

Jokanaan the Prophet not only suffers from the fatal power of Salome's sexual desire, but also represents the emerging spiritual and political power of Christianity. In both aspects, Jokanaan is a threat to Herod. Herod's imprisonment of the prophet represents his attempt to contain the dangers to his personal and political power. While Herod maintains political control over his kingdom, Jokanaan's status as a prophet suggests that Christianity is inherently stronger than Herod's worldly control.

## The Moon

In Oscar Wilde's play, he is persistent in comparing Salome to the moon. Scholars point out that Wilde employs a number of the images favored by Israel's kingly poets and that the moon is meant to suggest the pagan goddess Cybele, who, like Salome, was obsessed with preserving her virginity and thus took pleasure in destroying male sexuality.

The Young Syrian and the Page discuss the moon and the Princess Salome, comparing each to the other in terms of their beauty, femininity, and strangeness. Foreshadowing one of the play's major themes, the Syrian's desire is provoked and enhanced by the act of looking: the Page begs his friend not to look directly at the princess, since "it is dangerous to look at people too much ... [something] terrible might happen." The Page's appeal to the Syrian to look at the moon instead thus highlights the play's exploration of the gaze, or look, as the vehicle of desire.

The play's obsession with the relationship between desire and language (one that recurs throughout Wilde's writing) is also established through the different parallels the Page and the Syrian draw between Salome and the moon. Sensing his friend's desire for Salome, the Page implores him to instead look "at the moon ... she is like a dead woman ... one might fancy she was looking for dead things." To keep the Syrian's desire unfulfilled, the Page uses the moon in two ways: first, he replaces the act of looking at Salome with the act of looking at the moon, and second, he draws a parallel between the moon and Salome that is negative, calling attention to the murderous, ominous qualities that will later lead her to order Jokanaan's execution. The Syrian accepts the first substitution (Salome with the moon), but alters the comparison to a positive one that reflects his affection for the object of his desire. He compares the moon to a princess who "wears a yellow veil," "has little white doves for feet," and might be "dancing." The Syrian thus uses the moon to invoke Salome not in her murderous aspect, but in her seductive persona, the dancer of the erotic "Dance of the Seven Veils." For both characters, the moon is a metaphor for Salome – a substitution for her. More aptly, talking about the moon is a substitution for Salome, in that the two men exchange metaphors about the moon instead of looking at Salome. In the absence of the possibility of fulfilling his desire, the Syrian (prompted by the Page) turns to metaphoric language as a means of getting near the object of his desire without confronting it.



# Aubrey Beardsley

Born: August 21, 1872

Died: March 16, 1898

At the same time that Oscar Wilde was writing works such as *Salome*, Aubrey Beardsley (a fellow member of the Aesthetic movement) was an artist making posters in the style of Art Nouveau. He was a controversial artist, obsessed with the erotic and the grotesque and even once said: "I have one aim—the grotesque. If I am not grotesque I am nothing." So it was no surprise that one of his most beautiful and notorious works is a poster of Salome gazing into the eyes of the severed head of Jokanaan.

Oscar Wilde described Beardsley as having "a face like a silver hatchet, and grass green hair" and did not approve of the drawings Beardsley completed for *Salome*, denouncing them as too Japanese while *Salome* was set in a Byzantine locale.

As part of the aesthetic movement, Beardsley believed in "art for art's sake." It was a 19th century European art movement that emphasized aesthetic values more than sociopolitical themes for literature, fine art, the decorative arts, and interior design.

Beardsley died at the age of 25 in 1898, seven years before *Salome* debuted as an opera. He worked in the style of Art Nouveau, but he is credited by some as having planted the seeds of Art Deco.

Art Nouveau was an international style of art, decoration and architecture which developed in the 1880s and 1890s. The name derives from the *Maison de l'Art Nouveau*, an interior design gallery opened in Paris in 1896, but in fact the movement had different names throughout Europe. It is

characterized by intricate linear designs and flowing curves based on natural forms, and was dominant during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.



