



CHICAGO OPERA THEATER

Brian Dickie General Director

Musical and Opera Terms

ARIA [AH-ree-ah]

song for one major character

BARITONE [“BEAR”-ih-“tone”]

medium-range adult male voice; often plays the “bad guy” but can also be the hero

BASS [like “base”]

lowest male voice; often plays the father, king, or priest, but can also play the villain

“BRAVO!” [BRAH-voh]

Italian for “well done.” Shouted after a particularly good performance.

CHORUS [“CORE”-us]

group of singers who sing and act as a group

COMPOSER [“come”-POH-zer]

a person who writes music

CONDUCTOR [kuhn-“DUCK”-ter]

person who leads the orchestra and singers with a white stick called a baton

DIRECTOR [di-“WRECK”-ter]

person in charge of all the action and movement taking place on stage

DUET [“do”-ET]

a song for two performers

DYNAMICS [“die”-nam-iks]

how loud or soft the music is

LIBRETTIST [li-BRET-ist]

a person who writes the words to an opera

LIBRETTO [li-BRET-“oh”]

the words to an opera

MEZZO-SOPRANO [MET-soh-suh-PRAN-oh]

the middle female voice; often plays the maid or sister role

OPERA [AH-per-uh, OP-ruh]

a drama where all, or almost all, of the words are sung

OPERA BUFFA [AH-per-uh BOO-fah]

a funny opera

OPERA SERIA [AH-per-uh SEER-ee-ah]

a serious opera

ORCHESTRA [“OR”-kuh-struh]

group of musicians who plays instruments for the opera

OVERTURE [“OH”-ver-cher]

an orchestral piece that is played before the opera begins

PANTS ROLE

male character that is played by a woman

PITCH [pich]

how high or low a sound is

RECITATIVE [reh-sit-ah-TEEV]

dialogue that is sung but sounds more like normal speech

SCORE [skor]

the written music of an opera

SET

visual background for the opera

SOPRANO [suh-PRAN-oh]

the highest female voice; usually plays the leading lady

SUPERTITLES [SOO-per-TAHYT-l]

translation of the libretto projected above the stage

SUPERNUMERARY [SOO-per-NOO-mer-“AIR”-ee]

people on stage who do not speak or sing

TEMPO [TEM-poh]

how fast or slow the music goes

TENOR [“TEN”-er]

the highest adult male voice; usually plays the hero

TRIO [“TREE”-“oh”]

a song for three performers

VIBRATO [vi-BRAH-“toe”]

warm quality in a voice created by changing pitch very quickly