

# Opera 101

Utah Opera Resident Artists



This assembly is an introduction to opera: the art form that combines drama, visual art, dance, orchestral music, and singing. Operas use words, action, and music to tell stories full of conflict and emotion, and they are usually entirely sung.

In opera, performers sing everything they say to each other. In that respect, opera is not realistic: do any of your students go around singing phrases like "I'm sorry I hurt your feelings" or "Is that all we have for homework?"

Opera does explore real human experience, though, in ways that communicate powerfully. When music that suggests how someone feels is added to words that express that feeling, the power of the story increases.

Concept by Paula Fowler and Music Direction by Dr. Carol Anderson.



## Meet Utah Opera Resident Artists 2018-19!



**Grace Kahl**  
Soprano

**Hometown:**  
Queens, NY

**Hobby:**  
Podcasts



**Melanie Ashkar**  
Mezzo-Soprano

**Hometown:**  
Arlington, VA

**Hobby:**  
Board Games



**Chris Oglesby**  
Tenor

**Hometown:**  
Atlanta, GA

**Hobby:**  
Camping



**Jesús Murrillo**  
Baritone

**Hometown:**  
Detroit, MI

**Hobby:**  
Painting



**Robert Bosworth**  
Pianist

**Hometown:**  
Ft Worth, TX

**Hobby:**  
Reading

To learn more about the Resident Artists [visit this link!](#)

## Preparing for *Opera 101*

Options if you have 10 minutes...

- Use the Introductory PowerPoint presentation on the [USUO Education website](#).
- Brainstorm a list of what students already know about opera. Ask them to pay attention during the presentation to change or add to the list afterward.
- Basic Ideas about Opera
  1. Everyone sings almost all the time.
  2. It is like a play (drama) with characters, conflict, and staging by a director.
  3. Usually people who go to an opera treat it as a special evening; they dress up and make a big event of it.
  4. Utah Opera uses supertitles in the Capitol Theatre so that the audience can understand what the singers are saying.



### Voice Types

Talk about voice types. Most children have high voices and would be called "sopranos." During puberty, one physical change people go through is a change in the vocal cords. Boys' voices usually deepen and some become "**tenors**" who sing higher; others become "**baritones**," who sing in a medium low range; still others become "**basses**," who sing lowest of all.

A woman whose voice is most comfortable in a low range is called an "**alto**," one most at ease in a medium range is a "**mezzo-soprano**," and one who can sing very high is called a "**soprano**." Your voice type depends on the way your particular vocal muscles are put together. Most people know by the time they are in high school which voice category suits them best. Can your students name any contemporary singers who have these voice types?

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## Core Curriculum Connections: Choral Music Standards

The Utah Opera Resident Artists are inspirational examples of what students can achieve when they master the Utah State Core Standards for Music. Remind your students about [these standards](#) and ask them to evaluate the artists after the assembly.

STRAND: CREATE - Students will conceptualize, generate, and organize artistic ideas and work. They will complete and refine musical works.

STRAND: RESPOND - Students will perceive and analyze artistic work and process. They will interpret intent and meaning, and apply criteria to evaluate artistic work and process

STRAND: CONNECT - Students will relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

STRAND: PERFORM - Students will analyze, interpret, and select artistic work for performance.

## Basic Opera Terminology

In the assembly, the Utah Opera Resident Artists will introduce many terms used in opera.

<b>Aria</b>	A solo song in an opera	<b>Melody</b>	A group of notes organized to make up a musical phrase
<b>Baritone</b>	A low male singing voice	<b>Mezzo - Soprano</b>	A middle-range female singing voice
<b>Bravo</b>	Italian for Excellent! Well done! ("brah-vo")	<b>Opera</b>	"Work" in Italian, short for "opera in music," or "work in music"
<b>Breath Control</b>	The skill that allows a singer to have long phrases without gasping for air	<b>Properties (props)</b>	Objects that a singer holds or carries that help tell the story
<b>Coloratura</b>	Fancy decorative vocal music. Many fast little notes in complicated musical passages which require a great deal of technical ability	<b>Recitative (recit)</b>	A style of vocal music based on imitating speech, with a minimum of musical structure and accompaniment
<b>Composer</b>	A person who writes music	<b>Rhythm</b>	A pattern of long or short, accented or unaccented notes
<b>Duet</b>	A song for two people to sing together	<b>Set</b>	Large items like walls or furniture that create a sense of place
<b>Harmony</b>	Notes sung by several singers at the same time that makes a pleasing combination	<b>Soprano</b>	A high singing voice in children or women
<b>Libretto</b>	The words the singers sing in an opera; a "librettist" writes the libretto	<b>Tenor</b>	A high male singing voice
<b>Maestro</b>	The conductor of an opera or symphony		

### Post-Assembly Activity Options

- Guide your class in a discussion using the Strands from the State Music Core about the presentation.
  - Ask students to describe their favorite scenes and explain why they liked those scenes the best. [These skills are part of the National Standards for Music Education.]
  - Ask students what they learned about opera. These could be things the performers told or showed them, or things they realized on their own.
- If your class brainstormed a list about opera, go back through the list together, checking for accuracy and identifying important elements they hadn't known about before.
- Ask students to evaluate/give their perceptions of the performers' stage presence and music skills. [These skills are part of the Utah Music Core Standards.]
  - Did the singers know how to start and stop their musical numbers together?
  - Did the singers sing with "voices free from strain"?
  - Can students recognize and remember times when when the singers used musical skills such as different pitches, rhythms? And dynamics (loud or soft)?
- Learn more about opera singers by watching videos about different voice types at this [link](#).
- Invite students to write their answers to any of these questions, or share their response in a letter, card or email at [pfowler@usuo.org](mailto:pfowler@usuo.org). Send letters to:

Utah Opera  
 Paula Fowler, Education Director  
 336 N 400 S  
 Salt Lake City, UT 84103

Teachers, we would like your feedback. Please fill out our survey online at this [link](#).

## Utah Symphony | Utah Opera's Educational programs

Be sure to check out our website at [www.usuoeducation.org](http://www.usuoeducation.org). Check the listings by age group for all of our outreach programs. You'll find descriptions of *Who Wants to be an OPERA STAR?*, *Opera 101*, *Freeze Frame: The Elixir of Love*, and *Opera Up Close*, as well as the Utah Symphony School Concerts, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Abravanel Hall Concerts, and Open Rehearsals. You'll discover information about our teacher development opportunities, original opera teacher workshops, and student internships. You'll learn about special offerings for secondary school students, such as "Opera-tunities Night," when students can attend a final dress rehearsal of an opera, and high school clubs. Look for information about the Youth Guild, which entire families may join, as well as our Family Concerts.

If you have any students with special needs, please let them know about the free Utah Symphony | Utah Opera concert on January 22, 2019 at 7 PM in Abravanel Hall. You can find more information at [www.usuoeducation.org/specialneeds](http://www.usuoeducation.org/specialneeds).

Contact the Utah Opera Education Department:

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