Aubrey Beardsley



For more Aubrey Beardsley art, go to [www.wormfood.com/savoy/salome](http://www.wormfood.com/savoy/salome)

# Winnipeg Public Library

## Resources

### Books

Aubrey Beardsley: a biography [Matthew Sturgis]  
Harper Collins, 1998  
Call No.: B Beardsley

Built of books: how reading defined the life of Oscar Wilde [by Thomas Wright]  
Henry Holt and Co., 2009  
Call No.: 828.809 WILDE 2009

Richard Strauss: man, musician, enigma [by Michael Kennedy]  
Cambridge University Press, 1999  
Call No.: 780.92 STRAUSS

Salome: drama in one act after Oscar Wilde's poem / German translation by Hedwig Lachmann ; music by Richard Strauss.  
Boosey & Hawkes, [195-]  
Call No.: 782.1 STR

The secret life of Oscar Wilde [Neil McKenna]  
Century, 2003  
Call No.: B WILDE

Sisters of Salome / Toni Bentley  
New Haven : Yale University Press, c2002  
Call No.: 792.80922 BEN

### Scores

Salome op. 54: music drama in one act after Oscar Wilde's tragedy with modifications for use on the English stage by Alfred Kalisch [music] / Richard Strauss ; vocal score by Otto Singer  
Boosey & Hawkes, c1943  
Call No.: SCORE 782.1 STR

### Sound Recordings

Salome [Richard Strauss]  
Chandos, p2008  
Call No.: CD OPERA STRAUSS SAL

Salome [Richard Strauss]  
Chandos, p1999  
Call No.: CD OPERA STRAUSS SAL

Salome [Richard Strauss]  
Deutsche Grammophon, p1991  
Call No.: CD OPERA STRAUSS SAL

### DVD Recordings

Salome [music by Richard Strauss; libretto from a play by Oscar Wilde]  
Opus Arte, c2010  
Call No.: BLU-RAY 782.1 SAL

Salome [performed by] the Royal Opera Kultur, c1992  
Call No.: DVD 792.542 SAL



*Theda Bara in Salome (1918)*

# A Short Overview of Opera

An opera, like a play, is a dramatic form of theatre that includes scenery, props and costumes. In opera, however, the actors are trained singers who sing their lines instead of speaking them. An orchestra accompanies the singers. A conductor coordinates both the singers on stage and the musicians in the orchestra pit.

Opera consists of many dimensions: the human voice, orchestral music, the visual arts (scenery, costumes and special effects), drama (tragedy or comedy), and occasionally dance. The melding of these elements creates a multi-dimensional theatrical experience.

Opera has its roots in Greek drama and originated in Florence, Italy, in the late 1500's, with a small group of men who were members of the Camerata (Italian for society). The intellectuals, poets and musicians of the Camerata decided they wanted words to be a featured aspect of music. They used ancient Greek drama as their inspiration, including the use of a chorus to comment on the action.

The Camerata laid down three principles for their new art form:

1. The text must be understood; the accompaniment must be very simple and should not distract from the words.
2. The words must be sung with correct and natural declamation, as if they were spoken, and must avoid the rhythms of songs.
3. The melody must interpret the feeling of the text.

The first significant composer to fully develop the ideas of the Camerata was Jacopo Peri (1561-1633), whose opera *Dafne*, based on a Greek myth, was performed in 1594 and is regarded as the first opera.

Operas are divided into scenes and acts that contain different types of vocal pieces for one or many singers. An aria is a vocal solo that usually focuses on a character's emotions rather than actions. A recitative is sung dialogue or speech that occurs between arias and ensembles. It helps to further the action of the story and shape the relationships between the characters.

The story of the opera is written as a libretto: a text that is set to music. Composers write the score or the music for the opera. Sometimes



The Sydney Opera House



the composer will also write the text of the opera, but most often they work with a librettist. In the past, the libretto was also bound and sold to the audience. Today, the audience can easily follow the plot with the use of surtitles - the English translation of the libretto, which are projected onto a screen above the stage.

There are several differences between opera and musicals like *Phantom of the Opera*. One significant difference is the 'partnership' found between the music and the drama in an opera. While musicals use songs to help tell a story, in an opera, the music contributes to the drama, it does not only accompany it.

The musical style is another important difference between the two art forms; opera is usually classical and complex, while musicals feature pop songs and sometimes rock and roll. Also, singers in musicals have microphones hidden in their costumes or wigs to amplify their voices. The voices of opera singers are so strong no amplification is needed, even in a large venue. Furthermore, operas are almost completely sung while the use of spoken words are more common to musicals. There are some operas with spoken words and these are called singspiels (German) and opera-comique (French). Examples are Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and Bizet's *Carmen*, respectively.



