

Free essay about opera

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The word opera is the plural of 'opus'. In Latin 'opus' means work, labor. When we say opera today, we usually think about a musical, drama and stage work. Opera is also a building, a theater where operas are performed and a synonym for the institution that produces opera shows as well. Historically speaking, first operas, which were created in 1598 and 1600 in Florence, with the idea to revive the ancient drama, were composed in order to give the spoken or the recited drama text a certain rhythm and intonation which would give it a desired expression followed by a small or big instrumental group.

Simply speaking, opera has transformed throughout the time from "melodic reciting" into the most complex musical, dramatic and stage form. For the performance of one opera work, composed at the end of 19th or at the beginning of 20th century, a large orchestra is needed, a certain number of vocal soloists, a large choir, a big stage and often a ballet ensemble as well. Next step is to unite all these elements musically, which is the work of a conductor. Apart from a large orchestra, a music is usually needed on stage and behind the stage, in charge of which are assistant conductors. A director works with a scenographer and a costumography specialist and a choreographer works with the ballet ensemble. All of them have one or more assistants. Coulisses have to be created in a workshop and costumes in a sewing shop. Props also need to be acquired. Besides the singers in the show, extras need to participate as well and they also have their manager. If we take all of this into consideration, we will see how complex the work on the production of an opera is. However, there are many more participants in the whole job, from the director of the opera house to the rest of the staff.

In the development of opera there have been several styles. Baroque opera's characteristic is a great vocal virtuosity, which became a purpose in itself.

(There was also a time of a special kind of singing, castrato). Reaction to this was Gluck's reform and Classicism. During the 19th century opera was characterised by Romanticism of Bellini, Donizetti and Verdi.

Librettos of famous authors served as librettos or composers cooperated with their contemporaries, writers and poets. Wagner thought that only composers should write their own librettos of musical dramas, as he was doing. Verismo appeared in the 20th century: there were no more supernatural occurrences on stage, the plot was from everyday life and actors were made of flesh and blood in operas of Puccini, Mascagni and Leoncavallo. However, at the same time Richard Strauss, in collaboration with his librettist von Hoffmansthal, made magnificent works on biblical and ancient themes.

During the 20th century operas were composed and even today they are, but a very small percentage of these remain on the regular opera repertoire, which is still constituted of the most famous works of Mozart, Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, Verdi, Wagner and Puccini, as well as of operas of national romanticists such as von Weber, Lortzing, Tchaikovsky, Mussorgsky and Smetana.

It is important to say that operas on the opera stages are performed in conditions of good acoustics without help of electronic devices. Such conditions exist also on outdoor stages. It enables a direct and natural experience of voices and instruments.

An artist has to train his voice in a school of music in order to be able to

perform on the opera stage. Voices that naturally have strength and volume for the opera stage are extremely rare. However, they also need a mentor who will show them how to nurture their natural gift.

In opera, like in spoken theater, there are parts of dramatic seriousness, as well as parts of comedy. Therefore, opera singers are divided into middle, high and deep singing voices as well as into lyrical and dramatic voices and voices for serious and comic roles.

Every epoch in the history of opera has had its own famous male and female singers. Modern man still thinks about Maria Callas and Renata Tebaldi, Montserrat Caballe, Ana Netrebko, Caruso, Shalyapin, Pavarotti and Domingo.

Opera directing has had a great development in the second half of the 20th century. From something that has to serve the show, opera directing has become more and more the main reason of going to the opera to see what the director has done with the already famous work. In all of that, there have been great innovations and directing ideas and solutions, but there have also been provocative styles. At times, the impression was that the provocation was the main goal of a certain premiere.

The world's most famous conductors conducted and are conducting operas as well: Toscanini, von Karajan, Abbado, Levine, Sinopoli, Santi and Tileman. Most big cities in the world have opera houses, but in some countries, operas are performed in national theaters. It is important that every person has the opportunity to get acquainted with this art form from an early age. This is a form of high culture and a taste for it has to start developing as early as

possible. Therefore, children should be taken to see operas in order to get used to them and to learn to appreciate them.