The Metropolitan Opera (1937)

# Bringing an Opera to the Stage

Opera combines many great art forms to make something completely different. First and foremost are the performers who portray characters by revealing their thoughts and emotions through the singing voice. The next very important component is a full symphony orchestra that accompanies the singing actors and actresses, helping them to portray the full range of emotions possible in the operatic format. The orchestra performs in an area in front of the singers called the orchestra pit, while the singers perform on the open area called the stage. Wigs, costumes, sets and specialized lighting further enhance these performances, all of which are designed, created, and executed by a team of highly trained artisans.

The creation of an opera begins with a dramatic scenario crafted by a playwright or dramaturg who, alone or with a librettist, fashions the script or libretto that contains the words the artists will sing. Working in tandem, the composer and librettist team up to create a cohesive musical drama in which the music and words work together to express the emotions revealed in the story. Following the completion of their work, the composer and librettist entrust their new work to a conductor who, with a team of assistants (*repetiteurs*), assumes responsibility for the musical preparation of the work. The conductor collaborates with a stage director (responsible for the visual component) in order to bring a performance of the new piece to life on the stage. The stage director and conductor form the creative spearhead for the new composition while assembling a design team which will take charge of the actual physical production.



Wendy Nielsen (*Tosca*) and Richard Margison (*Cavaradossi*), *Tosca*, Manitoba Opera, November 2011. Photo: R. Tinker



Set designers, lighting designers, costume designers, wig and makeup designers and even choreographers must all be brought on board to participate in the creation of the new production. The set designer combines the skills of both an artist and an architect using “blueprint” plans to design the actual physical set which will reside on the stage, recreating the physical setting required by the story line. These blueprints are turned over to a team of carpenters who are specially trained in the art of stage carpentry. Following the actual building of the set, painters following instructions from the set designers’ original plans paint the set. As the set is assembled on the stage, the lighting designer works with a team of electricians to throw light onto both the stage and the set in an atmospheric, as well as practical way. Using specialized lighting instruments, colored gels and a state-of-the-art computer, the designer, along with the stage director, create a “lighting plot” by writing “lighting cues” which are stored in the computer and used during the actual performance of the opera.

During this production period, the costume designer, in consultation with the stage director, has designed appropriate clothing for the singers to wear. These designs are fashioned into patterns and crafted by a team of highly skilled artisans called cutters, stitchers, and sewers. Each costume is specially made for each singer using his/her individual measurements. The wig and makeup designer, working with the costume designer, designs and creates wigs which will complement both the costume and the singer, as well as represent historically accurate period fashions.

The principals are the people who have the major roles in an opera. They are professional singers. Principals usually arrive about three weeks before the first performance, with all of their music memorized and a good sense of their character. In rehearsal, they work with the director who helps them block each of the scenes. The director works with the principals to develop their characters and their voice. For the first two weeks they are accompanied by a rehearsal pianist. The week of the show, they move into the Concert Hall and begin work rehearsing on stage with the orchestra in the pit.



*Danièle Leblanc (Dorabella), John Tessier (Ferrando), James Westman (Guglielmo) and Monica Huisman (Fiordiligi), Così fan tutte, Manitoba Opera, February 2003. Photo: R. Tinker*

# The Operatic Voice and Professional Singing

Operatic singing, developed in Europe during the 17th century, places intense vocal demands on the singer. Opera singers rarely use microphones, and therefore must project their voices to fill a large theatre and be heard above an orchestra.

An opera singer learns to use his or her body as an amplification device. By controlling the muscles of the diaphragm, the singer can regulate the amount of breath used. The diaphragm expands and contracts, regulating the air that passes through the vocal cords, causing them to vibrate. The speed of this determines the pitch. As the sound passes through the mouth, it resonates in the upper chest cavities and the sinus cavities of the face and head. These cavities act as small echo chambers that amplify the sound.

Each person's vocal tract is constructed differently. The roles that a singer performs are dependent mostly upon their vocal range, but within the vocal ranges, there are many colours and weights of voice that contribute. Vocal colour refers to the richness of the sound and vocal weight refers to how powerful a voice sounds.

Many singers begin their operatic training in university. Opera students study singing, music history, composition and vocal pedagogy (voice teaching). In addition to music classes, they study diction and often at least one foreign language. After university, their first professional roles are usually small parts, but if they continue to study and train, they may move on to the bigger principal roles.

Professional singers develop a number of roles in their repertoire. Since the principal artists are required to have their parts memorized before rehearsals begin, singers must prepare well in advance of each contract. Even well established singers have voice teachers, and often acting coaches, who help them refine their singing techniques.

Physical health is a major priority to a singer. Contrary to popular belief, not all opera singers are overweight. Opera singers once believed that excessive weight gave added volume and richness to the voice. However, now we know that physical fitness can give similar benefits to a voice. Plus, the overall health benefits of being in shape overshadow any loss of vocal power. Most singers, like professional athletes, try to avoid tobacco, alcohol, and caffeine.

## VOCAL CATEGORIES

### *Women*

**SOPRANO:** Similar to a flute in range and tone colour. Usually plays the heroine in the opera since a high, bright sound can easily suggest youth and innocence.

**MEZZO-SOPRANO:** Similar to an oboe in range and tone colour. Called an alto in choral arrangements, this voice can play a wide variety of characters including gypsies, mothers, and young men (trouser role).

**CONTRALTO:** Similar to an English horn in range and tone colour. Usually play unique roles including fortune-tellers, witches, and older women.

### *Men*

**TENOR:** Similar to a trumpet in range, tone, color and acoustical "ring." Usually plays the hero or the romantic lead in the opera.

**BARITONE:** Similar to a French horn in tone color. Often plays the leader of mischief in comic opera or the villain in tragic opera, sometimes even the hero.

**BASS:** Similar to a trombone or bassoon in tone color. Usually portrays old, wise men, or foolish, comic men.

HIGHER

LOWER

## VOCAL COLOURINGS

**COLORATURA:** A light, bright voice that has the ability to sing many notes quickly, usually with an extended upper range.

**LYRIC:** A light to medium weight voice, often singing beautiful sweeping melodies.

**DRAMATIC:** Dark, heavy and powerful voice, capable of sustained and forceful singing.



# Glossary: Important Words in Opera

**ACT:** a section of the opera that is then divided into scenes.

**ARIA:** means “air” in Italian. This is a piece of music written for a one singer (soloist), usually with instrumental accompaniment.

**ASIDE:** a secret comment from an actor directly to the audience that the other characters cannot hear.

**BARITONE:** the middle singing range of the male voice.

**BASS:** the lowest singing range of the male voice.

**BASSO BUFFO:** a bass singer who specializes in comic characters.

**BASSO PROFUNDO:** the most serious bass voice.

**BATON:** short stick that the conductor uses to lead the orchestra.

**BEL CANTO:** Italian phrase literally meaning “beautiful singing.” A traditional Italian style of singing emphasizing tone, phrasing, coloratura passages, and technique. Also refers to the operas written in this style.

**BLOCKING:** directions given to the performers for movement on stage.

**BRAVO:** (Italian)- a form of appreciation shouted by audience members at the end of a particularly pleasing performance. Technically, bravo refers to a male performer, brava refers to a female performer and bravi refers to many performers.

**BUFFO:** from the Italian for “buffoon.” A singer of comic roles (basso-buffo) or a comic opera (opera-buffa.)

**CADENZA:** a passage of singing, often at the end of an aria, which shows off the singer’s vocal ability.

**CASTRATO:** (Italian)- a castrated male prized for his high singing voice.

**CHOREOGRAPHER:** the person who designs the steps of a dance.

**CHORUS:** a group of singers of all vocal ranges, singing together to support the vocal leads.

**CLASSICAL:** the period in music which comes after the Baroque and before the Romantic, roughly from the birth of Mozart to shortly after the death of Beethoven. It represents the greatest standardization in orchestral form and tonality.

**COLORATURA:** elaborate ornamentation of music written for a singer using many fast notes and trills. Also used to describe a singer who sings this type of music.



Jeffrey Springer (*Turiddu*), *Pagliacci*, Manitoba Opera, April 2004. Photo: R.Tinker



**COMPOSER:** the individual who writes all the music for both voice and instrument.

**COMPRIMARIO:** a nineteenth century term referring to secondary or supporting roles such as confidantes, messengers, and matchmakers.

**CONTRALTO:** the lowest female voice range.

**CONDUCTOR:** the person responsible for the musical interpretation and coordination of the performance. The conductor controls the tempo, the dynamic level, and the balance between singers and orchestra. You will see this person standing in the orchestra pit conducting the musicians and the singers.

**COUNTERTENOR:** a male singer with the highest male voice range, generally singing within the female contralto or mezzo-soprano range.

**CRESCENDO:** a build in the volume or dynamic of the music.

**CUE:** a signal to enter or exit from the stage, to move or to change lighting or scenery; or a signal given by the conductor to the musicians.



Jeff Mattsey (*Don Giovanni*) and Stefan Szkafarowsky (*Commendatore*), *Don Giovanni*, Manitoba Opera, November 2003. Photo: R.Tinker

**CURTAIN CALL:** occurs at the end of the performance when all the cast members and the conductor take bows. This can occur in front of the curtain or on the open stage.

**DESIGNER:** a production can have two or three designers: a lighting designer, a costume designer, a set designer, or someone who is both costume and set designer. They work closely with the stage director to give the production a distinctive look.

**DIVA:** literally *goddess* in Italian. An important female opera star. The masculine form is *divo*.

**DRESS REHEARSAL:** the final rehearsal before opening night, includes costumes, lights, makeup, etc. Sometimes it is necessary to stop for adjustments, but an attempt is made to make it as much like a regular performance as possible.

**DUET:** music that is written for two people to sing together.

**ENCORE:** a piece that is performed after the last scheduled piece of a concert. An encore is usually performed because the audience wants to hear more music even though the concert is over.

**ENSEMBLE:** a part of the opera written for a group of two or more singers. This may or may not include the chorus.

**FALSETTO:** the upper part of a voice in which the vocal cords do not vibrate completely. Usually used by males to imitate a female voice.

**FINALE:** the last musical number of an opera or an act.

**GRAND OPERA:** spectacular French opera of the Romantic period, lavishly staged, with a historically-based plot, a huge cast, an unusually large orchestra, and ballet. It also refers to opera without spoken dialogue.

**HELDEN:** German prefix meaning "heroic." Can also apply to other voices, but usually used in "heldentenor."

**HOUSE:** the auditorium and front of the theatre excluding the stage and backstage areas.

**IMPRESARIO:** the proprietor, manager, or conductor of an opera or concert company; one who puts on or sponsors an entertainment manager, producer.

**INTERLUDE:** a short piece of instrumental music played between scenes and acts.

**INTERMISSION:** a break between acts of an opera. The lights go on and the audience is free to move around.

**LIBRETTIST:** the writer of the opera's text.

**LIBRETTO:** Italian for *little book*. It is the text or story of the opera.

**LYRIC:** used to describe a light-to-medium-weight voice with an innocent quality, capable of both sustained, forceful singing and delicate effects.

**MAESTRO:** means "master" in Italian. Used as a courtesy title for the conductor (male or female).

**MARK:** to sing, but not at full voice. A full-length opera is very hard on a singer's voice, so most performers mark during rehearsals. During the dress rehearsal singers try to sing at full voice for part, if not all, of the rehearsal.

**MEZZO-SOPRANO:** the middle singing range for a female voice.

**MOTIF OR LEITMOTIF:** a recurring musical theme used to identify an emotion, person, place, or object.

**OPERA:** a dramatic presentation which is set to music. Almost all of it is sung, and the orchestra is an equal partner with the singers. Like a play, an opera is acted on stage with costumes, scenery, makeup, etc. Opera is the plural form of the Latin word *opus*, which means "work."

**OPERA BUFFA:** an opera about ordinary people, usually, but not always comic. First developed in the 18th century.

**OPERA SERIA:** a serious opera. The usual characters are gods and goddesses, or ancient heroes.

**OPERA-COMIQUE:** (*singspiel*) a form of opera which contains spoken dialogue.

**OPERETTA:** lighthearted opera with spoken dialogue, such as a musical.

**ORCHESTRA:** an ensemble, led by a conductor, that is comprised of string, woodwind, brass and percussion instruments.

**ORCHESTRA PIT:** sunken area in front of the stage where the orchestra sits.

**OVERTURE:** an orchestral introduction to the opera played before the curtain rises. Usually longer than a prelude and can be played as a separate piece.

**PITCH:** how high or low a note sounds.

**PRELUDE:** a short introduction that leads into an act without pause.

**PRIMA DONNA:** literally *first lady* in Italian. The leading woman in an opera. Because of the way some of them behaved in the past, it often refers to someone who is acting in a superior and demanding fashion. The term for a leading man is *primo uomo*.

**PRINCIPAL:** a major singing role, or the singer who performs such a role.

**PRODUCTION:** the combination of sets, costumes, props, and lights, etc.

**PROPS:** objects carried or used on stage by the performers.

**PROSCENIUM:** the front opening of the stage which frames the action.

**QUARTET:** four singers or the music that is written for four singers. Also quintet, sextet, etc.

**RAKED STAGE:** a stage that slants downwards towards the audience.

**RECITATIVE:** lines of dialogue that are sung, usually with no recognizable melody. It is used to advance the plot.

**REHEARSAL:** a working session in which the singers prepare for public performance.

**SCORE:** the written music of an opera or other musical work.

**SERENADE:** a piece of music honouring someone or something, an extension of the traditional performance of a lover beneath the window of his mistress.

**SITZPROBE:** the rehearsal held on to the main stage for the first time. The entire opera is sung through without any costumes or blocking.

**SOPRANO:** the highest range of the female singing voice.

**SOUBRETTE:** pert young female character with a light soprano voice.

**SPINTO:** a lyric voice that has the power and incisiveness for dramatic climaxes.

**STAGE AREAS:** refers to the various sections of the stage as seen by those on stage.



Andriana Chuchman (Pamina), *The Magic Flute*, Manitoba Opera, April 2011. Photo: R.Tinker

**STAGE DIRECTOR:** the person in charge of the action on stage. He or she shows the singers, chorus and cast where and when to move and helps them create their characters. The stage director develops a concept for how the entire performance should look and feel. He or she works closely with the stage managers, lighting designer, set designers, costume designer, and wig and makeup artists to make his or her vision into reality.

**STAGE MANAGER:** the person who coordinates and manages elements of the performance.

**SUPERNUMERARIES:** appear on stage in costume in non-singing and usually, non-speaking roles.

**SURTITLES:** the English translations of the opera's language, in this production Italian, that are projected above the stage during a performance to help the audience follow the story, much like subtitles in a foreign film.

**SYNOPSIS:** a short summary of the story of the opera.

**TABLEAU:** occurs at the end of a scene or act, when all cast members on stage freeze in position and remain that way until the curtain closes. It looks as though that moment has been captured in a photograph.

**TEMPO:** speed of the music.

**TENOR:** the highest natural adult male voice.

**TRILL:** very quick alternation between two adjacent notes. See coloratura.

**TRIO:** an ensemble of three singers or the music that is written for three singers.

**TROUSER ROLE:** the role of an adolescent boy or young man, written for and sung by a woman, often a mezzo-soprano. Also known as a pants role.

**VERISMO:** describes a realistic style of opera that started in Italy at the end of the 19th century.



# Audience Etiquette

*The following list will help you (and those around you) enjoy the experience of a night at the opera:*

- Dress to be comfortable. Many people enjoy dressing up in formal attire, but this is optional and people attend wearing all varieties of clothing.
- Arrive on time. Latecomers disturb the singers and others in the audience. Latecomers will only be seated at suitable breaks - often not until intermission.
- Find your seat with the help of your teacher or an usher and remember to thank them.
- Remove your hat. This is customary and is respectful to the artists and to people sitting behind you.
- Turn off, tune in. Switch off all electronic devices including cell phones, smart phones, iPods, pagers, and digital watch alarms.
- Leave your camera at home and do not use the camera function on your phone during a performance. This can be very disturbing to the artists and audience members.
- Find the “EXIT” signs. Look for the illuminated signs over the doors. You always want to know where the nearest emergency exit is in a theatre.
- If you think you might need a breath mint or cough drop, unwrap it before the performance.
- Settle in and get comfortable before the performance begins. Read your program. This tells you what performance you’re about to see, who created it, and who’s performing in it. You might like to read a synopsis of the opera before it begins.
- Clap as the lights are dimmed and the conductor appears and bows to the audience. Watch as the conductor then turns to the orchestra and takes up his or her baton to signal the beginning of the opera.
- Listen to the prelude or overture before the curtain rises. It is part of the performance and an opportunity to identify common musical themes that may reoccur during the opera.
- Save all conversations, eating, drinking, and chewing gum, for the intermission. Talking and eating can be disruptive to other audience members and distracts from your ability to be absorbed by the show. The audience is critical to the success of the show – without you, there can be no performance.
- Sit still. Only whisper when it is absolutely necessary, as a whisper is heard all over the theatre, and NEVER stand during the performance, except in the case of an emergency.
- Read the English translations projected above the stage.
- Feel free to laugh when something is funny – this is a performance and you are expected to respond!
- Listen for subtleties in the music. The tempo, volume and complexity of the music and
- Singing often depict the “feeling” or “sense” of the action or character.
- Notice repeated words or phrases; they are usually significant.
- Applaud (or shout Bravo!) at the end of an aria or chorus piece to show your enjoyment of it. The end of a piece can be identified by a pause in the music.
- Finally, have fun and enjoy the show!

# Manitoba Opera

Founded in 1969 by a group of individuals dedicated to presenting the great works of opera to Manitoban audiences, Manitoba Opera is the province's only full-time professional opera company. The company attracts great international artists, highlights the best local talent, and is supported by the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra under the direction of internationally renowned conductors. Manitoba Opera celebrated its 35th Season in 2007/08 by presenting the world premiere of an opera commissioned by the company, *Transit of Venus*.

## Chorus

The Manitoba Opera Chorus, under the direction of Chorus Master Tadeusz Biernacki, is hailed for their excellent singing and acting abilities. The chorus boasts a core of skilled singers who give generously of their time and talents. Some are voice majors at university, a few are singing teachers, but most work in jobs that aren't music related.



*Carmen, Manitoba Opera, April 2010. Photo: R.Tinker*

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# Student Activities

## Activity #1: Using the Five C's, Have your Students Analyze the Opera as Drama:

**CHARACTERS:** Are they interesting? Believable? Are their actions, words, thoughts consistent?

**CONFLICT:** What conflicts are established? How are they resolved?

**CLIMAX:** To what climax does the conflict lead?

**CONCLUSION:** How well does the conclusion work? Is it consistent? Satisfying? Believable?

**CONTEXT:** What are the historical, physical, and emotional settings? Sets and costumes?

- Give students the synopsis to read and have them re-tell the story after they have read it.
- Ask comprehensive questions.
- Present and discuss the composer and librettist.
- Listen to excerpts from the opera. Watch a DVD of the opera. Have students identify and recognize recurring themes.
- Discuss the historical background, emphasizing the visual and performing arts and history-social science frameworks. Discuss the results of certain events. Whom did they affect? How? Why? Did any changes occur as a result?
- Review the glossary of terms.
- Have the students watch for references to themes in the opera in their everyday lives. The internet, radio, TV, magazines, and movies often refer back to classics.

## Activity #2: Create a Poster, Set, Costume, Press Release, or Ad

- Choose a time and place to set your production
- Have the students design a poster for *Salome* Student Night at the Opera, including the date, the time, and the people involved.
- Have them draw a set for a production of *Salome*.
- They might also sketch a costume, wig, and makeup for a character in *Salome*.
- Have the students write a press release about *Salome* Student Night at the Opera, including the date, the time, the people involved, and why it would be exciting or fun to attend.
- Have the students create an ad for *Salome*. Include whatever you feel is the biggest “selling point” of the opera - what makes it exciting? Why should people come to see it?

### Activity #3: A Review

#### *Step 1 – Think-Group-Share*

Individually students will write, in point form, the answers to the following questions:

1. What did you like about the opera? What did you dislike?
2. What did you think about the sets, props, and costumes?
3. Would you have done something differently? Why?
4. What were you expecting? Did it live up to your expectations?
5. What did you think of the singers' portrayal of their characters?

Break the students into groups to discuss their feelings and reactions to the production. Have the students write on poster papers their answers or important points of their discussion. Encourage the students to go beyond the questions posed.

#### *Step 2 – Class Discussion*

Have the whole class examine the poster papers and discuss the different ideas from each group.

#### *Step 3 – Outlining your review*

Go over the essential aspects of a review including: a clearly stated purpose, a coherent comparison/contrast organizational pattern, a summary paragraph capturing the interest of the reader, precise nouns, revision for consistency of ideas. You might give your students a few samples of reviews for fine arts events – or ask them to bring in some reviews they find themselves. Have the students fill out the review outline, then complete a rough draft.

1. Purpose (why are you writing this and who is your audience?)
2. Plot Synopsis (including who sang what role, etc.)
3. Paragraph 1 (compare and contrast, things you liked or didn't like)
4. Paragraph 2 (compare and contrast, things you liked or didn't like)
5. Paragraph 3 (compare and contrast, things you liked or didn't like)
6. Summary/Closing Paragraph

#### *Step 4 – Peer Conferencing*

Students will exchange reviews to critique and edit. Encourage the students to focus on effective coordination of ideas in sentences and the correct use of grammar and punctuation.

#### *Step 5 – Creating the final draft*

Have students make the appropriate adjustments to their reviews. You could also have the students type the pieces up and organize them into a newspaper.

### Activity #4: Have your students act out the story

Have students consider the characters and the role they play in the story. Choose one of the following:

SALOME

HEROD

HERODIAS

OKANAAN

NARRABOTH

If you were going to play this character, you would have to discover, create, and imagine background, personality, and physical qualities. Some clues are provided in the story and the music and some you need to make up yourself.

*Pretend you are that character and answer the following questions:*

1. What motivates you? How does this affect your actions? What obstacles stand in your way?
2. What steps in the opera do you take to achieve your objectives? What are the results?
3. What obstacles are beyond your control (laws, social status, others' actions)?
4. What are your (character's) greatest strengths? Greatest weaknesses?
5. What is your relationship to the other characters?
6. How is the character's personality expressed through the music of the opera?
7. Can you think of a modern-day character who has similar characteristics and traits?
8. If this character were alive today, how would s/he be more or less successful?
9. What different steps would s/he take to achieve an objective?

### Activity #5: Write a Biography

Have students research and write a bio of the playwright, composer, librettist or one of the characters.

### Activity #6: Create a Journal or Blog from the Point of View of a Character

Have the students choose a point of conflict, and write a journal or blog of those events from a character's point of view. What is Salome thinking when she's dancing? Why did Herodias marry a man like Herod? Why is Narraboth so in love with Salome?



### **Activity #7: Write a Letter from One Character to Another**

Have the students choose a moment in the story and have one character write a letter to another, giving them advice for the future. Ethical questions raised by the plot or characters can be addressed.

### **Activity #8: Cast *Salome***

Have the students cast modern-day singers or bands as the performers in *Salome*.

Who did you choose? What are their costumes like? What did you base your decisions on?

### **Activity #9: Tweet About *Salome***

Have the students tweet about *Salome* Student Night by writing out a twitter in 140 characters. Have students read their tweet aloud to the class and post them to Manitoba Opera's Facebook wall. Try to be clever, funny, or start a conversation.

### **Activity #10: What's in a Name?**

Have students research the history and meaning behind their own names. They should provide a pronunciation guide, the country or region of origin, a definition of what the name means (if this applies; some names are simply names), and any interesting facts related to the name. Perhaps they share the name with someone famous? Or maybe their parents made the name up? Students can provide their own interesting family history to their names.

### **Activity #11: *Salome* Mood Board**

Often before artists and designers create their work, they make a mood board to set the tone for the piece. This is usually a poster-sized piece of paper covered in images and words, usually torn from the pages of magazines and newspapers, that together communicates the complex mood of the piece in a way that words can't. It's the same as making a collage, except a mood board is for the purpose of communicating a focused concept.

Have your students go through a stack of old magazines and newspapers to create a mood board for *Salome*. They can create one each or work together on a large one for the class. Consider elements like colours, textures, phrases, faces, patterns, and images that represent *Salome*.

## Activity #12: Opera Comprehension Tests

### *The Opera*

1. \_\_\_\_\_ A theatrical production incorporating both vocal and instrumental music, drama, and sometimes dance.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ The lowest male vocal range.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ An instrumental introduction to an opera.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ The area where the orchestra is seated.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Considered the first opera.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ A song for solo voice in an opera.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ The highest female vocal range.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ A song for two voices.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ The lowest female vocal range.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ The Italian word meaning "little book."
11. \_\_\_\_\_ The middle male vocal range.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ He/she is in charge of all the action on the stage.

*Salome*

1. In which city was the premiere performance of Strauss' *Salome*? \_\_\_\_\_.
2. In what year did it premiere? \_\_\_\_\_.
3. In which city was *Salome* banned and then finally had a modified version performed there, two years after its original Parisian debut? \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The play that the opera was based on was written by \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Where does this one-act drama take place? \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The role of Salome is sung by a \_\_\_\_\_ (name the singing voice).
7. The role of Herod is sung by a \_\_\_\_\_ (name the singing voice).
8. Who is the librettist? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What language is the opera performed in? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Who will play the title role in Manitoba Opera's production of *Salome*? \_\_\_\_\_

## Answer Key

### General Opera

1. Opera
2. Bass
3. Overture
4. Orchestra pit or “the pit”
5. Daphne
6. Aria
7. Soprano
8. Duet
9. Contralto
10. Libretto
11. Baritone
12. Stage director

### *Salome*

1. Dresden
2. 1905
3. London
4. Oscar Wilde
5. Judea
6. Soprano
7. Tenor
8. Hedwig Lachmann
9. German
10. Mlada Khudoley

Manitoba Opera would love to receive a copy of any work related to this opera produced by your students. Please forward to:

Marketing Coordinator, Manitoba Opera, 1060 - 555 Main St., Winnipeg, MB R3B 1C3

or

[balexander@manitobaopera.mb.ca](mailto:balexander@manitobaopera.mb.ca)